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Ukraine's Presidential Elections, 1991–2026 From Democratic Alternation to the Wartime Electoral Impasse under Volodymyr Zelensky

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Historical-institutional research article

Abstract: This comparative historical and institutional study examines presidential alternation in Ukraine (1991–2026), state-language policy, cross-border mobility and constitutional restrictions on elections during martial law. It situates the introduction of Ryanair routes in 2018 and the 2019 state-language statute within the same Poroshenko presidency, evaluates Zelensky's public commitment to review the law, and revisits cultural intelligence using Ang and Van Dyne's four-dimensional model. Scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed research and legislative sources are distinguished from company announcements used solely for operational chronology. Comparisons with selected wartime elections test, rather than presume, the applicability of foreign precedents. The resulting approach separates legal election postponement from broader demands for accountability, multilingual accessibility and democratic renewal.

Keywords: Ukraine; presidential elections; Petro Poroshenko; Volodymyr Zelensky; language legislation; Ryanair; cultural intelligence; martial law; comparative constitutionalism.

I. Introduction

The challenge of this study is to account for democratic continuity across three different kinds of institutional change: peaceful presidential turnover after independence, identity and language legislation during a period of geopolitical contestation, and the subsequent postponement of nationwide elections under martial law. This is a historical and constitutional problem rather than an invitation to infer motives from headlines. For that reason, two previously published studies on Ukraine's layered political history and competing civilizational narratives serve as historical context, not as substitutes for the present inquiry into the electoral system, state language and cultural intelligence (De Angelis, 2026a, 2026b).

The principal research question is: how can Ukraine preserve the constitutional and social foundations of electoral competition when war creates obstacles to voting, and what can the contrast between the Poroshenko and Zelensky presidencies reveal about openness to cultural difference? Four secondary questions operationalize this inquiry. First, what did successive presidents establish concerning alternation and executive continuity? Second, how did the 2018 opening of affordable international routes and the 2019 language statute coexist under the same president? Third, how should Zelensky's documented 2019 statement promising a rights-based review be tested against subsequent public decisions? Fourth, what do comparable elections and postponements in other wartime democracies actually demonstrate?

The article uses comparative historical interpretation and documentary legal analysis. Its corpus combines academic monographs by Kuzio, Kubicek, Risch, Sakwa and Miller, scholarship on cultural intelligence by Ang and colleagues, and original legal texts or legal summaries issued by public institutions. Airline press releases establish dates and routes, not cultural-intelligence outcomes; contemporaneous transcriptions of a president-elect's statements establish commitments, not what happened years later. International cases are compared through the dimensions of conflict location, franchise access, law-making authority, duration of the emergency and opportunities for meaningful electoral competition.

Five substantive sections follow the introduction. The first surveys the construction of presidential elections from 1991 to 2004. The second examines the 2004–2014 institutional crises. The third explicitly compares Poroshenko and Zelensky, then examines language regulation, Ryanair's entry and the four dimensions of cultural intelligence. The fourth investigates martial law and comparative wartime electoral practice. The fifth evaluates routes to electoral restoration and sets out future studies. An independent discussion of results synthesizes the five sections; the conclusion identifies what is established, what remains disputed and what evidence would resolve outstanding questions. Claims about the nonexistence of war or undocumented intentions are excluded because a reproducible academic analysis requires positive evidence rather than the distribution of media attention.

II. PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATION, 1991–2004

1. Independence and the first presidency

The dissolution of the Soviet Union did not yield an institutionally blank Ukrainian state. The first presidential contest of December 1991 coincided with the independence referendum, and Leonid Kravchuk emerged as head of a country whose administrative, economic and security structures had been inherited from the Soviet republic. The central problem was constitutional as well as political: how could executive authority operate within newly sovereign institutions without reproducing the command practices of the former party-state? Kubicek (2023) and Kuzio (2015) offer different but complementary historical frames. Kubicek provides the longer succession of state-building challenges, whereas Kuzio attends to the persistence of Soviet elite networks, regionally differentiated political cultures and electoral organization. Neither account justifies treating independence as a single moment in which representative government was already consolidated.

