

efficient operation of democratic institutions such as GNAT is the highest priority of the current agenda.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■

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LEGISLATIVE–EXECUTIVE RELATIONS IN UKRAINE'S WARTIME CONDITIONS

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DOI:10.1017/S1049096524000763

Legislative–executive relations in Ukraine have been contested since the country declared independence in 1991. Power has shifted formally between the legislative and executive branches through constitutional change and the declaration of martial law in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. This Spotlight article investigates the dynamics in legislative–executive relations since the declaration of martial law, highlighting public attitudes about interbranch relations.

Legislative–Executive Relations under Zelensky

Since its independence, Ukraine has witnessed tension over the distribution of power between the president and the parliament (Wise and Brown 1999). This has led to three major amendments to the constitution that regulate the relations between the legislative and executive branches. The 2014 amendment reinstated the 2004 reform, which passed the government-formation process from the president to the parliament (Constitution of Ukraine, Article 114). The law reduced presidential power; however, the substantial victory of the pro-presidential Servant of the People Party in the early-2019 elections increased President Volodymyr Zelensky's authority because it secured enough seats in parliament to control the agenda and form the cabinet (Vahina and Komar 2020). This victory created a single-party majority in parliament for the first time in Ukraine's independent history. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and the introduction of martial law magnified presidential power.

The president's strength vis-à-vis the parliament is enhanced by the right of legislative initiative (Constitution of Ukraine, Article 93). In the ninth convocation of the parliament, President Zelensky proposed 250 draft laws, with a 73% approval rate by deputies (i.e., 182 became laws)—surpassing the government's draft law approval rate (i.e., 24%) (Zabolotna 2023). Although concerns were expressed about the feasibility of Zelensky's agenda with his declining popularity in the pre-invasion period (Iwański et al. 2020), he has been able to pass legislation and gain public support—particularly after the full-scale invasion (Onuch and Hale 2023).

Legislative–Executive Relations under Martial Law

Ukraine entered a special legal regime following Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. President Zelensky declared martial law—a declaration that was supported by the parliament through the adoption of corresponding legislation. Compared to peacetime powers, martial law introduces extraordinary powers for executive-branch authorities, military commands, and local self-governmental bodies. Under martial law, the parliament carries out legislative regulation of defense issues and continues to work during a state of war and emergency.

The constitution reinforces parliament's central role in wartime by stipulating that "in the event of the end of the term of office, the parliament continues to perform its functions until the moment when after the abolition of martial law...a new parliamentary composition is elected" (Constitution of Ukraine, Article 83). Parliament partially amended one resolution to work continuously in plenary sessions and adopted another to instruct the Chairman of the Council to determine the time and place for plenary sessions and voting on legislation.

Although trust in the president increased with the onset of war (Herron and Pelchar 2023), trust in the parliament lags behind that trust. Throughout 2022, the Verkhovna Rada (i.e., the unicameral parliament of Ukraine) witnessed shifts in coalition dynamics, evolving from an informal coalition to a more unified "defense coalition" in response to the threat. Despite unity on the issues of war, the decisions about nonmilitary initiatives faced criticism for lack of both cohesion and transparency due to security measures (Zaboloty 2023). Parliament has been conducting its business, but the majority party has faced challenges. In early 2024, parliament encountered significant obstacles with absenteeism, thereby preventing action on legislation. The

difficulties created by the war—heightened travel restrictions, strained communication channels with other governmental bodies, and a growing perception of the parliament as a scapegoat for unpopular policies—have created obstacles to full participation (Januta 2024).¹

Public Attitudes about Legislative–Executive Relations in Wartime

How does the public view legislative–executive relations? In cooperation with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), we have conducted nationally representative surveys in Ukraine since 2020 (Pelchar, Herron, and Flikke 2024). The surveys ask questions about trust in institutions² and attitudes about interbranch relations.³ As illustrated in table 1, the legislature consistently has been trusted less than the president; however, both witnessed increased levels of trust following Russia’s full-scale invasion. Both institutions lag well behind the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the most trusted institution among those we evaluated. Since the war began, levels of trust have declined. In the most recent survey, trust in the parliament returned to its prewar level whereas trust in the president remained above the prewar level.

In the June 2024 survey, we also asked respondents about their perceptions of how well selected institutions worked with one another. Table 2 displays the weighted percentages of respondents who selected each category: a cooperative, working, or hostile relationship. Slightly more than 20% of respondents believed that the relationship between the president and the parliament was hostile; this is approximately the same percentage as respondents who believed that the relationship was cooperative. The majority

The president has increased authority to take actions under martial law and the parliament continues to function as the legislative branch.

—slightly more than 55%—assessed it as a working relationship with some differences. For comparison, almost 50% of the respondents indicated that the relationship between the president and the Armed Forces was cooperative. Almost the same percentage of respondents evaluated the legislature’s relationship with the Armed Forces as negative.

Table 1

Trust in Selected Institutions

	Verkhovna Rada	President	Armed Forces
April 2021	7.5%	30.5%	66.6%
September 2021	8.0%	29.1%	65.4%
February 2022	7.9%	29.1%	71.0%
May 2022	32.9%	81.0%	92.2%
November 2022	21.9%	80.7%	93.1%
September 2023	13.1%	68.7%	93.7%
June 2024	7.7%	40.2%	87.1%

Note: The values are the weighted percentages of respondents who indicated that they trusted or somewhat trusted the institutions.

