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Reform and Democratization in Ukraine: My Service as a Peace Corps Volunteer with an Ukrainian Local Government Organization

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Reform and Democratization in Ukraine: My Service as a Peace Corps Volunteer with an Ukrainian Local Government Organization

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Introduction

  I started studying for my master's degree at Illinois State University in the fall of 2016 and pursued an interdisciplinary program in political science and applied community and economic development. My track was unique in that it incorporated a practical experience component, which I am doing as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine. Prior to departing the United States for service, I read information regarding the history of and current political situation in Ukraine. I was intrigued by the reform efforts occurring in the country and decided to focus my master's capstone project on public administration reform. My placement at a local government organization that is the direct result of post-revolution decentralization efforts provided an ideal case study for conducting this research, and hopefully will encourage others to pursue similar research in Ukraine in the future.

In 2014, Peace Corps Volunteers were evacuated from Ukraine due to the Revolution of Dignity and tenuous circumstances, and the post did not reopen until 2015. It has been an honor – and privilege – to live and work in Ukraine at a time during which the nation is undergoing the most comprehensive reforms it has ever seen. The excitement and hope younger people feel for their country is palpable, but so is the nostalgia for days gone by as exhibited by many older Ukrainians. People here are some of the kindest, most resilient, and most hospitable you could ever meet. This study in no way seeks to undermine the integrity of those with whom I've built relationships and interacted over the last 20 months; rather, I hope this research will provide a foundation for conducting research in Ukraine that seriously considers the influence of culture on reform efficacy.

Chapter 1: A Bird's Eye View of Ukrainian History

Early History

As the largest nation in Europe and Russia's neighbor, Ukraine is a country rich in history, struggle, trauma, and resiliency. Considered the breadbasket of Europe, for centuries it has been a source of contention for other countries seeking to conquer it. Ukraine's current independence is a microcosm in the grand timeline of its history, which has direct implications for how it has fared through independence. The country initially became autonomous in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union but it has not achieved consistent political stability; Ukraine has endured two major revolutions and continued corruption since its independence.

In its early history Ukraine was known as Kyivan-Rus, was the largest state in Europe, and was well-positioned on busy trade routes that contributed to its success. Efforts to conquer this region began in the 14th century when the area was taken by Poland and Lithuania. It was during this initial conquest that Ukrainians started identifying themselves as a people and there was a countermovement led by peasants – formally known as Cossacks – who "fled the Polish effort to force them into servitude" (Watch, 2016, 11). The Cossacks were powerful enough to rule in the 16th century and defend Ukraine as a nation but were weakened by a Polish attack that necessitated asking Russia for assistance; the Cossacks were tricked and Russia assumed ownership of Ukraine despite promising to respect their autonomy (Watch, 2016; Nalbandov, 2014). Ukraine had another brief period of independence between 1918 and 1920, but it was not significant enough to warrant any major social or political shifts. The country was under Russian influence essentially from the end of the 18th century to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Watch, 2016; Perloff, 2009).

Stalinism and the Holodomor

One of the most traumatizing experiences in Ukrainian history occurred from 1932-1933 while Stalin ruled the Soviet Union. To this day, there is disagreement over whether this was a genocide intentionally inflicted by the Communists or if it was merely a tragic event that unfortunately affected millions of Ukrainians (Motyl, 2010). The Holodomor, which in Ukrainian translates to "death by hunger" (Mass, 2013; Motyl, 2010; Perloff, 2009), was by many accounts a manmade famine imposed by Stalin as he tried to assert greater control over the Soviet Union. The estimated death toll rivals Hitler's Holocaust, with more conservative estimates at 10 million (Mass, 2013; Perloff, 2009) and more liberal estimates at 14.5 million (Conquest, 1987) people who perished. The impetus for this famine was grounded in Marxism and class struggle as the Bolsheviks worked to collectivize agriculture and strengthen communism in the Soviet Union. Significant class differences did not exist in Ukraine at the time of collectivization (Mass, 2013; Perloff, 2009). The Bolsheviks used outcomes from a 1917-1918 uprising, during which peasants seized land from their landlords, as the foundation for their class argument.[1] There was a small group of peasants who fared slightly better than others in the aftermath of this revolt (Mass, 2013); they came to be known as kulaks and merely owning a few cows or more acreage were grounds for being categorized with this group (Perloff, 2009). In 1927, there was a precipitous decline in grain output that Stalin used as leverage to provoke discontent between kulaks and peasants, and "Thereafter a Marxist conception of class struggle led to an almost totally imaginary class categorization being inflicted in the villages" (Mass, 2013, 37). This was only the beginning of what would be Ukraine's most terrible nightmare.

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[1] This uprising led to Ukraine's short-lived period of independence, which lasted until 1920.

The Bolsheviks swiftly brought farms under state control; within one year, the percentage of collectivized farms went from 15 to 60 percent (Mass, 2013). This process was merciless towards Ukrainians, and peasants who resisted collectivization were forced to walk in the snow to the next village, where they were interrogated by local authorities; if they continued to resist, they had to keep walking – essentially until they died from exposure to the elements or conceded to the communists (Perloff, 2009). Stalin's justification for collectivizing farms was that it would make them more productive, but his regime's practices were counterintuitive to this theory succeeding. As part of the fabricated class struggle, kulaks were demonized when realistically they only fared slightly better than everyone else. The Bolsheviks spread propaganda against them, claiming they were hoarding property that belonged to the state and, by extension, the majority peasant population. Little evidence was needed to claim individuals were kulaks and peasants often blamed each other out of spite. The accused were apprehended by the state and "were either shot, deported to remote slave labor camps in Russia, or put in local labor details. Few survived" (Perloff, 2009, 33). Conquest (1987) postulates that half of the 14.5 million people he estimates died in the Holodomor were kulaks. Ironically, they were the most productive farmers and, after the Bolsheviks decimated their population, agricultural output further decreased. At this point, many peasants still resisted collectivization, and so the forced famine began. Stalin threatened that if output quotas were not met, which were unreasonably high and unattainable, his regime would confiscate all grain from the peasants (Perloff, 2009). Naturally, they were unable to attain these quotas and millions more starved to death. Despite Ukrainians' efforts to hide foodstuffs to feed their families, the Bolsheviks became experts at finding even the cleverest hiding places. Additionally, farmers were only given compensation

when the state had what it claimed to need, and sometimes they never received compensation. Ivan Kasiianenko, a Holodomor survivor, remarked

> We had nothing; they had taken everything from us. They came around with their pikes, poked around, asked questions and grabbed my mother by the hair. They tore off my mother's earrings and her cross. We children cried, but nothing helped. No one paid any attention to our tears. They locked our mother in the basement. So, there we were, five of us as children with me the oldest, and our father nowhere to be found. They came back to see if they had missed anything and found one egg that had not been taken. They took it away (Mass, 2013, 37).

These were dark times for Ukraine; at the worst point, approximately 25,000 people died per day from starvation. There were so many corpses they could not be buried quickly enough and often the bodies were dumped into mass graves. The confiscated food was not even required for the communists' wellbeing, and much of it was tossed or allowed to rot while victims were unable to find food anywhere (Perloff, 2009). During this time there was politicized and contradictory world coverage of the famine. The U.S. government did not acknowledge the famine or attempt to provide aid to Ukraine (Famine, 1988). News coverage in the U.S. also did not address the extent to which Ukrainians were suffering. Walter Duranty was a journalist for The New York Times who, despite his continual insistence that people in the Soviet Union (specifically Ukraine) were not starving, won the Pulitzer Prize for his outstanding coverage of Russia. Conversely, Malcolm Muggeridge, a journalist for Manchester Guardian, accurately reported the devastation in Ukraine and consequently lost his position with the newspaper (Mass, 2013; Perloff, 2009).

Disagreements over the Holodomor's causes and extent of consequences persist today. Motyl (2010) finds that most people now agree the famine occurred, but the current argument revolves around its cause and who was affected. National democrats assert it was a genocide specifically directed at Ukrainians, while pro-Soviet, pro-Russia, anti-Democrat people deny that it was an effort to eliminate Ukrainian national identity. In the words of Dmytro Tabachnyk, President Yanukovich's Minister of Education and Science, "the Holodomor of 1933 was a general tragedy of the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan" (Motyl, 2010, 29). It remains a highly politicized event, which is reflected in the initiatives of Ukrainian presidents.

After the Orange Revolution of 2004, popularly elected President Yushchenko sought to establish a stronger national identity, including recognition and acknowledgement of the Holodomor as a genocide inflicted by Stalin on the people of Ukraine; this elicited reactions from Ukrainians that were consistent with political divides in the country. The eastern part of the country – specifically the Donbas – is more politically aligned with Russian interests and denies that Ukraine's suffering during the Holodomor was a deliberate attempt to eliminate Ukrainian identity.[2] The following President, Yanukovich, adopted the opposite approach and promptly deleted information about Holodomor from the president's website; this was considered an attack on Ukrainian identity and culture, but the political pendulum shows there is no consensus in Ukraine about what should identify them as a people, as illustrated by Ukrainian presidents' political leanings since 1991.

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[2] The reasons for and implications of regional differences will be discussed in a later chapter.

Political Turbulence and Consequences

Independence to the Orange Revolution

The first president of independent Ukraine was Leonid Kravchuck, a former communist policeman whose presidency was tarnished with economic instability, despite receiving a financial aid package as part of severing ties with the Soviet Union (Nalbandov, 2014). Kravchuck ran in the 1994 election but lost to his opponent Leonid Kuchma; although both were former communists, Kuchma was considered slightly different because he was a former industrialist who rose to higher ranks based on merit, whereas Kravchuk was a party bureaucrat (Erlanger, 1994). The elections were held early because the economy was rapidly declining, and Kuchma's campaign was largely run on the promise of improving circumstances (Erlanger, 1994). There were initial concerns that a Kuchma administration would mean a policy shift and a "victory by the industrialist, Leonid D. Kuchma, shocked nationalists, who fear he will push Ukraine back into Moscow's orbit" (Erlanger, 1994); this trepidation was assuaged when he established closer ties with the United States and United Nations, and deflected economic pressure coming from Russia (D'Anieri, 2003). However, his administration was wrought with scandal and the honeymoon during which Ukrainians hoped he would lead the country in a positive direction was short-lived. One of the most compromising scandals was the assassination of Georgiy Gongadze, a local journalist and ethnic Georgian who was known for his opinions against corruption (D'Anieri, 2003; Nalbandov, 2004). His headless body was found outside the capital of Kyiv and tapes were discovered of Kuchma giving orders to get rid of him (D'Anieri, 2003). Although the assassination placed Kuchma in a difficult situation and compromised his presidency, his policy actions as president had more indirect but lasting effects on the Ukrainian presidency. Despite formal rules and procedures designed to prevent expansion of executive

power, informal power networks were crucial to Kuchma's success as president (D'Anieri, 2003).

Kuchma often utilized intimidation tactics and his relationships with parliament to advance constitutional changes. Since these changes were approved by parliament they technically were considered legitimate, and those opposing him had little power to argue that these constitutional changes were detrimental to the country's fledgling governmental structure (D'Anieri, 2003). Kuchma also attempted to amass further presidential power by establishing an 'upper house of parliament, which would include primarily regional representatives, many of whom would be appointed by the president' (Katchanovski, 2008, 358). Carrier (2012) examined institutional change under the Kuchma administration because it provided an excellent case study for understanding how extra-institutional factors affect power relationships between the president, prime minister, and parliament. The quality of relationships and distribution of power depended on if the prime minister was loyal to Kuchma, how the parliament felt about his policies, and connections the prime minister and parliament developed (Carrier, 2012). Although there were formal rules and policies to ensure the president did not reach beyond his constitutionally granted power, these informal networks proved to be far more important to how Kuchma utilized and successfully expanded his presidential power through constitutional amendments. Although the West viewed adopting a constitution as a step forward – despite Kuchma's expansion of presidential power – D'Anieri (2003) acknowledged that even if Kuchma left office, there would be little difference in how future presidencies operated unless there were "far-reaching and institutional political changes" (59).

