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Kazimierz M. Ślomożyński, Goldie Shabad and Jakub Zielinski

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FLUID PARTY SYSTEMS, ELECTORAL RULES AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF LEGISLATORS IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

The Case of Ukraine

*Kazimierz M. Slomczynski, Goldie Shabad and
Jakub Zielinski*

ABSTRACT

Does the system of repeated parliamentary elections function as a mechanism of political control in new democracies with fluid party systems? Moreover, does electoral format affect the degree to which voters are able to hold legislators accountable for their performance in office? In addressing these questions, we use a new database on all legislative incumbents and all parliamentary elections that have taken place in Ukraine since 1994. Our findings indicate that, even in a flawed 'electoralist' democracy such as Ukraine, repeated parliamentary elections do serve as a mechanism of accountability with respect to economic performance. Disregarding electoral format, political control tends to work through political parties/partisan blocs. Only in the case of single-member district elections, however, is there a statistically significant relationship between economic performance and chances of winning, i.e. when economic performance is poor, voters punish legislators from a pro-presidential group and reward legislators from the opposition.

KEY WORDS ■ electoral accountability ■ electoral format ■ new party systems
■ political control

Introduction

One of the central tenets of democratic theory is that elections function as a mechanism of accountability by providing voters with the opportunity to hold politicians responsible for their performance in office (Przeworski et al.,

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1999). If this is the case, the presumption is that politicians have an incentive to implement policies that serve the collective good, rather than to engage in rent-seeking or to provide particularistic benefits to their supporters. Here, however, we address only the empirical validity of the claim that repeated elections function as a mechanism of political control by examining whether the electoral fortunes of individual politicians rest, at least in part, on improved or worsened economic conditions in the districts in which they seek re-election. We also address the issue of whether type of electoral format affects the ability of voters to hold politicians accountable for their performance.

These issues are particularly interesting in the case of new democracies of Eastern Europe. Unlike in most well-established democracies of the West, electoral control in Eastern Europe takes place in the context of fluid party systems. From one election to another, entirely new parties are formed and existing parties disappear altogether, split or merge. As a result, the new party systems in Eastern Europe consist of many short-lived organizations with hazy policy reputations and fluid personnel. A number of basic questions about the impact of such party systems on electoral accountability have not yet been studied.

We know little, for example, about what form electoral control takes in the context of a fluid party system. The most likely possibility is that electoral control works through political parties, just like it does in mature democracies. In this case, when policy outcomes are bad, voters punish legislative incumbents who belong to a governing party or parties, and they reward those incumbents who belong to an opposition party. Voters use party labels to determine which incumbents are members of the legislative coalition that controlled the government in parliamentary systems or that supported the executive in presidentialist regimes, and who therefore should be held responsible for policy outcomes. The alternative possibility is that electoral control bypasses political parties and voters hold parliamentarians accountable regardless of their party affiliation or lack thereof.

We also know little about how the fluidity of new party systems affects the extent of electoral control. If accountability works through political parties so that voters punish legislators from a governing party for poor performance, then bad policy outcomes during their term in office create an electoral incentive for legislators to switch parties prior to an election or to run as 'independents', that is, as formally unaffiliated with any party regardless of their factional membership or support of the government in the previous parliament. To the extent that undeveloped and fluid party systems allow politicians to engage in such behavior and thus to evade electoral sanction, the system of repeated elections serves as a less effective institution of political control.

Another important research problem concerns the effect of formal institutions on the extent of electoral control in new democracies with fluid party systems. With regard to electoral systems, an extensive literature on

the ways in which electoral rules shape the process and outcomes of elections indicates that systems with single-member districts (SMDs) encourage and permit legislators to develop personal reputations that may be based on attributes apart from performance in office, or to rely extensively on the dispersion of selective benefits through clientelistic networks, while systems with multi-member districts encourage legislators to accentuate their party affiliation, programmatic appeals and (good) policy performance (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Cox, 1997). As a result, electoral control may take different forms or vary in degree depending on electoral format. In SMDs, there may be little accountability based on incumbents' policy performance or, if it exists, electoral control may bypass political parties. In multi-member districts, it may work through political parties.

Here we focus on the impact of electoral systems on the form and extent of electoral accountability in Ukraine. To do so, we analyze a new database on Ukraine that contains detailed information about individual legislators who chose to run again for office in the next parliamentary election, as well as data about unemployment rates in the oblasts (regions) in which their electoral districts were located and at the national level.¹ The dataset encompasses all competitive elections for the 450 member Verhovna Rada that took place in 1994, 1998 and 2002, i.e. since Ukraine became an independent state in 1991. It has 925 observations, where the unit of observation is an incumbent/election. In the 1994 election, 185 legislators (41 percent) who had served in the last Soviet-era parliament competed in independent Ukraine's first competitive elections; in 1998, 339 ran again for office (75 percent); in 2002, 401 incumbents sought to retain their seats (89 percent). To address the issue of possible selection bias, we also analyze data for 390 parliamentarians who chose not to run again in the next election.

Ukraine is an excellent case in which to address the questions of whether repeated parliamentary elections function as a mechanism of political control in a new democracy and how formal institutions influence the ability of voters to hold their representatives accountable. Ukraine's party system is undeveloped and fluid (Birch, 2000, 2003; Birch and Wilson, 1999; Diuk and Gongadze, 2002; Hesli et al., 1998; Miller et al., 2000; Miller and Klobucar, 2000). Parties emerge and disappear, coalesce and splinter; legislators frequently move from one parliamentary faction to another; many candidates (including incumbents) switch parties from one election to another; a significant number of candidates run – and win – as independents.² In addition, parliamentary elections took place under different electoral formats: an SMD system in 1994 and a mixed-member format in 1998 and 2002.