The analytical distinction between succession and electoral authorization begins in 1991. Independence was ratified through a referendum, while voters separately selected Kravchuk as president; the two decisions gave the new republic different kinds of authority. A referendum settles a question of sovereignty but cannot determine how future officeholders should be selected. The latter requires procedural regularity, competition and an accepted succession mechanism. Kubicek's historical synthesis is valuable for separating Soviet administrative inheritance from the emergence of democratic choice. Kuzio's analysis adds the importance of regional identities and political traditions which were not eradicated on independence day. These are historical explanations rather than causal proof that a subsequent president must govern in a particular way.

The 1991 vote and the referendum should be interpreted together but not conflated. One concerned the preferred president; the other endorsed national independence. Political legitimacy thus originated in separate acts of popular authorization. This distinction matters to the contemporary debate: a state may maintain international sovereignty while having to account for the changing procedures through which its leaders receive democratic authorization. Subsequent presidential elections reveal both the survival of electoral competition and periodic weakness in courts, media independence and administrative neutrality.

2. Leonid Kravchuk and the transfer of power

The 1994 transition is the most useful internal benchmark for the present inquiry. Kravchuk accepted an early contest and Kuchma won. The point is not to idealize the election; observers of post-Soviet politics highlight persistent unequal access to resources and fragile political accountability. Rather, an incumbent's defeat was institutionally processed without requiring a constitutional discontinuity. A historical comparison should ask whether political rules can permit citizens to withdraw executive authority while retaining state continuity. The 1994 precedent demonstrates the possibility of electoral succession under economic and geopolitical stress, but not under the territorial occupation, mobilization and nationwide martial-law restrictions associated with the post-2022 period.

Kravchuk governed amid economic contraction, disagreements over relations with Russia and the formation of separate Ukrainian military and administrative institutions. In 1994 he lost an early presidential election to Leonid Kuchma. That transfer of power was a constitutional milestone because a sitting incumbent accepted an electoral defeat. It did not mean that electoral competition was thereafter immune from manipulation. The contrast between a credible change of officeholder and persistent weaknesses in rule-of-law administration is a recurrent feature of the post-1991 record.

A comparative study should distinguish the formal mechanics of a transfer of office from its substantive fairness. Voters can remove leaders even while oligarchic money, uneven media access and regional patronage distort campaign conditions. The question is not whether the early republic was simply democratic or authoritarian, but which institutions allowed a loser to relinquish office and which weaknesses continued to affect voters' ability to choose freely. The 1994 precedent is especially relevant to the debate about future elections after martial law: the possibility of peaceful executive turnover was established before the contemporary war, and any account of Ukrainian political identity must recognize that institutional inheritance.

Kuchma's administration exemplifies the distinction between election regularity and the broader quality of democracy. Competitive voting can coexist with institutional dependence, opaque business influence and media concentration. This is central to the interpretation of later elections: neither simply counting presidential terms nor equating a victory with democratic consolidation provides an adequate assessment. Kuzio (2015) develops the links among oligarchic networks, legal institutions and presidential authority, while Kubicek situates constitutional and party change within the longer post-independence transition. The present study therefore examines five separate variables: legal authorization, competitive access, voter inclusion, peaceful alternation and institutional review.

3. Kuchma, constitutional design and incumbency

Leonid Kuchma was elected in 1994 and re-elected in 1999. The 1996 Constitution established the framework for a directly elected president, defined the distribution of powers and placed elections within a durable formal legal structure. During Kuchma's presidency the relationship between executive offices, parliamentary factions, business interests and broadcasters became central to disputes about political competition. Kuzio (2015) emphasizes oligarchic influence and corruption, while Kubicek (2023) situates executive consolidation within the state's wider economic and institutional transition.

Ukraine's subsequent constitutional changes illustrate why the written text is only one level of analysis. Competing political leaders repeatedly sought to adjust the relationship between president, cabinet and parliament. A democratic election cannot be assessed in isolation from the power that the winner can exercise after taking office. Stronger executive discretion increases the importance of independent election administration, judicial protection and legislative oversight. Conversely, disputes about electoral legitimacy can become disputes about constitutional authority. The Kuchma era therefore provides a necessary prehistory for Zelensky's eventual continuation in office under wartime law: both involve the relation between legal powers and the sources of public consent, although the security circumstances differ sharply.