In 2004 Ukraine experienced its first major revolution since gaining independence. The Orange Revolution was one of a series of politically driven events occurring in other post-Soviet

states at a similar time (Georgia had the Rose Revolution and Krygyzstan the Tulip Revolution). After Leonid Kuchma's scandalous presidency and a presidential election accused of being rigged, the Orange Revolution was a culmination of discontent over corrupt transitions of power and divisions within Ukraine over NATO membership (Katchanovski, 2008). The 2004 election had two candidates who illustrated political and policy divides within Ukraine. Yanukovych was Kuchma's prime minister, member of the Communist establishment, politically more aligned with Russian interests, and did not have majority popular support; Yushchenko was considered the more democratic candidate, desired closer relationships with western Europe, and advocated for European Union membership. Exit polls showed that Yushchenko was the most popular candidate but Yanukovych won the election (Watch, 2016; Nalbandov, 2014). There was enough pressure from the populace claiming it was a fraudulent election to convince the Supreme Court to require another election round, which Yushchenko won (Watch, 2016). These election results demonstrated that claims of election fraud were at least somewhat accurate, and this peaceful revolution was considered a victory for the Ukrainian people.

Despite Yushchenko's victory, his presidency was not free from political turmoil. Katchanovski (2008) posits that "Previous studies have almost universally regarded the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine as a democratic breakthrough because it replaced a semi-democratic or semi-authoritarian government with a democratic government that instituted free and fair elections" (356; Bunce and Wolchik, 2006; Hale, 2006; Stepan, 2005). However, given the economic and political turmoil after Yuschenko's victory following the Orange Revolution, he was forced to appoint Yanukovych as his prime minister and Yushchenko's efforts to further democratize Ukraine were mostly fruitless. In 2010 Yanukovych was elected president, "marking an almost 180-degree reversal from the volatile democracy to possible stable but

stagnant rule" (Nalbandov, 2014, 59). Yanukovych promised the Ukrainian public that the country would sign an association agreement with the European Union but he simultaneously aligned economic policies with Russia (Afineevsky, 2015), a maneuver that preceded violent protests across the nation.

The Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan)

More politically-charged protests began in 2013 when the Ukrainian government refused to sign an association agreement that would advance them towards partnership with the European Union (EU) (Afineevsky, 2015; Shveda & Park, 2015). At the time, Ukrainian president Yanukovych had the lowest approval rating since the country declared independence, suggesting that the legitimacy of the government was compromised (Shveda & Park, 2015). Despite optimism that the Orange Revolution advanced Ukraine towards a more democratic system, the country failed to comprehensively reform its government since independence; it remained an ineffective system that was a combination of Soviet and oligarchic models. According to Shveda and Park (2015), "the current political crisis in Ukraine is simply the external manifestation of a systemic crisis: the political elite's lack of will to reform and their inefficiency in policymaking since the 1990s" (86); this "lack of will", and other extraneous factors related to political division, prompted students to protest the government's refusal to sign the agreement with the EU.

The protests began on November 21, 2013 in Kyiv and students rather than political parties played a crucial role in driving growth of the movement (Shveda & Park, 2015). The protests were initially peaceful – the atmosphere was more like a festival for freedom and being considered a part of Europe – with students demanding that the government return to foreign policies that would continue to improve Ukraine's trajectory toward European integration

(Afineevsky, 2015; Shveda & Park, 2015). However, "On the night of November 31, as the Maidan dwindled to less than half a thousand activists (most of them were students), authorities sent two thousand security forces, who dispersed the youth in a cruel and ruthless manner" (Shveda & Park, 2015, 87). These police were called Bekrut and had a reputation for corruption; they used iron sticks to beat the student protestors, which inflicted significant damage, and resulted in confusion and chaos. This was the first time as an independent nation when Ukrainians saw their authorities so openly brutalize the citizenry and demonstrate their disdain for peaceful protests (Afineevsky, 2015). What started as a peaceful protest turned into a battle between government and citizens, during which the government continued to use weapons against the citizenry (Shveda & Park, 2015).

Following police brutality against the students, the March of the Millions attracted hundreds of thousands of people to demonstrate that they disapproved of and were angry about what happened. Euromaidan grew essentially overnight from a protest mostly confined to Kyiv, to a movement across the nation (Afineevsky, 2015). Mykhalivs'kyi Zolotoverknyi Monastery, also known as St. Michel's golden-domed monastery, became a sanctuary for protestors; there were a drop-off for warm clothes, a food center, and a medical center all available to assist Euromaidan protestors. On December 11, 2013, during a particularly horrendous night of fighting between the government and protestors, leaders at the same monastery felt they needed to do something to demonstrate further support for those risking their lives to maintain Ukrainian autonomy. The monastery rang all their bells at once and they could be heard throughout Kyiv – a demonstration that hadn't been done since 1240A.D., when the Mongol-Tatars invaded Kyiv (Afineevsky, 2015). During the stage of Maidan-sich (struggle), the government attempted to prohibit public assembly but that only further emboldened protesters (Shveda & Park, 2015).

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Although protestors failed to seize presidential headquarters, they succeeded in overcoming the Kyiv state administration building and it became a sort of refuge for protestors; film footage shows them dancing, laughing, and playing music, despite the mayhem occurring outside (Afineevsky, 2015).

The Revolution of Dignity exhibited remarkable camaraderie despite the seemingly insurmountable obstacle that was the Ukrainian government. People came from all over the country with donations of food and clothes; medical workers traveled with all the supplies they could manage to provide their services to the wounded. Retired military offered their skills to teach protestors how to resist attacks, patrol, and defend their territories. Those who owned vehicles spearheaded a parallel protest called Automaidan, crowding the streets and impeding traffic in solidarity with the original protestors. The 2014 New Year celebration in Kyiv commenced with protestors chanting, "Slava, Ukrayini!" or "Glory to Ukraine!" Regarding the general sentiment of Ukrainians risking their lives for the cause, one protestor lamented

> We are not afraid to die for freedom. Freedom is for us. Freedom is ours. We will win, and Ukraine will be part of Europe, and Ukraine will be part of the free world! And we'll never be slaves. We will be free (Afineevsky, 2015).

In February 2014, the protestors demanded three political actions for the government to take before they would stand down: to release prisoners, to establish equal power between the executive and legislative branches, and to hold early presidential re-elections. The government did not immediately yield and fighting continued, culminating in fatal battles during which protestors continued to risk their lives as they attempted to rescue their wounded while still under fire. After 93 days of chaos, the Ukrainian government acquiesced to their demands and

President Yanukovych fled Ukraine on February 22, 2014 (Afineevsky, 2015). Although the president was overthrown and the government conceded to protestors, Shveda and Park (2015) posit that the Revolution of Dignity needed to continue in Ukrainians' hearts if it would result in a complete government restructuring and/or overhaul. While Euromaidan thwarted Ukraine's descent into authoritarianism, the "revolution will be deemed completed only when the newly formed coalition successfully implements a new political system with the approval of a majority of Ukrainians. In the end, this will determine the fate of Euromaidan" (Shveda & Park, 2015, 91).

A Question of Origin

It is impossible to consider Ukraine's rich cultural and political history without discussing its variable status over time with Europe and Russia. Prior to declaring independence in 1991, Ukraine had only one brief period of sovereignty from 1918 to 1920 and was significantly influenced by competing forces for hundreds of years. From the 16th century to the present day, the country has been regionally divided consistent with how power over these regions shaped demographics.[3] A primary consequence of regional differences is that Ukraine does not have a "continuous state-tradition" (Kappeler 2014, 110); perceptions of Ukrainian history, and the direction in which Ukraine should head in the future, are contingent on competing narratives that fail to capture the full history of Ukraine.

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[3] Western Ukraine is characterized by Polish, Hungarian, and Romanian influences, and presence of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19th century. Central Ukraine was ruled by Poland-Lithuania from the 16th to 18th centuries, and only became Russian territory in the mid-17th to early 18th century. From the 18th century onward, the steppes of southern Ukraine were populated mostly by Ukrainian-Russian peasants. Eastern Ukraine attracted many Russians since the 19th century with its industrial and mining sectors (Kappeler, 2014).

The Story of 'Big Russia, Little Russia'

  Since Russia has had significant influence in Ukraine, the status of Ukrainian people in Russian policy has fluctuated between Russians viewing Ukrainians as vital to the success and richness of Russian culture, to conversely seeing them as an inherently inferior people whom Russia needs to civilize. The concept of Russia as big brother and Ukraine as little brother first emerged in the 17th century, but perspectives on the meaning of this relationship certainly differed. Through the lens of Ukrainian writer Semen Divovych, who wrote poetry in 1762 regarding the relationship between Great Russia and Little Russia, one could conclude that the early years of Russia's presence in Ukraine were more of an equal partnership between a larger and smaller nation; that Ukrainians considered themselves an independent and autonomous people (Kappeler, 2003). In his verses, Divovych responds to Russia's assertion of being greater by saying,

> I know, that you are Russia,
> and this is my name too.
> Why do you frighten me? I am brave myself.
> I have become subject not to you, but to your lord,…
> Do not think that you yourself are my ruler,
> But your lord and my lord are in command of both of us.
> And the difference between us is only in adjectives,
> You the Great and I the Little live in bordering countries.
> That I am called Little and you Great
> Is not a strange thing to you or to me.
> For your borders are wider than mine,…
> Yet we are equal and form one whole,
> We swear allegiance to one, not to two lords -
> Thus, I consider you equal to myself (Kappeler, 2003, 7; Lindheim & Luckyj, 1996).

While this poetry illustrates the spirit of Ukrainian people, it also romanticizes their past with Russia.

  Divovych's poetry is an example of the Cossack myth and the freedom they supposedly enjoyed during these early years with Russia, which has been canonized in Ukrainian culture and

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is a popular version of history among Ukrainian people. When he wrote the poem, Catherine II (also known as Catherine the Great) was working to integrate Little Russia into the greater nation. The verses illustrate the intention of Ukrainians to remain an autonomous nation, despite their integration with Russia, but ultimately this was "wishful thinking of the Cossack elite" (Kappeler, 2003, 8). Although there were periods when Ukrainians were treated as relatively equal with Russians, the primary theme is one of russification.

After the 18th century, Ukraine was totally absorbed into Russian culture; from language to customs to religion, Russian and Ukrainian culture became so intertwined that today it is difficult to distinguish what is strictly Russian, and strictly Ukrainian – even the Ukrainian language is considered by many people, Europeans and Americans included – to be a dialect of Russian (Kappeler, 2014). In the 19th century Ukrainians attempted to question an all-Russian nation and cultivate their own national identity, to which Russia responded by persecuting Ukrainian culture and language from 1863 to 1905. Relations seemingly improved post-1917 revolution and endured even through the Soviet Union circa 1920s. During this period of respite, the Soviet Union considered its previous imperial policies exploitative of other nations, and instead advanced policies that placed Ukraine on more equal footing with Russia. However, Stalin's regime quickly eradicated any sense of equality between the nations, and Ukraine was reduced to "an obedient little sister of the great Russian brother" (Kappeler, 2003, 8). Stalin's regime also inflicted the Holodomor on Ukrainians, a manmade famine that killed millions and is considered the Holocaust of Ukraine (Conquest, 1987; Mass, 2013; Motyl, 2010; Perloff, 2009). Even after Stalin's death, the authoritarian nature of the Soviet Union continued and had lasting impact on Ukraine.

