

UKRAINE'S SECOND FRONT: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL AND CIVIC LANDSCAPE FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

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A composite image depicting key themes from the assessment. Clockwise from the top LH corner: The Euromaidan protests; three activists, Oleksandr Solontay, Hanna Hopko and Sergii Leshchenko, who entered politics in the parliamentary elections, receiving NDI's annual Democracy Award from Secretary Madeleine Albright in December 2014; unpacking helmets paid for by voluntary contributions to the Anti-Terrorist Operation; 'People's Lustration'; a newsletter from Reanimation Reform Package and Opora's Parallel Vote Tabulation results for the 2014 parliamentary elections. Source: NDI Ukraine



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2014, NDI undertook a comprehensive assessment in light of a greatly changed political and civic landscape in Ukraine. Consisting of both desk studies and field research, the assessment was completed in mid-January 2015. NDI sought to identify the primary challenges and opportunities with regard to advancing Ukraine's democratization, as well as the roles that political parties and civic groups can best play in addressing these challenges.

1.1. Opportunities and Challenges

Deep societal and political transformations have taken place in Ukraine since the fall of 2013. The Euromaidan protests, leading to the Revolution of Dignity, were followed by early elections for a new president and parliament in 2014. Political and civic activists, energized by the magnitude of political change, pushed for major legislative reforms. Overhaul of the political system, however, has proved challenging, and many Ukrainians have been dissatisfied with the pace of reform and frustrated by the mounting economic crisis. Fear and frustration also abound about the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, Russia's interference in that region and the annexation of Crimea.

The changed political landscape in Ukraine presents new opportunities for democratic progress, with a marked increase in openness to new ideas among political parties and civic activists. Massive demand for new leaders has created openings to encourage new entrants into political life, including women, young people and reformers from civil society and the media. There is genuine recognition among a growing number of political party leaders of the benefits of more inclusive, transparent practices and real competition to fill the "integrity space" in Ukrainian politics. The assessors also noted near universal enthusiasm from parties for innovation and international expertise. There was an equally

widely shared sense of urgency and belief that Ukraine cannot afford to lose its third chance in 23 years to reform.

1.2. Roles of Parties and Civic Groups in Addressing Challenges and Opportunities

The assessors heard repeatedly that interest in participating in political life has jumped since the Revolution of Dignity. This is true throughout Ukraine, although to a lesser degree in the South and East. As channels for resurgent civic activism, effective parties and civic groups are more important than ever. Alternatives, such as disengagement from political life or resorting to non-democratic means of expression constitute existential threats to Ukraine in its current fragile state.

Unfortunately, both abstention from politics and politically motivated violence are real possibilities. Electoral turnout between the May and October 2014 elections fell by 7 percent. Within the regions that were strongholds of the former regime, turnout was considerably lower than in the rest of the country. The increase in political activism has also corresponded to a period of marked decline in respect for the rule of law and arming of the population, including many private militias. As impatience with the pace change has risen, some have threatened to turn their guns on the government in Kyiv if reform stalls.

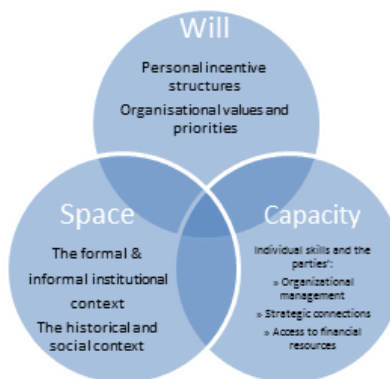
Strong political parties and civil society that effectively channel political expression are a key element in stabilizing Ukraine, enabling it to better resist external aggression and move forward with reform.

1.3. Conclusion

The stakes in Ukraine could not be higher. If its democratic transition succeeds it will be an example to the region and the world, a testament to the power of democratic ideas and the potential for transformative change. Failure would have equally significant and widespread ramifications.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

NDI's latest context analysis tool (www.ndi.org/files/NDI_ContextAnalysisTool_proof_f.pdf) provided a conceptual basis for the political party component of the assessment. The **Space, Will, Capacity** framework shown below describes the main factors that influence how political parties interpret and fulfill their representative role. These drivers can be grouped under three headings: political space, political will, and capacity. **Political space** describes the environment parties operate in and how they interact with it. **Political will** refers to the incentives that influence both political parties and the individual actors within them. Finally, **capacity** refers to the nuts and bolts of party organizing and activity. There may be significant overlap between the three. Party behavior sits at the intersection of these three sets of drivers. Both the findings and the recommendations for this component of the assessment refer to these three concepts. However, the political space component of the findings is included in the Findings Overview because this aspect is common to parties and civil society.



The Will, Space, Capacity framework from NDI's Context Analysis Tool for Political Party Development (October 2014)

The civil society components (civil society and data-driven citizen engagement) of the assessment were organized around the related, but different, **voice, space and accountability** framework developed by NDI and shown below. For the purpose of NDI's theory of change, participation is a reflection of citizens' **voice** in political life. It can take a variety of forms, such as awareness raising, voting, and advocacy, community organizing, or monitoring government institutions. **Space** refers to the avenues and opportunities (e.g., voting, meeting with an elected leader, writing a blog, joining a union, attending a city council meeting, etc.) that exist for citizens to access information, express their preferences, and engage government. **Accountability** denotes the fundamental principle of democracy whereby citizens have the right to demand accountability and public sector actors have an obligation to be accountable. The assessors considered the opportunities for more citizens' voices to be heard, for further space to be opened and for accountability to be established and solidified. The Space component of the findings is included in the Findings Overview because these were common to both civic groups and political parties.



The Voice, Space, Accountability framework from NDI's Political-Process Monitoring (June 2012)

3. BACKGROUND

1.1. Events Leading Up to the 2014 Parliamentary Elections

The events that have taken place since November 2013 constitute the most tumultuous period in Ukraine's history since independence was achieved in 1991. The refusal of then President Viktor Yanukovich to enter into an Association Agreement with the European Union sparked mass protests in Kyiv. Violent suppression of those protests triggered a broad-based popular reaction across the country from which the Euromaidan movement developed. New leaders, civic groups and political parties emerged and many citizens became active for the first time. On January 16th 2014, a package of bills to crack down on the protests was passed in parliament. These criminalized peaceful protest and became known as the 'dictatorship laws'. In February, more than 100 protesters were killed, primarily by riot police, making the protection of human rights an additional reason for people to take to the streets. In February, President Yanukovich fled and the government collapsed. In May, Petro Poroshenko emerged the clear winner in early presidential election considered democratic by credible non-partisan domestic and international observers, including NDI.

Prior to the election, the parliament made several improvements to the legal framework for the presidential election. For example, some provision was made for voters in Crimea, which was occupied by Russia, to vote elsewhere in Ukraine. Very high levels of turnout were seen in many parts of central and western Ukraine. A clear majority of the electorate wanted to rally around a candidate who promised to deliver an end to the conflict and reforms. Yulia Tymoshenko, the leader of Ukraine's oldest political party, Batkivshchyna, came a distant second while Oleh Liashko, the Radical Party's leader and sole member of parliament, emerged as a more serious contender than expected in third place.

Throughout Euromaidan and the electoral period, Russia openly resisted any moves towards Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration and covertly supported 'separatist' elements in Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, and South Eastern Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea was announced on 19th March 2014. Since then, armed conflict has been ongoing in parts of Eastern Ukraine. Local separatists armed and trained by Russia, mercenaries from other parts of the former Soviet Union and regular Russian forces have been confronted by a combination of Ukrainian regular forces, members of the Ukrainian National Guard and volunteer battalions, several of which are linked to oligarchs and political actors in Ukraine.

The war seriously disrupted life in the country. Although no reliable figure is available, it is estimated that more than one million people may have left the areas affected by the conflict. A special law was adopted on November 19th 2014 to address the needs of internally displaced persons or IDPs. Officially registered IDPs are now living in every oblast in the country, with the highest concentrations in Kharkiv and Kyiv. As of December 26th 2014, it is estimated that 610,400 people displaced by the conflict are in Ukraine¹, 245,500 are seeking asylum in Russia and 2,200 in Poland. A further 342,000 are seeking other forms of stay in neighboring countries. The economy has been seriously disrupted. Prices are rising rapidly and the currency has depreciated sharply against the US dollar. The energy situation has worsened with coal supplies from the Donbas no longer available, ongoing problems with gas supplies from Russia and the loss of solar energy plants in Crimea.

On September 5th a ceasefire was declared as part of an agreement reached in Minsk between Ukraine, representatives of the separatist movements in Donetsk and Luhansk and the OSCE. Many breaches of the ceasefire have been reported and both the US and EU announced that conditions are not yet right for relaxation of the sanctions which have been imposed on Russia in several waves since the crisis began. As part of the Minsk agreement, early local elections were due to take place in early December

¹ Source: Interfax-Ukraine 20.12.14. OHCHR estimates.

in the areas which are not under the control of the authorities in Kyiv. ‘Special Status’ and ‘Amnesty’ laws, which granted a high degree of autonomy to the parts of Eastern Ukraine under the control of the separatists, and provided for the holding of early elections in those areas, were passed in a closed session of the Ukrainian parliament on September 16th. The ‘Special Status’ Laws were suspended after separatist leaders in Donetsk and Luhansk held early local elections outside the framework of Ukrainian law.

Frustration with the pace of reform, ongoing corruption and the increasingly difficult socio-economic situation fed calls on social media for the lustration of government officials, by force if necessary. In September demonstrators outside the parliament building manhandled a Party of Development MP into a public garbage bin. More than 80 copycat incidents, involving other allies of the former regime, were reported in many other parts of the country and became known as a ‘People’s Lustration’ campaign. Some frustrated activists have also suggested that peaceful protest be abandoned in favor of an armed putsch. Several calls were made in the lead up to the October 26th parliamentary elections for volunteer battalions to return to Kyiv with their weapons if the new parliament and government fail to deliver radical reform.