Table 2

Attitudes about Institutional Relationships

	President–Parliament	President–AFU	Parliament–AFU
Hostile	21.8%	16.7%	46.9%
Working	55.6%	34.8%	37.8%
Cooperative	22.6%	48.5%	15.3%

To summarize, whereas Ukrainians have relatively low levels of trust in their institutions—less than 50% currently express trust in the parliament and the president—they also assess the relationship between the president and the parliament to be functional, even under the stresses of the war.

Conclusion

In the wake of Russia’s full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, Ukraine has witnessed several changes to its interbranch relationships. The president has increased authority to take actions under martial law and the parliament continues to function as the legislative branch. The parliament has faced challenges, including modifications to its processes and a decline in the number of active members. Although the Ukrainian public often has viewed institutions with skepticism, the parliament and the president gained trust after Russia’s full-scale invasion. The “rally effect” is diminishing, but Ukrainians nevertheless largely view these institutions as maintaining a working relationship even during the war.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by the National Values and Political Reforms project at the University of Oslo, financed by the Research Council of Norway Project No. 301249; and the Central Eurasian State Capacity Initiative project at West Virginia University, financed by the Minerva Research Initiative, Office of Naval Research (N00014-19-1-2456).

DATA AVAILABILITY

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the *PS: Political Science & Politics* Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/OLC2IF>.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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NOTES

1. Previously, Ukrainian parties had adopted informal practices of illicit proxy voting to overcome the problem of absenteeism (Herron, Fitzpatrick, and Palamarenko 2019), but these practices were curtailed by new rules under the Zelensky administration.

2. We asked: "For each institution I am going to mention, please tell me how much you personally trust it. Use the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means very little or no trust, 3 means moderate trust, and 5 means complete trust. So, how much do you trust...."
3. We asked: "How would you describe the relationship between the following institutions? Rate from 1 to 5, where 1 is a hostile relationship, 3 is a working relationship with certain differences, and 5 is a relationship characterized by complete cooperation."

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CONCLUSION TO THE SPOTLIGHT "DYNAMICS IN LEGISLATIVE-EXECUTIVE RELATIONS: GLOBAL OUTLINE FOR 2019-2024"

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DOI:10.1017/S1049096524000489

This conclusion summarizes the main goals for this Spotlight and discusses empirical findings and implications for the theory and practice of legislative-executive relations worldwide. The Spotlight's main goal is to explore the dynamics in legislative-executive relations from 2019 to 2024. Published research discusses populist executive branches coming to power and fundamentally reshaping legislative-executive relations in some countries; however, this has not been a monotonic process. In some countries, legislatures preserve and even increase their influence in policy processes. Given the fast pace of changes in the power distribution between legislative and executive branches of power and how

consequential those changes are for the future of democracy and overall security in the world, this Spotlight identifies some of the most important explanations for the observed dynamics. The Spotlight articles focus on the question: What are some of the most important factors associated with observed dynamics in legislative-executive relations?

The contributions to this Spotlight highlight a wide range of developments in legislative-executive relations worldwide. Many countries experienced a rapid power shift from a legislature to a more powerful and frequently populist executive. Some articles, however, focus on institutional and contextual factors. Many contributors described a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that resulted in the executive claiming more power and retaining it after the crisis. The articles discussed institutional changes—such as those in election laws and constitutional reforms—that governments introduced in response to the crisis. Some articles highlighted economic factors that influenced legislative-executive relations. Finally, other articles discussed culture and ideology as the main factors that can explain observed dynamics.

Crises and Institutional Changes

Adam Szymanski discusses a rapid power shift toward the executive in Polish legislative-executive relations. He examines the changes at the national and subnational levels and concludes that, whereas some factors explain the dynamics of legislative-executive relations at all levels, others are specific to the subnational level of government. This includes long-term deficits of democratic governance and changes to election law. Overall, Szymanski describes changes in election law and administrative reforms as the main factors that resulted in a power shift in legislative-executive relations in Poland toward the executive.

Luai Allakaria describes the deadlock in legislative-executive relations in Kuwait that shifts power toward the executive. She argues that the system in Kuwait is set up with permissive rules for interpolations and motions of no confidence. When combined with a personalized nonpartisan system, the result is an excessive utilization of oversight rules, which leads to executive strategies to delay or block this oversight.

Andrea Cullen makes a novel argument in discussing how the physical proximity of the executive to the legislature contributes to its exercising power in Australia. The "deliberate design" houses the executive branch in the legislature building. Cullen discusses how the executive has used the physical proximity to influence the legislative decision-making process.

Damien Lecomte and Calixte Bloquet examine constitutional reforms to explain changes in a historically weak position of the French Parliament relative to the government. They discuss how a shift from a seven-year to a five-year mandate for presidents in the early 2000s gave more power to the president. This, in turn, led to a slow erosion of in-party cohesion inside of the main parliamentary party groups and to heightened difficulties in disciplining majorities. This process eventually was completed by rapid party fragmentation that culminated in the current (as of August 2024) unusual situation of a minority government.

Ömer Faruk Gençkaya and Selma Gençkaya discuss the recent consequences of adopting the Turkish Constitution in 1982, the failed coup attempt of 2016, and subsequent constitutional engineering that led to a significant increase in presidential power at the expense of the legislature in Turkey. They argue that the