Moreover, Ukraine has been a rather flawed democracy in which key characteristics of a democratic regime, such as the rule of law and an independent media, are weak. On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating the highest level of democratization and 7 the lowest, Freedom House gave Ukraine in 1998 a score of 4.25 and in 2002 a score of 4.69. In contrast,

by the mid-1990s post-communist countries in Central Europe and the Baltics were given a score ranging from 1.5 to 2.5 (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/intransit/2002/index.htm>). Clientelism, what Sarah Birch (1997) has dubbed 'kolbasa politics', vote-buying, tactics used by pro-presidential groups to confuse voters, and electoral irregularities have been pervasive characteristics of Ukraine's parliamentary and especially presidential elections (Birch, 1997; D'Anieri, 2005; Kubicek, 2001; Kuzio, 2005; Way, 2005).

Despite these serious flaws, which served the interests of the 'party of power', that is, those associated with the president, elections 'were meaningful and created uncertainty' and were 'often highly competitive' (Way, 2005: 792). Whether they served as mechanisms of accountability, however, requires independent assessment. The 'hyper-presidentialist' regime (Frye, 1997; Wilson, 2003) in which the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections were held in Ukraine, the frequency of party-switching and independent candidacy, and the pervasiveness of electoral clientelism and procedural deficiencies, singly and in combination, should operate to undermine, if not eliminate altogether, the degree to which voters can hold politicians accountable for their performance. Strong regional divisions which affect the vote and are both related to and distinct from differences in economic conditions may also diminish the extent to which politicians are held responsible for certain kinds of policy outputs (see, for example, Craumer and Clem, 1999; Hesli et al., 1998; Kravchuk and Chudowsky, 2005; Kubicek, 2000; Wilson and Birch, 1999).

Electoral Control

Theoretical and Empirical Background

Elections are by no means the only mechanisms of democratic accountability, nor do they serve only or primarily, as the Schumpeterian notion (1942) would have it, as occasions for voters to pass retrospective judgment on politicians' performance in office. Elections may, for example, function as a means to facilitate representation, in which case voters choose politicians who are 'like them' in descriptive terms or engage in 'mandate voting' where they seek to ally their preferences with politicians' programmatic stances (Manin et al., 1999; Pitkin, 1967). Voters may also engage in 'prospective voting' (Fearon, 1999). Here, voters who are uncertain about incumbents' ability or willingness to implement good policies treat policy outcomes as a signal of incumbent type. When they see good policy outcomes, they conclude that incumbents are more likely to implement good policies in the future and so re-elect them. Conversely, when voters see bad policy outcomes, they conclude that incumbents are less likely to implement good policies in the future and so replace them with challengers. As a result of such inferences, policy outcomes will be related to the probability of re-election, and so the act of prospective voting implies that judgment of past performance is taken

into account. Notwithstanding the various motivations of voters when they cast their ballot, the degree to which repeated elections function as a mechanism of political control over politicians remains a central concern of normative and empirical democratic theory (Powell, 2000; Przeworski et al., 1999).

The empirical work that is most directly relevant to the study of electoral accountability to date is research on economic voting, mostly in the established democracies of the West, but increasingly also in the new democracies of the East. Some scholars focus on the relation between economic conditions and vote-shares received by governing political parties (see, for example, Bell, 1997; Fidrmuc, 2000; Pacek, 1994; Paldam, 1991; Powell, 2000; Powell and Whitten, 1993; Tucker, 2006). Others examine the impact of economic conditions on voting intentions of individual citizens (Lewis-Beck, 1988; Powers and Cox, 1997; Przeworski, 1996). The most basic finding of this literature is that a weak economy diminishes the vote-share of governing parties and makes individual voters more inclined to vote for the opposition (see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier [2000] and Tucker [2002] for a review).

However, this finding contains an important limitation. It generates information about voters rather than the probability of reward or punishment faced by individual politicians depending upon their performance in office. More broadly, studies of economic voting describe how economic performance affects voting behavior, but they do not describe how economic performance affects the electoral prospects of individual incumbents. Yet, it is precisely the second piece of information that is central to the study of electoral control. This implies that, for the purpose of studying electoral accountability, the relevant information concerns the impact of economic outcomes on the re-election probability of individual incumbents rather than the influence of economic outcomes on voting behavior (for a fuller explication of this point, see Zielinski et al. [2005]).

An Operationalization of Accountability

In order to determine whether electoral control exists, we operationalize accountability by reference to the probability with which individual politicians are re-elected based on their performance in office. In particular, we propose the following definition: accountability exists if and only if bad policy outcomes increase the probability that at least a subset of legislative incumbents lose. This definition represents accountability as a relation between policy outcomes and the probability of re-election. The approach follows directly from the theory of elections as a mechanism of accountability.

For the purpose of studying elections as a mechanism of accountability, it is useful to classify political parties as either governing or non-governing. Of course, there are other ways of classifying political parties and the choice of a specific classification depends on the theoretical problem under investigation.

Policy Outcomes. We decided to concentrate on unemployment as the main indicator of economic performance because unemployment correlates highly with other indicators of economic standing (Blanchard, 1997), and surveys of public opinion from post-communist societies, including Ukraine, indicate that voters in these countries consistently rank unemployment as a major policy concern (Wilson and Birch, 1999), whereas the significance of other issues – such as inflation, crime, corruption or foreign policy – changes from one election to the next.

