

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND POLITICS IN UKRAINE AFTER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

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The European revolution of 2014 has once again opened up the prospect of far-reaching change in Ukraine and highlighted how much change is needed if Ukraine is to become, what many people in the country hope for—a “European country.” At the time of this writing, even the borders of the country are unclear, and the prospect of war looms. Scholars of Ukrainian politics face two related sets of questions. One set relates to explanation: how do we explain what has happened, and more generally how do we explain how Ukrainian politics works? A second set focuses on policy: what measures, and by whom, can lead to more positive outcomes for Ukraine?

These two questions highlight two distinct but connected practices of political science: explanation and prescription. In the abstract, political science is a *science*, and its practitioners are *scientists*, and our goal is simply to explain how the world works, not to change it. This notion of science, linked broadly with positivist approaches to social science, is particularly characteristic of the academy in North America, but is widely influential elsewhere as well. Inevitably however, in social science as well as in natural science, we hope to shape the world, not merely understand it. We have some notion of what a better world would look like, and we use science to help build it. This not only guides the scientific questions we ask but prompts us to move beyond narrowly specific scientific problems to policy prescriptions.

I have been asked to focus in this essay on North American approaches to Ukrainian politics, and so the essay begins with a broad characterization of how North American political science has approached Ukrainian politics. I then illustrate this characterization by surveying four of the major issues that have faced Ukraine (institutional design, identity politics, protest and revolution, and foreign policy), and explore what political science has had to say about the nature of these problems, about the possible solutions, and about the challenges currently facing the country. Then, I point to some of the inherent difficulties in applying political science to these problems. The point is not that we should not use social science to address social problems, for the alternative is to make decisions based on hunches or superstition. If social science has not led to progress in Ukraine, it is not because political scientists studying Ukraine have failed, but rather that the nature of social problems and of social science inherently limits the ability of social science to solve practical problems. In the conclusion, I focus on one of those problems—that of power politics—which causes particular problems for a problem-solving approach to political science. Focusing on the role of power politics in Ukraine will help us understand some of the ways in which Ukraine deviates from our expectations, and will help us to craft more appropriate recommendations.

The Study of Ukrainian Politics in North America

Delineating what constitutes the study of Ukrainian politics in North America is doubly tricky. Political science as a discipline is notoriously undisciplined, and North America is neither homogeneous nor isolated in an academic enterprise that is increasingly transnational. First, there is not much homogeneity in approaches or views among North American scholars of Ukraine.¹ Ukraine became independent just as a heated debate was taken place among North American political scientists about the relative merits of “area studies” versus “political science” (Bates 1997). The first focused on deep, contextualized knowledge of a particular country that crossed disciplines, while the second focused on using objective categories to compare phenomena cross-nationally and if possible quantitatively. Area studies seems to have lost that battle, but not completely. Nuanced qualitative research has contributed a great deal. At the same time, there is a strong current of post-positivist and critical theory approaches that prevents political science from having a single uniform epistemology and method, as is the case in economics. Further diversifying the study of Ukrainian politics in North America is that authors from a diverse array of disciplines beyond political science have contributed to the discussion. These include not only other social sciences, but also the humanities and law.

Second, there is no clear dividing line between what is written and published in North America and what is written and published elsewhere. Scholars and ideas flow quite freely across borders, so that scholars working at North American universities have a great diversity in their national origins, native languages, and educational backgrounds. Similarly, scholars educated in North America come from many countries and work at institutions all over the world. The “melting pot” or “mosaic” that characterizes the US and Canada in general apply to universities and scholarship as well. Barriers to the free flow of ideas do exist, the two most salient being language and the unaffordability in much of the world of many prominent journals, but academic borders probably mean less today than at any time in the past.² This relative absence of barriers is a benefit to scholars and to scholarship, but it makes it difficult to generalize about approaches geographically.

With those caveats in mind, I would suggest that if there is a North American approach to political science (and to Ukrainian politics), it is a political science that is largely (but not exclusively) *positivist* and *problem-solving*. It is positivist in that it sees as its aim the development and testing of falsifiable causal hypotheses about the political world. There is wide variety in how formally the hypotheses are stated and how they are tested, but the idea that underlies much of North American political science is that political phenomena are rarely unique. Instead, each instance can be thought of as one case among a larger universe of cases, which can be compared to yield generalizations about causes and effects. The rest of this discussion focuses on this admittedly narrow conception of “political science” in “North America.” Framing the problem this way both makes the discussion manageable and makes it possible to construct some debatable arguments about the literature, rather than simply producing a long annotated bibliography.

