

Research Report: Parliamentary Oversight in Russia and Ukraine

Background

Parliamentary oversight is seen as ostensibly offering enhanced accountability and representation in a political system by holding the holding governments to account for the implementation of policy and compelling them to alter their behaviour where it is found to be wasteful, dishonest or straying from objectives of the legislation. However, the study of oversight has largely been focused on oversight in Western liberal democracies, and in particular on the most active and best-institutionalised legislatures such as in the US or Nordic states. Such studies argue that overseeing the executive and the implementation of legislation is a key function of contemporary legislatures and one that has become increasingly important in liberal democracies as a response to executive dominance in policy-making.¹ This study was initiated to investigate how far such propositions could be usefully applied beyond consolidated democracies by broadening our understanding of oversight activities and their role in contemporary political systems through examination of two in-depth cases from the post-Soviet space, an area where systematic study of parliamentary oversight was absent. This research aims to identify the developmental trajectory of oversight practices and to examine the meanings attached to them by actors.

While much of the literature on legislative studies and democratisation has tended to focus on formal institutions,² informal networks and patrimonial practices such as patronage, rent-seeking and clientelism have increasingly been recognised as at least as important for understanding power and decision-making in contemporary post-Soviet politics. Building on this work, case studies of oversight activities offer a suitable vantage point from which to extend our understanding of contemporary post-Soviet states, in particular as a means to examine how actors shape, negotiate and subvert formal institutions and rules, altering the meaning of formally democratic institutions in a neopatrimonial context,³ and how oversight mechanisms can take on different, and rather fungible, meanings in uncertain and shifting political contexts.

Objectives

The research initially had four broad objectives related to exploring the nature of parliamentary oversight conducted in Russia and Ukraine. These aims evolved over time as the literature review and fieldwork proceeded, resulting in several shifts in emphasis, particularly as political instability in the Ukrainian case (see Methods section) compromised the comparative objective of the project.

1. *To explore and compare the practical application of oversight in Russia and Ukraine, considering both process and output. In doing so, the project aims to assess how far these institutions are able to exercise their constitutional prerogatives.* The phrase constitutional prerogatives turned out to be somewhat misleading, as to a significant extent the oversight role of a national legislature is implied in the constitution and elaborated by ordinary legislation and parliamentary standing orders (as

¹ Aberbach, J. (1990), *Keeping a Watchful Eye: The Politics of Congressional Oversight* (Washington DC: Brookings Institute), Christensen, T, Laegreid, P. and Roness, P. (2002), 'Increasing Parliamentary Control of the Executive? New Instruments and Emerging Effects', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, pp.37-62, Hazan, R. (2001), *Reforming Parliamentary Committees: Israel in Comparative Perspective* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press), Judge, D. (1995), 'The Failure of National Parliaments', *West European Politics*, 18(3), pp.79-100.

² For example, Dr Whitmore considers some of her earlier publications on Ukraine overemphasise the important of formal institutions to political outcomes and behaviour E.g. Whitmore, S. (2005) *State Building in Ukraine: The Ukrainian Parliament, 1990-2003* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon).

³ Eisenstadt, S. (1973), *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage).

is the case in many consolidated liberal democracies such as the US and Germany). Therefore, this is better conceptualised as parliaments' formal powers of oversight. The practical utilisation of oversight mechanisms was explored from several perspectives, including paying special attention to actors' perceptions of these processes, as a way to interpret the meanings attached to oversight practices in the post-Soviet context. As the project progressed, for reasons of appropriate scale and data availability, this objective was adjusted to focus more specifically on the process of conducting oversight and its significance for the developing political system. Output was considered in terms of official data on which oversight instruments were being utilised and to assess change over time. However, the objective of inter-country comparison was seriously compromised during the project for reasons beyond the researcher's control, primarily due to the ongoing political uncertainty in Ukraine, and secondly due to the growing differentiation in the levels of openness to foreign researchers in Russia and Ukraine (see Methods section for details). In sum, the data collected on the two cases differed in terms of range of sources and political context, and therefore it was decided that the most appropriate way to deal with these variations was to analyse each country separately as a single case study, and adjust the intended outputs to reflect this (see Outputs section). Furthermore, drawing conclusions about the exercise of formal powers of oversight in Ukraine was deemed unwise given that substantial constitutional amendments had come into force less than six months before the fieldwork commenced, so this objective was refocused to a) assess previous convocations and change over time and b) to locate oversight activities and the struggle over formal rules to enhance oversight powers in Ukraine within the unfolding power struggle.