In the 1990s, ordinary Ukrainians for the first time began to experience unemployment. The national rate of unemployment increased from 0 percent in 1990 to 11.9 percent in 2002.³ This national trend, however, hides considerable variation across the 27 oblasts. To illustrate this variation, Table 1 provides a frequency distribution of parliamentarians who sought re-election based on the change in the unemployment rate in their electoral districts between any two consecutive elections.⁴ For all 925 cases, the maximum increase in level of unemployment was 11.4, while the maximum decrease was 8.2 percent. An average incumbent ran for re-election in an oblast in which the level of unemployment had increased by 3.2 percent since the previous election.

Re-election, Unemployment and Electoral Format

Form and Extent of Electoral Control

To ascertain to what extent electoral control exists in Ukraine, we classified all political parties and electoral blocs as governing or non-governing. We defined governing political parties/blocs as those that had been pro-presidential or supportive of the administration during the parliament leading up to the election as well as new parties allied with the president or supportive of the administration at the time of a particular election.⁵ We also included in the pro-presidential party/bloc category those who competed

Table 1. Unemployment change in ecological units by electoral format, 1990–2002

<i>Unemployment change</i>	<i>Electoral format</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Proportional representation</i>	<i>Single-member district</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	
Minimum	–4.0	–8.2	1.8	–8.2
Maximum	8.4	10.0	11.4	11.4
Mean	0.6	3.4	6.8	3.2
Standard deviation	2.9	3.8	1.5	3.9
Median	–0.2	4.6	7.0	3.8
N	268	482	175	925

as independents. A total of 188 incumbents (20.3 percent) ran for re-election as independents in the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections. All studies of Ukrainian politics indicate that a sizable majority of legislators who are elected as independents move to pro-presidential groups and then seek re-election once again as independents (Birch, 2000; Birch and Wilson, 1999; Bojcun, 1995; Herron, 2002a). For this reason, we treat independents as ‘crypto-presidential’.⁶ The nature of executive–legislative relations in Ukraine, the fragmentation of the party system and the significant mobility of deputies toward pro-presidential parliamentary factions effectively give greater control over legislation to those supporting the president. If electoral control exists and it works through parties, then those incumbents who are associated with pro-presidential groups are the ones who should be held accountable for their performance.

For each legislative incumbent, we constructed a binary variable referring to the incumbent’s re-election status (w), where $w = 1$ if the incumbent is re-elected and zero otherwise. We also constructed a binary variable called pro-presidential party/bloc affiliation (X_1), which equals 1 if the incumbent was affiliated with a pro-presidential party/bloc or ran as an independent and zero otherwise.

Our measure of economic performance is conceptualized as a function of the initial economic conditions that politicians inherit when they are elected and of the change in economic conditions that take place while they govern. More specifically, for any election t , we measure the initial economic conditions as the oblast-level rate of unemployment (u_{t-1}) at the time of the previous election $t - 1$, and we measure the change in economic conditions as the change in the oblast-level rate of unemployment ($\Delta u = u_t - u_{t-1}$) that took place between the previous election $t - 1$ and the current election weighted by the initial state of unemployment. Thus, we conceptualize economic performance as a continuous mapping:

$$\pi: u_{t-1} \times \Delta u \rightarrow \Re$$

where higher values of π represent better performance.

Consider two hypothetical scenarios involving weighted change in unemployment. In the first case, politicians inherit an economy with low unemployment, say 4 percent, and they preside over a 1 percent increase in unemployment. In the second case, politicians inherit an economy with relatively high unemployment, for example, 9 percent, and they preside over a 1 percent increase in unemployment. In both cases, the change in economic conditions is the same ($\Delta u = 1$ percent), yet intuition suggests that the first case represents better performance than the second. In the first case, politicians inherit a good economy in terms of unemployment level and they ‘make’ things slightly worse, thus leaving the economy in relatively decent shape. In the second case, in contrast, they inherit a relatively bad economy, and they fail to make any improvements. Indeed, they ‘make’ things worse and thus leave the economy in relatively poor shape. Extrapolating from

this example, we assume that economic performance is a decreasing function of u_{t-1} , called here X_2 . In effect, what we are measuring is the weighted change in unemployment in ecological units. The crucial question is whether pro-presidential incumbents' chances of winning are determined by economic performance so defined.

To address this question, we estimated parameters of the following equation for all legislative incumbents who ran for re-election regardless of the type of electoral format in which they ran:

$$\log(p/(1-p)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 (X_1 \times X_2)$$

where p refers to the probability of being re-elected ($w = 1$), X_1 refers to pro-presidential party/bloc affiliation and X_2 refers to weighted change in unemployment. Our expectations are as follows. If voters in Ukraine do not use elections to control politicians, then there should be no relation between weighted change in unemployment in the ecological unit in which the incumbent competed and the probability of his or her re-election ($H1: \beta_2 = 0$ and $\beta_3 = 0$). If electoral control works through political parties, then a worsening of economic performance should decrease the re-election probability of an incumbent affiliated with a pro-presidential party/bloc, and it should increase the re-election probability of an incumbent from an opposition party ($H2: \beta_2 + \beta_3 < 0$ and $\beta_2 > 0$). Finally, if electoral control bypasses political parties, then deteriorating economic conditions should decrease the re-election probability of all legislative incumbents equally ($H3: \beta_3 = 0$ and $\beta_2 < 0$).