1.2. The 2014 Parliamentary Elections²

A break with the past

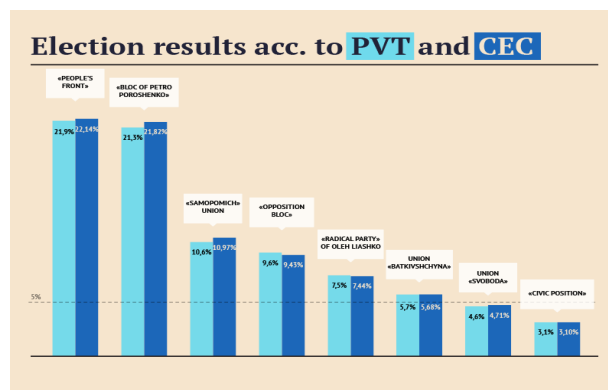
In spite of the formidable challenges presented by this sequence of events, the May 2014 presidential election and the October 2014 parliamentary elections were hailed by NDI and others as democratic breakthroughs for the country. Early parliamentary elections were held in response to strong public pressure to replace the parliament, a majority of whose members had supported the former regime, and in fulfillment of a promise made by President Poroshenko during his election campaign. The parliamentary election campaign had several salient features. Like the presidential election, it represented a break with the past. In particular, there is very little evidence that the incumbent president abused his position as Head of State. Several civil society groups which monitored the election told NDI that the abuse of administrative resources at the national level was markedly reduced compared to previous elections. Although President Poroshenko’s eve-of-poll address on national television was criticized in some election reports as breaching the rules on campaign silence, this was less important than the praise he received for resisting the temptation to abuse his position for electoral advantage. The illustration from a Crimson Hexagon search shown below demonstrates that in a wide range of feeds posted during the campaign from Twitter, Facebook and blogs, in both Ukrainian and Russian, the President’s name was most often associated with the ongoing conflict, and individuals and places connected with it, rather than issues relevant to the election.

² NDI’s full statement on the presidential election 2014 can be found here:

https://www.ndi.org/files/UKR_PresidentialElection2014_IOM_Statement_2014_05_26_FINAL-1.pdf

NDI’s full statement on the parliamentary elections 2014 can be found here:

https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI%20Ukraine%20Parliamentary%20Election%20Stmnt%2010.27.14_0.pdf



Source: Opora

All the main pollsters delivered quite similar mid-campaign results showing the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko (BPP) with a clear lead over all its competitors, fuelling speculation as to whether that party would be able to form a majority in the parliament without entering into a coalition with other parties.

Although it is possible that some of the methodological challenges observed during the research component of this assessment contributed to gaps between the polls and the eventual outcome of the elections, it is clear that BPP, which included candidates from the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) led by Vitali Klitschko, the Radical Party and Batkivshchyna, performed less well than expected and that People's Front, Opposition Bloc and Samopomich performed better than expected. Both Strong Ukraine and Civic Position (which included candidates from Democratic Alliance) appeared to lose ground to competitors (Opposition Bloc and Samopomich, respectively) and failed to make it over the threshold.

Party and coalition formation

The formation of many new parties shortly before the elections complicated the situation for pollsters and voters alike. Even in less challenging contexts, it takes time for new parties to establish clear identities in the minds of voters. For much of the campaign, between one quarter and one third of the voters described themselves as undecided and this figure remained stubbornly high right up to election day. Many voters were not sure which choice would most accurately reflect their aspirations.

Supporters of the Party of Regions experienced the loss of a president and government which had been led by their party, and the collapse of the party itself, as well as, along with other Ukrainians, the annexation of Crimea and ongoing conflict in the East. Even those that had not been physically displaced by the conflict were politically disoriented. They were faced with a choice between voting for one of the new options which emerged shortly before the elections, principally the Opposition Bloc and Strong Ukraine, or abstention. This was one of the factors that produced low turnout across much of the East and South of the country.

For opponents of the Yanukovich regime, a bewildering array of new parties emerged, first from the Euromaidan movement and later in the aftermath of the presidential elections. As had happened in the past, parties still tended to form around the personality of their leaders. In the absence of campaign and party finance reform, political parties in general were still perceived as the creatures of oligarchs. It was difficult for voters to make policy-based choices between the reform-minded parties because their prescriptions for change were very similar. Nevertheless, there appeared to be some movement in public opinion during the campaign away from more populist platforms towards parties with not only credible leaders but also strong reform credentials.

The proliferation of parties and the absence of effective coalition formation before the elections prevented a single strong reform option from emerging. While some reform-minded parties succeeded, others failed to make it over the threshold. The latter could have had a better chance of success if the electoral system had been reformed in ways that made their entry to the parliament easier, such as abolishing single mandate districts, lowering the threshold and allowing the formation of electoral blocs. There was strong pressure from civil society to introduce an open list proportional system and make other changes to the legal framework, such as campaign finance reform, for these elections. Although several attempts were made, they all failed.

Competition for the ‘integrity’ space, party finance and changes in party behavior

Competition was especially intense for what might be described as the ‘integrity space’ in Ukrainian politics. The Centre for Political and Social Analysis (CPSA) contributed to this feature of the campaign by raising awareness of the parliamentary track record of political parties and incumbents standing for re-election. The Revolution of Dignity was driven by rejection of the former regime in general and of corruption in particular. This included rejection of the longstanding and opaque dependency of political parties on the funding and media access provided to them by oligarchs. NDI’s parliamentary election delegation heard from many sources, including parties, NGOs, government officials and election administrators, that ‘the lack of transparency and regulation of campaign and party financing fuels corruption, inhibits the emergence of new parties, encourages the underrepresentation of women and other groups, penalizes qualified but underfunded or new candidates, distorts electoral and political outcomes and divorces parties and elected officials from the citizens they are meant to represent’³.

In the absence of campaign finance reform, the NGO Chesno (“Honesty”) provided a means by which parties and candidates could voluntarily disclose information about their campaign revenue and expenditure. By election day, six parties (Poroshenko Bloc, People’s Front, Batkivshchyna, Civic Position, Samopomich and People’s Force) had posted asset declarations for their candidates on the Chesno web site. Three of those parties, Civic Position, Samopomich and People’s Force voluntarily provided a list of their donors on their own party websites. People’s Force provided not only the total amount and the list of donors but also the amount per donor. The same three parties voluntarily posted the total amount they had spent on their campaigns. People’s Force and Civic Position also included the amounts spent per vendor and type of activity. The inclusion of campaign finance reform in the coalition agreement signed by members of the new parliamentary majority provides hope that law and regulation will replace the current voluntary disclosures by parties. It will be important to ensure that, whatever measures are enacted, sufficient effort is invested in implementation and enforcement of this legislation.

Some reform-minded parties concluded even before the election that, in addition to voluntary disclosure of information about their campaign funds, other changes in party behavior were needed. Some of these parties told NDI’s election day delegation that they were explicitly running their campaigns in new ways, including focusing on direct voter contact rather than relying on the media; advancing policy proposals, rather than counting on the image of their leaders; and soliciting more input from local party structures in their decision-making.

Several of the parties that emerged from the Euromaidan movement have put in place party structures or set other precedents which diverge markedly from traditional Ukrainian forms. For all reform-minded parties, finding ways to finance their activities and achieve sufficient access to the mainstream media, without becoming beholden to small numbers of large donors, is a major challenge.

³ NDI’s 2014 parliamentary election delegation statement (ibid.)

For this reason, the introduction of public funding for political parties has featured prominently in discussions about political reform.

The emergence of parties that recognize that their internal decision-making processes constitute both an important aspect of their political mission and a possible source of electoral advantage may represent a turning point in the development of Ukraine's political parties. It is too soon to make any predictions about parties that are still in the process of formation, but it is possible that one or more of them could set examples that eventually change the behavior of their less progressive competitors.

'New Faces'

Reform-minded parties understood that the electoral choices of many voters would be based on the extent to which parties demonstrated their reform credentials. One means by which parties sought to do this was by selecting 'new faces' as candidates, whether from civil society and the media or from the military and volunteer battalions. It is not possible to measure the effect of the parties' candidate selection decisions on the election outcome with any degree of accuracy, but it is likely that these were major factors in determining the outcome of the elections.

As a result of selection decisions made by the parties, and personal decisions made by the activists themselves, a group of prominent 'new faces' from civil society and the media emerged during the campaign who were seeking to transition from protest to politics. Some chose to stand as candidates of new parties that had slim chances of success under the current election law. Some ran on the lists of major parties. Others decided to stand as independent candidates in majoritarian seats. Although estimates vary, even amongst those interviewed for this assessment, it is reasonable to state that at least 29 members of the new parliament are new entrants to politics with this type of track record. Rather than forming the core of a new party or bloc, these new MPs are dispersed across all the major factions in the ruling coalition as shown in the table below.

Political Party/Faction	Number of 'New Faces'*	Men	Women
Bloc of Petro Poroshenko	8	5	3
People's Front	4	2	2
Samopomich	11	3	8
Batkivshchyna	4	3	1
Radical Party	2	1	1
Total	29	14	15

**'New Faces' are defined here as civic and media activists who entered politics for the first time in the 2014 parliamentary elections. Candidates elected with backgrounds in the military and volunteer battalions are not included. Source: NDI Ukraine*

Cross-party, issue-based cooperation may assist these MPs to achieve their shared political objectives. Early moves to co-operate across parties among this group of candidates were seen during the election campaigns when there was a push for agreements to be reached on which reform-minded candidate should be chosen to contest single mandate districts where prominent supporters of the former regime were standing. Following the elections, there were discussions about whether or not they should form an official inter-party group, or reform caucus, in the parliament.

Other candidates of the 'new faces' type were not successful at the elections but are fully engaged in political life through their parties and are now focused on the campaign for the 2015 local elections. The local elections will provide an opportunity for those political parties that did not make it to the parliament in 2014 and for a much larger number of new reform-minded leaders to gain elected office.

Negative stereotypes and voter choices

Stereotypical images of women as homemakers and of men as decision-makers are deeply embedded in Ukrainian society. However, in focus groups in Lviv and Vinnitsya in November 2014 NDI successfully tested the hypothesis that, in a male-dominated political system, women aspirants could benefit from the strong desire for new leaders that is sweeping Ukraine. In all these focus groups, which were part of a program funded by Sida, candidates that were perceived as old-style politicians, whether male or female, were universally rejected. They were seen as entering politics in order to serve their own interests, rather than those of their constituents. ‘Young professionals’, both male and female, scored the best in terms of national office. Young ‘civic activists’, both male and female, were considered better-suited for local office, at least in the first instance. The key point made by the participants about them was that candidates for national office should represent a new approach to politics but they should have some relevant experience as well as integrity.