2. *To investigate the incentives for deputies to engage in oversight activities and the responses such activities engender from the executive organs and this to identify meanings attached to oversight by political actors and further insights into the network of executive-legislative relations.* This objective was primarily investigated by interpreting deputies' own subjective accounts of their oversight activities as offered during semi-structured interviews, which were contextualised using documentary, press, observations and other sources, and then related to the existing academic literature to identify points of continuity and distinctiveness in the post-Soviet cases. Although the focus was primarily on deputies' perceptions, which has also been the main concern of the academic research on oversight to date, executive responses were also considered, both through interviews with government officials and media sources.
3. *To evaluate the trajectory of parliamentary oversight in both countries – is it becoming more or less important for the operation of the legislatures and relations with the executive, and as a mechanism of accountability?* This was approached by collecting both quantitative (mainly official) data on the conduct of oversight activity over time in both cases to ascertain whether oversight activity was increasing or decreasing, combined with an assessment of the various qualitative data to evaluate the wider significance of such activities. In Ukraine, it proved possible to access official figures and documents across several previous convocations, and so to provide a more detailed insight into the trajectory of oversight activity. As the data collection in both cases proceeded, it became apparent that accountability was not a central aim of oversight activities for the deputies that conducted them. Accountability often occurred as a by-product rather than a central aim of oversight activities. Therefore the research sought to focus upon the main aims motivating the conduct of oversight (i.e. objective 4).
4. *To broaden our understanding of the nature of parliamentary oversight by adding new case studies outside 'the West' (but inside Europe) and to contribute to theory concerning deputies' motivations for engaging in*

oversight in post-Soviet contexts. The case studies of the conduct of parliamentary oversight in Russia and Ukraine are the first to offer an in-depth exploration of the range of activities available to these legislatures based on quantitative and multi-method qualitative data. As such they offer a rich overview of the various types of oversight activity, how this differs across various mechanisms and about the meanings deputies attach to these activities. Furthermore, the case of oversight provided an opening into the dynamics of the neopatrimonial state in the post-Soviet space.

Methods

A range of methods were employed in both settings to facilitate triangulation and enhance the study's validity. These included a review of the national press, documentary analysis, in-depth interviews and observation. However, it is appropriate to begin this section by discussing the main challenges to the project and how they impacted on its execution before moving to look at specific aspects of data collection. The original research proposal identified the political and institutional uncertainty in Ukraine as the predominant threat to the project, and particularly to the ability to collect comparable data, and indeed this proved to be far more extensive than any specialists could have predicted as Ukraine's 'orange revolution' of autumn 2004 precipitated far-reaching constitutional changes and a period of prolonged (and still ongoing) political instability. This, along with changes to the political climate in Moscow, necessitated making adjustments to the data collection process and the regrettable but appropriate abandonment of a systematic comparison in favour of pursuing two single case studies.

The ongoing political uncertainty in Ukraine led to a one-year postponement of field research in Kyiv, which was the longest period feasible within the timeframe of the project. This was therefore conducted during autumn 2006, at a time when the new constitutional changes had just come into force and the new government formed for the first time by the Verkhovna Rada (under Prime Minister Yanukovich) after months of wrangling had only been working a few days. This meant that the fieldwork took place in sub-optimal conditions from the perspective of investigating institutions and routine practices, as not only were the parliament and the government new, but due to the new constitutional arrangements, the formal relationship between the executive and legislature had fundamentally changed. At best, a process of 'bedding down' could be expected, at worst, extended and escalating inter-branch conflict over the unclear division of powers. Unfortunately, in Ukraine the latter scenario was (and, as of 2009, still is) playing out. This meant that although 30 semi-structured interviews were carried out, less than a year later pre-term elections to the Verkhovna Rada were held. This meant that the interview and observation data were derived from a parliament that proved unable to function and survived for just a year, thus raising important questions about the appropriateness of comparing this data with that derived from the Russian case. It seemed most appropriate to take a more ideocratic approach where the conduct of oversight activities could be contextualised in the unfolding power struggle in Ukraine. While this meant that the objective of comparison envisaged in the original proposal was compromised, the Ukrainian case study complements Dr Whitmore's previous work on the Verkhovna Rada.