The judicial intervention that produced a repeat second-round vote in 2004 is a more precise historical comparison than a general assertion that protests produce legitimacy. An election must produce a legally recognizable winner, and contestation must be capable of receiving an institutional answer. Yet the Orange Revolution also reveals that formal adjudication depends on public trust, political acceptance and the enforceability of decisions. The contrasting narratives in Kuzio and Sakwa should not be blended into a single cause: the former places stronger emphasis on domestic political organization and competing identities, while the latter foregrounds security architecture and geopolitical rivalry. The difference is analytically productive precisely because it obliges the researcher to distinguish an election dispute from subsequent claims about alignment with Russia and Europe.

4. The 2004 contest and the Orange Revolution

The 2004 presidential election between Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych brought disagreements over electoral integrity into public view. Mass protests challenged the announced second-round result; the Supreme Court ordered a repeat runoff, which Yushchenko won. The Orange Revolution shows that contested procedures can be reopened by legal intervention and civic mobilization rather than settled exclusively by incumbent executive authority. It also reveals a divergence between momentary electoral correction and the longer task of institutional reform.

Kuzio (2015) interprets the episode against the background of post-Soviet regional competition, parties and elite networks. The experience also warns against assuming that demonstrators represent a uniform electoral public. Support for candidates and for the legitimacy of contested results varied geographically and socially. A sound historical account distinguishes protest participants, candidate coalitions, courts and election commissions. The lesson for future elections under exceptional conditions is procedural: public confidence depends on the visible possibility of contesting official decisions through institutions that are independent enough to remedy violations. Neither crowds alone nor presidential declarations can replace lawful, verifiable electoral administration.

The historical baseline yields a testable proposition: exceptional extensions of incumbent authority demand more specific legal justification and stronger independent review than ordinary electoral succession. It does not follow that every postponement is unlawful, because constitutions can authorize emergency continuity. Conversely, formal legal authorization does not settle proportionality, civic access or the risk that an emergency may cease to be temporary. These distinctions guide the comparative sections below. Throughout, the term 'postponement' describes the nonoccurrence of a due election under a preexisting legal prohibition; 'cancellation' would require separate evidence that the electoral right has been permanently extinguished.

5. What the first period establishes

The 1991–2004 period established several patterns that persisted into the twenty-first century: elections had the capacity to change presidents, but campaigns were vulnerable to economic patronage, information asymmetry and concentrated power. The presidency also became a focal point for disputes about Ukraine's place between Russia and Europe. These alignments should not be reduced to a permanently divided population. Historical regional experiences influenced political preferences but did not determine an immutable east–west electorate.

Methodologically, this first period supplies the baseline against which claims about today's democratic crisis must be assessed. In 1994 an incumbent left after electoral defeat; in 2004 judicial intervention helped reopen a disputed result. Both outcomes demonstrate that the election system had endogenous corrective

capacities. Neither is evidence that conducting a national vote amid a full-scale invasion would be straightforward. Historical analogy must identify the condition being compared: institutional willingness to accept a result is different from the physical capacity to register displaced citizens, protect polling places and ensure campaigning across a territory under attack. The study therefore turns from initial consolidation to the more polarized period preceding 2014.

The Yushchenko period confirms that winning an election after a contested transfer does not automatically resolve elite conflict. Coalition fragmentation and tensions over the distribution of executive authority affected policy coordination. The presidency must consequently be studied together with parliament, courts, parties and local government. In a country with a changing balance between presidential and parliamentary institutions, the personal popularity of a leader is an unstable proxy for democratic consent. For this article, the implication is methodological: political accountability is not exhausted by an election, but recurrent elections provide a distinctive corrective that other institutions cannot entirely substitute.