Table 2 presents the results.⁷ Panels A and B differ in one important respect: in Panel B we control for independents in 1998. In that year, independents were a more heterogeneous category with respect to their affiliation with a pro-presidential party/bloc than in 1994 and 2002. Only in 1998 could candidates compete on both proportional representation (PR) and SMD tiers, and a sizable number of incumbents who ran as independents in plurality elections also appeared on a party/bloc PR list. As can be seen, inclusion of this control variable strengthens the relationship between re-election probability and weighted change in unemployment and makes the relevant coefficients strongly statistically significant.

The results presented in Table 2 allow us to reject hypotheses 1 and 3. They show that there is a relationship between weighted change in unemployment and the probability of re-election. Moreover, economic performance has a differential effect on the chances of an incumbent's re-election depending on whether or not he or she is affiliated with a pro-presidential party/bloc. As weighted change of unemployment increases, an opposition incumbent's probability of winning increases to a statistically significant degree. Note that for all opposition incumbents the terms $\beta_1 X_1$ and $\beta_3 (X_1 \times X_2)$ become 0; thus, their chances of winning increase substantially as unemployment rises, since $\beta_2 > 0$. This statistically significant result gives some credence to hypothesis 2. Indeed, in comparison with those incumbents affiliated with

Table 2. Logistic regression of winning election on pro-presidential party/bloc affiliation and weighted unemployment change in ecological units, controlling for independents in 1998

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
A. Without control ^a			
Presidential party affiliation (X_1)	-0.485	0.308	0.615
Weighted unemployment change (X_2)	0.028	0.003	1.028***
Interaction ($X_1 \times X_2$)	-0.009	0.004	0.991**
Constant	-2.024	0.152	0.132***
B. Controlling for independents in 1998 ^b			
Presidential party affiliation (X_1)	-0.897	0.356	0.408***
Weighted unemployment change (X_2)	0.028	0.003	1.028***
Interaction ($X_1 \times X_2$)	-0.018	0.005	0.982**
Independents in 1998 (yes = 1)	1.733	0.389	5.655***
Constant	-2.024	0.152	0.132***

Note: Data are pooled for the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections.

^aChi-square 160.8, d.f. = 3, -2 log likelihood = 849.42, Cox and Snell R Square = 0.160.

^bChi-square 183.3, d.f. = 4, -2 log likelihood = 826.84, Cox and Snell R Square = 0.180.

* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

a pro-presidential party/bloc, opposition incumbents have a better chance of winning when there is an increase in weighted change of unemployment in their ecological units. The fact that the impact of the interaction term β_3 is negative ($\beta_3 < 0$) also lends support to hypothesis 2. In the case of incumbents affiliated with a pro-presidential party/bloc, economic performance has a negative and statistically significant effect on their chances of winning. This set of pro-presidential incumbents is held accountable and are punished for 'making' things worse in an already bad economic situation.

To assess the extent to which pro-presidential incumbents are punished, assume that in one oblast the initial unemployment rate was 15 percent and by the next election it had risen 7 points to 22 percent. This means that in this oblast pro-presidential incumbents would be severely punished, since the coefficient -0.018 (see Table 2, Panel B, coefficient for interaction) must be multiplied by 105 (since $15 \times 7 = 105$), thus leading to a non-trivial value of -1.89. The corresponding value for opposition incumbents is 2.94. Consequently, pro-presidential incumbents in such oblasts are relatively 'punished', since for poor performance they get 1.05 points (2.94-1.89) in log metric probability.

The probability of re-election of pro-presidential versus opposition incumbents as a function of economic performance is in the right direction and is statistically significant. However, the magnitude of difference between the re-election probabilities of the two groups is not so large as to allow us to confirm the hypothesis that pro-presidential incumbents are noticeably punished in absolute terms. Accountability based on economic performance exists, but is only rather weakly channeled through political parties/blocs.

The Effect of Electoral Format

Different rules governed each of the three fully competitive parliamentary elections that were held in 1994, 1998 and 2002. In 1994, Ukraine's first post-independence parliament was selected according to a single-member constituency, two-round majoritarian system, one that was largely left intact from the Soviet era. In 1997, the Rada adopted radically different electoral rules, similar to those of Russia. The 1998 parliamentary elections were held under a mixed system in which half of the 450 deputies were elected through a closed-list format in a single-member constituency with a 4 percent threshold, and the other half in SMDs under a first-past-the-post format with no turnout requirement. The two tiers were not linked. In 1998, candidates were allowed to run on both a party list and in a single-member constituency. This, however, was disallowed in the 2002 election. But, as in 1994, in the 1998 and 2002 elections 'self-nominated' candidates could easily qualify to run for office without being affiliated with either a party or an electoral bloc.

There is a vast literature on the effects of electoral systems on the nature and institutionalization of party systems, the behavior of ordinary voters and legislators, and electoral outcomes in long-lived and new democracies (Birch, 2005; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Cox, 1997; Herron, 2002b; Herron and Nishikawa, 2001; Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001; Thames, 2001, 2002, 2005). Within this literature, research on the impact of electoral systems on accountability is largely based on vote-shares obtained by governing versus non-governing parties or on individuals' recalled vote or voting intention. Here, we assess the effect of different electoral formats (PR versus SMD versus mixed) on the re-election probability of individual incumbents as a function of their or their party's/bloc's performance in office.

