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Structural, Institutional and Agency Based Impediments to Authoritarianism in Ukraine

Authoritarianism

- ✓ Authoritarianism is understood here as a two-dimensional construct:
- ✓ The unaccountable power of a single or collective ruler is underpinned by the peoples 'mentality', a leader's charisma, or the state coercive apparatus

Theoretical background – congruence theory

- ✓ According to the congruence theory, a regime is stable in so far as its *authority pattern* – the way it governs meets people's *authority beliefs* – the way that political authority ought to govern
- ✓ Democratic regimes are stable when most people have genuinely democratic authority beliefs
- ✓ Authoritarian regimes are stable when most people believe in the legitimacy of dictatorial power

Two-step argument

- ✓ Ukrainians share mixed authority beliefs that are largely congruent with elites' hybrid authority pattern.
- ✓ The resulting “hybrid congruence” alongside three groups of societal factors limits the prospect for authoritarianism in Ukraine.

Empirical findings

- ✓ The score of liberal understanding of democracy (LND) is twice higher than that of authoritarian understanding AND (0.82 to 0.41 respectively) while emancipative values score is positive and growing from 0.38 in the 5th wave to 0.40 in the 6th wave (on the scale from - 1.60 to +2.80)
- ✓ This signifies that Ukrainians (a) share mixed – liberal and authoritarian notions of democracy, but (b) the former prevail and is supported by the positive score of emancipative values
- ✓ This suggests that the prevalence of democratic beliefs would press the regime to increase, but not to limit the supply of democracy

Implications

- ✓ Authoritarian congruence is hardly achievable in post-Euromaidan Ukraine
- ✓ Mixed, but largely democratic public attitudes prevent Ukraine from moving in authoritarian directions.
- ✓ It does not mean that authoritarian populist cannot be voted for power in Ukraine.
- ✓ There at least three groups of societal factors that prevent him/her from consolidating power and establish some sort of authoritarian rule.

Structural impediments

- ✓ Poor leadership legitimacy
- ✓ Poor economy performance
- ✓ Regional polarization
- ✓ Fragmented elite structure
- ✓ The relative weakness of the 'party of power'
- ✓ Weak state repressive capacity
- ✓ The growing linkage with the West