III. COMPETITION, PROTEST, AND POLITICAL CRISIS, 2004–2014

6. Yushchenko and the limits of revolutionary renewal

Yanukovych's 2010 victory illustrates the reversibility of electoral coalitions. His return through the ballot after the 2004 conflict is evidence that partisan competition remained politically consequential. Yet subsequent centralization, institutional disputes and confrontation over European integration transformed the conditions under which citizens evaluated executive authority. Scholarly accounts disagree on relative explanatory weights assigned to domestic authoritarian practices, geopolitical bargaining and street mobilization. That disagreement must be reproduced accurately, not resolved merely through the author's preferred narrative. The relevant sequence is election in 2010, protest in 2013–14, departure in February 2014 and exceptional transitional arrangements before the May election.

Viktor Yushchenko's 2005–2010 presidency began with expectations of democratic reform after the 2004 electoral dispute. Yet disputes among coalition partners, executive-parliamentary tensions and uneven institutional reform complicated those expectations. The relevance to presidential elections is twofold. A victory obtained after public protest still requires routine governance through law, and the electorate remains entitled to replace leaders who do not deliver the promised political changes.

Neither Kubicek nor Kuzio reduces this period to the behavior of a single politician. Parties, regional networks, judges, economic interests and constitutional changes created multiple veto points. The democratic significance of 2010 is that the presidency changed hands again through an election, despite the polarizing 2004 history. Comparative claims should therefore distinguish political disappointment from the absence of competition. The fact that electoral winners may fail to transform institutions is an argument for repeated accountability, not for dismissing elections as inconsequential.

William Jay Risch's Ukraine's Euromaidan (2026) is particularly important because it is based on interviews and contemporaneous observation and places the perspectives of participants alongside those of opponents and skeptics in eastern and southern Ukraine. The book's chapter sequence moves from protest organization to escalation and armed confrontation, resisting a simple binary between a homogeneous democratic movement and a homogeneous counter-movement. It is complementary to, rather than interchangeable with, Kuzio's long-run institutional narrative. Because eyewitness observations do not establish nationwide prevalence, their methodological contribution lies in reconstructing actions, discourses and local variation. The article therefore avoids using individual recollections as election statistics.

7. Yanukovych elected in 2010

Viktor Yanukovych won the 2010 presidential election, returning to the office he had unsuccessfully sought in the disputed 2004 race. His election demonstrates that electoral constituencies cannot be presumed to disappear after defeat. The period also revived disputes about concentration of executive power and the independence of public institutions. The Library of Congress documented a 2010 constitutional ruling that reinstated the 1996 constitutional framework and expanded presidential powers. This legal intervention matters because elections confer authority inside a changing constitutional architecture.

Political interpretation requires care with chronology. Yanukovych's 2010 victory was an election; the 2013–2014 crisis was a subsequent confrontation over governance, European integration, policing and the limits of presidential accountability. It would be analytically incorrect to retroactively erase his initial electoral mandate because of later events. Equally, an electoral mandate is not unlimited permission to disregard constitutional constraints. The distinction between authorization and ongoing accountability lies at the heart of this article.

The interim presidency of Oleksandr Turchynov is a reminder that constitutional continuity can pass through procedures other than the normal completion of a presidential mandate. Its circumstances, however, are

historically and legally distinct from the continuation of an incumbent during nationwide martial law. The first followed the breakdown of an administration amid protests and a disputed transfer; the second is structured by explicit constitutional and statutory rules governing exceptional security conditions. Treating both as identical examples of 'unelected government' obscures the different questions concerning succession, parliamentary authority, contestation and emergency powers.

8. Euromaidan in competing scholarly accounts

The Euromaidan protests began in late 2013 amid the suspension of preparations for an association agreement with the European Union and escalated after violence against demonstrators. William Jay Risch (2026) reconstructs the protests with interviews, local observation and attention to activists, skeptics and opponents, including perspectives from eastern and southern Ukraine. This produces a detailed account of mobilization that cannot be reduced to a uniform movement with a single command structure. Richard Sakwa (2015) emphasizes geopolitical conflict and competing European security projects; these interpretations address overlapping but not identical questions.