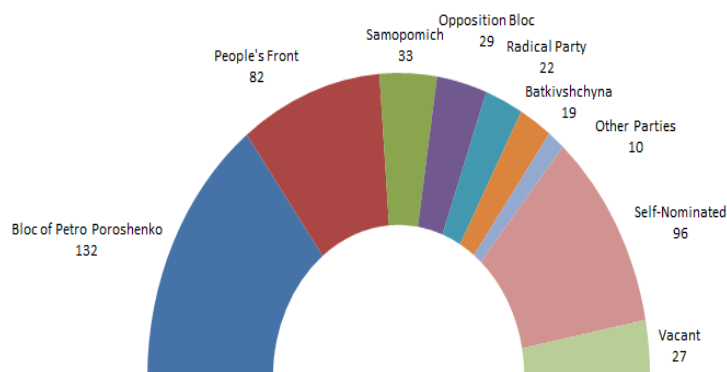
It is possible to suggest that these were the first elections in Ukraine where the selection of prominent women candidates on party lists provided political parties with a competitive advantage. If this realization takes root within the parties themselves, further progress for women’s political participation can be expected in future elections.

1.3. Outcome of the 2014 Parliamentary Elections

The effect of retention of the mixed electoral system

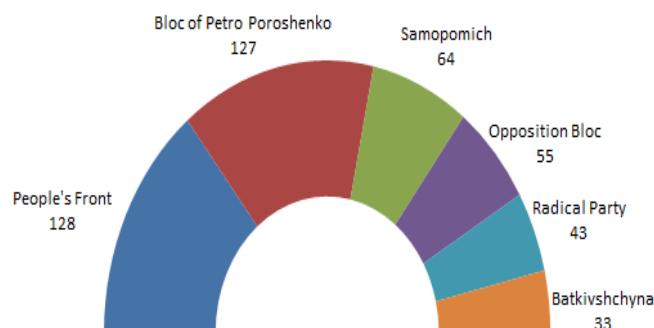
Lack of reform of the electoral system was another key feature of the parliamentary elections and it had a dramatic effect on the composition of the new parliament. The two graphics below compare the balance of the parliament as it is with the way it would have been if single mandate seats had been abolished and only the results of the national list contest counted.

The Parliament Elected in October 2014 (Actual Results)



*Parties in parliament: 11, Parties needed to form a majority: 3. Vacant seats: 27 (6%), Percentage of women MPs: 11%
Percentage of self-nominated MPs: 23%*

The Parliament Based on National List Results (2014) Only



Parties in parliament: 6, Parties needed to form a majority: 2, Vacant seats: 0 (0%), Percentage of women MPs: 20%

Percentage of self-nominated MPs: 0%

Source: NDI Ukraine

Improved prospects for women's political participation

One of the most notable differences between the two graphics concerns the representation of women. There was a small improvement overall in the position of women in the parliament but a much bigger leap forward was made by the women standing on party lists, largely as a result of the introduction of a gender quota in 2013 and decisions made by some parties to place more women in winnable positions. Unfortunately, much of this gain was negated by the poor performance of women in single mandate districts.

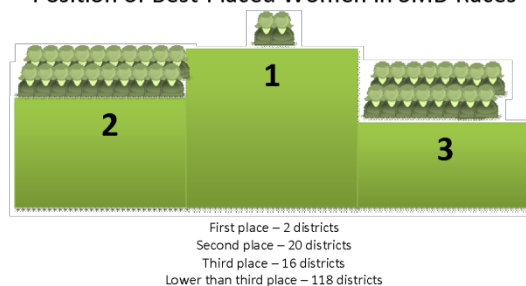
Parliamentary elections	Number of women elected from party lists	% Women members elected from party lists	Number of women elected in SMDs	% Women members elected in SMDs	Number of women elected overall	Women elected overall (%)
2012	29/225	12.8%	16/220	7.2%	45/445	10.1%*
2014	46/225	20.4%	2/198	1%	48/423	11.3%

**This fell to 9.4 percent soon after the elections*

Source: NDI Ukraine

These were the first elections in Ukraine for which gender quotas were applied. Since the current legislation does not require women to be placed in winnable positions on the lists, and there are no sanctions for parties that fail to nominate 30 percent of women, the increased number of women on party lists can be seen as a success, even though there is a long way to go before gender balance is achieved. In addition, 20 women came second in single mandate races (see graphic below). It is expected that many of these (including one interviewed during the assessment) will focus on the 2015 local elections and subsequent parliamentary elections, rather than giving up after missing out this time.

Position of Best-Placed Women in SMD Races



Two women were within less than 1 percent of winning candidate

Source: NDI Ukraine

For women aspirants, a move to regional open lists, as provided for in the coalition agreement, would remove one major obstacle to gender balance (single member districts) but create another challenge (the ability of voters to alter the order of the lists). Successful implementation of quotas in an open list system may be extremely difficult. Although young women with a professional image and strong reform credentials may be better placed to secure popular support in the current context, ongoing biases in the media, and other obstacles to women's political participation, are likely to make it difficult for women to compete successfully in an open list system.

The number of appointments of men and women to positions in parliament, government and the presidential administration is shown below. Overall, the outcome represents an improvement on the situation prior to the elections. However, women have performed much better in parliamentary appointments than in the other two categories.

BREAKDOWN OF APPOINTMENTS BY GENDER: PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION			
		W	M
Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine:			
	Chairperson of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine	0	1
	First Deputy Chairperson	0	1
	Deputy Chairperson	1	0
Factions and Groups of VIII convocation:			
	Head of the Faction/Group	1	7
	First Deputy Chairman of the Factions	0	2
	Deputy Chairmen of the Faction	1	21
Committees of the Verkhovna Rada of VIII convocation:			
	Head of the Committee	6	21
	First Deputy Chairman of the Committee	5	22
	Deputy Chairmen of the Committee	6	57
	Secretary of the Committee	8	18
Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine:			
	Prime Minister of Ukraine	0	1
	Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine	0	3
	Minister	2	14
Presidential Administration of Ukraine:			
	Presidential Administration of Ukraine (all senior positions)	2	40

Source: NDI Ukraine

Fragile coalitions

Although the absence of electoral reform affected the composition of the parliament, and of coalitions, it did not prevent the emergence of a reform-minded majority. However, this majority may not be as stable as the figures suggest. Even before the negotiations to form the new government were concluded, there was clear evidence of friction within, as well as between, the coalition parties, several of which were coalitions of parties or quasi electoral blocs formed for the purpose of these elections or, in the case of People's Front, a new party led by defectors from an established party, Batkivshchyna. Selection of candidates, now Members, with widely differing backgrounds and track records by all the main coalition partners will inevitably complicate decision-making within and between the factions. Many of NDI's interlocutors during the assessment described the new parliament as 'fragile' or 'transitional' and predicted that it would not serve its full term. In some cases, they described the current situation as analogous to the period after the Orange Revolution when rivalries between reform-minded leaders harmed the prospects for reform.

Rather than being able to form a workable majority on its own, as might have been expected given the result of several polls taken during the campaign, the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko had to look for coalition partners. The new coalition contains five parties (BPP, People's Front, Samopomich, the Radical Party and Batkivshchyna). In stark contrast to the initial proposals from BPP, which would have given the President's party a dominant position, the coalition agreement in its final form requires unanimous decision-making for all major decisions affecting the coalition, thus giving each faction a veto. In theory, provisions of this type complicate and slow down decision-making, but they also promote stability by preventing any party from assuming the type of dominant position that causes resentment among coalition partners.

The potential fragility of the various alliances and coalitions that were formed before and after the elections suggests that the menu of parties offered to the electorate may continue to change radically, as has been the case in previous election cycles. Tensions within alliances and coalitions in the post-election period are a common trigger for the fracturing of electoral blocs and of individual parties. This sets off other problems. If political parties rarely contest more than one election, the ability of the electorate to hold parties and their leaders effectively to account is severely constrained and cynicism about the democratic process can grow.

There is already evidence that this has occurred in Ukraine as a result of the high turnover of parties since independence. A slowing down in the turnover of parties would require several fundamental changes, including the introduction of more effective methods of internal conflict resolution, coalition or alliance formation that produce more stable outcomes, higher levels of internal party democracy and the emergence of party identities that are more ideological or policy-driven.

Caucuses

As a continuation of work conducted in the previous parliament, a new Equal Opportunities Caucus was formed shortly after the October 2014 elections. It includes 45 MPs, both women and men, from both majority and minority parties. The priorities for the Caucus for the post-election period are still under discussion but they will likely include: amending the election framework and introduction of new gender quota legislation; supporting the role of women in peace-making and conflict resolution; elaboration of legislation ensuring women's rights in social protection and helping women IDPs.

In addition to the Equal Opportunities Caucus, 16 other groups have been registered including an Anti-corruption Caucus, which includes members from all the coalition factions, and a 'Euromaidan Self-Defense' group, which includes members who were prominent in the protests and those with a military background. The agenda of the latter group includes the fight against corruption and the pursuit

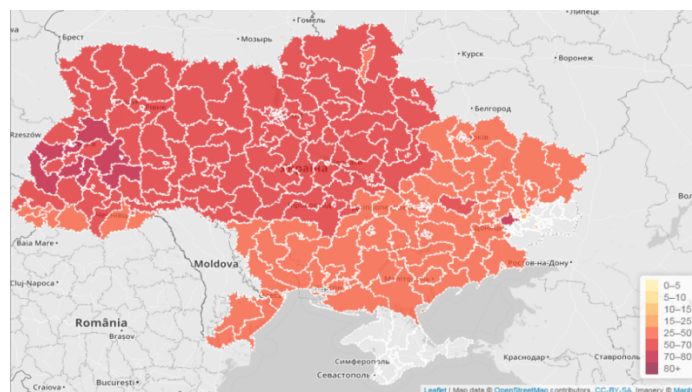
of EU integration. Another, separate group also seeks closer ties with the EU and there is also a group concerned with Ukraine's digital future. Most of the other groups seek to represent the interests of particular regions.

The EuroOptimists Caucus, which consists of new entrants to politics from civil society and the media, was created after the completion of this assessment on February 3, 2015.