A prominent example, as it relates to Ukraine, is the enormous literature on democratization. We assume that “regime type” is a variable, devise ways to measure it, and then set about finding the independent variables that might explain variation in the dependent variable. We test our hypotheses using methodologies ranging from qualitative comparisons to statistical studies. From this perspective, Ukraine may be just one case contributing to a comparative or large-n research design. When we write about democracy (or the design of election systems, or identity politics) in Ukraine, we bring theory and findings developed and tested in cross-national research, expecting that what is true elsewhere will be true in Ukraine. We also use Ukraine—sometimes by itself, more likely in comparison with other cases—to refine broader cross-national theories.

This political science is problem-solving in the sense that it links the study of politics to solving problems in the real world. In practice, much political science, explicitly or implicitly, is interested in understanding how the political world works precisely so that we can shape outcomes. Explanation in such research is a means toward the end of *prescription*—identifying the policies and practices that will lead toward goals that are considered worthy. This means that the agenda for research is often driven by the substantive concerns of the day. In this respect, political science does not differ from much of the natural sciences, which are often pursued and funded due to the promise that they will solve practical problems. We seek to provide “usable knowledge” (Lindblom & Cohen 1979).

For example, since there appears to be some negative relationship between strongly presidential systems and democracy, many scholars have advocated that Ukraine weaken its presidency. In Ukraine, the variation over time in the formal strength of the presidency has allowed us to study the question comparatively across time within Ukraine. The salience of this connection between political science and practice was demonstrated vividly in January 2014, when protesters and opposition leaders in Kyiv modified their demands to focus on the reinstatement of the division of powers between president and parliament that had existed under the 2004 constitutional amendments (RFE/RL 2014; personal communication, Kyiv, December 2013), as though they had been carefully reading Henry Hale’s comparative research (2011) on the division of powers in divided executive systems.

Research Questions

What has this approach accomplished, and what has it failed to do? Among the scientific successes have been providing a much improved understanding of Ukraine’s identity cleavages, anticipating the dangers of strongly presidential powers, and predicting the effects of different election laws. Among the unsolved problems is our inability to pin down the sources for variation in democracy over time in Ukraine (we can describe the variation but not really explain it). Nor have political scientists (or intelligence agencies) had much success predicting revolutions. Political scientists have not been able to design formal institutions that resist being subverted by preexisting informal institutions (Allina-Pisano 2008). We have not been able to devise policies to reduce corruption that can actually be

implemented successfully in Ukraine's political conditions, and we have not been able to devise foreign policies that make the country's location an advantage rather than a liability. Scholars might reasonably respond that they have indeed identified such policies, but that they have not been adopted. Thus, the problem of designing good policies becomes a problem in designing the conditions for adopting good policies, and so on. The problem of unwillingness or inability to implement the sensible recommendations of political scientists is returned to in the third part of this essay.

Among the questions that Ukraine faces today, and has faced for the past twenty-three years, are four that are indicative of the scope of political science and of the problems facing Ukraine. Reviewing research and policy on these questions helps illustrate what political science has and has not accomplished, and what the agenda looks like as this new journal is launched. Addressing these four issues is not meant to imply that other issues are less important; it is simply intended to contribute some breadth to the discussion. These four issues illustrate the value and the shortcomings of viewing Ukraine in comparative perspective and of using comparative research to inform policy.

Institutional Design

The post-communist states, and the states of the "third wave" more broadly, have driven an immense literature on institutional design. The notion that constitutions and other formal rules can channel politics is not inherently North American, but this perspective has been particularly prevalent in US political science for two reasons. First, most Americans understand their own experience in terms of the genius of the constitutional framers in 1787, and see much of what followed as constrained by that document. Second, a huge and successful body of literature has studied the formal rules of the US Congress to show how the rules channel behavior and shape outcomes.

The debate about executive arrangements in the constitution has been typical. In asking about the ideal institutions for Ukraine, we tend to ask, "what works best in general," the underlying assumption being that there are general rules, and that the traits that Ukraine shares with other states are more salient than those in which it differs. Much of the literature has centered on the relative prerogatives of the president and parliament, and while considerable controversy remains, the general consensus is that the stronger the presidency, the weaker democracy (Linz 1990; Stepan & Skach 1993; Linz & Valenzuela 1994; Easter 1997; Frye 1997; for application to Ukraine, see D'Anieri 2006a). Most of the democracies of Western Europe have parliamentary systems with presidencies that are ceremonial. In this literature, the US is considered an historical exception, but Ukraine is not.