Risch's emphasis on the unpredictability of crowds and the internal diversity of the movement helps challenge deterministic historical narratives. Analyses should separate protesters' demands, decisions by elected officials, acts of violence and subsequent foreign intervention. Attributing every outcome to one external actor is a causal proposition requiring direct evidence, not a substitute for reconstructing events. The same evidentiary discipline applies to claims that elections or their suspension are solely designed to benefit an incumbent: procedural effects can be identified without inferring secret motivations.

Territorial control directly conditions whether a universal franchise is more than a statement on paper. An election covering only safely accessible regions may marginalize displaced citizens, residents of occupied territory, service members and refugees abroad. The conflict that began in 2014 and expanded in 2022 therefore raises a problem different in scale from the political diversity of ordinary elections. It is nevertheless necessary to distinguish physical access problems from legal choices about voting modalities. Registration, secure identification, accessible candidacy, independent observation, appeal and transmission of results each require separately assessed safeguards. The failure of one safeguard is not automatically proof that every possible electoral design is impossible.

9. Yanukovych's departure and interim presidency

After the February 2014 upheaval and Yanukovych's departure from Kyiv, parliament acted to reorganize the executive and Oleksandr Turchynov served as acting president until a new presidential election. The constitutional characterization of Yanukovych's removal remains contested in political debate; a historical study must report the parliamentary actions, security crisis and disputes without treating competing labels as settled description. What matters for electoral chronology is that an early presidential vote took place in May 2014.

The legal literature is especially valuable here because constitutional continuity is neither the same thing as uninterrupted tenure nor the same thing as unchallenged political legitimacy. An acting presidency is a transition mechanism, not a normal five-year electoral mandate. The 2014 election therefore served as one mechanism for restoring direct authorization of the head of state, despite the emerging conflict and territorial disruption. That experience is relevant to later discussion of elections under martial law, but the conditions of 2014 and 2022–2026 were not identical.

The 2014 election brought Poroshenko to office amid territorial conflict and profound distrust. It establishes a relevant but limited precedent: Ukraine did hold a presidential election during an armed conflict, although the legal regime, geographical scope and intensity of hostilities differed from those after February 2022. The comparison is essential because it prevents the imprecise inference that any active combat categorically precludes a vote. The pertinent legal issue is the later imposition of nationwide martial law and the resulting statutory prohibition. Accordingly the research does not use the fact of fighting alone as a substitute for analyzing law and voter access.

10. Crimea and Donbas: the geography of participation

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the outbreak of armed conflict in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk substantially changed the territorial conditions for voting. The 2019 OSCE/ODIHR final report records that voting could not be organized in Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine outside government control. The restriction of participation long predates the full-scale invasion of 2022. It demonstrates why national election legitimacy requires attention to the effective electorate, not merely the legality of a national polling date.

The 2019 state-language law provides the clearest bridge between electoral representation and the everyday meaning of citizenship. The Law Library of Congress documented requirements concerning the use of

Ukrainian in administration, official proceedings, education and certain services (Library of Congress, 2019). Article 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution simultaneously establishes Ukrainian as the state language and provides protections for other languages. The distinction between an official language and linguistic discrimination is not solved by asserting either that a common language is always coercive or that state-building automatically validates every mandate. A proportionality analysis must distinguish public-office competence from private speech, access to services, minority-language education, exemptions, enforcement and administrative penalties. A credible evaluation would require implementation evidence and judicial decisions, not statutory text alone.

Christopher Miller (2024) brings the civilian experience of the conflict into view, whereas Kuzio (2015) analyzes its institutional and geopolitical antecedents. Their genres should be kept separate: military reportage does not by itself measure electoral attitudes, and historical political analysis does not replace evidence about displaced households. The core electoral question emerging from 2014 is how a state can preserve inclusive national representation when territory and residence patterns have been forcibly altered. This is a structural challenge, not a question answered by identifying a preferred president.

IV. POROSHENKO AND ZELENSKY COMPARED: LANGUAGE, RYANAIR, AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

11. Poroshenko's 2014 election

Petro Poroshenko won the May 2014 early presidential election and governed during the first years of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. His presidency combined efforts to strengthen state capacity and armed forces with disputes about corruption, concentrated business influence, national identity and institutional independence. The evaluation of these policies varies across scholarly traditions; their relevance here is to show that wartime security pressures were already affecting presidential governance before Zelensky.