Leadership legitimacy

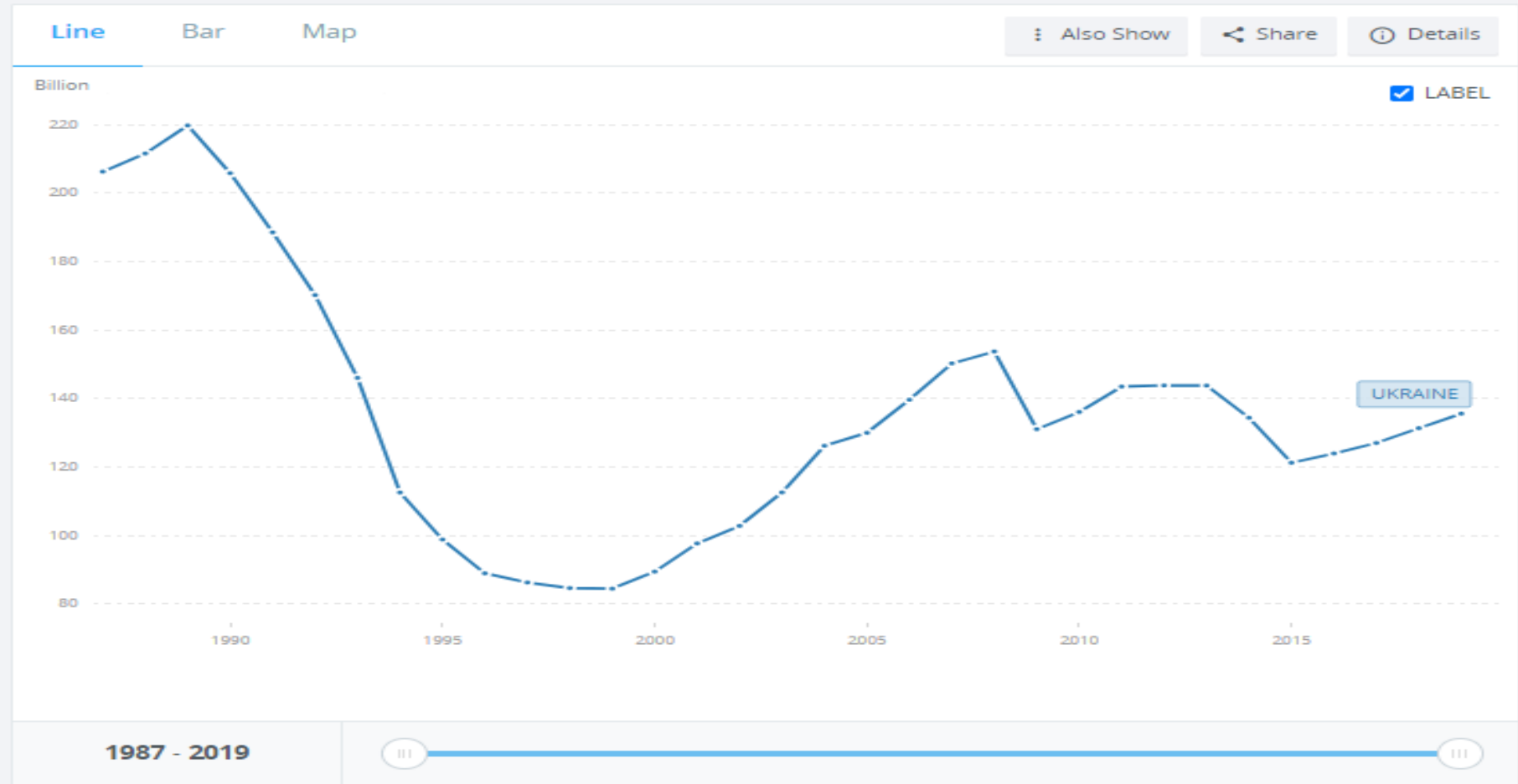
- ✓ In a period 2000-2015 the full support of the president has been around 14 % average, the support of the parliament and the cabinet has been less than 10 % (6.5 and 9.6. respectively)
- ✓ Before the 2019 presidential election, none of the major politicians or candidates had a positive balance of trust and distrust
- ✓ In September 2019 Zelensky enjoyed a comfortable 73 percent of support, but by April 2020 he lost 30 percent, which exceeded the losses of Yanukovych and in par with that of Yushchenko
- ✓ In June 2020 the number of those who disapprove his actions (45 percent) for the first time exceeded the number of those who approve (38 percent) and the balance turned negative by seven percent
- ✓ In November 2019 the number of those who thought the events are moving in the right direction for the first time became lower than those who thought differently (36 to 39 percent respectively). By November 2020 the gap has widened more than threefold (17.5 to 65.5 percent respectively)