A similar application of institutional design concerns the rules for parliamentary elections. Here again, political scientists have applied lessons gleaned more broadly to the case of Ukraine. A key question in the 1990s, when the parliament was fragmented and therefore ineffective, was what kind of electoral laws were likely to promote consolidation of parties and formation of a workable parliamentary majority. Much attention was focused on the effects of the "mixed" system that

Ukraine adopted, in which half the members were elected in single-member districts and half were elected according proportional representation. The broader literature was applied to Ukraine, and the Ukrainian case was used to contribute to the broader understanding of mixed systems (Herron 2002).

In other respects as well, the comparative literature applied to Ukraine with good practical effect. In particular, the argument that a proportional representation system would strengthen parties led in part to the move from a full single-member district system to the mixed system and then, in 2006, to a fully proportional system. Moreover, it was understood correctly that the threshold for representation in a PR system would affect the number of parties that were represented in parliament and the fragmentation or consolidation of the party system. Unfortunately the same knowledge was available to aspiring autocrats as well as democrats, and under Viktor Yanukovych the country moved back to the mixed system in 2011.

In sum, comparative research on institutional design has had a solid record when applied to Ukraine, both in explaining outcomes and in helping design institutions to achieve certain outcomes. From the perspective of early 2014, it appears that there is much work to do. There is widespread acceptance of the dual-executive model, and the debate surrounds the relative prerogatives of the president and the prime minister (Protsyk 2003; Sydorchuk 2014). It is remarkable that in this respect, the European revolution of 2014 was initially neither particularly European nor revolutionary: protesters demanded not to adopt a European parliamentary system, but rather to reform the dual executive model so widespread among the autocratic regimes of the former Soviet Union. They sought a return to the 2004 “Orange” constitution that had led to non-stop conflict between president and prime minister until Yanukovych was elected in 2010 and subordinated the prime minister. Pressing questions today are whether the dual-executive model can be made more functional and more resistant to subversion, and whether these goals can be accomplished without weakening executive authority to the extent that important reforms cannot be implemented. It remains to be seen whether more support for a parliamentary system will emerge.

Identity Politics and Regionalism

Questions of identity politics and regionalism just hit the front pages of newspapers around the world in 2014, but they have been at the center of academic discussions about Ukrainian society and politics for decades (Wilson 1997; Arel 2006). In the post-Soviet era, key practical questions have centered on the ethnic versus civic basis of statehood, language policy, the implications of regional divisions for politics, and the potential for violence or separatism.

To study Ukraine’s ethnic, regional, religious, and linguistic divisions, political scientists and sociologists deployed two of the preferred tools of modern social science, the survey and multiple regression. Large-n surveys offered the potential to empirically measure identities across Ukraine. Multiple regression and its variants offered the ability to parse out the independent influences of different components of identity on political attitudes and voting behavior. Language, religion, and ethnicity often overlap with region of residence in Ukraine, making it challenging to

discern which of these identities may be driving the others. Quantitative approaches allowed scholars to reveal patterns that were otherwise invisible. Most notable was the finding that region played a strong driving role—independent of language, religion, and ethnicity—in driving political values (Barrington 1997; Kubicek 2000, Barrington & Herron 2004).

Qualitative research uncovered an important distinction between Ukraine and many other multi-ethnic societies, namely that Ukrainian and Russian identities in Ukraine are not exclusive categories, but rather are often blurred or blended. This was widely confirmed once surveys began allowing respondents to choose multiple responses on identity questions. Many Ukrainians identified with both nationalities, and spoke both languages, which is not surprising given the significant amounts of intermarriage and the blurring of the two languages into the “surzhyk” often heard in Kyiv. Similarly, religious identities and affiliations were often not seen as opposing one another, but rather as different places in a common community. This blurring of compatible and sometimes overlapping identities made the dynamics of identity politics in Ukraine different from those in many other countries in significant ways that were not appreciated in the early 1990s. For example, David Laitin (1998) applied a cross-nationally derived rational choice model of language use and predicted that Kyiv would become a Ukrainian-speaking city, something that at least so far does not appear to be imminent. The empirical clarification of the nature of identity in Ukraine might be regarded as one of the major accomplishments of the social scientific study of Ukraine.