Aside from Russia's history of general dominance over Ukraine, there were less direct factors that also contributed to russification. Russia has long considered Ukraine a peasant culture, one which is their duty to civilize. In the 19th century, the "modern Ukrainian language and culture, which were under construction since the beginning of the century, were provincialized and limited more and more to the peasants. Only a small group of educated Ukrainians declared support for the Ukrainian language and culture and initiated an Ukrainian national movement" (Kappeler, 2003, 32). However, 19th century Ukrainians were educated in Russian schools and universities, meaning they viewed their own culture through a Russian lens. The use of family dynamics to describe the relationship between these two countries only further clouded cultural distinctions and resulted in Ukraine having a sort of inferiority complex. Initially, the big brother/little brother image illustrated how Ukraine should show deference to Russia and not overreach its authority. Using family dynamics as a descriptor for Russia-Ukraine relations has only complicated Ukraine's fight for independent statehood.

The Problem of a Single Story

The dichotomy between Russian and Ukrainian historical narratives derives from the debate over Kyivan-Rus, which was a large and successful state in Europe during Ukraine's early history (Country Watch, 2016; Kappeler, 2003; Kappeler, 2014;). In the Russian/Soviet narrative, Russia and Ukraine share a common heritage that started with Kyivan-Rus. In the 19th century, Russian historians published a history that was disseminated through official – and authoritative – textbooks, which prevails today. This narrative also discusses Ukraine's voluntary union with Russia in WWII and focuses on the implausible notion that the two nations can be separate because Ukrainians and Russians are one people (Kappeler, 2003). The family dynamics used to illustrate Russia-Ukraine relations help clarify the Russian lens through which history

between the two nations is perceived, and to understand why Russians would feel the two nations are inseparable when considering that they have long thought Ukraine to be a little brother. Although the Russian narrative focuses on the two nations being one people – i.e. a family – there are problematic characteristics of this perspective, such as Russia's refusal to this day to acknowledge that the Holodomor was a genocide (Kappeler, 2014; Motyl, 2010); Russia considering Ukraine a peasant culture, and therefore inferior (Kappeler, 2003; Kappeler, 2014); using the Orthodox church for continuing hegemony over Ukraine (Kappeler, 2014); and the issue that the "periods, during which Ukraine was part of other states, above all Poland-Lithuania, are interpreted as times of national and religious oppression" (Kappeler, 2014, 112). Although scholars (Watch, 2016; Nalbandov, 2014; Perloff, 2009) ascertain that other states attempted to assert dominance over Ukraine and didn't necessarily treat them as equals, the Russian narrative fails to acknowledge that Ukrainians have suffered to varying degrees over time under Russian rule as well.

There are symbols throughout Ukraine that challenge the Russian narrative; these include the trident, Cossack princes and Ivan Mazera on currency, statues of Taras Shevchenko (a beloved 19th century poet), and the name of Ukrainian currency (hryvna). It is not disputed that these people had an impact on the Ukrainian people, but in the context of the Ukrainian historical narrative "Foundation myths, heroes, villains, defeats, and victories are identified – and sometimes invented – so as to create 'narratives' that have implications for contemporary political movements" (Motyl, 2010, 26); without these foundation myths and the Ukrainian version of history, it can be argued that there would have been no impetus for the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. Additionally, part of the canonized Ukrainian historical narrative is that they belonged to Poland-Lithuania for two centuries longer than

Russia and therefore have stronger ties to Europe (Kappeler, 2014), but what Ukraine views as 'the West' has evolved over time contingent on circumstances. For example, initially when Germany occupied the country, Ukrainians behaved favorably toward the Germans because their opinion of the Soviet Union was low, given their experience during Holodomor. However, their amicable feelings toward Germany faded when they realized that Germans also viewed Ukrainians as an inferior population (Rywkin, 2014). Despite current United States foreign policy positions on the situation in Ukraine, shortly before Ukraine declared themselves an independent state in August 1991, U.S. President George H.W. Bush gave his famous 'Chicken Kiev' speech, during which he urged Ukraine to unite with Russia (Rywkin, 2014). In other words, even western policy positions have not always expressed support for a Ukraine independent from Russia.

The reality of these two nations' historical narrative is that they are both biased. The Russian narrative focuses heavily on their empire, culture, language, and rhetoric around the familial ties between Russia and Ukraine; the Ukrainian narrative is skewed towards the foundational myths of the Cossacks (Kappeler, 2003). An accurate historical narrative is far more complicated, given the cultural interrelationship between Russian and Ukraine.[4] The similarities between their language, culture, and religion are prevalent enough to complicate distinguishing between them. Given Russia's great influence on eastern European states over time, it is difficult to designate the Tsarist and the Soviet empires as strictly Russian because their impact was not confined to the modern-day national borders of Russia (Kappeler, 2003). The migration of people throughout eastern Europe, particularly ethnic Russians to Ukraine,

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[4] A more in-depth analysis of Ukrainian history is outside the scope of this paper; a detailed overview of Ukrainian history can be found in various sources on the subject (Kappeler, 2000; Magocsi, 1996; Subtelvy, 1994).

further blurs the boundaries between Ukrainian and Russian narratives; political ideology is

regionally divided consistent with Ukraine's demography, and contributes to political instability

that persists today.[5]

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[5] Regional differences will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Ukraine After Euromaidan

The Revolution of Dignity, or Euromaidan, was significant for various reasons; not only did the protests signify the first time Ukrainians witnessed outright police brutality against the populace, but it also provoked governmental reforms that had not been the result of either independence from the Soviet Union or the Orange Revolution in 2004. The resignation of Yanukovych and early election of not President Poroshenko was only the beginning of an ongoing complicated reform process occurring at all levels of government in Ukraine. Although there have been some visible systemic changes due to these nascent reforms, there remain cultural and demographic issues that may or may not impede Ukraine's decentralization.

Demography, Language, the Issue of Crimea, and War in the Donbas

The demographic makeup of Ukraine perpetuates socio-political differences that might otherwise be ameliorated if the majority had a common thread they could utilize in their cultural and political narratives. As Ukraine developed into a more urban and industrialized nation over time, Russians felt encouraged to migrate and settle in Ukraine. As Kappeler (2014) noted, from the 18th century onward the southern region of the country was primarily comprised of Ukrainian-Russian peasants, and 19th century industrialization prompted Russian migration into the eastern region of the country. Ethnic Russians constitute roughly 17 percent of the entire Ukrainian population, and they are primarily concentrated in eastern and southern Ukraine (Charnysh, 2012; Kappeler, 2014). Although almost one-fifth is a considerable portion of the population, even more people speak Russian as a first language – nearly 50 percent (Kappeler, 2003; Kappeler, 2014). These realities perpetuate complications associated with determining Ukraine's future trajectory and sovereignty.

Politicians have effectively used the linguistic dichotomy as a tool for eliciting a sense of identity, and therefore mobilizing electoral blocs. This strategy has been successful because in Ukraine, language is regional and historically has been a major source of contention in the country.[6] Charnysh (2012) calls this strategy "identity bidding" and posits that it has been intrinsic to Ukrainian politics since independence from the Soviet Union; it is effective in Ukraine because the extent to which

> identity-based strategies mobilize votes depends on the emotional valence of a particular cleavage…In Ukraine, language arguably evokes strong sentiments because of the emotional scars left by centuries of forced russification under Russian tsars and the Soviet government (Charnysh, 2012, 3).

It's important to emphasize that while 17 percent of the population in Ukraine is ethnically Russian, language does not equal ethnicity. Nearly 16 percent of self-declared Ukrainians consider Russian their native tongue, and even more speak it in their homes (Charnysh, 2012). Although everyday language usage may not foster hostility among Ukrainians, its utility in politics is strengthened by a "pro-Russian elite glorifying the Soviet past, vilifying Ukrainian nationalists and narrowing the space for the Ukrainian language" (Samokhvalov, 2015, 1385). The politicization of language has deepened the chasm between ideological camps in Ukraine, and it is inextricably linked to the historical narratives which Ukrainians claim to be true.

One of the most hotly contested regions in Ukraine is the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in March 2014, shortly after the Revolution of Dignity ended (Myers &

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[6] Ukrainian historically was mostly spoken by peasants and considered an inferior language. Even in the 19th century, only a small group of educated Ukrainians spoke their native language and advocated for wider usage. Furthermore, Ukrainian is often misidentified as a Russian dialect by foreigners, rather than its own language (Kappeler, 2003; Kappeler, 2014).

Barry, 2014; Treisman, 2016). Ukrainian President Yanukovych's government fell on February

21, 2014, and Russia annexed the region roughly a week later (Myers & Barry, 2014). However,

Russian President Putin's reasons for acquiring the region are not entirely clear. Interpretations

regarding motive include fear that NATO was expanding, that Ukraine would join NATO, and

subsequently that Ukraine would oust Russia's Black Sea fleet from Sevastopol; that Russia is

trying to reclaim territories of the former Soviet Union; that Putin was trying to protect ethnic

Russians in Crimea and promote the peninsula's self-determination; and that it was merely a

quick response to Ukrainian President Yanukovych's failed government (Treisman, 2016). The

theory that Putin annexed Crimea to protect ethnic Russians can be discarded because the

Ukrainian nationalist threat there was fabricated; additionally, Putin showed little to no interest

over the years in whether the peninsula could self-determine (Treisman, 2016). There is some

weight to the argument that the maneuver was strategic to reclaim territories of the former Soviet

Union, especially given that Crimea has only been part of Ukraine since the mid-20th century.

The region was originally settled by Tatars and for part of its history was protected by the

Ottoman Empire, before it was conquered by Catherine the Great and made a Russian territory.

In 1954, former Soviet statesman Nikita Khrushchev gifted the peninsula to Ukraine to

commemorate the country's 300th anniversary of being united with Russia (Rywkin, 2014).

However, Putin's actions leading up to the annexation do not make total sense when considered

alongside the theory that seizing Crimea was an imperial plot to restore the Soviet Union. There

is speculation that Putin was unaware Yanukovych's government would crumble until just before

it happened, and this is supported by the $3 billion Russia loaned to Ukraine in December 2013 –

after the Revolution of Dignity already started (Treisman, 2016). It is possible that annexing

Crimea was merely a product of circumstance. Ukraine was nowhere near NATO membership

when Russia seized the peninsula, given that Yanukovych's government was enacting policies in the opposite direction (Afineevsky, 2015; Samokhvalov, 2015; Shveda & Park, 2015; Treisman, 2016). Considering that Russian troops were already present in Crimea, and that the region is too small to thrive economically if autonomous, it is plausible that annexing the peninsula was the most strategic option at the time (Treisman, 2016). Regardless of the impetus behind seizing the peninsula, Crimea has a large ethnically Russian population that supports Russian interests, much like other regions in eastern Ukraine.