A new Reform Caucus may also emerge. Mustafa Nayem, Serhiy Leshchenko, Svitlana Zalischuk, and at least 20 other MPs are currently engaged in talks about this. Some of these members already collaborate informally. For example, in December 2014 they issued a joint statement calling on the parliament to discuss the state budget fully.⁴

Turnout

Turnout in the October elections was 52.42 percent, a drop of 7 percent since the May 2014 presidential election. Within the regions that were strongholds of the former regime, turnout was considerably lower, as shown in the map below. Even though the level of turnout was sufficient to legitimize the outcome of the elections, and comparable with previous elections, the presence of high proportions of abstainers in several regions is a key concern when the reform process is still at an early stage and subsequent measures, combined with the ongoing economic crisis, are likely to create more losers than winners for several years ahead.



Source: Opora

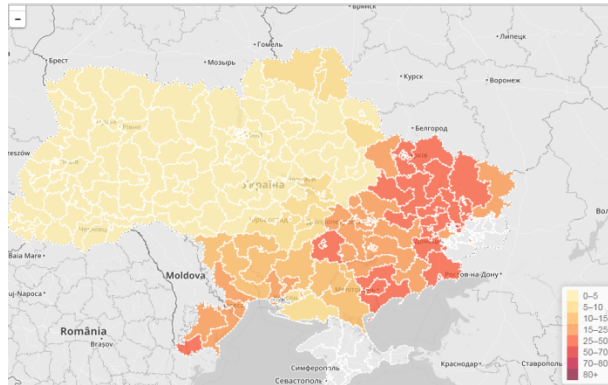
The challenge of national cohesion

Although the elections resulted in a parliament which is much better placed to enact reforms than its predecessor, uniting the country behind the reform process will remain a considerable challenge. One indicator of the differing views towards the political landscape after Euromaidan is the striking divergence in attitudes towards the fairness of the campaign period. Uniquely among the major parties, Opposition Bloc and Strong Ukraine complained to NDI's election delegation and others that they did not have an equal opportunity to campaign compared with other parties. The perception of unfairness, as expressed to international monitors points to a continuing issue in national cohesion and legitimacy of the new parliament across all regions. The geographical concentration of support for the Opposition Bloc, shown in the map below, makes clear that national cohesion is at play in the relationship between the ruling majority and the opposition. The coalition agreement includes constructive provisions to ensure that the rights of the opposition are fully protected in parliament, including allocation of committee positions and time for opposition-led debates. It is important that these provisions are observed. However, other measures, such as systematic public consultation by the government and

⁴ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/12/19/7052670/>

outreach by political parties should be taken to ensure that the voices of those who did not participate in the elections and of those who voted, but did not support any of the parties in the current governing coalition, are heard during the reform process. There are important roles for government, parliament, political parties and civil society groups to play in that process.

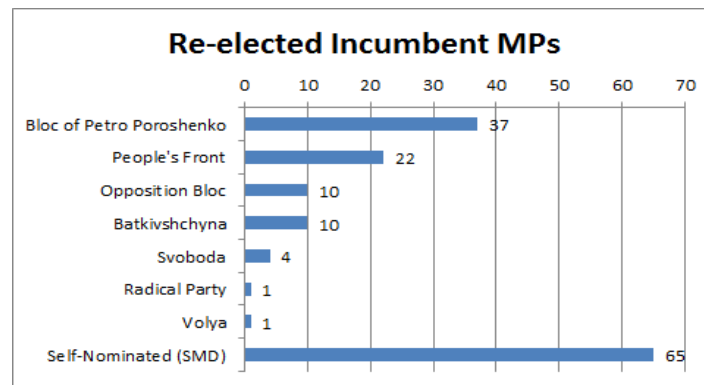
Distribution of votes for Opposition Bloc in the Party List contest (October 2014)



Source: Opora

The re-election of incumbents

Overwhelmingly, the interlocutors interviewed for this assessment believed that far fewer incumbents would have been re-elected if the single mandate districts had been abolished.



Source: NDI Ukraine

Some of NDI's interlocutors, during the parliamentary election day mission and this assessment, believed that the prospect of lustration provided an additional incentive for candidates associated with the former regime to seek re-election, whether in single mandate districts or on party lists. Members of the new parliament automatically enjoy parliamentary immunity, which currently protects them from prosecution even in criminal cases. None of the sanctions included in the law on lustration, which was enacted shortly before the elections, apply to them either, leaving voters to make their own judgments on the track record of their elected officials. The inclusion of reform of parliamentary immunity in the coalition agreement may ensure that this incentive is less powerful in future elections. Further research would be needed to assess the extent to which the votes cast for re-elected incumbents were based on approval of their records in office, rather than other factors.

4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. Overview of the Assessment Findings

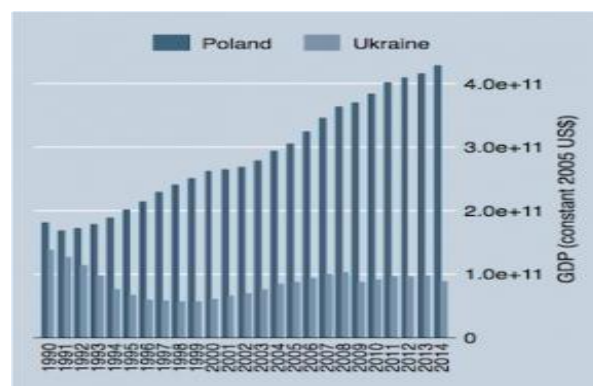
This section summarizes the views received during the assessment that are relevant to both political parties and civil society. Findings specific to political party and civil society development are found in subsequent sections of the report.

Divergent views about the prospects for reform

One notable finding was the very wide divergence of attitudes expressed about the prospects for reform. This was particularly noticeable among civic leaders, whose views ranged from extreme pessimism to cautious optimism. Differences of opinion were also notable amongst political party actors but, among most of the reform-minded parties, these were less extreme.

Determination to succeed and sense of urgency

It was common in interviews with all types of respondents to hear strong expressions of determination that Ukraine's second attempt at transition in a decade must succeed and that time is short. There was very widespread demand for urgent large-scale assistance to support a change in the country's leadership at all levels. This view reflects the motivation of much greater numbers of citizens without a track record of activism to become engaged with either civil society groups or political parties and a very strong sense of disenchantment with those who are blamed for leading the country into its current crisis. Rampant, ongoing, corruption has played an important part in motivating citizens to demand change but the sense conveyed in many interviews was that this was an unmissable opportunity for the country to make a decisive break with the past. It is not just integrity in public life which is being sought, important though that is. There is a push for justice, inclusive decision-making, public consultation and adherence to what are often referred to as 'European values'. Part of the motivation for this can be seen in the graph below which compares the progress of the Polish economy 1990-2014 with the Ukrainian economy over the same period. This conveys very well the background to the sense of lost opportunity, and the urge to catch up, which are such strong motivators in Ukraine today.



Source: *The Economist*, 5th December 2014.

Constitutional reform and decentralization

The prospect of decentralization provides an exciting opportunity to re-invigorate efforts to engage citizens more directly in the political process. Decentralization enjoys very broad support among political and civic actors interviewed for the assessment. Hitherto, the absence of significant decision-making power at the local level has been one of the most serious barriers preventing citizens from believing that they can influence decisions that affect them. However, the assessors also heard frequent concerns about the lack of timely, inclusive public discussion about decentralization and

constitutional reform more generally. The assessors also heard from several quarters that, if constitutional reform is approached in a piecemeal fashion, it is less likely to be sufficiently comprehensive and founded on a broad-based political consensus. This would increase the likelihood of ongoing political and legal uncertainty.

Several key political and civic interlocutors expressed the hope that the local elections in 2015 will take place after decentralization and reform of the law on local elections, rather than before. Although there have been some proposals to bring those elections forward to the spring of 2015, many hope that they will be held in October, as scheduled, to allow time for constitutional and electoral reforms.

The prospect of electoral reform for future parliamentary and local elections, increasing the role of party lists and greatly reducing (in the case of local elections) or eliminating (in the case of parliamentary elections) the role of single member districts, will present fresh challenges to the process of building closer connections between elected representatives and their voters between elections. The loss of single mandate constituencies at most levels of the electoral system and the introduction of more party lists, popular though these measures are among civic and political actors interviewed during the assessment, will change the context within which elected officials interact with their constituents between elections. The choice that is made between national and regional open lists will have important implications for political party organizing. A regional list system would present challenges as well as opportunities for new, smaller parties that lack infrastructure below the national level. The introduction of open lists will also affect the parties because the outcome of elections may depend less on the way voters perceive them and their leaders and more on how they view individual incumbents and other aspirants. This is likely to alter the balance of power between candidates and their parties.

National cohesion and political participation

Questions about national cohesion were raised by the assessors in all the meetings with political party and civic leaders but this issue was rarely referred to spontaneously by the interviewees and there was a lack of clarity about this concept in many cases. Several interlocutors described Ukraine as ‘united as never before’ and this is, of course, true for many citizens across much of the country who strongly support resistance to Russian aggression and the pursuit of a European future for the country. However, the fact that significant numbers of voters supported parties and candidates with different views about the future of the country was not uppermost in the minds of most interviewees. Even less evident was concern about the inclusion of those who did not vote at all. There were few spontaneous references to the need for government, political parties, parliamentarians and civil society to reach out those who either supported the opposition or decided not to participate in the elections.

The lack of focus on engaging the broadest possible range of citizens, which NDI’s assessors noticed in so many meetings with their interlocutors, has been a longstanding problem for political parties and civic groups in Ukraine. It could have particularly serious implications in the current context.

The challenge of achieving change peacefully

A further common sentiment expressed during interviews with both political and civic actors, concerned the risk that angry citizens might take matters into their own hands if they remain frustrated with the pace of reform. For some, this risk is seen as higher than in many comparable countries in the region that have successfully undergone reforms in the past two decades, because of the level of public frustration, the proliferation of small arms and the growth of militias as a result of the conflict. Many interlocutors during the assessment referred to public and private threats that if the new government and parliament fail to meet public demands for reform, fighters from the front will return to Kyiv and demand change at the point of a gun, possibly with the support of commanders from both the regular forces and volunteer battalions who are now MPs. Many Ukrainians, including all the participants of

the focus groups conducted by NDI in November 2014, referred to in the Background section of this report, approve of the election of active participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation and see this as an expression of public support for resistance to Russian aggression. Nevertheless, it is clear that there has been some blurring of the line drawn in Ukrainian law between the pursuit of democratic politics and the defense of the country.