Economy performance

GDP (constant 2010 US\$) - Ukraine

World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

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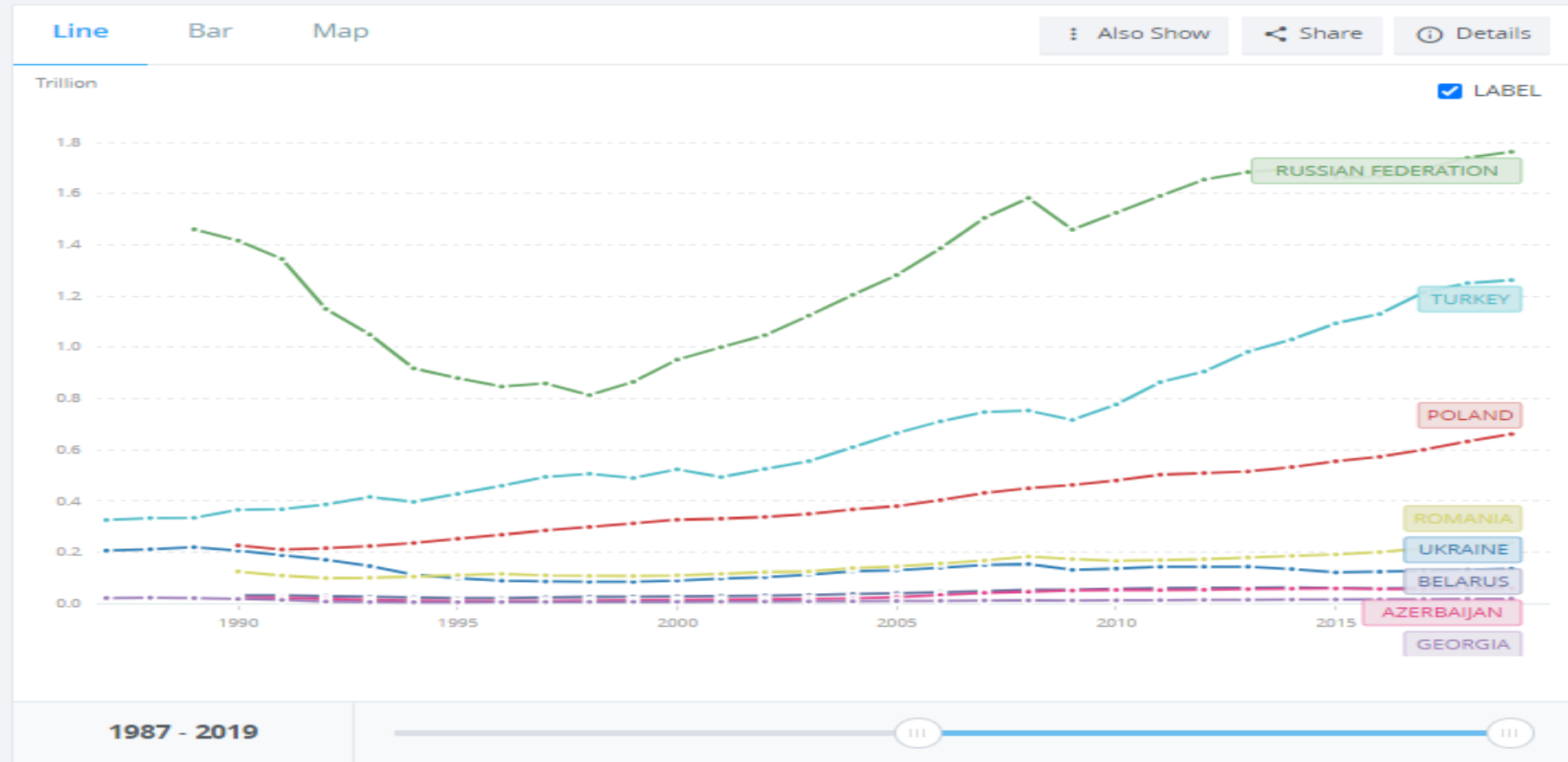


Economy performance

GDP (constant 2010 US\$) - Ukraine, Russian Federation, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, Romania, Poland

World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

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Regional polarization

- ✓ Autocrats face serious constraints in consolidating their power in regionally and culturally divided societies
- ✓ Homogenous identity facilitate not only democratization, but also autocratization
- ✓ Divisions within *titular* national identity is more important than competition between titular nation and minorities
- ✓ Identity divisions facilitate *mobilization* of opposition and *undermines elites unity*
- ✓ Examples: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia vs. Belarus, Turkmenistan, Russia,

Fragmented elite

- ✓ Regional and identity divisions hinder the formation of unified elite – an important factor of any regime consolidation
- ✓ Ukrainian elite inherited the fragmented structure – neither ideocratic nor consensual consolidation, therefore, was successful
- ✓ When various elite factions compete for influence (and rents), none of them can monopolize power
- ✓ Elite fragmentation persisted after the 2014 and 2019 electoral cycles. Now the major division lies between pro and anti-reformers in parliament on the one hand, and between ‘the oligarch in power’ and ‘oligarch outside power’ (with Poroshenko and Kolomoisky switching their positions) on the other

Weak party and state repressive capacity

- ✓ Weak parties undermine the incumbent capacity to monopolize power
- ✓ Parties organizational weakness is the effect of oligarchization – most parties are ‘political machines’ created from above
- ✓ Most of the Ukrainian parties, including lefts and rights, are not programmatic, but clientelistic organizations
- ✓ Weak ‘party of power’ constrains the incumbents’ ability to repress effectively