Beyond characterizing the salience of different sources of attitudes, political scientists sought to identify the implications of these divisions and to recommend policies that would strengthen democracy despite the internal identity cleavages. Some who focused on linguistic and ethnic divisions advocated tolerant language policies, on the grounds that the Russian-speaking community was too large and too concentrated to be ignored (Shulman 2002). This advice clashed with that of advocates of promoting Ukrainian language (Hrycak 2006). The essential difference, however, was not analytical but normative: some took the status quo as a starting point of analysis, whereas many advocates of Ukrainianization saw the status quo as the result of past Russification policies and therefore as, at least partially, illegitimate.

The events of 2014 have put identity politics at the top of the agenda again in Ukrainian politics. The question of how to design institutions that can cope with Ukraine’s regional diversity is now a matter of the survival of the state. This is an issue on which there has been considerable cross-national research, especially in the literature on “consociational democracy,” which has yielded useful insight on Ukraine (Norris 2002; Stepan 2005, Stepan, Linz & Yadav 2011, Chap. 6). The study of identity politics across countries and the design of institutions is vexed by the fact that, identity cleavages can persist peacefully for many years and then quickly become activated with violent consequences. Were the events of 2014 simply a matter of time or were they fundamentally avoidable? This is not simply an academic question, as further ethnic violence and separatism are still very possible.

Early indications are that perceptions of the Euromaidan and the February 2014 revolution vary significantly by region. Russia's use of ethnic conflict as a fig leaf for its invasion of Crimea further raises the stakes for identity politics. Moreover, the de facto federalization of Ukraine during the Euromaidan protests, when several regional administrations were seized by local forces—first to resist Yanukovich, then to resist the interim government—indicate that questions that remained in background for Ukraine's first two decades now must be squarely faced. One of the key dilemmas surrounds federalism: on the one hand, a federal system might give different regions sufficient autonomy to dampen secessionist sentiment. On the other, once secessionist sentiment receives a certain level, a federal system facilitates separation, as shown both in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. Here is a place where cross-national research might be brought to bear. When does federalism help preserve a diverse society, and when does it not?

Another question that we now need to address is how the likely annexation of Crimea (and perhaps other regions) will affect subsequent identity politics in Ukraine. Two questions in particular loom large. First, how would it affect the balance of forces in Ukrainian elections? Crimeans voted in a large majority for Viktor Yanukovich in 2010, and throughout the post-Soviet era have voted for anti-reformist candidates. Without them, it will be much harder for a candidate whose support is based in eastern Ukraine to triumph. This in turn could reshape the dynamics of political competition at the national level. If one or more of the much more heavily populated eastern oblasts were separated from Ukraine, the electoral consequences would be dramatic. Second, which political forces and which causes will be empowered and disempowered in the response to the annexation of Crimea? Will nationalist politicians insisting on Ukrainianization gain influence, on the grounds that weak national identity is a security threat? Or will supporters of regional autonomy and linguistic pluralism gain influence, on the argument that only these policies will keep the country together?

Protest and Revolution

Protest and revolution have spurred a massive amount of research across the disciplines of history, sociology, and political science. There are enduring debates not only about the causes of revolution, but on the nature of revolution and the meaning of the term. It remains very difficult to explain after the fact (let alone to predict) when protests begin, when they will dissipate, to what extent authorities will repress them, and when revolution will occur.

In Ukraine, some of the most basic questions have been salient. Many scholars, for example, have expressed skepticism that the Orange Revolution was really a revolution at all, because rather than sweeping away the existing institutions, the pact reached in 2004 occurred within them and largely preserved them. To the extent that the definition of revolution includes major social change, what happened in 2004-5 clearly does not meet the standard. The events of 2014 provide a telling contrast. The most significant agreement—that underpinned by EU mediators in which Yanukovich would remain in power and elections would be moved up—

collapsed rapidly when it was rejected by forces in the street and when the security forces defending Yanukovich disappeared from the streets. The Yanukovich regime simply collapsed and for several crucial days, there was no effective state power in Kyiv. Order was maintained by restraint and by non-state “self-defense” forces. The re-formation of state power was completely improvised and driven by power in the streets rather than by any agreed upon process. Whether these changes look revolutionary in retrospect remains to be seen.

Beyond the conceptual lack of clarity as to what was a revolution and what was not, explaining these protests, and characterizing them, has proven challenging. In discussing 2004, there remains disagreement over the basic driving force behind the protests. The dominant view focuses on transnational diffusion of protests and on the role of the protesters in the streets (Beissinger 2007; Bunce & Wolchik 2010; Hale 2005; Kuzio 2006; McFaul 2005; Tucker 2008). A minority focuses on elite competition, and sees the protesters in the streets and the transnational actors as having been mobilized largely by counter-elites (D’Anieri 2007; Way 2008). In many respects, this debate reflects the broader debate in the social movement literature about the relative importance of mobilization capacity and political opportunity structure in explaining variation in the incidence of contentious politics.