In February 2014, Russia supported separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine and ultimately provoked a war that continues today. The conflict was sparked when President Yanukovych was ousted from Ukrainian government as a result of the Revolution of Dignity (Coman, 2017). The war is occurring in a region known as the Donbas, which is primarily Russophone and was an industrial giant prior to Ukrainian independence. The Donbas has suffered economically since independence, and partial impetus behind separatist ideology is economic instability. Overall, Ukraine's annual gross domestic product (GDP) has not improved significantly since independence (Coman, 2017). However, there is regional disagreement around the direction in which Ukraine should go with economic interests. Ukrainians farther east largely support closer alliance with Russia, but "From Kiev to Lviv, western Ukrainians are desperate to integrate further, believing that EU disciplines will normalize one of the most corrupt societies in the world and boost one of the least successful economies of all the former Soviet states" (Coman, 2017). Despite economic interests provoking the war, prior to 2014 the region produced 16 percent of Ukraine's GDP but is now flailing (Buckley, Clem, Fox, & Herrod, 2018). Although the 2015 Minsk ceasefire agreements attempted to stop violence and reintegrate separatists into Ukraine (Coman, 2017), the current situation is a stalemate. Buckley, Clem, Fox, and Herrod

(2018) designate the war in the Donbas as "among the worst humanitarian crises in the world."

More than 13,000 people have died in the war, but the total number of victims exceeds 40,000

(Number of donbas conflict victims exceeds 40,000 – UN, 2019). Infrastructure in the Donbas is

crumbling as a result of warfare; children cannot go to school, people do not have heat and/or

running water because pipes are damaged, people do not have access to vital medicine, doctors

are difficult to find, and numerous hospitals have been damaged (Buckley, Clem, Fox, & Herrod,

2018; Coman, 2017). The war has displaced thousands of people throughout Ukraine, and

considering regional ideological differences, eastern Ukrainians are not always able to easily

integrate in other parts of the country (Coman, 2017). Presently there is no viable solution to the

conflict that has torn apart Ukraine; while the country combats separatists and Russian

aggressors in the east, it also contends with other issues instigated by Russia.

The Sea of Azov and Continued Dependence on Russia

On November 25, 2018, conflict escalated between the Ukrainian and Russian navy fleets

in the Sea of Azov. This body of water lies on the eastern side of Crimea, closer to Russia. As

Ukrainian ships were passing from the Black Sea through the Kerch Strait, to the Sea of Azov, a

Russian border guard boat opened fire on them ("Russian border guard boat opens fire on

Ukrainian Navy Ships", 2018). There are trading ports on the Sea of Azov and access to these is

vital to Ukraine's economy, considering 80 percent of the country's exports pass through this

region ("Ukraine and russia take their conflict to the sea", 2018). Although Ukraine and Russia

have officially been able to freely use the body of water since a 2003 agreement ("Russia-

ukraine sea clash in 300 words", 2018; "Ukraine and russia take their conflict to the sea", 2018),

construction on a bridge between Russia and Crimea has complicated the arrangement, and since

early 2015 "Moscow has subjected Ukrainian vessels to its own authorization procedures to traverse the strait" ("Ukraine and russia take their conflict to the sea", 2018).

Of course, there is disagreement between the two nations – and the international community – regarding why the Russian guard boats opened fire; Russia claims that the Ukrainian ship was in Russian waters, but further analysis of exact coordinates confirmed that both boats were in international space. The conflict provoked Ukrainian President Poroshenko to initiate martial law for a 30-day period, during which additional security checkpoints were established and Russian immigration to Ukraine was restricted ("Russia-ukraine sea clash in 300 words", 2018). Although there was no further escalation, the provocation is an example of how Ukrainians are constantly reminded of the omnipresent Russian threat.

Despite Russian aggression towards Ukraine, the dark reality is that Ukraine still depends on them for necessary resources, such as gas. Ceasing trade with Russia would be detrimental to Ukraine, given that they are the country's primary trading partner (Kappeler, 2014). Ukraine's heavy dependence gives Russia a political tool that they can use for manipulation (Rywkin, 2014), and further complicates situations such as the conflict in the Sea of Azov. The obvious solution for circumstances like these would be for Ukraine to cut some ties with Russia but doing so would mean committing national suicide and plunging the country into a resource crisis. Although the hryvnia – Ukrainian national currency – has stabilized (Haring, 2017), people are still suffering an economic crisis and relations with Russia remain a delicate balance. Given Ukraine's comprehensive reform process in the wake of Euromaidan, questions remain regarding how this dependence on Russia will be managed in the future.

Decentralization, Corruption, and Looking Forward

The 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity sparked a wave of governmental reforms unlike any Ukraine had seen since independence from the Soviet Union. The process continues today and permeates all levels of government but moving forward has been fraught with lack of clarity and continuity. Ukraine is a unitary state, meaning that it is centralized, and the bulk of authoritative power is in the national government (Kozyrev, 2019). However, the post-revolution climate has seen efforts to decentralize and combine smaller communities so that there are fewer levels of administrative bureaucracy; this process is called amalgamation and has been a voluntary endeavor for communities, but it is expected that by 2020 all communities eligible to do so will have amalgamated (Erheshov, 2019).

Currently the Ukrainian national government has three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive is comprised of the President, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Central Elections Commission, Constitutional Court, Prosecutor General's Office, and National Anti-Corruption Bureau (Kozyrev, 2019) – this last institution is a direct result of the revolution, decentralization, and attempts to mitigate corruption in a culture where it is rampant. An example of executive power is budget decentralization, which is conducted by different ministers who are designated by the President and approved by the legislature. The legislative branch is called the Verkhovna Rada and there are 450 representatives who serve five-year terms; half are selected via ballot/self-nomination, and the other half are selected according to party affiliation. A recent example of legislative power is approving martial law when it was declared by the President, following Russian aggression towards Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov. The judiciary branch – or Supreme Court – sets national government responsibilities, but the actual workings of this

branch are confusing for everyone because their responses vary (Kozyrev, 2019); i.e., they fail to set and follow precedents.

Ukraine is made up of 24 oblasts, a region that is akin to a state in the United States; the autonomous region of Crimea; and two cities of special significance, which are Kyiv and Sevastopol. There also are raions, which are like counties in the United States (Kozyrev, 2019). The primary purpose for amalgamation is to transfer power and resources to local communities (Erheshov, 2019) because prior to starting this process it was concentrated in the national government. The administrative levels of government that existed before amalgamation fostered confusion and were conducive to high levels of corruption because it was never clear who was accountable. The ultimate goal is to eliminate the raion level and only have amalgamated communities, but this has created a power struggle between the old and new systems (Kozyrev, 2019); the reality is that people are losing their positions/jobs as a consequence of this process, and determining who will hold positions of power in the future is causing contention. Regarding boundaries for communities, there are pockets between some that have amalgamated but the goal is to have contiguous boundaries so that all communities are part of larger administrative centers (Kozyrev, 2019). Amalgamation has created challenges that were not relevant to the old administrative structure, such as local communities needing to draft their own budgets, foster participatory government, promote transparency, and fight corruption.

Budget decentralization also is a result of the Revolution of Dignity, and it is independent of compiling and executing budgets. This process includes improved governmental transfers, optimized spending authority, and communities independently developing their local budgets. There is a national/local tax system in Ukraine, but community leaders don't always know how to explain to constituents the importance of paying taxes, and the services and/or infrastructure

they provide; there is a need to develop a better tax culture at the local community level. There are additional opportunities to improve local budget revenue that include improved employee qualifications, better administration of tax money, and working more closely with taxpayers. However, continued problems with budget transparency, alienation between authorities and the public, and ensuring continuity make genuine progress towards effective budget decentralization more difficult (Malynyak, 2019).

Ukraine, like many other post-Soviet states, is notorious for corrupt practices at all levels of society. Three anti-corruption agencies were established from 2015-2018 in the wake of the Revolution of Dignity (Koriukalov, 2019), including the executive branch's National Anti-Corruption Bureau (Kozyrev, 2019); this illustrates a concerted national effort to address this rampant issue. Although a high percentage of Ukrainians feel that corruption is common, few believe they have the power to improve the situation. Through surveys and value-based focus groups, MSI Worldwide discovered that 41.5% of participants indicated having actual experience with corruption, but there are discrepancies in what is perceived as corruption. Participants differentiated between governmental and everyday corruption, and generally didn't feel that everyday corruption was an issue (Koriukalov, 2019). There is the perception that the overall situation in Ukraine is terrible but that individual communities are perfect (Daschakivska, 2019), a sentiment which aligns with Dickinson's (2017) assertion that Ukrainians' habit of pessimism is the most damaging enemy to reform and progress. People are over-sensitized to corruption but are not necessarily able to recognize these practices in themselves; media coverage perpetuates perceptions that corruption is rampant and unsolvable, while there remains little individual accountability in everyday life (Koriukalov, 2019). The negativity Ukrainians feel toward their overall structure is pervasive and they are able to find the worst aspects in any

situation and turn them into reasons explaining why efforts will not work and/or are not worth

pursuing (Dickinson, 2017). Respondents from MSI Worldwide's research indicated they want

systemic change but cannot articulate how this should be achieved (Koriukalov, 2019), and lack

of understanding how change can be achieved is compounded by negativity that serves the

function of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Constantly talking down Ukraine's chances hampers the

post-Maidan transformation process in real ways. It makes it much more difficult for reformers

to maintain the momentum needed in order to overcome decades of inertia. It consolidates the

status quo and strengthens the position of those who advocate resignation in the face of

impossible odds (Dickinson, 2017).

When asked if they would be willing to participate in anti-corruption activities, 36.5%

indicated they are ready to do so, while only 11.5% indicated they already actively participate in

such efforts (Koriukalov, 2019); this demonstrates that even if there are opportunities to

participate in anti-corruption activities, most Ukrainians would not engage. Suggested solutions

for combatting not only corruption but also general disengagement among the populace include

increasing access to services, digitizing services, and working with youth. (Koriukalov, 2019).

Fortunately, despite attitudes remaining pessimistic towards national-level corruption,

perceptions of corruption at the local-level have decreased ("Ukraine poll: local outlook

improves as national pessimism remains high", 2017), indicating that perhaps reforms at the

local level are having a positive impact.

Although the country is actively reforming and there is uncertainty regarding whether

these efforts will have staying power, there is positive work happening to support a post-Maidan

Ukraine. Transparency International strives to influence perceptions of corruption, and they have

methodologies and roadmaps that can assist organizations in Ukraine working in this area. There

is a coalition of non-governmental organizations that collaborates to have a louder voice and be heard by local government; an example of one such coalition is the Center for Reform in Ternopil, Ternopils'ka Oblast (Ishchenko, 2019). There have also been efforts to increase citizen participation in budget hearings, and persuading people to understand it is their right to participate (Malynyak, 2019). It is important to consider that while there are non-governmental efforts to support the reform process, the situation in Ukraine remains delicate. Haring (2017) posited that the "sad reality is that Ukraine's reforms have stalled, and the window of opportunity is starting to close." With the presidential election approaching on March 31, 2019 – and a runoff scheduled for April 21 – the reform momentum that has been building since the Revolution of Dignity concluded could turn as quickly as it started.

Chapter 3: Administrative Frameworks and Post-Soviet Reformation

Models for Reform in Post-Communist Europe

There are three public administration models that are considered more traditional and are addressed in existing research regarding reform in post-Soviet space: Weberian, Neo-Weberian, and New Public Management. The Weberian model was created by Max Weber, the prominent 19th century German philosopher, sociologist, and political economist. The Weberian tradition is the most hierarchical of all public administration models and focuses on clearly defined duties, job security for civil servants, and established rules of conduct. It is important to respect authority regardless of opinion, individuals are hired as administrators based on merit, and there is an expectation that those entering administrative fields will become career civil servants (Czaputowicz, 2015; Goran, 2009; Weber, n.d.). Advantages of the Weberian approach include a high degree of professionalism, continuity, clear responsibilities, and protections of the public interest, since administrators are hired on merit rather than other factors – such as political affiliation (Czaputowicz, 2015; Goran, 2009). However, this approach also might inhibit change due to its highly structured nature and it may be ineffective for addressing citizens' needs. Some scholars argue this model is not sufficient to meet demands in the modern world and that it mistakenly assumes changes in law automatically provoke change in people's behavior; "for that to happen, a change in people's mindset is necessary, which does not automatically follow the change of law" (Czaputowicz, 2015, 9). Goran (2009) opines that while the model has some disadvantages, the Weberian tradition may be most effective for implementing reforms in post-Soviet space because their systems are historically hierarchical. The guidelines of Weberian administration may be necessary for ensuring lasting reform efficacy in post-Communist countries because these nations' systems most resemble Weberian's basic structure. However, it

also is possible that the Weberian model may only perpetuate existing issues in post-Soviet space.