The 2014 election must not be described as an uncomplicated national plebiscite. Its legal and political importance coexisted with the inability to vote in some occupied or contested areas. The Library of Congress preserves a substantial primary-source collection of campaign ephemera for the May 2014 presidential election, available through its reading-room or subscription arrangements rather than as freely downloadable PDFs. Campaign leaflets and advertisements permit research into what candidates publicly offered at the time; they are not a substitute for certified election results or observer judgments.

Zelensky's pre-inauguration response to the language law deserves direct examination. In April 2019 he accepted Ukrainian as the sole state language but favored incentives and positive examples over prohibitions and punishments, and called for scrutiny of how the law was implemented. This establishes a documented political commitment to a different method of language development; it does not by itself establish a legally binding promise to repeal the statute. To test whether he subsequently delivered a transparent public review requires a chronological dataset of proposed amendments, parliamentary debates, executive initiatives, constitutional review and implementation measures. The present documentary corpus does not establish that no discussion of any sort ever occurred. It does establish an important unanswered accountability question: how were his 2019 public reservations translated into policy once in office? Scholarly evaluation should not silently convert an absence of evidence in a limited corpus into a universal negative.

12. Language, identity and citizenship

Poroshenko's years saw intensified debate about the official Ukrainian language, education and cultural protection. The Law Library of Congress documented Ukraine's 2019 legislation governing use of the state language. Language policy is part of electoral history because media access, schooling, administration and political identity can affect both public deliberation and experiences of inclusion. The existence of Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens makes any simple equation between language preference and geopolitical loyalty untenable.

A comparative approach draws on Kubicek (2023), Kuzio (2015) and Risch (2026) to identify distinct scales of explanation: long-term state formation, post-Soviet nation-building and the lived political diversity of the 2013–2014 protests. The central normative question is not whether a sovereign state may protect its official language, but how linguistic policy can coexist with inclusive electoral citizenship and protections for minorities. These issues influence the conditions of public debate that any post-war campaign will confront.

A final implication of the 2019 contest is that democratic consent has a time structure. An election authorizes an officeholder for a constitutionally defined term, yet the constitution may also contain continuity provisions to avoid an institutional vacuum. These two designs can collide during an emergency without either disappearing. Scholarly analysis must resist conflating legal continuity with renewed electoral endorsement. It should instead ask what judicial, parliamentary, media and civic checks continue while the ordinary renewal mechanism is unavailable and how officials publish objective criteria for its restoration.

13. The 2019 presidential race

The 2019 presidential election was held in two rounds, on 31 March and 21 April. Volodymyr Zelensky defeated incumbent Petro Poroshenko, receiving 73.19 percent of valid votes in the second round according to the Library of Congress's research guide. That figure demonstrates an unequivocal electoral victory in the vote that could be conducted, but should not be interpreted as a permanent endorsement of every later policy. A term-bound electoral mandate includes the expectation of future public scrutiny.

The OSCE/ODIHR concluded that the campaign was competitive and fundamental freedoms were generally respected while documenting problems such as misuse of state resources, vote buying, business influence on the media and weaknesses in campaign-finance and dispute-resolution practices. A complete account therefore avoids both extremes: the election was not an empty ritual, and its observed defects should not be erased because the incumbent lost. The Library of Congress also lists a 2019 collection of campaign materials, valuable for investigating how candidates positioned themselves on war, corruption and representation.

The Law Library of Congress describes the 24 February 2022 presidential decree introducing nationwide martial law and its parliamentary approval. Its analysis of the Law on the Legal Regime of Martial Law identifies a special legal structure in which state institutions continue but certain activities are legally restricted. The crucial distinction is between the empirical condition of armed conflict and the legally declared state of martial law. The latter, not the fluctuation of international headlines about the fighting, determines whether the statutory election prohibition remains operative. This is why a change in foreign media attention, including attention redirected to Iran, cannot by itself establish that Ukrainian martial law has ended or that an election has become lawful.