The contrasts between the 2004 and 2014 “revolutions” await a full scholarly study, but on the surface, they look quite different. Among the lessons of the 2004 events was the importance of elections as a “focal point” facilitating mobilization (Tucker 2008). So while many analysts were looking forward to the potential for protest surrounding the 2015 presidential elections, a more minor event—Yanukovich’s decision to spurn an EU association agreement—spurred the protest. It would have been hard to predict the initial outbreak of protest, since it would have been hard to predict that Yanukovich would go so far down the aisle with the EU before running from the altar. It would have been harder to predict, at the outset, that Yanukovich and the security forces would bother assaulting the tiny protest, or that their assault would have such a mobilizing effect on Ukrainian citizens, or that snipers would open fire on protesters, and so on until the February 2014 revolution. Path dependence, which seems to characterize this case, makes prediction extremely difficult (Jervis 1991-1992, p. 42-3). Path dependence also hinders general explanation, for it seems that every one of these crucial decisions, had it been made differently, could have led to a different outcome. This leads to a proliferation of necessary conditions for revolution to occur. Political science cannot solve the autocrat’s dilemma—when to repress protest. Nor can it reliably tell opposition leaders when protest will succeed. Even in Russia, where the Putin administration has strived to learn and implement every possible lesson about avoiding protest and revolution, Vladimir Putin was unable to prevent massive protests after the sham election that returned him to the presidency in 2012.

Immense effort will no doubt be expended documenting, describing, and explaining the revolutionary events of 2013-14 in Ukraine, but protest will also likely be a huge policy question looking forward as well. Two of the last three changes of presidency in Ukraine have been resolved in the streets. In this respect, protests appear to have as much legitimacy in Ukraine as elections. Building democracy

will not be easy in such circumstances, and reforming an economy may be even harder, as aggrieved individuals have well-tested means of challenging the state, and the state has neither the means nor the legitimacy to repress protesters. More ominously, protests and the ejection of leaders by protests do not necessarily contribute to liberal democracy. All these phenomena, and the capacity of the Ukrainian state in particular, are subjects that merit deeper analysis than they have received. Both in the study of Africa and in the study of the post-communist states, state strength and state-society relations have been central issues (Beissinger & Young 2002), but this topic has been relatively neglected in the case of Ukraine.

Foreign Policy

International politics is often seen as a distinct discipline from the rest of political science, because it deals not with politics within sovereign states, but among them, and a long line of scholars has contended that these are two fundamentally different kinds of politics. Nonetheless, the study of international politics does, especially in North America, aspire to be a social science and to connect social science to policy goals. In this field, much less has been done in Ukrainian studies than in many of the topics considered by comparative politics. There have been relatively few studies of Ukrainian foreign policy that are explicitly social scientific. Some have applied theories from the broader study of international politics to Ukraine (D'Anieri 1999; Moroney, Kuzio & Molchanov 2002; Kravets 2011). Others have included Ukraine as a case in a comparative study and illuminated Ukraine in the process (Abdelal 2001). But much more of this research has been focused on particular policy problems and has examined them with little if any specific reference to broader patterns or theories of international politics. This is the field in which the North American study of Ukraine has been most “traditionalist” in its approach.

For Ukraine, foreign policy is an area—more so than many areas of domestic politics—in which the unique and hard-to-compare aspects of the country's situation appear to outweigh the easily compared aspects. The problem of denuclearization is a case in point. There are very few comparable cases, and except for Belarus and Kazakhstan, they occurred in vastly different circumstances. Nonetheless, we might hope for more. In particular, there exists the potential for comparative or large-n analysis within Ukrainian foreign policy. We now have four presidencies to compare, various institutional arrangements, and some issues that have been dealt with repeatedly over twenty years. These are ripe for comparative analysis. However, these areas tend not to be the ones that interest us most, and that is not likely to change the relationships with Russia and Europe will continue to dominate the agenda, and recent events imply a fundamental break that will make comparison with previous years difficult. Two ongoing issues point to the continuity in Ukrainian foreign policy over time, even as Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territory represents a fundamental discontinuity.