The Neo-Weberian model for public administration is somewhat less focused on hierarchy, but still retains many tenets of the Weberian tradition. There is more emphasis on public needs and a degree of representative bureaucracy,[7] which is achieved by focusing less on internal rules. Both the Weberian and Neo-Weberian traditions assume that civil servants will act rationally instead of pursuing personal interests in their administrative capacity, and critics also argue that these models neglect to acknowledge how outside actors influence the field of public administration; i.e., these models assume that public administration is the only institution affecting the public despite there also being influential nongovernmental actors, such as community organization and private corporations (Czaputowicz, 2015). Although Neo-Weberian administration attempts to incorporate representative bureaucracy, it does not account for how external environments affect bureaucracy.

New Public Management (NPM) is a market-based approach to public administration. This model assumes that the public and private sectors are not inherently different, and therefore a privatized approach can be taken with bureaucracy (Goran, 2009). Similar to economic approaches to markets, NPM focuses on efficiency and how public demand should drive administrative policy (Czaputowicz, 2015; Goran, 2009). Within this framework, people accessing administrative services are essentially customers and it is the government's responsibility to convince the public to support administrative decisions (Czaputowicz, 2015).

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[7] Representative bureaucracy is a form of administration that prioritizes representation of the population in the actual makeup of civil servants. In other words, bureaucrats should reflect the demographic characteristics and values of the population(s) they represent (Krislov, 1974). While Neo-Weberian bureaucracy does not quite reach this level of representation, it incorporates eliciting citizens' opinions to try and meet public needs.

Czaputowicz (2015) and Goran (2009) disagree regarding the appropriateness of NPM as a model for public administration in post-Soviet space; while Czaputowicz (2015) argues that this approached has improved administration because it is more responsive to public needs, Goran (2009) posits that it is not the ideal model because the "liberalisation of working conditions in practice leads to further politcisation and destablisation of public services" (108). Although NPM is much less structured than the Weberian and Neo-Weberian models, treating the public sector like an economic market may further entrench administrative habits developed when nations were in the Soviet sphere.

While the Weberian, Neo-Weberian, and New Public Management frameworks differ in some respects, they all incorporate a degree hierarchy and structure. The opposite of these models is New Public Governance (NPG), which is an administrative framework that is naturally horizontal and most aligned with open systems theory.[8] This framework acknowledges the relationship between government and nongovernmental actors, and "Governance refers to horizontal interactions in which public and private actors on many levels coordinate their operations to implement policies and provide public services" (Czaputowicz, 2015, 10). Of all the models, NPG is most likely to consider cultural factors and attempt to remain culturally unobtrusive. This strategy may be beneficial in post-Communist nations because it accounts for the importance of "better policy participation, coordination and cooperation of central and local administrations, as well as non-governmental institutions" (Goran, 2009, 109). Like other post-Soviet nations, Ukraine has a weak civil society and people generally distrust governmental and nongovernmental institutions, which creates challenges when nongovernmental organizations

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[8] An open system theory accounts for the symbiotic relationship between administration and external environments. Essentially, administration is affected by outside factors, and the external environment is also affected by actions within administration (Gaus, 1947).

attempt to mobilize the public towards better civic engagement (Lutsevych, 2013). Government

and weak civil society are both responsible for the unsuccessful democratization of post-Soviet

nations, and

> The weakness of civil society not only renders citizens helpless to prevent backsliding by
>
> ruling elites, it also allows those holding power to commit abuses. This is vividly
>
> illustrated in Ukraine. Selective justice in imprisoning opposition leaders, media
>
> censorship, corruption, raids on businesses and the use of force against non-violent
>
> protests are just some examples of the country's degradation (Lutsevych, 2013, 10).

Since NPG is structurally horizontal, it might be useful for challenging hierarchies,

politicization, and corrupt practices promoted by a ruling elite. This framework is entirely

devoted to building trust between administration and the public, and resources used for

maintaining hierarchy and internal rules within the traditional models are redirected in NPG to

ensure administration is adequately meeting public needs (Czaputowicz, 2015; Goran, 2009).

This framework has potential to bridge the divide between government and citizens and

contribute to the overall health of civil society in post-Communist nations. While the lack of

strict guidelines and hierarchy make NPG more flexible, there is criticism that focusing too much

on public needs and not enough on internal organization can inhibit administration's efficacy

(Czaputowicz, 2015).

There is no consensus on which of the four public administration frameworks is best for

implementing reform in post-Soviet space. There are obvious challenges with affecting change in

these countries, given the history of politicized administrations in the Soviet Union. Some

nations have attempted reform since the dissolution of the USSR; research regarding the success

of reforms in Slovenia, Romania, and Albania provides helpful insight into the process and

whether reforms became institutionalized.

Comparing Administrative Reforms in Post-Communist States

Although several decades have passed since the USSR dissolved, post-Soviet nations still

are struggling with successfully reforming public administration. Existing research shows that

these countries have applied administration systems from abroad, which can be problematic

because this approach fails to acknowledge that cultural values

> are in fact the cornerstones of state and administrative systems, shaping the structure and
>
> culture of administrative organizations. Administrative traditions change, but are path
>
> dependent, so the same reform measure implemented within different administrative
>
> traditions may result in very different outcomes. Administrations do not stem from the
>
> same model and move in the same direction (Goran, 2009, 107).

In other words, culture plays a significant role in shaping the direction of administrative systems;

models from abroad are not immune from being manipulated to align with ingrained cultural

values. The literature suggests that implementing foreign administrative systems in post-

Communist countries has been inconsistent with their cultural values, and commonly cited

obstacles to effective reform are politicization and institutionalization. Reform experiences in

Slovenia, Albania, and Romania provide insight into the success of transplanting administration

systems from abroad.

Slovenia adopted administration reform directly from western frameworks, with little to

no modification based on country-specific needs and was considered a model country for

administrative reform in post-Soviet space. Relative to other countries in the Soviet sphere,

Slovenia fared better than others and maintained some political standards originating from Communism as it was practiced in the USSR while implementing western administrative frameworks (Bugaric & Kuhelj, 2015). The persistence of Communist political norms was a significant obstacle to the success of western frameworks, and ultimately long-established informal rules in this environment undermined the formal rules that were aligned with administrative models and initiated during reform. The friction between cultural norms and reform did nothing to combat politicization in Slovenia, and the country was unable to effectively institutionalize reform; civil service remains a sector in which elites promote their self-interest on the premise of political criteria (Bugaric & Kuhelj, 2015).

While working towards membership in the European Union (EU), Romania was subject to oversight during reform implementation. Initially they transitioned successfully to an impartial civil service, but that success seems to have been tied to EU supervision. The country was under conditional reforming from 1996 to 2006 while trying to gain EU membership, and during this time they practiced administrative standards such as merit-based appointment/hiring for civil servants and refraining from discussing personal political beliefs while operating in a professional capacity. After becoming an EU nation, Romania regressed to old patterns established during Communist rule; like Slovenia, the country's administrative system remains highly politicized due to inadequate reform institutionalization.

Albania's experience with public administration reform differs from the aforementioned cases, in part due to cultural values that stem from former incorporation in the Ottoman Empire versus the Habsburg tradition. Slovenia and Romania both descend from the Habsburg tradition, which emphasized rule of law and a bourgeois society; Albania's Ottoman history did not foster an environment for more adherence to such standards and resulted in a patrimonial form of

Communism and highly corrupt administrative system (Škarica, 2012). Compared to other post-Soviet nations, Albania also suffered more under Stalinism and human rights abuses were rampant. After independence from the USSR, reform was further hindered by a civil war and other external factors; initial attempts at public administration reform were too like socialist traditions for the sector to be de-politicized, and there are questions regarding whether a non-western public administration framework would have been more suitable for Albania (Škarica, 2012). Although Albania incorporated more European Union (EU) standards at the turn of the 21st century, when the country began working towards EU membership, Škarica (2012) notes that "almost every report accentuates implementation problems; the reforms are not rooted enough in the minds of people implementing them. Institutionalization of reforms is still embryonic" (384).

Existing research demonstrates issues with reforming public administration in various post-Soviet countries. However, little research exists regarding the situation in Ukraine. Considering the nation's history and continued problems with political instability, analysis of administrative reform may provide useful information regarding why they have been unable to effectively democratize and implement reforms.

Chapter 4: Situating the Research

Conceptual Framework

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine, the researcher seeks to determine whether politicization and institutionalization are barriers to effective public administration reform in her country of service.[9] Since the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, the country has endured numerous policy changes aimed at comprehensively reforming government and decentralizing administrative systems. While there is a range of research assessing public administration reforms in other post-Soviet states (Bugaric & Kuhelj, 2015; Goran, 2009; Iancu, 2013; Nalbandov, 2014; Škarica, 2012), there is little research on the subject for Ukraine. Considering the nation's relatively recent political revolution and efforts to reform, this is an opportune moment in Ukraine's history to assess the efficacy of public administration reforms, and whether they are subject to issues associated with politicization and institutionalization.

This research was conducted with two underlying assumptions: the first is that based on Ukraine's history, the general trend exhibited by other post-Soviet nations regarding problems implementing democratization and public administration reforms will hold; the second is that the Communist history of Ukraine is one obstacle to effective change (Stevens, 2017, 6-7). There are various lenses through which this research could be conducted but given the researcher's position as an outsider in her community of service, a culturalist approach is the most appropriate lens for assessing how Ukraine's history contributes to the obstacles it has encountered while trying to democratize. Culturalist theory was suggested by Eckstein (1988) as a lens for explaining political change. This approach is rooted in concepts of human development and

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[9] For the scope of this research, "effective" refers to how resilient public administration reform is to issues of politicization and institutionalization; i.e., whether reform efforts are becoming successfully ingrained in a culture that is notoriously politicized and corrupt.

behavior, and how learned behaviors manifest in society. The theory relies on the idea that human behavior is guided by orientations, which are learned behavior patterns that people develop earlier in life. Orientations are not spontaneous and are formed by culture; they are inherently different from attitudes because they cannot be easily circumvented. They essentially are the control center for the brain and the lens(es) through which people process and react to the world around them (Eckstein, 1988).

All people have orientations, but when they occur on a larger scale – i.e. among large populations – they are referred to as "culture themes" and guide reactions and actions for affected demographics (Mead & Metraux, 1954). Culture themes are important for conceptualizing this research because they are pervasive and not easily penetrated. It is difficult to alter orientations in culture themes because they are comprised of early learned behaviors with significant permanence. They are dichotomous and dictated by dynamics such as trust-distrust, hierarchy-equality, coercion-liberty, and parochial-national identifications (Pye & Verba, 1965), which are useful to reference for this research given Ukraine's history and current political situation. The researcher will be able to analyze how decentralization efforts affect Ukraine's orientation in these dichotomies, considering the country's political pendulum swings between the extremes that align with these dynamics. Additionally, culture themes will be useful for understanding how Ukraine's reform efforts compare with those in other post-Soviet spaces. Some countries have been more successful with reforming public administration than others, and Nalbandov (2014) argues that Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine have different reform outcomes because they have variable cultural and/or political climates, which have more impact on change than typically referenced economic circumstances. Lovelace, the Director for the Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, opined that

Nations democratize at a different pace: Some achieve high governance standards, lasting

political stability, and robust economies; others are lingering in their desires to look and

act like their democratic counterparts. While no country strictly follows patterns of

democratic institutionalization, there is a variable that defines the rate of success of their

efforts: their political cultures (Nalbandov, 2014, vii).