2.2. Findings and Recommendations: Political Parties

Space

Space for party political organizing has dramatically opened up following the events of the past year. Most parties described freedom to organize, with the exception of two parties that that attracted most of their support in the former strongholds of the Party of Regions. Both Strong Ukraine and Opposition Bloc provided dossiers of complaints to international election delegations about their ability to campaign freely during the parliamentary elections. The assessors did also hear more widespread complaints about media access, particularly from the Radical Party, which adjusted its strategy and placed greater emphasis on social media as a result. Some civil society groups and political party representatives at the local level expressed concerns that the space within which they operate is subject to pressure from various directions. In Lviv, Svoboda raised a complaint about electoral fraud denying them a result which they were convinced would have taken them over the threshold. Although all party interviewees referred to electoral fraud at the local level in single mandate district races, Svoboda was one of the few parties that believed that electoral fraud had significantly affected the overall outcome of the party list contest.

Will

Whether the political will exists to complete Ukraine's second attempt at transition is a controversial question. Even though several major pieces of legislation have been adopted, many interviewees referred to insufficient progress having been made since the fall of the former regime. The re-election of so many incumbents to the new parliament is seen by many as evidence that further progress will not be achieved easily. A senior reform-minded party official in Kharkiv told the assessors that: 'The real creation of civil society, rather than groups formed under parties and grant-eaters, only started recently and social media played a huge role in enabling people to organize. At the same time, while these processes are ongoing, there is a risk that the outcome will be the same as it was with the Orange Revolution. Society has become disappointed. Surely there is a role for political parties to play in sustaining the transition?'

Almost all the parties met during the assessment expressed concern that the ongoing lack of political awareness in large sections of the population could be a threat to the maintenance of popular support for the transition and they referred to the need for more civic and voter education. One newly-elected woman MP told the assessors: 'Only the most active part of society has changed, not society as a whole'. Although civic and voter education are traditionally seen as roles for either government or civil society (or both), the parties themselves understand that they have an important role to play, particularly by demonstrating that more representative politics can take root. Among other things, this would require parties to remain in closer touch with citizens between elections, soliciting input on policy development and communicating with them about the reform process. If decentralization takes place and major changes are made to the electoral system, the election administration, civil society and political parties will all have a role to play in ensuring that voters understand these changes well enough to participate meaningfully. This is not just a matter of enabling voters to understand the electoral system. It will be equally important for them to understand the powers of the institutions to which they are electing officials and the different policies on offer from the political parties.

An appreciation of the need for internal party reform (for established parties) and for party-building (for newer parties) and real openness for assistance with these efforts was apparent across the board. This is one of the most important changes to arise as a result of the events of the past year. Not only has the space for political organizing opened up but the parties themselves are more focused on the need to build and reform their own systems. Some of the newer parties are already operating on the understanding that there is a relationship between their methods of internal organizing and their external positioning. This is driven by their own critique of the status quo and the knowledge that voters are increasingly forming judgments about the parties on the basis of their reform credentials. In many cases, parties were clearer about how they did not want to operate than they were about how they should operate. They do not want to be ‘projects’, creatures of powerful individuals often created just before elections. They want to be parties. However, they need assistance when it comes to putting in place organizing mechanisms that function well long term.

In some cases there was a lack of clarity about how parties can, or should, demonstrate reform-mindedness through the design of their own internal systems. In Kharkiv, for example, the representative of one party talked about providing access to all members to far more information about decisions taken by the leadership. However, no mention was made of the need to provide members with some rights in actually taking decisions. The local leader of another party in Kharkiv described the importance of the party’s reform image in the elections but went on to state that the party needed to be very selective about which members it recruited.

Overall, parties demonstrated an instinctive understanding of the need to take decisions more democratically, to focus more on policy development and to have more direct contact with voters. They were less clear about how best they could reach these goals.

Capacity

In the current environment the needs within each party vary markedly, depending on the level of the party and the specific region under consideration, but there are some general trends. Among parties’ top leaders there is a realization in most, though not all, cases, that traditional modes of operation consisting of short-term campaigning efforts at election time, based on polling results, rather than systematic interaction with party supporters, is not effective. In all cases, there is demand for cutting edge methods which help parties to achieve broader-based operations throughout the electoral cycle. These include mining election-related data, applying more sophisticated approaches to opinion research and exploring new methods of campaigning and assessing public opinion using social media. Within the national leaderships of the parties, there is an emerging understanding of the need to strengthen the lower levels of their organizations, including through branch development, internal party communications and, particularly, the development of new leaders. The middle tiers of the parties consulted were more focused on local elections, inter-party relationships, party positioning and attracting new leaders. There is a great need to develop the lowest tier of party structures across the board. Interest was expressed in the Training of Trainers (ToT) model of party development not only for the delivery of candidate training but also for branch development and grassroots organizing. Strong interest was also expressed in developing more robust links with civil society, locally as well as nationally. For newly-formed parties, the assessors heard requests for a ‘Party Start-up Handbook’ which would enable them to resolve questions about how they organize, take decisions and structure themselves.

2.3. Findings and Recommendations: Civil Society

Space

As with the political parties, civil society groups overwhelmingly reported that over the past year there was an opening up of space for them to function. In terms of access to the media and to senior officials in government, parliament and political parties, civil society leaders in Kyiv described a dramatic improvement of the situation. Civic groups have the freedom to develop proposals and advocate for them in the media and there is clear evidence that the behavior of national political leaders has been influenced by these efforts. The period between the May and October elections saw the passage of 17 major items of legislation that had been advocated by the Reanimation Reform Package (RRP), an umbrella group of many leading civic organizations. During the negotiations to form the new coalition government after the parliamentary elections, civil society actors were invited to participate directly at various stages and there is now a Department on Relations with Political Parties and Civil Society within the presidential administration. However, variations were observed in the extent to which space has opened up in different sectors. Human rights groups that were interviewed were particularly concerned about the situation in the Interior Ministry and the Office of the General Prosecutor. One said: ‘Within government we have a very bad situation...nothing has changed. We have heard a lot of plans from government officials about reforms...but real changes are lacking. If this continues, we will unfortunately end up with another protest.’

The assessors also heard doubts about the motivation behind greater inclusion of civic leaders in national policy-making. Moves to include civil society directly in deliberations previously reserved for political leaders or government officials were dismissed by one interviewee in these terms: ‘Volunteers have just become part of the state...All that involvement of civil society in government bodies can be just a kind of decoration. They can be used. After that, they can blame them for lack of success.’ At the local level, the pace of change varies markedly from place to place and skepticism about the motivation of officials who appear more open is common.

The assessors concluded that there was a need for more discussion to build consensus on the space that civic and political actors should occupy in Ukraine’s transition, reduce the level of suspicion and encourage bridge-building. Although this is most obviously needed at the national level at this stage, a similar effort is likely to be needed locally.

Whether the space for citizens to organize will open further, or start to close, was one of the most controversial topics discussed during the assessment. Some participants in the assessment were cautiously optimistic about the period ahead but others were decidedly gloomy. One civic leader in Kyiv referred to the re-emergence of allies of the former regime, and the lack of action to prosecute those responsible for the deaths of the ‘Heavenly Hundred,’ peaceful protesters killed by riot police during Euromaidan, as: ‘Bad signals...[that] the previous system is trying to save itself.’ Another described the window of opportunity that followed the presidential election as having delivered too little and said there would be a further window of six months after the parliamentary elections but: ‘if this is lost, the country could be lost.’ Several specifically mentioned fears that the space available to them could close again, as it did following the Orange Revolution. One confidently predicted ‘a return to dictatorship.’

Voice

Public attitudes towards activism

For citizens to have an effective voice in the reform process, they have to have confidence in their ability to press for change without facing adverse reactions from those in authority and believe that

their efforts will produce positive results. Public attitudes towards activism are therefore very important. The assessors were told that there has been a tenfold increase in the number of active citizens (from 100,000-1m.) since 2004. According to another estimate, 20 percent of Ukraine's citizens were actively involved in the events leading up to the fall of the former regime. Several participants in the assessment described an emerging sense of self-reliance and belief that civic action can produce political change. They referred to a growing understanding that 'one leader can no longer be expected to solve everything'. However, it is clear that this change is not occurring at the same pace everywhere. In the former Party of Regions' strongholds, there has been a long tradition of fear of the consequences of demanding change, even on very local issues. Some of the civic leaders interviewed believed that barriers to civic activism in the minds of citizens themselves remained real. One said: 'I would not say nothing has changed. [But] The Soviet and Yanukovich regimes killed a lot of things. We still struggle with that mentality.'

Results of research carried out by the civic group For Peaceful Protest (FPP), with support from NDI, in September 2014, mirror comments made during the assessment. Even participants in FPPs focus groups who had succeeded in actions, such as demanding that a teacher be fired, expressed pessimism about the likely consequences of civic activism. Nevertheless, in their survey, FPP found that resistance to becoming active as a citizen was, nevertheless, falling in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Nearly two thirds of the respondents said they would support a public protest under certain circumstances.

Civic activism and the conflict

It was notable that most Kyiv-based groups did not refer to the conflict as a barrier to civic activism or a threat to their ability to organize. Some did not refer to the conflict at all. Others referred to it as a spur to activism, citing the development of many voluntary initiatives to support those fighting at the front.

Media and human rights organizations mentioned the influence of Russian media, that, among other things, equate civic activism with 'extremism' and chaos. These media sources now play an overwhelmingly dominant role in Crimea and areas occupied by separatists in Eastern Ukraine and are influential in other places, especially those bordering the conflict zones. One interviewee commented: 'Russian propaganda has been working very hard. We need protection from propaganda. It is obvious that it is part of the war campaign. I think it is part of the violence'.

Several civic groups, including FPP, are trying to address this problem by publishing local newspapers or posting materials on social media but they feel overwhelmed by the weight of Russian propaganda and lack support to counteract it. This is clearly a major challenge for Ukraine and efforts should be made to ensure that sufficient support is provided to civil society groups that are trying to provide objective information to citizens.