One is the economic and political relationship with Russia. Several early studies (Motyl 1993; Garnett 1996; D'Anieri 1999; a more contemporary study is Balmaceda 2013) pointed to the fundamental dilemma that Ukraine faces in its relationship

with Russia: how to square Ukraine's deep economic interdependence with Russia with its desire to be politically independent of Russia. That is a problem that states around the world face, but few face it as starkly as Ukraine. Even in 2014, as Russia seizes Ukrainian territory, Ukraine finds itself needing to preserve the flow of energy to Ukraine, and the availability of Russian markets for Ukrainian goods. A great deal of advice about how to reorient Ukraine's economy toward the west will no doubt be forthcoming, and cross-national comparison has much to contribute. The question is whether Ukraine has the state capacity to implement such policies, for these policies have been self-evident for two decades, with little progress to show.

A second issue is the relationship with Europe. As Abdelal (2001) has shown, post-communism turns conventional thinking about nationalism and foreign economic policy on its head. Conventional analysis holds that nationalism in economic policy is equivalent to the promotion of autonomy and rejection of integration and supranationalism. Abdelal showed that for some of the post-communist states, nationalism was expressed by integration with Europe. This phenomenon is particularly salient in Ukraine today, when the question of joining Europe drove a revolution and then an invasion. How will the cataclysmic events of 2013-present shape attitudes toward Europe, and will the desire to join Europe build support for badly needed reforms?

The Obstacles to Successful Political Science on Ukraine

In many respects, the substantive questions of 2014 mirror the questions we have been asking since 1991. Ukraine's inability to make progress has left it addressing the same problems over and over again (D'Anieri 2011). Few predicted the Orange Revolution, few predicted the February 2014 revolution, debate continues over institutional design, and no one has been able to chart a viable path to judicial reform, sustainable economic growth, or a workable foreign policy strategy. If the goals of social science as generally practiced in North America are to explain how politics works and to prescribe policies to achieve desirable goals, we might ask why we have not accomplished more.

In this section, I propose a simple answer to that question: the project of political science as conceived of in North America is a very difficult one, and there are numerous barriers to success. This has little to do with Ukraine in particular, although Ukraine does have some particular challenges. Skeptics of political science often point out ways in which the project seems futile. Not one, but two important articles entitled "Is a [the] Science of Comparative Politics Possible," with the philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre voicing extreme skepticism and the political scientist Adam Przeworski (2009) being positively inclined while demonstrating important limits.

Below, I highlight eight inherent barriers to successful explanation and prescription. None of these points are new; all have been made by other scholars in other contexts. I simply apply them to the study of Ukraine. Moreover, none of these barriers invalidate political science as a discipline or diminish its utility in informing

policy discussions. Indeed, political science is essential to the critical evaluation of competing policy proposals. Whether we admit it or not, policy prescriptions are always based on some understanding of causes and effects. Political science seeks to make those understandings explicit and to test them empirically. It is better at falsifying questionable theories than at definitively proving truths.

1. Problems of Comparison

MacIntyre points out that, due to cultural differences, the same concepts rarely mean the same thing in different countries. Therefore it is very difficult to actually compare the same things in different countries. “Democracy” is likely just such a term. Thus cross-national surveys asking respondents about democracy may inadvertently compare different ideas. MacIntyre claims that different formal institutions likely play different roles in different societies. This kind of critique is at the heart of “area studies” based critiques of applying cross-national findings to Ukraine.

The problem has been more salient in some areas than others. The finding in the comparative literature—that strong presidencies correlate poorly with sustained democracy—has fit well with Ukraine’s experience; the problems that arose in Ukraine are similar to those that emerged elsewhere. However, as noted above, the somewhat unique relationship between the Ukrainian and Russian languages have made it harder to apply cross-nationally derived findings on language policy. Similarly, research in Ukraine shows that institutions, intentionally or otherwise, often end up performing different roles than envisioned in cross-national analysis (Allina-Pisano 2008).

2. Isolating Variables

Przeworski (2009) points out that many factors in which we are interested tend to correlate with one another: wealth, democracy, rule of law, and civil liberties. This makes it very difficult to isolate these variables as one would do in a pure scientific model. The rarity of such “natural experiments” impedes the specification of clear relationships among many of the phenomena that concern us. This difficulty in disentangling correlated phenomena leads to a very prominent problem in crafting recommendations for reform: it is essential to sort out causes from effects, and to identify which steps are prior to others. This is a serious issue in Ukraine, where numerous “chicken and egg” issues exist. For example, combatting corruption depends on building a strong state, but the state cannot easily be strengthened when it is so corroded by corruption. Similarly, separating the closely related concepts of nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, and region has proven tricky.