The different levels of openness to foreign researchers in Russia and Ukraine also presented a significant challenge to the goal of comparison during the project. These became much more pronounced in the period after the project proposal was written (summer 2004) due to the altered political atmosphere following the Beslan school siege in Russia in September 2004, the 'orange revolution' in Ukraine in autumn 2004 and the impending presidential elections in Russia due in 2008. In sum, the political climate in Russia in general and in the Federal Assembly in

particular became considerably more closed and less receptive to foreign researchers, while in Ukraine the political system remained relatively open and transparent. This meant that it proved impossible to collect the same types of data for both countries. For example, Dr Whitmore conducted regular observations of committee and plenary sessions as well as in-depth interviews with parliamentary and especially committee staff and extensive work in the parliamentary library and archive in the Verkhovna Rada (see below), while the official permission required to do this was denied in the case of both chambers of the Federal Assembly. It proved possible to partially circumvent this official refusal as some deputies and senators were willing to help Dr Whitmore conduct observations and provided some archive and documentary material to her, but in the case of the Federation Council insufficient data was collected to draw meaningful conclusions about the process and output of oversight. While in the State Duma although a rich wealth of data was obtained, it was decided that this was not broadly comparable with that collected in Ukraine. Thus, for both reasons detailed, it was considered infeasible to compare the results of the Russian and Ukrainian cases. Instead, the most fruitful approach was to analyse and write them up as separate case studies, and adjust the emphasis on comparison in the objectives accordingly.

The project used a multi-method qualitative approach, beginning with an extensive survey of Russian and Ukrainian national newspapers from 2000-2006 accessed via the *Eastview* database. This facilitated the contextualisation of oversight activities within the broader political and parliamentary setting over time, background detail on the unfolding of salient processes (for example, the Beslan parliamentary investigation in Russia and the privatisation of the Komsomol' Iron Ore factory in Ukraine) and the identification of actors interested in the theme of parliamentary oversight.

Figures on oversight activity were obtained from various official publications, although the data collected and published on activities in the Verkhovna Rada were much more extensive and detailed than those from the Russian Federal Assembly, and in both cases it was possible to build up a picture of the extent and trajectory of oversight activities conducted, although on Ukraine covering a longer time period was possible. In addition, deputies and committee staff were sometimes willing to provide additional internal documents, and in the case of Ukraine, Dr Whitmore was able to have unrestricted access to the parliamentary archive, which provided a very rich data set. In both countries, the official parliamentary website was also a valuable source of official documentation and stenograms of debates.

32 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Moscow during January-March 2006, (with four follow-up telephone interviews in October 2007) and a further 30 in Kyiv during October-December 2006. In both cases, Dr Whitmore began by interviewing authoritative local experts for in-depth contextualisation, before moving on to deputies, parliamentary staff and actors from other relevant bodies (the government, the Accounting Chamber, the Ombudsman on Human Rights). In terms of the sample of deputies interviewed, the aim was for diversity across the factions represented in the parliaments, but due to the closed nature of some factions (particularly United Russia in Russia and the Party of Regions in Ukraine), although more deputies from these factions were approached, many refused to participate in the study. Nevertheless, the sample interviewed reflects the political diversity of the legislative bodies which is appropriate for a qualitative approach. In addition to the faction membership, the sample aimed to reflect a range of committee memberships (large and small, influential and less so, and cover a range of themes: financial, industrial and social). At the same time, parliamentarians known to be interested in oversight (as identified through the press and their participation in

certain activities) were approached, because although it is acknowledged that such deputies were likely to be more interested in oversight than many of their colleagues, such deputies were able to provide in-depth insights into the process and their activities. Those deputies also tended to have been elected more than once, and thus were able to offer perspectives on the trajectory of oversight over more than one convocation, but the final sample included a mix of ‘interested’ deputies and their ‘less-interested’ colleagues in both countries. An open-ended question schedule was used which asked deputies about how they conceptualised oversight, the forms of work they undertook, its relative importance and their attitudes and motivations towards such activities. For parliamentary staff and officials from other relevant bodies these were adapted as appropriate. The interviews were conducted in Russian and Ukrainian by Dr Whitmore, then transcribed by a native speaker. They were then translated by Dr Whitmore, with points of clarification provided by a native speaker. The transcripts were analysed by a process of multiple close readings of the texts leading to the emergence and identification of categories and themes.