Of the total number of 925 cases of incumbents who sought re-election, 268 ran on PR lists only (in the 1998 and/or 2002 election), 482 ran only in single-member constituencies, and 175 competed on both a PR list and in an SMD in 1998. As can be seen from the findings presented in Table 3, the results varied depending upon electoral format. Under PR and SMD formats (Panels A and B), the re-election probability of incumbents affiliated with opposition parties/blocs increased as the weighted change in unemployment level rose. The effect of poor performance on the chances of winning among opposition incumbents was particularly strong under PR. In contrast, the probability of re-election among opposition incumbents who ran on both a PR list and in a single-member constituency in 1998 (Panel C) was negatively affected, but very weakly so, by worsening performance. As for pro-presidential incumbents, the coefficients between performance and re-election probability were in the expected direction under the PR and SMD formats (Panels A and B), but only in the latter case was it statistically significant. There was no effect of weighted change in level of unemployment on the chances of winning among pro-presidential incumbents who ran simultaneously in PR and SMD tiers in 1998 (Panel C).⁸

Table 3. Logistic regression of winning election on pro-presidential party/bloc affiliation and weighted unemployment change in ecological units by electoral format

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
A. Proportional representation^a			
Presidential party affiliation (X_1)	-0.454	2.186	0.635
Weighted unemployment change (X_2)	0.079	0.014	1.082***
Interaction ($X_1 \times X_2$)	-0.039	0.030	0.961
Independents in 1998 (yes = 1)	1.824	1.682	6.197
Constant	-5.113	0.947	0.006***
B. Single-member district^b			
Presidential party affiliation (X_1)	-1.909	0.621	0.148***
Weighted unemployment change (X_2)	0.016	0.004	1.017***
Interaction ($X_1 \times X_2$)	-0.022	0.010	0.979**
Independents in 1998 (yes = 1)	3.001	0.877	20.101***
Constant	-1.575	0.193	0.207***
C. Mixed^c			
Presidential party affiliation (X_1)	-1.921	0.962	0.146
Weighted unemployment change (X_2)	-0.013	0.007	0.987*
Interaction ($X_1 \times X_2$)	0.004	0.011	1.004
Independents in 1998 (yes = 1)	1.221	0.502	3.389***
Constant	1.734	0.649	5.662***

Note: Data are pooled for the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections.

^aChi-square 88.5, d.f. = 4, -2 log likelihood = 48.72, Cox and Snell R Square = 0.281.

^bChi-square 51.9, d.f. = 4, -2 log likelihood = 443.01, Cox and Snell R Square = 0.102.

^cChi-square 19.3, d.f. = 4, -2 log likelihood = 220.75, Cox and Snell R Square = 0.105.

* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Overall, then, the findings in Table 3 only weakly support the claim that within the PR format electoral control will work through parties. Instead, they are most consistent with the proposition that voters are likely to be better informed about incumbents seeking re-election in SMDs, including whether or not they were affiliated with pro-presidential groups in parliament, and thus voters are better able to hold legislators accountable for their performance in office. Only with respect to the SMD format is hypothesis 2 ($H2: \beta_2 + \beta_3 < 0$ and $\beta_2 > 0$) fully supported by our findings. 'Making' things worse in districts in which economic conditions were already relatively bad decreases the electoral chances of pro-presidential incumbents. Opposition incumbents are more likely to win vis-à-vis pro-presidential incumbents as economic performance declines.

Additional Analyses

Redefining the Key Independent Variables

Two independent variables pertaining to pro-presidential party affiliation and the rate of unemployment have been crucial to our analyses. For reasons explained earlier, in our analysis we defined pro-presidential candidates broadly by including in this category all those who ran as independents. Of course, this introduced error into these analyses, since some incumbents who had competed as independents either never affiliated with any parliamentary faction or did not move to a pro-presidential group. In additional analyses, we experimented with eliminating 'misclassified' cases from the pro-presidential category on the basis of both random assignment for the entire dataset and ascertainable factional affiliation in the 1988–2002 parliament for the 2002 election.⁹ The results remained substantially the same as those already presented.

In assigning change in unemployment to incumbents' districts we relied on statistics from oblasts in which these districts were located. However, we faced the dilemma of what to do with incumbents who ran under the PR format in 1998 and 2002. We chose to use the national rates of unemployment in 1998 and 2002. In additional analyses, we were interested in finding out what would happen for these years were we to include estimates of unemployment for the oblasts in which incumbents had run in the previous election. Even under this re-specification of the crucial variable, in the PR tier of elections we did not observe a significant effect of increase of weighted unemployment on the chances of being re-elected among pro-presidential incumbents. Thus, the null hypothesis that redefining key variables would not change the results was upheld.

Redesigning the Sample

In previous analyses we restricted our sample to only those parliamentarians who chose to run in the subsequent election. However, it is quite possible that those pro-presidential legislators who decided not to run again might have done so in anticipation of their defeat at the polls. Indeed, the data suggest that poor performance of parliamentarians in a given election, as indicated by an increase of weighted unemployment in their districts, is positively correlated with the probability of choosing not to run again (pseudo- $R^2 = 0.15$, statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level). If we treat not running again as 'self-punishment', we can ask whether the inclusion in our sample of parliamentarians who chose not to run again affects the likelihood of 'voters' punishment' of poorly performing incumbents who sought re-election. Including parliamentarians who chose not to run again extends our sample by 390 cases.