As with the political parties, most civil society participants were less focused on the challenge of national cohesion and conflict resolution than on the need to pursue reforms as quickly as possible. However, many were aware of the role civil society can play in bringing citizens with different views of the conflict together, and a few groups are already doing this. Others, including some respondents to the questionnaire for local groups, pointed to a high level of intolerance in society which is reflected in the work of some local groups and needs to be addressed.

Kyiv-based NGOs

The area where Space, Voice and Accountability overlap in Ukraine has grown significantly over the past year. As a result, the ability of citizens to influence policy is greater now than at any time in the past decade. However, this is largely a result of the work of a small number of Kyiv-based groups on

specific items of legislation. Few Kyiv-based groups are of a grassroots nature with genuine networks throughout the country. Several interact with networks of organizations in the regions. However, the assessors were told that the quality of that interaction may amount to no more than using those groups as event organizers. The tendency for national groups to focus on national issues and for local groups to work on local issues remains strong. The mobilization of grassroots campaigns in support of national advocacy efforts is not common. One national civic leader asked: 'Suppose officials are not listening to us, do we have the potential to mobilize help?' Some groups use opinion research to inform their activities but this is a useful adjunct to, not a substitute for, actual outreach. Overall, communication between government, NGOs and citizens across the country remains weak. Therefore, the number of voices that are being heard is small. The central focus of the elite Kyiv-based groups during the past year has been on the legislative process. So the most notable impact of those voices that are being heard is on the passage of legislation in the national parliament.

The assessors heard, from groups that are inside and outside the Reanimation Reform Package coalition, that there is insufficient expertise across all sectors within the Kyiv-based groups to enable them to produce consistently high quality draft legislation. Some suggested that the holding of two snap elections and fears that the 'window of opportunity' could close soon have pushed groups working on the reform agenda to stress quantity and speed, rather than quality. The time factor was also cited as a reason why it has been difficult to engage more citizens in the process. Some international organizations are trying to address the quality issue, including the Kennan Institute, which has proposed the formation of an independent national think tank with access to a network of international experts. From the groups themselves, the assessors heard a range of views about the value of international expertise. One described it as largely irrelevant to the Ukrainian context. Others requested access to foreign experts but said the countries from which they are selected should be carefully considered. Although views varied about the relevance of other countries' experience of transition, there is particularly strong demand among the elite groups for assistance with advanced analytical methods and tools for data-driven citizen engagement, which are covered elsewhere in this report.

Activities other than the provision of expert input into national legislation were mentioned during assessment interviews with Kyiv-based groups, though they were not a major focus of much of the work that is under way. Ukraine has very highly developed election monitoring groups and some plans are already in place to scale up parliamentary monitoring efforts. However, several interviewees referred to the need for more watchdogs to monitor the implementation of reforms after laws have been passed, and offered suggestions as to how Ukrainian activists could learn from other countries. For example, the leader of one group told the assessors that Ukraine could learn from the Serbian experience where systematic reports on the performance of national ministries are published regularly.

In regard to coalition building and networking, Kyiv-based groups have been encouraged to create networks, both among themselves and with local organizations. One interviewee described this process in these terms: 'We were encouraged to create networks and coalitions. This was done but we witnessed those who did a great job lobbying for legislation... jump into politics. The level of trust is not high.' The representative of another group described the organizational disruption created by the loss of some leaders to politics. He said: 'The lack of internal organization was exposed'. The complexity of managing a large network, such as RRP, even without the loss of a number of high profile leaders, should not be under-estimated. The larger and more numerous networks become, the greater the challenge of co-ordination. Some members of multiple NGO networks described the difficulty of even finding time to attend network meetings. One interviewee regretted the lack of any university course on non-profit management in Ukraine and did not rate the management capacity of existing Kyiv-based groups highly, whether they operate as single entities or coalitions. Some members of major national coalitions complained that they are not really aware of the activities of other coalition

partners or, worse still, considered some of them as their competitors. The negative consequences of intense competition for donor funds were raised as an organizational challenge by several interlocutors. In extreme cases, this can divide natural allies against each other on key reform issues.

Sustainability

Many of those interviewed for the assessment commented on the negative, as well as the positive, effects of the reliance of many leading civil society organizations on foreign funding and foresaw a time when international interest in Ukraine will wane. However, the assessors also heard very varied responses to questions about sustainability. In one case it was even suggested that NGOs should sustain themselves by taking paid contracts from political parties. This is not the best way forward in an environment where civic activists have long complained about the formation of quasi-independent groups that are in fact the creatures of government, parties, oligarchs, or all three. One civic leader, who has migrated to party politics, described the need for a new legal framework, including tax breaks, to facilitate the development of philanthropy and social enterprise. Others talked about the need for government funding. Another leading expert suggested the development of crowd-sourced funding for NGOs. This has already taken off in Ukraine but both crowd-sourcing, and other forms of fundraising and voluntarism, are currently more focused on the war and its victims, rather than sustaining the reform process.

For both civic groups and political parties, fundraising from the general public will remain a challenge unless the value of their work is better understood. Whereas huge amounts of money have been raised from the general population to support the war and its victims, and fundraising in the street has become a fashionable thing to do, donations to fund the work of civic groups that are currently supported by international donors will be much harder to come by. New opportunities may emerge, such as soliciting support for human rights monitors who are working directly with victims of the conflict. One such group described the large amounts of money raised for the families of the ‘Heavenly Hundred’ and the absence of fundraising for more than 1,500 released hostages on whose behalf they are seeking access to legal advice and other forms of support. If the right examples are identified, they could become the basis of pilot projects to crowd-source funds for civic activism. Other options may emerge in the context of decentralization, which should create more opportunities for local activism to bring about changes that directly affect the lives of people who may then support local groups with their time and money.

Summary of results of local civic questionnaire

As part of the assessment, NDI received completed questionnaires from 38 local civic groups (West 10, East 8, South 7, North 1, Central 9 and Kyiv City 3) within the requested two week timeframe. Key findings included the following:

- Although all but one group described civic space as more open, skepticism about the attitude of government towards civic activism remains
- Most of the groups continue to use advocacy, monitoring and information tools to advance citizens' interests, but some of them are now thinking about how to engage citizens directly
- Almost all the groups think that there is a role for civil society to play to bring people with different views together
- Most of the groups agree that local groups should play a leading role in national advocacy campaigns and there is a good number that think that citizens should be mobilized around national, as well as local, issues

- Civic groups have a number of different needs, but the most frequently mentioned is training for young activists and the newly-active citizens and making expertise and experience available from other groups in Ukraine and from abroad
- Obtaining technical and financial support continues to be important for civic groups, but the question of self- sustainability is also important to them

Citizen engagement in the reform process

Lack of information about, and engagement in, the reform process among citizens was mentioned many times as a risk to Ukraine's transition. This fuels public frustration, prevents more citizens from understanding that advocacy efforts are having an impact, and can deliver more positive changes over time, and creates a risk of capture of the reform process by a narrow elite. National organizations, regional and grassroots groups, and citizens themselves, need to develop a genuine sense of common cause around the reform process, akin to the manner in which Ukrainians have pulled together to resist Russian aggression. For this, much broader access to information about civil society's successes, locally as well as nationally, and more determined efforts to enable citizens to have a greater sense of ownership over the reform process will be needed. Although more groups are becoming aware of the need to move in this direction, the advantages of grassroots lobbying campaigns are not sufficiently widely understood and many still lack the skills to do them.

Engaging more citizens in the reform process is not the responsibility of civil society alone. More participatory methods should be adopted across the board, particularly by government. Some moves towards public consultation on the part of the national government have been seen, for example with the Green Paper on e-governance. However, for reforms that affect the population as a whole, rather than specialized professional communities, systematic use of modern public consultation methods that can reach larger numbers of citizens at low cost could play a very useful role in the work of both national and local government in Ukraine. This should be an integral component of Ukraine's open government strategy. Civil society can make an important contribution by pressing for more inclusive consultation and supporting the 'demand side' of public consultation exercises when they occur.

Accountability

The migration of several civic leaders into political life, and improved access to policymakers more generally, has created opportunities to increase the responsiveness of government to citizen demands, at least at the national level. However, this has also generated controversy. One civic leader told the assessors: 'We don't know how to treat those new politicians who were our colleagues. Should we criticize them? If we do, will they say we are jealous?' If we do not criticize them, is this corruption from both sides?' However, another said: 'They really had to go there because now they have the chance to change something from the inside.' There will be a need, on the one hand, to include the 'New Faces' in parliament in conversations about the role of civil society in the reform process and, on the other, to encourage civic groups to build advocacy strategies that include reaching out to the great majority of parliamentarians who are not former activists.

Lack of confidence, even among national groups, about whether they will be able to exert sufficient influence on decision-makers in the future was evident in several interviews. This was reflected in a wish to forge alliances with donors so that more conditions relevant to the pursuit of reforms are attached to international assistance to Ukraine. One example of success in negotiating the imposition of tougher conditions on the provision of international assistance was described by a participant working on anti-corruption initiatives. However, this type of strategy should not be pursued as an alternative to effective mobilization of Ukraine's own citizens.

In general, local civic activists do not enjoy the same type of relationships with political leaders as their national counterparts and this is particularly true in the East of the country. Some participants in the assessment, particularly respondents to the questionnaire for local groups, described even the positive changes that have occurred in their relationships with government as neither systematic nor fundamental. However, if many more civic activists migrate to elected office at the local elections, new opportunities may arise to build stronger bridges between civil society and elected officials at the local level.

Accountability, e-governance and open data

Given the commitment of the Ukrainian government to e-governance reform, and the important role that civil society should play in the process, NDI decided to include a specific component in the Assessment devoted to open data and data-driven citizen engagement. The aim was to explore whether more program activities could be developed that would integrate support for e-governance and e-participation with support for civic activism. The aim was also to determine the extent to which advocacy related to open government and open parliaments (discussed below) can also be used to help sustain reform momentum and, to the extent these advocacy efforts succeed, to help institutionalize these gains.