Observations were conducted of parliamentary and committee hearings, Government Day (Ukraine)/Government Hour (Russia) and committee meetings in both countries. However, given the extensive access granted to Dr Whitmore in Kyiv (she obtained a ‘diplomatic’ pass to access all areas of the parliament save the chamber floor itself), it proved possible to conduct many observations in the Verkhovna Rada and build up a detailed view of the functioning of oversight in several committees. In Russia, Dr Whitmore relied on the generous help of a number of deputies, who invited her to a parliamentary hearing, a budget committee meeting and allowed her to observe Government Hour several times on the televisions in their office or provided access to the Duma press room (as journalists cannot enter the chamber balcony they watch parliamentary sessions via a live television screen nearby).

Results

1. *To explore and compare the practical application of oversight in Russia and Ukraine, considering both process and output. In doing so, the project aims to assess how far these institutions are able to exercise their constitutional prerogatives.*

Although during the 1990s both parliaments saw the gradual elaboration of a range of oversight mechanisms modelled on those available in ‘the West’, during the 2004–2005 period a very different trajectory in the development of formal rules was evident. In Russia incremental rule changes made the exercise of various parliamentary oversight tools more difficult by raising the threshold for their initiation or moving decision-making powers away from individual deputies and standing committees to the parliamentary leadership and president. In Ukraine, the constitutional reform of December 2004 significantly expanded the Verkhovna Rada’s oversight powers as the amendments intended to shift the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches from a ‘president-parliamentary’ to a ‘parliamentary-presidential’ republic where for the first time the legislature would be responsible for forming the government. However, these reforms only came into force following the March 2006 parliamentary elections, and therefore the results of this formal institutional shift on parliamentary oversight activities were unclear at the time of data collection (and indeed remain so as of 2009 given the early elections of September 2007 and the continued power struggle in Ukraine).

In terms of process and output, in Russia the process was pervaded by patrimonial relations and could usefully be conceptualised as operating in two spheres – the legal-rational (formal) and the patrimonial (where activities are infused with clientelism, patronage and rent-seeking). The process was also seen as increasingly ritualised or

formalised by parliamentarians – a typical quote being that such activities were ‘for show’, and needed by the executive to create the appearance of a democratic process. In Ukraine, the preliminary findings were more equivocal as a strong sense of uncertainty pervaded deputies’, parliamentary and government staff members’ responses, with a lack of understanding of the composition and role of the coalition, the opposition and key debates on the role of the government, president and parliament were under way.

In both cases deputies had a limited sense there that oversight activity could affect government behaviour, but for rather different reasons. In Russia this feeling was thorough-going and profound, and was due to the increasingly closed nature of the political system, the increased difficulty of exercising oversight instruments and the limited proportion of the deputy corpus with incentives to conduct oversight (see below). Therefore deputies expected to make a difference only at the very lowest level (e.g. to help a pensioner with their accommodation problem). In Ukraine, there was lots of activity but little sense of the efficacy of this among deputies. For example, parliamentary resolutions were adopted as a result of Government Day, but the recommendations were rarely implemented and the Verkhovna Rada was thus doomed to return to the same themes year after year, partly due to the high turnover of governments in Ukraine. However, there was a hope that this would change once the new constitutional arrangements had become embedded.

2. *To investigate the incentives for deputies to engage in oversight activities and the responses such activities engender from the executive organs and this to identify meanings attached to oversight by political actors and further insights into the network of executive-legislative relations.*

In both cases, the increasing number of deputy-entrepreneurs was identified as impacting on the use of oversight mechanisms for the pursuit of personal goals, and as expected incentives were higher for opposition deputies to engage in oversight, although in both countries ‘opposition’ remained conceptually and empirically difficult to define. In Russia, deputies were much more open about how such instruments were used for business purposes. In both cases, some deputies attracted a lot of oversight work in a specific sector and tended to note the significance of personal contacts in obtaining access to executive bodies, a finding commensurate to patterns in consolidated democracies.

In Russia, there was clear evidence of declining incentives for deputies to engage in oversight activity. For the constitutional majority of deputies comprising the pro-Putin United Russia faction, this is scarcely surprising given their loyalty to the president and their dependence on him for access to resources (primarily revenue streams) and the continuation of ‘suspended punishment’ (primarily relating to their business operations). However, the presidential administration did require some oversight activity for manifest and ‘safety-valve’ legitimisation purposes to be exercised by United Russia, and at the same time oversight mechanisms offered such deputies the opportunity to mobilise resources and to exercise influence, so that various types of lobbying were also evident motivations. Self-legitimation of one’s position and representing constituents were declining motivations even for previously active opposition deputies due to the change in the electoral law to a fully proportional system and due to a sense that such activity was in vain. In Ukraine, deputies were more likely to mention their party’s position and electoral promises as a motivation for oversight, but this could be due to the close proximity to the elections and timing of the fieldwork.