Using this extended sample, we performed a multinomial regression in which 'self-punishment' and 'voters' punishment' were two values of the

dependent variable; the reference value was winning the election. Independent variables included increase of weighted unemployment at the oblast level, affiliation with a pro-presidential party/bloc, and the interaction term of these two variables. The crucial variable, the interaction term, proved to be positive and statistically significant for both 'self-punishment' and 'voters' punishment'. Moreover, the coefficient for the interaction term in this model is similar to that in the model for 'voters' punishment' only (i.e. with the dependent variable having opposite values to that in Tables 2 and 3). Thus, the null hypothesis that redesigning the sample would not alter our findings was sustained.

Extended Specification of the Model

We hypothesized that among parliamentarians the probability of being re-elected is a function of weighted change of unemployment at the oblast level, affiliation with a pro-presidential party/bloc, and the interaction term of these two variables. We controlled only for independents in the 1998 election. Although we do not aim to provide a full explanation of the probability of re-election, the issue of omitting other relevant variables requires some consideration. Our model might be misspecified if additional variables alter significantly the impact of those already present in our model. To check for this possibility, in additional analyses we included two variables characterizing the incumbent (age and Communist Party membership) and one contextual variable (region: west, east, south, central and Kiev).¹⁰ These are variables that might affect the impact of our core variables, since they are

Table 4. Logistic regression of winning election on pro-presidential party/bloc affiliation, weighted unemployment change in ecological units, and control variables, for single-member districts

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Presidential party affiliation (X_1)	-1.988	0.634	0.137***
Weighted unemployment change (X_2)	0.022	0.006	1.022***
Interaction ($X_1 \times X_2$)	-0.027	0.011	0.973***
Independents in 1998 (yes = 1)	3.299	0.098	27.087***
Age (years)	-0.036	0.012	0.967***
Communist Party affiliation (yes = 1)	-1.688	0.584	0.185***
Region: Southern (yes = 1) ^a	-0.586	0.434	0.557
Region: Eastern (yes = 1) ^a	-0.601	0.342	0.548*
Region: Western (yes = 1) ^a	0.025	0.347	1.025
Region: Kiev (yes = 1) ^a	-1.469	0.672	0.230**
Constant	0.479	0.616	1.615

Note: Data are pooled for the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections.

Chi-square 77.50, d.f. = 10, -2 log likelihood = 386.76, Cox and Snell R Square = 0.154.

^aReference category: Central.

* $p < 0.10$ ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

relatively strong predictors of voting behavior (Birch, 2000; Craumer and Clem, 1999; D'Anieri et al., 1999; Kubicek, 2000). As the results presented in Table 4 show, even when these additional control variables are introduced, there remains strong support for our thesis that the re-election probability of pro-presidential incumbents (who competed under the SMD format) is a function of change in the level of weighted unemployment in the districts in which they ran.

Conclusions

Our findings provide evidence that repeated parliamentary elections in Ukraine do serve as a mechanism of political control. The re-election probability of legislative incumbents affiliated with pro-presidential parties/blocs is an increasing function of economic performance, while the re-election probability of incumbents from opposition parties is a decreasing function of economic performance. Since our analysis is based on data from the first three elections, this result is theoretically interesting because it suggests that the system of repeated elections functions as theorized from the very beginning. In particular, there appears to be no need for a lengthy, transitional process during which voters and politicians learn about the incentives generated by repeated elections. Indeed, it would seem that individual politicians have learned rather quickly since significant numbers of incumbents associated with pro-presidential groups employ strategies, such as running as independents, switching partisan affiliation and forming spoiler parties, to circumvent being held responsible for their or their parties' performance. Thus, given the historical legacy of dictatorship, the institutional context in which elections are held, and the strategies employed by governing incumbents to escape punishment for poor performance, the fact that our findings indicate that voters in Ukraine have learned to use the electoral system to hold their representatives to account is surprising.

Our analyses also show that electoral control in Ukraine operates through political parties or partisan blocs. Despite the informational noise that exists in Ukraine's party system and the deliberate confusion perpetrated by 'the party of power', partisan labels communicate to the voters which incumbents were or are associated with political forces supportive of the presidential administration and therefore should be held responsible for economic outcomes. Nonetheless, the fact remains that poor economic performance diminishes only slightly the re-election probability of pro-presidential incumbents when compared to that of opposition legislators.

Finally, our analyses demonstrate that electoral formats do matter. Only in the case of SMD elections did we obtain statistically significant results that indicate a relation between economic performance and chances of winning in the anticipated direction among pro-presidential and among opposition incumbents. Only under this format, moreover, was there evidence

of party-based electoral control. On the basis of these findings, the 2005 constitutional amendment which established a wholly PR electoral format seems ill-advised from the standpoint of accountability. We are reluctant, however, to take too strong a position on this issue on the basis of the results presented here. A similar analysis of electoral control in Poland, which has an (open-list) PR system, showed that in that country the system of repeated elections does function as a mechanism of accountability and that electoral control works through political parties (Zielinski et al., 2005). There is also empirical evidence suggesting that a PR system more so than an SMD format tends to facilitate political party development and hence party system institutionalization (see, for example, Birch, 2005).

The weak, but nonetheless surprising, confirmation of the presence of electoral control in Ukraine and the rather tentative inferences that can be drawn from our analysis regarding the impact of electoral format on accountability may be the consequence of the ‘crudeness’ of our operationalization of our key variable, i.e. governing versus non-governing parties. Compounding this problem is the difficulty of properly assigning incumbents to one or the other group because of the inability to accurately monitor the shifting partisan affiliations in the parliament of those who run as independents and more generally to track inter-party mobility of incumbents between consecutive elections. However, the additional analyses which addressed these problems, as well as others, did not negate our central finding that politicians who compete under the SMD format are held accountable for their performance.