Linkage with the West

- ✓ The higher the linkage - the harder it is for incumbent to 'rule without limits'
- ✓ High linkage (through EU AA and dependency on western financial and security aid) makes regime more democratic
- ✓ Russia's factor: Putin's aggression against Ukraine made the civilizational divorce apparently irreversible
- ✓ After Ukrainian Orthodox Church has gained independence from Moscow (in January 2019), Russia has lost a great deal of its soft power in Ukraine

Institutional constraints

- ✓ **Semi-presidentialism** is a system where the executive power is divided between the president and prime minister.
- ✓ A divided executive system resulted in a more competitive and open regime, or 'competing pyramid system', whereas single executive system leads to the less competitive and more closed regime – 'single pyramid system'
- ✓ One effect of a divided executive system is internal instability, yet the institutionally implanted conflict between the president and the prime – minister is a fundamental barrier against concentrating power in one hand
- ✓ There has been six shifts within the semi-presidential system (1991, 1995, 1996, 2004, 2010 and 2014). Inability to centralize the executive power is a sign of incumbent weakness and society's distaste for purely presidential system .

Institutional constraints

- ✓ **'Institutionalized hybridity'**, or the legacy of being a hybrid regime for about a quarter of century
- ✓ Hybrid means *competitive elections*, but prevalence of subversive institutions (clientelism, corruption, secretive elite deals) over Constitution and legal norms
- ✓ The hybrid regime in Ukraine coalesced under Kuchma and survived both the Orange and the Euromaidan revolutions
- ✓ It is an institutional trap that became a factor of elite's authority pattern
- ✓ This regime is preferred by the elites as it allows for extracting rent without turning to outright violence

Agency- based constraints

- ✓ **Lack of charismatic leadership**
- ✓ None of the post-independence politicians (except for Zelensky's first half a year in office) enjoyed at least 50 percent of public support over the tenure
- ✓ It does not mean that a charismatic strongman could ever come to power, but to emphasize that personalism, as a legitimating strategy, has never reached the level of a personalist cult in Ukraine, like it is in Russia, Belarus, Hungary, or Turkey.
- ✓ The threat that a charismatic autocrat would be able to abuse the presidency for his ends appears quite dismal in post-Euromaidan Ukraine.

Agency- based constraints

- ✓ Like no other post-soviet state, Ukraine has a history of successful anti-authoritarian mobilizations (1990, 2004, 2014)
- ✓ In the Orange and Euromaidan revolutions, participated some 18- 20 percent of adult citizens, which is between 5-7 million people.
- ✓ The protest potential remains relatively high in Ukraine (in November 2019, 48 percent express readiness to take part in various forms of protests)
- ✓ The trigger has so far been of non-material nature (stolen elections and stolen European dream)
- ✓ Given the steady growth of emancipative values, ‘the freedom factor’– the ability to mobilize in defense of freedom has to be taken as an important variable affecting political dynamics in Ukraine

Conclusions

- ✓ Any attempt to impose the authoritarian rule from above would face the cumulative resistant effect produced by three groups of structural, institutional, and agency based factors
- ✓ The group of structural factors (8 out of 12) seems to be the hardest ones to overcome for any aspiring autocrat
- ✓ Institutionalized hybridity – the state of being a hybrid regime for more than two decades is generally congruent with the mixed (mostly democratic but also some paternalistic) people's authority beliefs
- ✓ Ukrainians share mixed – liberal and authoritarian notions of democracy, but the former prevail and are supported by the positive score of emancipative values (0.40 on the scale from – 1.00 to +1.00)
- ✓ Even moderate, but positive growth of emancipative values index (0.5) from the mid-90s to mid-2000s is not conducive to authoritarianism

Conclusions

- ✓ Ukraine has to cope not with authoritarianism, but:
- ✓ Growing social populism
- ✓ Involution of the constitutionalism and the rule of law
- ✓ If not constraint, these will likely lead to:
- ✓ Weakening of the state's governing capacity
- ✓ Deepening of regime hybridization

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