The neopatrimonial approach proved useful in the case of Russia for identifying clear shifts in oversight activity away from activity in the legal-rational sphere, where the

remaining activity became increasingly ritualised, utilised for legitimisation purposes and various types of lobbying. In Ukraine, the preliminary findings suggest that patrimonial relations were also significant in oversight activity (indeed this is one possible explanation for the six-fold increase in deputies' interpellations once their initiation was made easier in 2005), but further analysis is required to confirm this.

In terms of executive responses to oversight activity, the findings are covered under Objective 1, but in terms of the broader nexus of executive-legislative relations, unsurprisingly different tendencies were revealed. The presidential dominance of the legislature during the Putin era meant that the regime constructed an obedient majority but one that was costly in terms of resources. Deputies moved their activities away from oversight activities in the legal-rational sphere and patrimonial relations were increasingly evident in the lobbying activity that formed a principal reason why some semblance of oversight was maintained in the State Duma. There were clear tensions in this model of presidential dominance of the legislature as far as the more it was perceived as externally controlled and as a 'rubber stamp' for presidential initiatives, the less it was able to provide manifest and 'safety-valve' legitimisation to interested sections of the population (see the example of the Beslan victims' groups in the submitted paper).

In Ukraine, the unsatisfactory compromise of the 1996 Constitution helped to perpetuate inter-branch power struggle and the hastily-adopted, crisis-response amendments of 2004 merely shifted the axis of that struggle from president + government vs. parliament to parliament + government vs. president. At the same time, lines within the Verkhovna Rada remained unclear as the various economic groups that underlay the party factions remained amorphous and hedged their bets on who would prevail in the 2010 presidential elections.

3. *To evaluate the trajectory of parliamentary oversight in both countries – is it becoming more or less important for the operation of the legislatures and relations with the executive, and as a mechanism of accountability?*

In Russia a clear and significant (by up to 50% for some mechanisms) decline in oversight activity during Putin's presidency was identified, and oversight was increasingly controlled by the presidential administration as exemplified by the 2004-5 rule amendments, which were part of broader formal changes intended to close the space for autonomous social expression in the run-up to the 2008 presidential 'succession' to ensure a smooth transfer of power from Putin to his chosen successor. At the same time, the evidence clearly suggests that the nature of the remaining oversight activity shifted to a more ritual, formalised character or was related to business activities of various hues.

In Ukraine the evidence is less clear-cut, as the frequency of certain activities such as Government Day, hearings and deputy interpellations increased during 1998-2006 and the formal competences of the Verkhovna Rada were also expanded during this time due to incremental rule changes and the 2004 constitutional amendments. Although oversight activity is likely to increase in importance as the new constitutional arrangement embeds, this was not yet evident as both legislative and oversight work were largely subordinated to the broader power struggle and embroiled within it (e.g. used as weapons in inter-faction economic battles over resources).

In both cases, deputies were sceptical about the efficacy of oversight activity yet in Ukraine they felt able to publicise misdemeanours and obtain some beneficial publicity for themselves/their party (for example, in stopping a corrupt privatisation). Therefore accountability and system openness worked hand-in-hand, and

accountability was more a by-product than a central aim of the activities pursued, which is a pattern similar to that observed in consolidated Western democracies.⁴

4. *To broaden our understanding of the nature of parliamentary oversight by adding new case studies outside 'the West' (but inside Europe) and to contribute to theory concerning deputies' motivations for engaging in oversight in post-Soviet contexts.*