Overall, a culturalist lens will be especially useful for understanding behavior in the context of

reform implementation.

Service in a Local Government Organization

The researcher was placed in a local government organization that is the direct result of

decentralization efforts in Ukraine; it is one of the administrative centers created to provide

better service provision to constituents. Located in western Ukraine in Rivnens'ka Oblast, the

Rivne Center for Administrative Services was opened on January 29, 2016 with the participation

of Ukrainian President Poroshenko. This administrative services center has a reputation for being

the best of its kind in Ukraine. These centers represent a national effort to unite regional

authorities, eliminate unnecessary levels of bureaucracy, streamline services, and make services

more accessible to the populace. The organization's mission at which the volunteer is placed is:

Creation of a single space for the provision of administrative services and organizing cooperation

between local governments and civil society, in order to generate new creative solutions for the

development of the city of Rivne.

The Rivne Center for Administrative Services has five sectors. In passport services,

employees can issue, replace, and exchange international passports for Ukrainian citizens. People

visit residence registration to address all needs related to their places of residence, and this proof

of residence is needed for voting, business, taxes, etc. – similar to residence registration

requirements in the United States.[10] The sector for administrative services fulfills constituents'

multiple administrative needs including architecture and construction, land relations, trade and

catering, security of state labor, ecology and natural resources, and forestry and hunting. Public

registration of legal persons and physical business entrepreneurship deals with all administrative

services related to registering businesses and public associations. Finally, the sector for public

registration of real property deals with all matters regarding real estate in the region. In 2017

these five sectors served a total of 245,101 people; the busiest sector was residence registration,

which served nearly half of all visitors that year.

The researcher's volunteer placement is constructed in the format of an open office. All

administrators are visible and there are few individual office spaces. Upon arriving, visitors

approach reception and receive a number in the queue. There are smart screens placed

throughout the building that show the numbers and sectors next in line, and which administrator

visitors need to attend. An express services option is available for some, depending on their

administrative needs. The entire system feels much like going to the Department of Motor

Vehicles in the United States; it's very organized and efficient, as far as administrative

bureaucracy is concerned.

The sponsor for Peace Corps Ukraine's community development (CD) project is the

Ukrainian Ministry of Regional Development, and the CD logical project framework (LPF) was

updated in 2018 to reflect the ministry's desire to focus more on organizational capacity

development. The LPF has three objectives, which are to strengthen organizations' capacity and

promote organizational learning; improve organizations' project design and management

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[10] These requirements are similar in theory, but actual practical application will be discussed in more detail later.

practices; and promote collaborative engagement among organizations and community stakeholders. The Rivne Center for Administrative Services waited two years to receive a Peace Corps Volunteer, whom they desired to assist with streamlining practices, improving employee engagement, strategic planning, developing Rivne in the model of a SMART city, engaging youth, and collaborating with community partners to promote better community engagement. Based on how their self-identified needs fit within the context of the Peace Corps Ukraine CD LPF, a volunteer's work should focus on developing people within the organization to strengthen their capacity for developing and implementing projects related to their needs. After observing dynamics within the organization, the researcher determined her skills would most likely contribute best to developing employees so they could effectively work on improving employee engagement, strategic planning, engaging youth, and collaborating with community partners.

Overall, the Rivne Center for Administrative Services is an ideal placement for conducting research related to public administration reform through a cultural lens. Considering it and organizations like it are the direct result of decentralization efforts, these institutions have an opportunity to develop practices and organizational culture that limit politicization and contribute to overall reform institutionalization; since they did not exist prior to Euromaidan, they may not be subject to pre-revolution organizational practices that might inhibit reform. Conducting this research through a culturalist lens will help the researcher analyze how broader cultural norms influence organizational development and implementation of public administration reforms in Ukraine.

Methodology

Delimitations

While problems inhibiting effective public administration reform are not limited to politicization and institutionalization, this research is limited to these two obstacles because the literature for other post-Soviet states most commonly refers to them as barriers (Bugaric & Kuhelj, 2015; Goran, 2009; Iancu, 2013; Nalbandov, 2004; Škarica, 2012). Considering the literature commonly cites politicization and institutionalization, it is reasonable to assume that these are known obstacles and therefore useful for conducting similar research in Ukraine.

This is a small-scale qualitative study confined to the researcher's placement at a local government organization as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine. Information and prior scholarly research are useful for providing context that illustrates how history affects present circumstances at the researcher's volunteer placement. Although community development Peace Corps Volunteers devote 24 months to serving with an organization in their community, a significant amount of time is spent learning about and integrating with the culture. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to conduct research beyond the scope of the researcher's volunteer placement. The small-scale nature of this study allows the researcher to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the organization in which she is placed and provide detailed accounts of their administrative role in her community of service.

Data Collection

Qualitative research methods were utilized in this research. While quantitative analysis would have been valuable for conducting research related to public administration reform in Ukraine, data in the country is notoriously unreliable and often inaccessible. There also may have been a language barrier while using quantitative data, and information easily could have been lost or manipulated when translating information from Ukrainian/Russian to English. Given

the researcher's limited time in-country and lack of enough language skills, qualitative research is most appropriate for conducting this study.

The researcher employed a triangulation of qualitative research methods to ensure an accurate representation of public administration reform implementation in Ukraine. The primary research methods used were case study and autoethnography. The Rivne Center for Administrative Services was the case study subject and with this method the researcher seeks to establish the following: how Ukrainian public administration reform compares to other models of reform in central and eastern Europe (Goran, 2009; Czaputowicz, 2015); how impartiality and political environment contribute to organizational behavior, which will serve as measures for politicization; and attitudes toward policy implementation, which will serve as a measure for institutionalization.[11] Analysis of these two indicators, politicization and institutionalization, will help the researcher determine the effectiveness of public administration reform. Within the organization, the researcher also looked for documents that could contribute to institutionalization because they provide institutional memory, such as meeting minutes and operations manuals. Finally, the researcher determined if the Rivne Center for Administrative Services has a strategic plan, which may help the organization resist politicization and institutionalization because the plan provides long-term goals and objectives to follow.

Autoethnography is not typically used as a method for public administration research, but the researcher's unique position as a member of an Ukrainian community and organization

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[11] More concrete definitions for politicization and institutionalization emerged in-country, compared with those in the initial research proposal, because the researcher considered grounded theory. While existing research provides useful definitions for these obstacles to reform, no country's situation is exactly like another's; an understanding of how these challenges manifest in Ukraine were able to emerge because grounded theory allows for "the complexity and variability of phenomena and of human action; the belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations; [and] the realization that persons act on the basis of meaning" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 9). This theory also complemented a culturalist approach.

provides an ideal opportunity to conduct this type of observational, experience-based research. Rhodes (2014) opined that

Observational fieldwork has two long-established virtues. It gets below and behind the surface of official accounts by providing texture, depth and nuance, so our stories have richness as well as context…These tools lead us into the office, the engine room of public administration, where the state is continuously enacted and reshaped. They enable us to explore the contending beliefs and practices of elites. They seek out the silent voices of bureaucracy. Above all, they lead to surprises, to moments of epiphany, so we look at the world through different spectacles (326).

While ethnography is the collection of information based on the researcher's observations as an outsider, autoethnography differs in that observations are formed based on experiences of the researcher as a participant. This study was conducted in the context of participant-as-observer; this method is ideal for conducting this study because of the researcher's role as a Peace Corps Volunteer and her active participation in Ukrainian culture. The researcher has a background in nonprofits and social service delivery, which cultivated a perspective that differs from that of traditional Weberian, Neo-Weberian, and New Public Management – models commonly associated with public administration reform in central and eastern Europe (Goran, 2009). In practical application, the researcher applies a management/administrative lens that most aligns with an open systems approach to administration, which is most like the New Public Governance framework. Considering existing research demonstrates that other post-Soviet spaces have had trouble implementing reforms with more traditional hierarchical structures, there is opportunity to explore approaches that challenge these hierarchies. In order to document experiences for the autoethnographic method, the researcher maintained a journal detailing her

service within the Rivne Center for Administrative Services, and how her approach to administration was received by her colleagues.

Data Analysis

For the case study at her volunteer placement, the researcher utilized any organizational documents accessible and/or available such as a strategic plan, meeting minutes, operations manuals, annual reports, etc. to establish presence or lack of institutionalized practices echoing administrative reform. She also observed and analyzed written organizational communication; interactions between leadership, management, and administrators; interactions between administrators and clients; and any improvements made within the organization during her service. Since these institutions were initiated as part of decentralization, there are no historical documents prior to 2016 that might contribute to this case study. While analyzing the autoethnography, the researcher looked for patterns with her documented experiences and whether they were negative or positive.

Limitations

There are four limitations with this research. The first is a language barrier that inhibits the researcher's overall understanding of happenings within the Rivne Center for Administrative Services. All Peace Corps Volunteers complete three months of intensive training prior to settling in their community of service, and the researcher did not commence this study immediately upon arriving at her site. However, the Ukrainian language is incredibly difficult to learn and understand; the grammar and rules are different enough from English that they can be hard to fully grasp, which inhibits understanding of the language's nuances. Additionally, it is rare to hear pure Ukrainian, Russian remains widely spoken, and surzhik is a combination of both languages that is used as well. Essentially, volunteers spend significant time trying to 1) discern what language they're hearing and 2) process what is happening around them.

The second limitation is time. While the researcher has been in her country of service for 20 months and has integrated into the community, she is still an outsider and will 1) never be entirely privy to more sensitive information related to government and public administration, and 2) be unable to completely understand how Ukrainian governmental and administrative systems work because she is not from this culture. Research could not be conducted during training, there was a learning period when the researcher arrived at site, and not all time was spent at the volunteer's host organization.

The third limitation is the expected reality versus the actual reality of how organizations utilize their Peace Corps Volunteer. Although the Rivne Center for Administrative Services identified needs for which they wanted a volunteer, it was not always clear how the researcher could help address those needs – and sometimes assisting with them was not even feasible or appropriate. There are instances in which organizations do not fully understand the purpose of Peace Corps Volunteers and how to fully utilize them, which was often the case with the Rivne Center for Administrative Services. The researcher was their first volunteer and while she had steep learning curves associated with living and working in a foreign culture, the organization also needed to learn how the partnership should work.

The fourth limitation is challenges related to Peace Corps service generally. The experience can be isolating, degrading, frustrating, and demoralizing for the volunteer; at times it feels like being a helpless child again. Although service in Ukraine on the surface seems significantly easier than many other Peace Corps posts – e.g. volunteers are not digging wells or fighting malaria – there are aspects of Ukrainian culture that make service just as difficult, only in a different way. The culture can feel openly aggressive to Americans, and there are many micro-aggressions volunteers are faced with daily that contribute to demoralization. The

researcher has experienced conditions and emotions that many volunteers face in service –

depression, frustration, hopelessness, loneliness, anger – and these negative emotions may have

contributed to a more pessimistic slant in her autoethnography. The researcher did not foresee

that she should consider the effects of Peace Corps service and how that perspective would

inform the research.