Thus, it is equally, if not more, plausible that the combination of Ukraine’s fluid party system, the large number of politicians who seek re-election as independents to try to escape responsibility despite their affiliation with pro-presidential groups in parliament, and the ambiguity generated by executive–legislative relations as to which partisan groups should be held responsible for governmental performance combine to undermine party-based accountability. Research on electoral control in Poland (Zielinski et al., 2005), a new democracy in which there is greater clarity of institutional responsibility, far fewer unaffiliated incumbents who seek re-election, and a less fluid party system, found strong evidence that repeated elections do function as a mechanism of accountability and that electoral control works through political parties.

Finally, other characteristics of Ukraine’s ‘electoralist’ democracy – particularly clientelism – need to be taken into consideration because of their implications for our findings regarding electoral control, as well as for the presence of democratic accountability more broadly. It may very well be that the electoral control we observe, particularly under the SMD format, is of two kinds. The first signifies that individual politicians or parties are held accountable for poor policy performance (in terms of increasing district-level unemployment), irrespective of whether voters or their families have been directly affected by such worsening economic conditions. The second signifies that individual politicians or party machines are held accountable

for failure to deliver particularistic benefits to their supporters in the form of job distribution or the bailing out of unprofitable businesses in which such supporters are employed.

If electoral control in Ukraine is at least in some measure the consequence of voters' reaction to politicians' performance in terms of their distribution of particularistic benefits, this raises serious questions about whether politicians face electoral incentives to enact policies that benefit the electorate as a whole. The presumption of both empirical and normative theorists of democracy is that, if voters condition their ballots on politicians' performance and if politicians want to be re-elected, politicians have an incentive to serve the collective good rather than to engage in rent-seeking or to provide their supporters with particularistic benefits. If this claim is empirically correct, then elections function as a mechanism of democratic accountability. If, however, politicians are rewarded or punished primarily on the basis of their success in providing particularistic benefits – what Stokes (2003, 2004) calls 'perverse' accountability – then there is little incentive for politicians to act on behalf of the electorate as a whole, and, consequently, democratic accountability is undermined (but see Kitschelt, 2000: 852). If such is the case, it may very well be that clientelistic politicians who do not deliver the goods are punished only to be replaced by another set of clientelistic politicians who may or may not be better at conducting patronage politics.

These issues, as well as the generalizability of our findings, can only be addressed by extensions of this type of analysis and the use of different kinds of data. Briefly, we suggest two possible avenues for further research. The first is to develop a more complex measure of policy outcomes. In this article, we concentrated on weighted change in unemployment as the chief measure of performance. Performance, however, is a multidimensional concept that may include things like inflation, crime and corruption. By incorporating these factors into the analysis, it should be possible to assess their relative importance in influencing legislators' probability of re-election. It would also make it possible to extend the discussion of electoral control beyond economics into other domains for which politicians can be held accountable – domains that are highly salient in Ukraine and other new democracies. Furthermore, a focus on non-economic dimensions of performance would help in disentangling the presence of democratic accountability from that of perverse accountability. The second extension of our research is to move beyond the analysis of a single country and compare several other new democracies with varying formal institutions. Poland and the Czech Republic, for example, rank relatively low on the presidential power index; they continue to have relatively fluid party systems and they have PR electoral rules. Poland, however, has an open-list system, while the Czech Republic does not. Hungary offers perhaps the best case with which to compare Ukraine (for the period 1994–2002). It is a parliamentary democracy with a far less fluid party system than Ukraine's, but its mixed electoral systems are similar.

In general terms, the findings presented here remain surprising and provide grounds for optimism. Even in such an evidently flawed or ‘electoralist’ democracy as Ukraine, repeated elections do function as a mechanism of political control.

Notes

- 1 All data were provided by the State Statistics Office Committee of Ukraine. We gratefully acknowledge Natalia Pohorila, Director of SOCIS-CSPD Ltd., for her assistance in collecting these data and preparing them in usable form for analysis. We also thank The Mershon Center, The Ohio State University, for providing funding for the purchase of these data. This is a substantially abbreviated version of an earlier article. The more extensive version and all analyses not shown here are available upon request to the authors.
- 2 According to Thames (2005: 98), of the 476 deputies who served in the Rada from 1998 and 2002, 55.7 percent moved from one parliamentary group to another, not including those who became independents; many deputies changed numerous times. Altogether, there were 408 instances of switching among parliamentary groups. Legislators who had been elected in SMDs were more likely to switch than those chosen in the PR format.
- 3 Official data on unemployment do not capture the significant levels of ‘hidden’ unemployment or underemployment, as indicated by the percentage of the workforce who are on unpaid or partially paid administrative leave or who are employed on a shortened work week (Caceres, 2001). The official rates of unemployment do not reflect involvement in the ‘second economy’, a large part of all economic activities on the national level in post-communist countries (Kaufmann and Kaliberda, 1996). However, it would be difficult to reject the argument that official unemployment rates are constant proportions of real unemployment at the regional level.
- 4 For those cases of incumbents who ran only on a PR list in 1998, the change in unemployment rate is the difference between the national rate of unemployment in 1998 and the rate of unemployment in the oblast in which the incumbent ran in 1994. For the cases of incumbents who ran on a PR list in 2002, the change in unemployment rate is the difference between the national rate of unemployment in 2002 and the rate of unemployment in the oblast in which he or she ran in the SMD tier in 1998. There are no cases of incumbents who ran exclusively on a PR list in both 1998 and 2002. A different operationalization of the change in unemployment rate for the PR format is presented in the section on additional analyses.
- 5 In the 1994 election, we classified the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine, Citizen Congress, Democratic Renaissance and the Labour Party as pro-presidential. In the 1998 election, the following electoral blocs were classified as pro-presidential: Social Democratic, Socialist-Rural, Christian Democratic, Bloc of Democratic Parties, Social Democratic-United, Agrarian Party, Forward Ukraine, Party of Regional Renaissance, Progressive Socialist Party. The following parties were categorized as pro-presidential: Democratic Party, Socialist Party, Christian Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, Social Democratic-United Party, Agrarian Party, Party of Regional Renaissance, Economic Renaissance of Crimea