Manifest and 'safety-valve' legitimisation were apparent as key aims of oversight activity, which provides contemporary empirical support to the assertions made by Packenham⁵ about the significance of such system maintenance functions for parliaments especially where legislatures play a less significant role in policy-influencing. Legitimation functions were more prominent and more clearly directed by the executive in the Russian case where the policy-influencing role was less significant than in Ukraine. Furthermore, the patterns of oversight activity observed reflected the broader political system in which they operated, so that patrimonial relations infused a significant proportion of oversight activity, although this was evident to a greater and increasing extent in Russia. Approaching oversight through the lens of neopatrimonialism was particularly fruitful in the Russian case, where it enabled the identification of different types of lobbying activity and of a shift towards such activities within the patrimonial sphere. In turn, this permitted broader inferences about the trajectory of broader state development to be drawn, which relate to and support the research of Richard Sakwa and Thomas Remington.⁶ Russia under President Putin exhibited tensions between the legal-rational and patrimonial spheres, and the shift towards activity in the patrimonial sphere increased costs in terms of maintaining political authority and should be considered as a significant challenge to the Russian state if replicated elsewhere in the Federal Assembly and in the wider political system. In the case of Ukraine, oversight activities became embroiled in the broader political struggle, and this was reflected in the exercise of various mechanisms and in the ongoing 'game around the rules' discussion of draft laws on how to define parliament's oversight powers, with various players each seeking to secure a advantage in a future game. In sum, both cases illustrate how actors' subvert, negotiate and deliberately shape formal rules in a neopatrimonial context, so that ostensibly democratic institutions take on different meanings, which can be rather fluid in periods of political uncertainty. Formal institutions do matter, they do shape actors' behaviour in patterned ways but how this occurs is largely conditioned by the broader political context and the extent to which patrimonial relations (clientelism, patronage and rent-seeking) infuse state institutions.

Activities

As data analysis proceeded, papers on the Russian case were presented at two major conferences plus an international workshop for academics, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, with a paper on the Ukrainian case also being presented at a major

⁴ Wiberg, M (1995), 'Parliamentary Questioning: Control by Communication?', in Döring, H. (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press).

⁵ Packenham, R (1979), *Comparative Legislatures* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press)

⁶ Remington, T. (2008), 'Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations Under Vladimir Putin', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60, 6; Sakwa, R. (2005), 'Presidential Power: The Struggle for Hegemony', in Pridmore, A (ed), *Ruling Russia: law, Crime and Justice in a Changing Society* (Lanham, MA and Oxford: Rowan and Littlefield); Sakwa, R. (2008), 'Putin's Leadership: Character and Consequences', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60, 6.

US conference (see section 2A for details). In addition, the project and the extended fieldwork in Ukraine facilitated the development of an in-depth knowledge of the 'orange revolution' and the ongoing political crisis in Ukraine and resulted in six invited presentations in the UK, Ukraine and Poland. These were for academic, pedagogic and policy audiences. In addition, I gave numerous media interviews during this period on the 'orange revolution' and its impact on Ukrainian politics, including to BBC Newsnight, the World Service as well as US, Irish and Ukrainian media outlets.

Outputs

As detailed in section 2A, one paper on the Russian case was published in 2008 and a further paper is currently under review at *Europe-Asia Studies*. Furthermore, 2 lead articles were published in a respected analytical bulletin used by the academic, policy (especially international technical assistance) and business communities. A further article on the Ukrainian case is planned for submission to *The Journal of Legislative Studies* after feedback is obtained from appropriate conference presentations. The dataset was accepted by ESDS Qualidata and is due for submission by 1 November 2009.

Impacts

The research was used to inform the entries on Ukraine for *The Global Integrity Report* in 2005 and 2007, for which Dr Whitmore acted as a country reviewer. The report is produced by Washington DC-based NGO Global Integrity and tracks governance and accountability trends. In addition, as detailed in section 2B, the research on Ukraine informed the production of two briefings for the German-speaking academic, policy and business community, was discussed with members of the policy-making community in Kyiv and solicited interest from *The Westminster Foundation for Democracy*. Further dissemination to the Ukrainian policy-community is anticipated following the completion of the data-analysis and writing up process in the form of an article for *Parlament*, the journal of the respected Laboratory of Legislative Initiatives think-tank.

Future Research Priorities

The research raises several important questions that could fruitfully be developed into future research projects relating to the broader trajectory of post-Soviet state development. The first concerns whether legitimisation as a key function of oversight and indeed other parliamentary activities becomes increasingly salient as policy-influencing activity declines as is suggested by the divergence of the two case studies undertaken so far. A broader study would seek to investigate this relationship further by considering other parliamentary activities and incorporating cases from consolidated democracies, where the manifest and safety-valve legitimisation functions are often overlooked but may be of equal salience in an era of executive dominance of policy-making. It is proposed that such an investigation could take the form of a desk study based on the existing literature and building directly on the findings of the current project. Secondly, the research raises a further important line of enquiry relating to neopatrimonialism as an analytic framework for the study of post-Soviet states. As a concept that requires greater conceptual elaboration, the current research could be fruitfully form the basis of a more theoretically-inflected article that seeks to deconstruct and elaborate the relationship between the legal-rational and patrimonial spheres, and to consider the specific utility of the concept in post-Soviet compared to post-colonial empirical case studies.