This component of the assessment was limited in duration and scope but opportunities to design new activities which would enable citizens and civic groups to participate in government-led reforms in this area, and to develop and deploy new tools to enhance government accountability and transparency at the national and local levels, were identified. The main points from this component of the assessment are summarized below.

The open government agenda in Ukraine

There is commitment to pursue open government at the highest level of the national government and considerable enthusiasm within a growing number of cities. Several interviewees, including the East European Foundation and Transparency International, singled-out Volodymyr Hroisman, the new Speaker, as one of the first Ukrainian government leaders to have gained significant visibility and traction in championing open government. He remains active, having recently convened a meeting of newly-elected MPs to consider opening up parliament. There are two government entities working in this field. One is a formal state body within the Ministry of Regional Development, which is responsible for the e-government strategy. The other is an Advisory Group that provides input to that strategy. The Advisory Group's mandate focuses on five areas: interoperability, access to data, open format, online services, and civic engagement. It enjoys significant political backing, but is not accountable to any single ministry.

Commitments made within the coalition agreement and the new Green Paper, published in December 2014, demonstrate that momentum in this field is being maintained in spite of the many other challenges with which the new government is faced. The White Paper is expected to merge e-democracy and e-participation initiatives, in contrast to the Green Paper that preceded it. With greater decentralization anticipated, it remains to be seen how the Ukrainian government will strike a balance between a top-down approach and empowering individual ministries and local authorities. There are currently six draft laws under review by the government that will have an impact on open data, including legislation with sections on public data format and accessibility mechanisms.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP)

The government of Ukraine entered the process to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in [September 2011](#). With more than 65 member states, the OGP is the world's foremost body dedicated to

open governance, including open data. All OGP members are expected to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) that describes concrete commitments over a two-year period. Ukraine's second Action Plan was adopted in November 2014. Assessment interviews revealed a very low-level of awareness and engagement by open data civic leaders in this process even though involvement of civil society is an OGP requirement. In other OGP member states, trainings are provided to civic organizations to help them analyze the relevance of the OGP on their own activities and provide constructive feedback on the NAPs. Expertise can also be made available to the government of Ukraine by the OGP's Open Data Working group, led by the Web Foundation and the Government of Canada, to support the development of a measurable, achievable, and specific open data strategy in Ukraine.

Social demand for open data and the role of civil society

Social demand for open data in Ukraine has emerged in the last year and a half. As explained to the assessors by the [SocialBoost](#) founder, understanding of open data and its benefits is currently limited to tech savvy civic activists. These individuals share values typical of open data activists elsewhere, such as a commitment to collaboration, problem solving, and entrepreneurship. Yet, as in many other countries, coordination and communication mechanisms to share best practices, co-create, or diversify the open data community appear to be wanting.

The open data community in Ukraine could benefit from an advocacy group with a specific mandate to conduct public education campaigns, explain the benefits of open data for government, political leaders and other stakeholder groups, act as a watchdog for the best open data policies and licenses, and increase citizen awareness and participation. Successful examples of [citizen led groups](#) or [initiatives](#) with strong movement building approaches, such as Code for America⁵, could be adapted to the Ukrainian context.

Open data at the local level and the role of civil society

Open data creates tangible opportunities to build more responsive public institutions by creating pressure for services that are more flexible and adapted to the needs of citizens. Applications using city level data often serve as the first examples of how open data can benefit citizens. There are many examples, ranging from [garbage collection](#), to [recreational services](#), or [health services](#). These are proliferating as the global Open Data community applies lessons learned in one context to other situations.

Modelled on the common 311 service designed to provide access to non-emergency municipal services, the [Open Cities project in Ukraine](#) is a good example of local data accessibility by enabling city residents to tag a problem and report it to their local authorities. The project manager told the assessors how partner cities were initially reluctant to put their problems in the open for fear that it would reinforce perceptions of poor city management. But with solid political commitment, the OpenCities project is changing the relationship between residents and their cities. As response times have improved, residents are gaining more trust in their public institutions. The original group of 10 participating cities is expanding. Some are using mobile applications to roll out this project. However, the Open Cities project does not release data in an open format or use the [Open311 data standard](#). Many cities do so and see the benefits in adopting this open standard for civic issue tracking. This open model, based on clear [open definitions](#), provides transparency, and opportunities for participation and collaboration. By enabling collaboration on these issues, the open model, employed by cities such as [Baltimore](#) and [Chicago](#), makes it easier to collect and organize more information about important problems. Open data, in this case, can help facilitate conversations about the health and livability of a

⁵ <http://www.codeforamerica.org/brigade/tools>

community. To become truly open platforms, the OpenCities program could study initiatives such as [SeeClickFix](#) or [FixMyStreet](#).

Given the move towards decentralization and growing enthusiasm within local authorities towards open data initiatives, local civil society groups in Ukraine should be encouraged, trained and supported to advocate for municipal open data road maps and participate in their development. The assessors shared the example of the City of Guelph's [Open Government Action Plan](#) in Ontario, Canada (pop. 121,668) which is an action-oriented document that sets out how the local administration intends to move to open governance, create a new open by default culture, open up city hall, implement e-government services, and, most importantly for this report, make data and information public assets. Initiatives of this type often include civic education portals which would be extremely beneficial in an environment where major changes are taking place but public awareness of how citizens' lives will be affected is low.

National, regional, and local governments need to collaborate. The Ukrainian government could apply Canada's goal ([Canada Open Government Action Plan 2.0](#)) of providing users with a "no wrong door" approach to accessing open data, so that data can be easily found and downloaded regardless of which government open data portal is used.

Monitoring parliament

Parliamentary data is especially significant in a country like Ukraine undergoing transition. So many new laws and policies are being debated without user-friendly tools to track the exchanges and decisions of newly elected representatives. Opora has done significant work in the past two years to gather, sort, and present parliamentary data on deputies conduct, voting, and attendance records on a new [parliamentary monitoring website](#). The new site also presents analysis of many pending draft or recently passed laws, analyzing them based on content and the process by which they were debated or passed. Both Opora and CPSA expressed interest in enhancing the existing site, and applying many of the lessons and innovative practices being applied in parliamentary monitoring and data visualization around the world. NDI has exposed Opora to a community of good practice in parliamentary monitoring through the [Opening Parliament website](#), which the Institute helped create in partnership with the Sunlight Foundation and the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, with financial support from the NED, Open Society Foundation and the World Bank. This website houses the initiative to promote the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*, a set of shared principles sponsored by NDI on the openness, transparency and accessibility of parliaments supported by more than 160 organizations from over 80 countries. Canada's [open parliament](#) website, which was developed by Open North according to international best practices, also possessed features of significant interest to Opora and CPSA. With the benefit of experience and international best practices, many components and advanced features could be integrated into this type of work in the Ukrainian context.

Budget monitoring

Communities of "information intermediaries" should be fostered to develop new tools that can translate raw data into information for a broader constituency of non-technical potential users and enable citizens to provide feedback. Budget monitoring tools are a good example of this.

The Revolution of Dignity has resulted in greater demand for transparency and accountability in public spending. The assessors heard that an estimated 120 civic groups across Ukraine have a budget-monitoring mandate. These groups all seek to access data as part of their efforts to make government more honest. However, even when it is available, it is often difficult to understand and analyze. The website [costaua.com](#), modeled on a [UK site](#), helps demonstrate how budget information

relates to the lives of average citizens. Working with state budget data, it illustrates how personal income taxes contribute to the expenditures of the state.

Examples from other tech savvy communities undergoing democratic transitions, like [Tunisia and Bosnia-Herzegovina](#), are noteworthy. [CheckBookNYC](#), which is considered a leading city spending monitoring site in the US, now includes alerts systems enabling citizens to track specific types of public expenditures by geographic location, contractor, or interest area. The underlying data design and sampling, methods, tools and datasets is explained and published alongside findings to enable greater scrutiny, understanding and independent analysis. On the latter, Ukrainian budget monitoring sites could be improved through collaboration with data journalists which can bring context and scrutiny to budget data analysis.

Piloting municipal budget simulators

Budget transparency doesn't necessarily lead to an increase in citizen engagement. Indeed, shedding light on wastefulness when the economy is struggling can have the opposite effect and reinforce distrust and negative perceptions of public institutions. Bureaucrats and politicians commonly express this fear in opening up public data. The OpenCities program's intention to scale up its activities and provide budget data literacy training is important but insufficient. There is an opportunity to innovate budget monitoring and develop participatory processes and online tools that increase and broaden citizen engagement in budget decision-making.

Tested examples of participatory budgets include [New York](#) and [Chicago](#). These initiatives help citizens find out how their tax dollars are spent, enable them to share ideas for how they would like to see their community improved, and connect them with neighbors in creating project proposals to appear on the ballot for a community vote. But open data and technology can enhance these models further. [Hybrid participatory budgets](#) combine online simulators with [in-person consultations](#) at the design and result dissemination stages. Online simulators become one step in a citizen engagement strategy. Community groups can contribute valuable contextual information to help design an online tool to collect more meaningful input for decision makers.

With sufficient political and bureaucratic buy-in, there is an opportunity to create a budget simulator pilot in a municipality, town or rayon with sufficiently high levels of internet access, education, and mobile phone use. Based on conversations held during the assessment, Kyiv could fit these criteria. Budget simulators, such as Open North's [Citizen Budget](#), which is used in over 30 municipalities, are engaging, educational, and user-friendly. As they strengthen transparency and accountability, politicians and bureaucrats share the burden of tough decision-making. Interactive budget simulators are fully customizable and can be used to consult residents on major infrastructure projects, altering city services, and prioritizing revenue-generating projects.

Expanding and strengthening data literacy

Filling the gap between the demand and supply of open data is a persistent challenge in building sustainable open data ecosystems. In the Ukrainian context, data literacy could help increase understanding of the relationship between digital skills and social outcomes. Open data should be driven by principles of inclusivity and be mindful not to further marginalize segments of the populations without technology skills or access to the Internet.

Digital literacy skills are needed to take full advantage of the benefits of open data. The potential reach and impact of Ukraine's open government activities can be significantly augmented by efforts to ensure citizens understand how to make use of the technologies that enable open government. Data literacy is relevant for public administrators, civil society, entrepreneurs, citizens, academics and scientists alike.

The support of the Ukrainian government and open data leaders within government would help support civic data literacy program.