3. Competing Priorities

In contrast to situations where important variables correlate with one another, there are situations in which important priorities seem to contradict one another. Two variables that seem, to some, to be in tension are state strength and democracy. In many western democracies, strong states were built under autocracy, and were later liberalized. Ukraine is trying to build a state and democracy at the same time. Some wonder if this is possible, but few are willing to choose one over the other,

especially since the argument that a strong state is required before democracy can be built (or before a market economy can be built) seems to justify autocracy. In Ukraine, a case in point was the adoption of the constitution in 1996, when many Ukrainians (and western observers) supported Kuchma's coercive adoption of a highly presidentialist constitution on the grounds that this concentration of authority was needed to overcome opposition to reform in the leftist-controlled parliament.

4. Values and Goals

Social science does not have anything to say about what values and goals policy *should* pursue. Thus many major questions for a newly independent state are not subject to political science, and some of the findings of political science are trumped by normative goals. In the case of Ukraine, this is evident in the sphere of ethnic politics and language policy. Predicting the effects of a particular language regime is an empirical question; choosing a language policy is primarily a normative question. Unfortunately, these two kinds of issues were sometimes conflated, and there has been some tendency to advocate the empirical argument that best supports one's normative position. Political science may be able to address the causal questions, but it cannot address the value questions. Similarly, there has been a great deal of mixing of normative preferences and analytical arguments in the area of economic reform and in the related area of relations with Europe and with Russia.

5. Scholarly Disagreement

The kinds of debates on which social scientists thrive undermine the ability of policy makers – from constitution writers to corruption fighters – to apply political science effectively. There remains considerable uncertainty about many of the causal relationships that concern us most. What causes democracy? What causes economic development? If democracy and development are correlated, what is the relationship—is one driving the other, or are both driven by some third variable? Scientific debate is not unique to political science—it occurs in physics as well—but because we are so eager to apply findings to policy, scientific disagreement is especially salient. Efforts to use political science to inform policy are hampered by the paucity of unambiguous answers to the most important questions.

6. The Problem of Agency

Another problem that hampers the application of political science to policy is that of agency. Even if we can clearly identify the causes of a particular phenomenon, if we cannot manipulate those causes, we cannot influence the outcomes. A good example is research on geography and democratization. It has been widely noted that, among the post-communist states, there is a correlation between geography and democracy, with those located further to the west, other things being equal, scoring higher on democracy measures (Kopstein & Reilly 2000). To the extent that geography, by itself, is having an effect, there is not much one can do. To the extent that geography is a surrogate for other factors, there may or may not be hope: if the key factor is a favorable reception from the European Union, than change is possible; if the key factor is historical connection to the Roman Empire,

then nothing can be done. A central underpinning of almost all North American research on Ukraine is the belief that Ukraine *can* become a liberal democracy in the foreseeable future.

7. Collective Action Problems

A great many of public policy issues are beset by collective action problems, in which cooperating makes sense only if one can be assured that others will behave the same way. For example, while it is fairly easy to state that citizens and officials should not engage in corruption, for the citizen hoping to get a permit to renovate an apartment, refusing to pay a bribe is irrational if no one else changes their behavior. Corruption is not, therefore, reduced and the citizen loses the opportunity. A related example is macro-level economic reform. It takes a determined and powerful actor to enact far-reaching reforms, but no actor may have sufficient power to do so. Gaining the assent of other power holders is necessary, but these politicians are all competing for power with one another, and have much incentive to avoid being perceived as responsible for unpopular decisions. What all these problems have in common is a suboptimal outcome that is a stable equilibrium. The implication is that for social scientists, identifying the “best” policy is not the hard part as this does not fully solve the problem. A large literature in political science has elaborated the conditions that make collective action problems easier or harder to solve, and has identified institutions that can facilitate reaching solutions. Yet, many collective action problems continue to resist solution. This problem connects to that of agency discussed above: the nature of collective action problems is that no single agent has the ability and incentive to solve the problem unilaterally.

8. Power and Interest versus Reform

The final and perhaps most significant problem is that which the realist international relations scholar Hans Morgenthau (1946) memorably characterized as *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. The application of political science to solve problems assumes the desire to solve achieves certain goals, such as the creation of democracy, the increase in economic growth, and the maintenance of international security. And while there is considerable debate over both of the normative goals, that debate is still grounded in goals that are assumed to be public and shared. Much of politics, however, is not about shared goals, but about private goals. If everyone is concerned with building democracy, we can focus on the question of how. But for many actors, and not only the most venal, private goals compete with public goals. Government decisions affect wealth and privilege. This gives people an incentive to try to control the government, and this desire spills over into a desire to design institutions that will favor their control over government. This of course is not unique to Ukraine, and furthermore, it is a problem that social science cannot solve.