and the Rural Party. In the 2002 election, the following blocs were classified as pro-presidential: For a United Ukraine, Green Party and Social-Democratic United. The following parties were classified as pro-presidential: People's Democratic Party, Green Party, Social Democratic-United, Agrarian Party, Working Ukraine, Party of Industrialists and Party of Regions. We based our classification on our own reading of the secondary literature on Ukraine politics as well as on information provided by experts in Ukraine. In particular, we thank Valeriy Khmielko, President of Kiev International Institute of Sociology, for his help in this regard.

- 6 By including all incumbents who ran as independents within the 'pro-presidential party/bloc' category, we obviously introduce some errors to our analysis, since there is a small number of independents who affiliated themselves with opposition parliamentary groups. In so far as this is the case, our classification makes for a fairly conservative test of our hypotheses. However, we also conducted separate analyses, restricting the definition of independents on the basis of their faction affiliation. The results are reported in the section on additional analyses.
- 7 Our statistical analyses are based on pooled data for three elections. However, these data have only partial panel structure, since the overlap of cases from 'wave' to 'wave' is far from complete. Among 185 incumbents in the 1994 elections, only 48 (25.9 percent) appear in the 1998 elections, and only 36 (19.5 percent) in the 2002 elections. Among 339 incumbents in the 1998 elections, only 132 (38.9 percent) appear in the 2002 elections. Generally, in the entire dataset there is less than one quarter of overlapping cases. To investigate the impact of these cases on the regression estimates, we created a set of appropriate dummy variables and partialled out their effects. The results of these analyses convinced us that the regression coefficients presented in all analyses are not affected by 'case-dependency' or semi-correlation problems. Moreover, all standard errors are robust.
- 8 One possible explanation for the results regarding the re-election probability of incumbents who ran simultaneously in this mixed format is that there was little variation in change of level of unemployment across the ecological units in which they competed. As the data in Table 1 show, although on average the degree of change was highest, the minimum change the lowest and the maximum change the highest in these ecological units, in fact there were few cases at these extremes as revealed by the standard deviation of 1.5. In addition, only 175 cases pertain to this category of electoral format. There is considerable debate on the possible interactive effects of mixed-member systems taken as a whole. For various aspects of this debate, see Shugart and Wattenberg (2001).
- 9 Random assignment was performed for 5, 15 and 25 percent of all independent incumbents in the pooled data for the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections. For incumbents in the 1998–2002 parliament, factional assignment was performed on the basis of data assembled by the Laboratory F-4 (Committee of Voters of Ukraine and Laboratory of Social Analysis F-4 2001, Kiev); see also Protsyk and Wilson (2003) and Thames (2005). We thank Laboratory F-4 and Erik Herron, Department of Political Science, University of Kansas, for providing us with these data. Using these data we were able to eliminate about 8 percent of independent incumbents in the 2002 election as clearly belonging to opposition factions.
- 10 Our categorization of oblasts into regions is the following: Western (Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankovsk, Khmielnitski, Lvov, Rivne, Ternopol, Volhynia, Zakarpatya);

Eastern (Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Lugansk, Zaporozhye); Southern (Republic of Crimea, Kherson, Nikolaev, Odessa); Central (Cherkassy, Chernigov, Kirovograd, Poltava, Sumy, Vinnitsa, Zhitomir); Kiev (the capital city).

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KAZIMIERZ M. SLOMCZYNSKI is a Professor of Sociology and Political Science at The Ohio State University. He is also affiliated to the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences. He co-authored *Social Structure and Self-Direction: Comparative Analysis of the United States and Poland* (1993) with M. L. Kohn and *Mental Adjustment to the Post-Communist System in Poland* (1999) with K. Janicka, B. Mach and W. Zaborowski. He has also published numerous articles on social stratification and mobility, mass support for systemic change in Poland, and the institutionalization of competitive party systems in East Central Europe. ADDRESS: Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University, 190 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA. [email: slomczynski.1@sociology.osu.edu]

GOLDIE SHABAD is an Associate Professor of Political Science at The Ohio State University. She co-authored *Spain After Franco: The Birth of a Competitive Party System* (1986) with R. Gunther and G. Sani. She has also published articles and chapters on ethnic nationalism in Spain, political socialization in post-communist Poland, mass-level support for systemic change in Poland, and the institutionalization of competitive party systems in East Central Europe. ADDRESS: Department of Political Science, The Ohio State University, 154 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA. [email: shabad.1@osu.edu]

JAKUB ZIELINSKI is an analyst with the Boston Consulting Group. He has published articles on democratic transitions and the development of party systems in new democracies. ADDRESS: Boston Consulting Group, Exchange Place, 31st floor, Boston, MA 02109, USA. [email: zielinski.kuba@bcg.com]

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