Chapter 5: My Peace Corps Service in a Ukrainian Local Government Institution

Since December 2017 I have been working at the Rivne Center for Administrative Services, a local government organization created to establish decentralized and more efficient administration practices in Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014. This experience and others related to increasing knowledge of Ukrainian government, such as the 2018 and 2019 local government retreats for Peace Corps Volunteers, have provided significant insight into reform processes and efficacy. The following experiences I detail through case study and autoethnography are merely one example of public administration in Ukraine and should not be taken to represent the entire country; however, I hope this study will provide a foundation for continued research on the subject in Ukraine.

Rivne Center for Administrative Services Case Study

This administrative services agency has the best reputation of organizations with similar missions in Ukraine and is viewed as a highly organized and efficient institution. They serve thousands of people each year, and these agencies have helped increase access to and expedite services for Ukrainians; they appeared throughout the country after the Revolution of Dignity and in transliterated Ukrainian are called a tsentr nadannya administratyvnykh posluh, or ЦНАП. The Rivne Center for Administrative Services is a subsidy of city council, is led by a director, employs lawyers to help interpret legislation, and is divided into departments with individual managers. All employees are required to be knowledgeable with these laws and practices: local governance, the constitution, anti-corruption, and administrative services. There are two department-specific laws staff need to know, freedom of movement (residence registration) and economic permits (administrative services). There are lawyers employed at the center to help with interpreting the legislation but administrators also are expected to have working knowledge

of the law pertaining to administrative services; all employees in the center (lawyers and administrators) are required to take an exam assessing this knowledge, which is mandated by the anti-corruption institutions that came out of the Revolution of Dignity. The standards and procedure for this exam are unclear. When I initially arrived at the center in December 2017, employees needed to take the test every five years or when they changed sectors within the organization. They were waiting for the exam to be scheduled when I arrived, and it ultimately occurred in March 2018. It was merit-based in that it assessed administrative law competency, but employees did not necessarily take it upon being hired; city council determined when it was scheduled each year, and any new staff would take it at that time. The five-year time limit had not yet been reached because the Rivne Center for Administrative Services only opened in 2016. The test contained three questions and employees would hand write their answers. In late 2018, it was announced that all staff would need to pass an oral attestation. This upset many people in the organization because they were concerned that the panel would ask questions regarding their personal lives, that they would not be able to articulate their answers very well, and/or that they would become emotional and be unable to complete the attestation. Some employees participated in the attestation and passed, but for unknown reasons the remaining ones were cancelled and no one else needed to take it. Considering the confusion with the oral attestation and it not being an original testing requirement, there are now questions regarding when and how often staff will need to be tested in the future – and in what format.

On March 1, 2018 there was an emergency meeting held with employees at the Rivne Center for Administrative Services. They had been waiting since before my arrival to learn when employees would need to take their exam, but city council was lagging with determining a timeframe. At this meeting, all people working under a monthly contract – e.g. those who had

not passed the exam and were not yet employed long-term – learned that the center could no longer pay them because they ran out of budget, and that they would need to wait until the exam period before receiving a paycheck again. These contracted employees were encouraged to continue coming to work as 'volunteers.' They also learned that a month earlier they struggled to pay the salaries of many employees because they ran out of money. The organization's budget issues are intriguing because employees at this center are payed the lowest salaries of all the other ЦНАП agencies in Ukraine. They receive budget from city council, and in conversations with the center's director I learned that she tried to convince the mayor to increase administrators' salaries. A colleague once showed me her paycheck and I was appalled to learn that it was barely more than what I receive as a Peace Corps Volunteer – before I account for the funding Peace Corps also provides for volunteer housing. Not only are the center's employees not paid enough to thrive in the city, some also had to survive for more than a month without pay because there was no budget.

Since the center is a young institution, they do not have a well-established institutional memory that could help with constructing an organizational timeline. Legislation relevant to the center's operations occurs at the national level and is disseminated through individual local governments. The organization lacks a strategic plan but administrative law changes rapidly and frequently, which creates numerous obstacles to drafting and implementing a strategic vision. Each department develops an annual plan to guide their yearly activities, but beyond annual planning legislative changes are impossible to anticipate and often organizations operate in survival mode.

There are no operations manuals and/or established standard operating procedures (SOP) to guide administrators. I work closely with one administrator who also acts as my translator, and

for months she has advocated for SOPs; she feels that there are instances when she and no one

else knows what to do because there is no documented procedure, and that an additional

consequence is inconsistency between administrators. When participating in departmental

meetings, no one was designated to take meeting minutes. I have not been invited to meetings

with leadership (director, deputies, managers) and therefore have been unable to determine if

minutes are taken in those spaces. The center maintains hard copy archives of all documents

completed each day, and the paperwork is extensive and possibly cumbersome. There is an

electronic system for inputting information, but it appears that not all processes have been

streamlined electronically.

Earlier in this paper I mentioned that the department of residence registration provides

services that are similar to registering places of residence in the United States, but unlike going

to a single location like a Driver's License Division to obtain identification and register an

address, Ukrainians must visit two agencies to complete this process. The first is actually where

residents obtain a posvidka, which is essentially an identification card that demonstrates a

person's legal residence in Ukraine. Through my experience of renewing my posvidka, I

discovered that working with this institution can be difficult, especially for someone who doesn't

really understand processes and requirements in Ukraine. They maintain hours that are difficult

to remember and an appointment must be made. Additionally, obtaining this identification card

is expensive and likely cost prohibitive for many Ukrainians, considering the depressed

economy. Fortunately, Peace Corps manages information and costs for registering volunteers,

but we were unaware of costs to renew until the morning of our appointment; this illustrates lack

of consistent and accessible information. After obtaining the posvidka, residents visit the Rivne

Center for Administrative Services to register their addresses; each time a person moves, the

previous address must be deregistered and the new one entered into the system. Prior to 2018, the posvidka was a booklet much like an international passport, and the center would stamp the booklet and provide registration information within that. Ukraine recently transitioned to cards like driver's licenses in the United States, but they don't include address information. Residents are provided a piece of paper with their residence information and presenting it is necessary for various activities. There has been at least one occasion when I forgot this paper and was unable to open a bank account when I needed, despite having the physical posvidka with me.

Regarding communication in the center, interactions between employees at the same hierarchical level seem congenial and mostly without major conflict. However, the organization relies significantly on hierarchy. Communication between levels appear to lack openness and comfort. Every Peace Corps Volunteer is assigned an Ukrainian counterpart with whom they ideally work on projects, and my counterpart manages the department for residence registration. She is responsible for managing the activities and administrators within her department, and she reports to the director's deputies and director herself. The deputies also provide oversight to the individual departments. In mid-2018 they changed the deputy supervising my counterpart's department, and after this transition there was an obvious positive change in her demeanor that she attributed to feeling more comfortable with the new deputy supervisor. She felt the former deputy was unapproachable and interacting with her was always stressful; I can attest to this as my interactions with this specific deputy have been similar, and I usually left the conversation feeling incapable and nervous. She is noticeably afraid of the director, as are others within the organization. My counterpart will not start new projects on her own and all decision-making powers seem to be concentrated in one person, which significantly slows progress. Any time I approached her with training and/or project ideas, the answer was always that we needed to

speak with the director about it. It appears that department managers do not have any real decision power and are primarily there for supervisory purposes. Although there is room for improvement, my counterpart employs a leadership style that is much closer to being approachable and open to new ideas than other Ukrainians I've observed. However, the director has criticized her for being too friendly with staff, which was discouraging; she feels her team trusts her more compared to other managers because she tries to build relationships with them.

Two of the needs this organization identified on their application for a Peace Corps Volunteer were training in conflict resolution and improving customer service. While most interactions between administrators and clients are amicable, there have been some instances with upset clients and situations that needed to be de-escalated. Early in my service there was a client who did not have the correct documents for what she needed to do and raised her voice considerably while expressing her anger with the administrator. They informed her she would need to return with the right documentation, which angered her further, and my counterpart threatened to call the police. Another instance involved an older woman who was yelling in the lobby and the authorities were called to de-escalate the situation and escort her out; according to one colleague, this situation happens often with the same woman. During a training I organized on the topic of change management, an employee asked how they might apply this knowledge to working with difficult clients; based on my observations and inquiries like these, it seems that conflict resolution is an emerging need that has not really been a significant part of conversations in the past. One day I was sitting at my desk when an old woman approached me asking for assistance. Considering my lack of adequate language skills and that I am not an administrator, I asked her to wait while I found someone to help. She used a cane and clearly was struggling to remain standing, so I wanted to find assistance for her as quickly as possible. When I approached

an available administrator, identified the woman in need, and tried to explain she needed help, the administrator exhibited little interest in the situation. There was little more I could for the woman besides instructing her to take a number from the queue and wait. Despite the lack of customer service in this situation, there are signs of good service such as smiling administrators when clients approach, increasing the number of stations to assist people, and a play area where parents can entertain their children while they wait.

The center does not have a corporate email system for business communication and instead uses a messaging service called Viber, which is not much different from other applications like Facebook Messenger. There are separate communication groups for each department, various committees, and the entire organization. Here they post all information related to meetings, trainings, new legislation, requests for reports, among other things; it is also used for congratulating people and wishing each other well on holidays. As a business communication system, it does not seem very effective or professional because it is difficult to search, there is not a clear separation of business versus personal messages, and not all employees have access to it – a smartphone is required, which not all staff possess.

When communication is posted in Viber regarding meetings, reports, trainings, etc., requests generally are not far in advance and are sometimes urgent. A cultural trait in Ukraine is lack of planning, a consequence of prolonged and sustained instability in the country; people still operate in survival mode because that is what the nation has known for so long, and issues with planning in this organization are further compounded by constant legislative changes. Meetings are typically scheduled the day they are supposed to happen. There have been urgent calls for monthly and/or annual reports to present to the city council. It is not unusual for the center's staff to be unaware of trainings and/or seminars with the city's other departments until the day they

occur, maybe the day before if they are lucky. More than once I have planned trainings and/or presentations that have been rescheduled multiple times due to 'surprise' conflicts or were cancelled altogether. Sometimes my counterpart and I planned to meet and discuss our work, but upon looking for her I discovered she was on a business trip or at a training. There is a general lack of foresight and planning that hinders employees from further developing themselves because they do not know what will happen any given day on the job. Despite virtually no planning – or perhaps because it doesn't really happen – Ukrainians are experts at completing urgent tasks; i.e. doing things last minute.

My Work as a Peace Corps Volunteer

Being placed at the administrative services center has been advantageous because it was an ideal site for conducting this study, but simultaneously one of the most frustrating work experiences I've ever had. Peace Corps service is difficult for a multitude of reasons and it takes time for volunteers to find their niche within their organizations/communities, but despite my continued efforts there has not been a lot of measurable success. After several months at the center and realizing that their daily work requirements would not allow for significant time devoted to projects and/or skills transfer, I decided my service here could best be utilized for one-on-one social support and personal/professional development. Additionally, since they had never before worked with a volunteer I needed to spend significant time building relationships and trust. Ultimately, Peace Corps is all about the relationships we establish and the foundations of trust we build in our communities; without these pillars community development work would be impossible.