Conclusion: Political Science in a World of Power Politics

While collective action problems are in principle solvable, zero-sum games cannot be solved cooperatively. They can be solved only through the exercise of

power. Nearly every governmental decision has distributive consequences, in terms of which people win office, which firms get contracts, which workers get benefits, or which industries find a more congenial playing field. In each case where there are winners and losers, we can expect rational, self-interested actors to pursue their interests. Who wins is determined by who has power, and thus power becomes an end in itself.

Viktor Yanukovych's presidency was emblematic of this phenomenon. Having captured the state, Yanukovych and his associates sought to put the state to work pursuing their private goals. They also revised Ukraine's constitution to make it harder for others to compete with them for power. Moreover, events to some extent validated their concern—when their power flagged, they were ejected from power and forced to flee the country. However, the problem of power is much more universal—one need not envision a Yanukovych or a Kuchma for the problem to be profound. Even Viktor Yushchenko, who was generally regarded as being somewhat oriented to the public good, found that in order to pursue the public good he had to have power. To increase his power, he needed diminish that of others, and when it came to power, his allies (i.e. Yuliya Tymoshenko) seemed a lot like adversaries. Tymoshenko—whose public-mindedness is debated—encountered the same dilemma; she needed to undermine Yushchenko to preserve her prerogatives. Thus, it is the case that the publicly-minded, almost as much as selfish people find themselves confronted with the need to acquire power.

The problem of power is important especially where it intersects with the problem of institutional design. The institutional design literature assumes that institutions channel power, and that the goal in designing institutions is to promote and protect democracy. In many countries, Ukraine included, the opposite of both these propositions is just as likely to be true. People designing institutions are often concerned with maximizing their own power, not necessarily building democracy. Or rather, in designing democracy, they seek to do so in ways that maximize their own likelihood for success in competitive politics. The problem is not unique to new democracies, as the example of drawing US congressional districts demonstrates. Precisely because institutions define who has power and what “counts” as power, those with power seek to enact institutions that preserve and extend, rather than limit, their power. Therefore, power shapes institutions as much as institutions shape power.

In this version of political science, the theoretical question is “what determines who wins in the contest for power,” and the policy question is “what means will help the side that I prefer triumph?” In this Machiavellian perspective, the “real” political scientists are not the academics, but rather the competitors for power and the political technologists and strategists they employ.

In the “consolidated democracies” it seems that the overall institutional framework—formal and informal—manages to channel efforts at private gain *within* the existing institutional framework, rather than at its expense. In Ukraine, the opposite is the case. Twice in fifteen years, autocrats have been able to subvert nascent democratic institutions, and street protests have been necessary and

sufficient to determine who would be president and to force revision of the constitution. This lack of institutionalization deprives politics of the regularized interactions on which positivist political science depends. Ukraine's relatively de-institutionalized power politics resembles international relations as much as the domestic politics of the advanced industrial states, where comparative politics has been most successful.

Does the role of power in Ukrainian politics mean that political science is irrelevant? Not at all. As a long line of work attests, the problem of power complicates the project of applying political science to public policy but does not reduce its importance. The literature on institutional design is a case in point. The challenge, as shown in the Federalist Papers, is not to design perfect institutions for a perfect society, but rather to design institutions which function well *despite* the problems of power and interest described above. The separation of powers among distinct parts of government is designed largely to make ambition counteract ambition, so that the result is acceptable, if not perfect. Applying political science to these problems is likely to be superior to applying untested hunches.

With Ukraine once again in a post-revolutionary situation, Ukrainian elites and citizens, backed by western elites and academics, profess the goal of building a European-style democracy in Ukraine. It is not enough to ask what has worked in the well-institutionalized free-market democracies to the west. It is also necessary to ask how to get to a position of deeply institutionalized democracy from the de-institutionalized power politics, which currently characterize Ukraine. This is a problem to which political scientists and politicians alike need to pay more attention.

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Notes

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¹ In this context "North America" is really shorthand for "Canada and the United States." Those two countries have produced far more scholarship on Ukraine than Mexico or any of the Caribbean countries.

² The multinational character of our discipline is in clear evidence every spring at the annual meeting of the Association for National Studies, and that conference's organizers deserve credit for ensuring that it is far more inclusive than most academic conferences in North America.

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