Data literacy can also form the basis of regular meet-ups between local open data enthusiasts from a range of backgrounds. The experience of the Ottawa Open Data Book Club could have applications in the Ukrainian context. This monthly meet-up brings together technical and non-technical open data enthusiasts to work on datasets that have been democratically selected by the group. The dataset's quality is determined in consultation with relevant city employees. Book Club members form groups and work on projects that are then presented at the following meeting. The best projects are posted on the city's open data portal.

Open data and the fight against corruption

Opening up government and tackling corruption are two sides of the same coin that help governments become more accountable and more transparent and help increase citizen participation in government. Technology can provide powerful tools to access and trace private and public money flows, between areas such as contracts, payments, revenues, budgets and international bank accounts. But technology or data alone is rarely enough to bring change – for that tool must be nested in broader approaches that respond to the realities of power.

The work of the [Anti-Corruption Action Center](#) (ACAC) in Ukraine strengthens the demand for accountability by providing essential information used in monitoring and enforcement efforts. Accessible and [searchable public disclosures](#) allow citizens, media, government, and civil society organizations to verify information and raise concerns as they are discovered. The profile about [Yanukovych's Assets](#) and those of his close associates gave the ACAC significant profile in the open data and anti-corruption community in Ukraine.

On October 14, 2014 the parliament of Ukraine voted for the so-called “anti-corruption package of laws”, developed during the summer jointly by civil society, government, the presidential administration, and anti-corruption committees of the parliament and international organizations. ACAC told the assessors that some last minute amendments were made which could endanger the integrity and independence of the legal framework. The effectiveness of the adopted laws will depend on their implementation, thus strong civic control is needed. High levels of skepticism about the likelihood of concerted efforts to curb corruption were heard from many civic leaders interviewed.

The ACAC focuses on two datasets, neither of which is available in open format: real estate owners and state procurement database. Scrapers are used to make these public databases available in an open format. Analysis remains difficult and the databases fall short of international open data standards. Nevertheless, the ACAC has demonstrated its ability to stop the illegal outflows of taxpayer's money for fraudulent public procurement contracts. New political leaders should encourage the bureaucracy to work with anti-corruption advocates and data users. Moreover, it's important that these activists have access to the people responsible for these datasets. Supporting open communication makes it possible to ask questions, confirm interpretations, discuss applications, report errors, find related work, or explore ways to add value to the data. The fight against corruption can also serve to rally a diversity of stakeholders, which could be mobilized collaboratively in hacking spaces, which are community workspaces or technology labs in which like-minded activists can cooperate on technology projects.

2.4. Summary of the Research Environment Assessment

Partners' needs

The importance of applying robust analysis to democracy programs has been demonstrated in many contexts. The methods and topics vary widely, depending on the needs of partners in each context.

Even within the same context, partners' needs are likely to vary significantly. For political parties in Ukraine, for example, there are data 'haves', usually the leaders of political parties who are able to pay for frequent ratings, and data 'have-nots', usually activists working at the lower levels of large parties and smaller parties at all levels. NDI has noted during the course of this assessment that there is a need to encourage party leaders to consider strategically how data is used within their party structures and to assist them to use a wider range of research tools to fully understand the political context, especially qualitative research and interpretation of election results.

More civic groups in Ukraine are now applying quantitative and qualitative research methods, which is giving rise to a need for capacity-building. Some groups have been using research for some time but they could achieve more in this field if they are given technical assistance. The level of need is high. It is very important for civic actors to understand the demand side of the democracy equation in Ukraine. However, even basic decisions they need to make prior to entering into contracts or commissioning research from their own members, such as the selection of suitable tools to achieve a given set of research objectives, are not always well understood.

Surveys

In addition to quality control issues and possible interviewer biases observed during the assessment, the largest problems noted by the assessors in the conduct of face to face surveys concerned sampling methods and sampling frames. Research firms in Ukraine generally use quota sampling techniques, which are not accepted in academic circles and should not be employed. A survey based on a quota sample in Ukraine is likely to provide a very imprecise picture of public opinion. A stratified random sample is the standard tool used for surveys worldwide because it is currently the best method available to ensure that every individual has a chance of being selected in the sample.

Even if we omit the problem that quota sampling has no basis in probability theory, the argument behind quota sampling – that it is able to approximate a stratified random sample – relies on high quality administrative data being available. Such data does not exist in the Ukrainian context. While firms continue to argue they approximate stratified random samples, such a claim is hard to sustain, given that the last census was carried out over ten years ago and there has been considerable population upheaval because of the war in the east of the country.

Quota sampling has remained commonplace in the Ukrainian context because it is cheap and most clients are undemanding when it comes to sampling methodology. However, several companies are willing and able to use stratified random samples. Even though random sampling is more expensive, the gap is not as large as expected (less than 10 percent of the overall cost of a nationwide survey). For political parties and civic groups, it is often the case that data quality issues are not uppermost in their minds when they commission survey data. However, educating partners to demand more of the companies they use could be integrated into activities that encourage them to look at their data strategies more broadly.

Particular challenges now face the conduct of any research in Donetsk and Luhansk. Most research organizations do have access to the occupied areas, as they still have members of their old networks there. The problems are manifold, however. Many people may be angry and fearful and therefore not interested in participating. There is no reliable sampling frame (meaning a list of all possible units from which to sample) from which to carry out sampling, so the universe is unknown. Some companies are carrying out phone polls but these are problematic, especially given the displacement of population that has taken place. Others are simply excluding occupied areas from their national samples. In addition, focus group rooms are not usable at the moment in Donetsk and Luhansk. In Crimea, some firms still

have their networks there, though one will no longer use theirs because it has been taken over by a Russian affiliate. The largest difficulty is the inability to verify any research done there.

Focus groups

There is little difference in the way organizations conduct focus groups in Ukraine. They all rent rooms in big cities, and these rooms have a one way mirror. In smaller towns, they provide a video link to a separate room. Most firms can provide video links but the internet connection often does not support the bandwidth to do so. Generally, few problems specific to the Ukrainian context were found with this method, other than the high cost of translating transcripts.

Implicit association tests (IATs)

This is a tool that has become increasingly used in the public policy and public opinion world. These tests are designed to get at the underlying attitudes of subjects, where it may be politically sensitive for individuals to articulate their real attitudes or where those attitudes may be implicit, that is, people hold these attitudes without really even knowing them. An early study using this method in Italy, which focused on undecided voters, was found to be powerful in predicting an election outcome. A computer program is written for each exercise and participants respond to questions posed to them on screen in a computer laboratory. In Ukraine, IATs could be useful. There are often very high levels of undecided voters, who actually have preferences, but do not necessarily know what they are and switches in party affiliation are common.

Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis forms a part of the larger field of text mining. In recent years, social sciences have used increasingly complicated methods borrowed from computer science to better understand the sentiment of language in different contexts. These text mining techniques can be used to understand the valence of written communication, to count or analyze the usage of specific words, and to cluster the usage of language by information source. The sources of text most often used are news articles, tweets, Facebook posts and blogs.

The assessors looked at Crimson Hexagon, a commercialization of several algorithms developed within the political science department at Harvard University. Crimson Hexagon has created some automated supervised machine learning and also provides unsupervised topic modeling. One example of information provided by Crimson Hexagon appears under the parliamentary campaign section of this report. The assessors concluded, however, that, while some useful information could be gleaned, there were barriers to using Crimson Hexagon in the Ukrainian context. In particular, Crimson Hexagon is very limited by its lack of support for Russian and Ukrainian.

If sentiment analysis can be successfully adapted to the Ukrainian context, it could provide a powerful, low cost, tool for monitoring a wide range of issues. Of particular interest, perhaps, is the potential for sentiment analysis to be used to track the evolution attitudes towards the conflict and major reform issues, such as corruption. So there is a fair rationale for developing more bespoke solutions to the analysis of sentiment in the Ukrainian context.

Election data

Another tool to help all stakeholders in the elections process to better understand election dynamics is the visualization and analysis of election results. One of the most powerful tools for the analysis of election results are visualizations. Because election fraud can often be observed at the precinct level, there has been a move towards trying to visualize and analyze election results at the lowest possible level of aggregation, which is usually the precinct. Innovative work has occurred in the United States in

this area at Stanford University. When meeting with the assessors, Opora expressed interest in creating the polygons, or shape files, for precincts. They have done excellent visualization of election results but are only currently able to visualize results at the level of districts.

5. CONCLUSION

The key questions that NDI sought to address during the course of the assessment were:

1. What are the primary challenges and opportunities with regard to advancing democratization following Euromaidan and two recent national elections, in the context of on-going conflict in the East?
2. What roles can political parties and civic groups best play in addressing these challenges?

1.1. Challenges and Opportunities

Strengthening Ukraine's democracy is very much a work in progress, but a promising and hopeful one. Immense challenges are matched by unprecedented opportunities. Demand for new leaders has created openings for new entrants into political life including women, young people and reformers from civil society and the media. A growing number of political leaders recognize the benefits of more inclusive, transparent practices and there is real competition to fill the 'integrity space' in Ukrainian politics. Ukrainians have learned lessons from the Orange Revolution, particularly the need to move from paternalism to self-reliance, and there is popular support for activists who have decided to take responsibility for governing by running for elected office. Some parties and civic groups have started to reflect on their own sustainability and there is eagerness for innovation and international experience that transcend partisan divisions. There is also a shared sense of urgency and belief that Ukraine cannot afford to miss its third chance in 23 years to reform.

1.2. Roles of parties and civic groups in addressing challenges and opportunities

The assessors heard repeatedly, that interest in participating in political life has jumped since the Revolution of Dignity. This is true throughout Ukraine, although to a lesser degree in the South and East. As channels for renewed civic interest, effective parties and civic groups are more important than ever. Alternatives, such as disengagement from political life or resort to non-democratic means of expression constitute existential threats to Ukraine in its current fragile state. Strong political parties and civil society that effectively channel political expression are a key element in stabilizing Ukraine.

1.3. Conclusion

The stakes in Ukraine could not be higher. If its democratic transition succeeds it will be an example to the region and the world, a testament to the power of democratic ideas and the potential for transformative change. A failure would have equally significant and widespread ramifications. It will likely be many years before the Eurasia region has an opportunity to advance the global cause of democratic development equal to the one currently before Ukraine.