At least the first eight months of my service were tumultuous, and this was when I completed the bulk of journaling for this study's autoethnography. I often felt useless, powerless,

and underutilized, negative emotions that are apparent in my journaled experiences. There was

misunderstanding regarding my purpose for being at the center and my counterpart was mostly

inaccessible. The first two months' entries contain similar information: I was stuck at my desk

with nothing to do, I couldn't find my counterpart, meetings with my counterpart were cancelled,

and I was constantly approached by clients and felt frustrated because I could never help them. I

also wrote considerably about how my counterpart would devote time to micromanaging

anything I did but would not spend time developing projects with me. She also did not attend a

mandatory Peace Corps training with me, and the organization sent a random employee in her

place. While it was a professional development opportunity for the other colleague, my

counterpart and I were never able to get on the same page regarding project design and

management practices. Over the initial months at the center, I did my best to honor hierarchies

and the organization's work culture. It wasn't until I stepped outside of those boundaries that I

began to see some results in at least my relationship with my counterpart.

Ukrainians can come off as aggressive in their communication, and this is especially

obvious in a working environment. For more than half a year at the center I tried to be as

understanding as possible when meetings I arranged with people – mostly my counterpart – were

almost always cancelled. I felt this was the best approach because it was the most culturally

mindful. However, one day roughly seven months into service I waited around for hours to have

a meeting with my counterpart; once I finally accepted it wasn't going to happen, I took a coffee

break to clear my head. My counterpart messaged me asking when I'd return, and I'd reached a

point where I no longer felt I could passively accept the blatant disregard for my time. I aired my

frustration with her and told her to respect my time because it was just as valuable as hers, which

provoked an argument between us. We fortunately were able to de-escalate the situation and

reach a mutual understanding. Since that day, our relationship has felt more equal than it did before and she isn't so quick to railroad over me. I realized that my assertiveness (it actually felt aggressive to me but I have a different perspective on appropriate work culture) was still culturally understanding because I was meeting my counterpart on her level, and that was the only way she actually heard me. Prior to this experience I was focusing too much on external factors and understanding why I was always a last priority, and I didn't acknowledge that it was okay to set boundaries that would help me fulfill my purpose as a volunteer. That day was enlightening and demonstrated that although I have a management/administrative style that aligns with open systems theory, it's important to consider how external factors can significantly inhibit progress and it might behoove organizations to consider strategies that will mitigate the effects of externalities.

Apart from the one conflict with my counterpart, I developed relationships with my colleagues using a social services approach. I focused extensively on developing rapport, so they felt comfortable talking with me about issues and I took every opportunity to encourage them. One day my counterpart was having a tense conversation with another colleague, who was crying, and although I could not understand the full exchange my counterpart's tone was condescending. I left the office that day with the other colleague and walked with her, during which time she confided in me regarding how difficult it is to be yelled at for something you have no control over, and that she was tired of answering to so many people. Before we parted I told her she had the right to stand up for herself and that she was a capable, intelligent individual; she became emotional again and it was clear she didn't often receive encouraging words in the workplace. Conversations like these, smiling at my colleagues (generally Ukrainians don't smile at each other in passing), and learning about who they are as people are strategies that have

helped me gain the reputation for being open, kind, and approachable. Although this kind of success isn't measurable, I feel it has been important for them to hear a voice that is most times more positive than those from management.

I have been unable to complete any larger projects at the center and the one-on-one social support has been my biggest contribution. It also is a volunteer's duty to find other needs in the community, so ultimately not all time is spent in the primary organization. In my case, I found a local civil society organization that wants to develop and increase their impact on youth in the community. We have worked on several projects together and soon will start the strategic planning process, so most of my time has been occupied with volunteering for them. However, this also means that my time at the center has decreased precipitously and I have been unable to continue developing relationships with people there. Yet, after multiple failed attempts to engage the center in developing the organization and opportunities for skills transfer, I felt that productive service would be found elsewhere. I still spend some time there but at this point in my service, when I only have seven months remaining, it is unlikely I will have any large impact on the organization's structure. Despite the lack of measurable success, I feel the one-on-one social support has positively impacted individuals and I hope they will use similar approaches when interacting with others in their professional lives.

Discussion
Administrative Framework

The case study conducted for this research demonstrates that at least one Ukrainian local bureaucratic institution is mostly relying on a Weberian model. The Rivne Center for Administrative Services has clear hierarchy and the organization's director has most of the decision-making power; sometimes decisions must be made by the city council and/or mayor,

who hold higher positions than the director. The yearly exams mandated by anti-corruption institutions provide a degree of hiring people based on merit, since those who do not pass the test are unable to continue working at the center. Administrators and department managers have clearly defined duties and little creative freedom for conducting their work outside those boundaries. There is some opportunity for upward movement within the organization – both the director and my counterpart started as administrators and were promoted. Interactions between people of different hierarchical levels illustrate deference to authority, regardless of opinion. Although this center pays their civil servants the lowest salaries of any other similar administrative centers in Ukraine, it is still one of the most respected and stable careers in Rivne. Rules of conduct and legislation come directly from the national government, and the center does not have freedom to establish its own standards.

The impetus for creating administrative centers like my volunteer placement was demand for reform from Ukrainian citizens, which somewhat echoes New Public Management (NPM). After Yanukovych resigned from the presidency as Euromaidan was concluding, President Poroshenko's administration began working to reform all levels of government in the country. Ultimately the revolution's civil unrest provoked the government to instigate the most comprehensive reform the nation had ever seen. However, there are not many characteristics of NPM in the actual implementation of reform.

Continued Politicization?

While the post-revolution environment saw the establishment of anti-corruption institutions and mass decentralization at all levels of government, it remains to be seen if politicization is an obstacle to reform efficacy. However, this study has at least shown that legislation changes rapidly; there are various possible explanations for why this is so, such as

political whims, guidance from foreign powers (specifically those in the European Union) for how to improve, and internal evaluation. However, the frequency with which the law changes suggests it is less related to outside guidance and/or internal evaluation. At the local level, legislative inconsistency hinders the ability of civil servants to effectively do their jobs because they are unable to adequately learn and implement reforms. At the Rivne Center for Administrative Services, staff still largely operate in survival mode and there is little time – or energy – to devote to organizational development. Until legislation is more stable, it is unlikely that this organization will have the capacity to consider organizational development that could contribute to overall long-term reform efficacy.

The confusion around testing requirements and measuring civil servants for competency also might contribute to politicization. Handwritten exams are problematic because reviewers are less able to objectively measure one's knowledge; people have varying writing skills/styles and handwriting quality, and this format leaves too much room for interpretation rather than clear analysis. The integrity of civil servants' answers is compromised because the reader can misinterpret them. There also is a question of whether the test takers' names are kept anonymous while their exams are reviewed. Neglecting anonymity could result in judges purposely misconstruing answers based on personal feelings towards whoever took the test. To protect civil servants from politicized exam review, the government could consider transitioning to more objective test formats such as multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank, possibly using an electronic system that maintains anonymity.

The budget issue that the Rivne Center for Administrative Services experienced in March 2018 also raises questions of politicization. It is unclear at which level the money was spent to the point of not having enough for salaries – i.e. national government, city council, or the center

itself – but the lack of uproar from employees when this happened illustrated that these situations might occur often. I have been unable to determine if the city and center utilize transparent budgeting practices or participatory budgeting, but it seems that the salary funds were either 1) not appropriately earmarked or 2) used for other purposes. There are not safeguards in place to protect civil servants when funds are misused, and there was total lack of accountability and transparency when this happened at the center.

Ukrainians still largely rely on their informal networks, which might contribute to politicization, as was the case with Slovenia (Bugaric & Kuhelj, 2015). My experiences as a Peace Corps Volunteer, inside and outside the organization, illustrated that informal networks are the primary mode of information sharing in Ukraine. Often, I was surprised – and impressed – by how Ukrainians rapidly disperse information through channels in which I was rarely included. The use of Viber, an informal messaging service, as a corporate communication platform demonstrates that using formal networks typically considered effective for business is not a priority. My reliance on what I consider traditional business communication systems, such as email, inhibited my ability to sufficiently integrate into the organization's culture. Other obstacles, such as cultural and language barriers, further hindered my integration into informal networks. Without more time in this environment and better language proficiency, it is extremely difficult to infiltrate these networks and therefore view reform from the inside looking out.

Ever-elusive Institutionalization

While it is not clear if continued politicization is an obstacle to reform efficacy, this study has illustrated that institutionalization is an issue. This case study at the administrative services center revealed daily operations in an Ukrainian bureaucratic environment and how cultural norms can undermine reform implementation. Persistence of informal networks, maintenance of

strict hierarchical structures, aggressive communication styles, unquestioned deference to authority, lack of time for organizational development, rigid job duties, and general fear of acting on one's own ideas adversely impact the administrative services center's trajectory for institutionalizing reforms. These obstacles support the second underlying assumption in this study because they are characteristics associated with Communist administrative bodies, but they should not be attributed only to Ukraine's experiences as part of the USSR. The country's earlier history should also be considered when assessing how cultural standards impede reform. Ukraine has a long history of persecution and culture blending with Russia, and it would be a mistake to assume that behaviors inhibiting reform originate only from Communist practices. Behavior patterns, or orientations, exhibited by Ukrainians are cross-generational and sometimes the result of inherited trauma. An example of inherited trauma are behaviors around food consumption; as a member of a Ukrainian family, I have learned that trauma from the Holodomor persists today and is a reason my host family is always trying to feed me, regardless of me vocalizing not feeling hungry. Another example is media continuing to push the idea that all of Ukraine is corrupt, rather than trying to also highlight positive aspects of the reform process. These kinds of behaviors are taught to younger generations and consistently conceptualizing Ukraine in a space of uncertainty only perpetuates these ideals. It is not uncommon for older generations to wax nostalgic about how circumstances were better in the Soviet Union; in some ways they were, as there are communities that are dying as a result of more privatized practices. Regardless, there is a disconnect between younger and older generations about the direction Ukraine should take, which is further complicated by inherited behaviors that perpetuate old ideals.

The difficulty I've experienced while serving as a volunteer at the center also illustrates that reform has not been institutionalized. Aside from frequent legislative change that prevents

reform from becoming entrenched in administrative culture, there are persistent cultural ideals that impede development. The strict hierarchical structure does not encourage everyday administrators to creatively problem solve, consider outside-the-box ideas for organizational development, or actively pursue professional development opportunities. Lack of planning and failure to fully transition to formal networks for business communication also impede institutionalization. Despite these challenges, there is eagerness to implement administrative policies and provide efficient services to the public, but constant changes in the law contribute to a culture of chaos and instability. External forces significantly impact reform implementation at the center.

Conclusion and Contribution to Future Research

Conducting this study as a Peace Corps Volunteer provided an unique opportunity to observe public administration reform at the local level in Ukraine. My role as a volunteer in the community fostered space to build relationships and witness dynamics that might not be seen in research conducted on a larger scale. The micro nature of this study illuminates how one public administration institution is coping with comprehensive reform occurring in the national government, and how culture has influenced the development of this nascent organization. Although this research illustrates that reforms are not institutionalized in the Ukrainian psyche, more research is needed to determine this trajectory in the long term. There also needs to be more analysis regarding the presence or lack of politicization as an obstacle to reform efficacy. The Revolution of Dignity occurred just five years ago, and it is too early to draw conclusions regarding whether reform will be effective.

This study also demonstrates the possibility for autoethnography to be incorporated in public administration research methodology; this approach provides flexibility for diving deep

and analyzing how culture impacts reform in post-Soviet space. One of the most valuable lessons as a volunteer has been that culture influences our lives in ways that are not always visible. The failure of reforms to institutionalize in other post-Soviet nations, and experiences documented in this study, show that perhaps culture needs to be a part of the conversation for countries reforming their governments. The persistence of older ideals in Ukraine often made my work as a volunteer frustrating, but not impossible. Many Ukrainians are excited for their country's potential and altering the way we think about reform could open new pathways for nations whose cultures may not align with traditional western frameworks.

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