14. Zelensky's initial program and the 2019 parliament

Zelensky entered office in May 2019 on a strong electoral mandate and publicly associated his presidency with anti-corruption, political renewal and an attempt to end the war in Donbas. The subsequent early parliamentary election reinforced the political strength of his party. Yet electoral strength does not abolish the separation of powers: the parliamentary majority, judiciary, election bodies and media retained different constitutional roles. The 2019 law governing impeachment, documented by the Law Library of Congress, is particularly relevant because its adoption was presented as part of the president's institutional reform agenda.

Under Article 19 of Ukraine's law on the legal regime of martial law, elections are prohibited during that regime. The Council of Europe's guidance on organizing post-war elections likewise identifies the legal barrier and distinguishes it from practical conditions for calling elections after the regime ends. The institutional question is therefore not accurately phrased as whether the president personally decided simply to dispense with an election. It is whether legal continuations and renewals of emergency powers were validly authorized and whether there is an adequate mechanism for parliamentary scrutiny, judicial review and eventual restoration of voting. A serious critique should specify a contested renewal, procedure, right or safeguard, rather than infer intent from elapsed time alone.

The existence of an impeachment procedure should not be confused with its routine use. The Library of Congress describes legal thresholds and constitutional procedures, including the role of a parliamentary investigative commission. The broader point is that presidential accountability includes mechanisms other than periodic elections, but those mechanisms are supplements rather than interchangeable equivalents. The accountability problem becomes more acute when the normal election date is postponed for reasons that may endure for years.

15. The meaning of the last national presidential vote

Constitutional Article 103 stipulates a five-year presidential term and the timing of regular presidential elections. Article 108 states that the president exercises powers until the newly elected president takes office. These provisions should be interpreted together, not selectively quoted as if one makes the other disappear. Article 83 separately addresses the legislature's continuity under martial law. The resulting structure creates legal continuity without equating continuity with a fresh election. The Council of Europe's assessment notes related statutory provisions. The scholarly controversy concerns the scope and duration of exceptional rules and the safeguards against indefinite normalization; it is not resolved merely by calling the incumbent 'elected' or 'unelected'.

The election of 2019 is the last completed Ukrainian presidential election in the evidentiary record considered here. It established Zelensky as an elected rather than appointed head of state. As the 2024 presidential election did not take place, a historical account needs to distinguish three propositions: the 2019 electoral authorization was real; the ordinary five-year interval has passed; and Ukrainian law sets rules for continuity and elections during martial law. None of those claims alone decides whether emergency institutions are being managed as openly and proportionately as possible.

The strongest comparison with earlier presidencies is not an attribution of virtue or wrongdoing. Kravchuk lost in 1994, Kuchma eventually left office, the disputed 2004 race was repeated, Yanukovych's presidency ended in crisis, Poroshenko lost to Zelensky in 2019, and Zelensky has continued in office during the wartime suspension of elections. These are distinct historical pathways. Calling them all ordinary transfers or all denials of democracy would obscure the mechanisms that the article seeks to explain.

Comparative assessment of Poroshenko and Zelensky

Poroshenko's presidency combined a nationality-building program with a practical widening of low-cost European travel. During his term Ryanair inaugurated scheduled flights to Kyiv on 3 September 2018. The Verkhovna Rada adopted a state-language law on 25 April 2019 and Poroshenko signed it before the presidential transition. The policy measures are not interchangeable: access to foreign destinations lowers one economic barrier to intercultural exchange, whereas the national-language statute regulates state administration, education, media and defined commercial settings. A coherent appraisal must assess each policy on its own institutional objectives and its impact on differently situated citizens.

Zelensky defeated Poroshenko in the 2019 runoff, then publicly insisted that Ukrainian remain the sole state language while criticizing prohibitions and administrative punishment as policy instruments. His 25 April 2019 statement said the law had not received sufficiently broad prior public discussion and promised a thorough examination of constitutional rights after assuming office. That documented commitment can be investigated through dated legislative proposals, presidential submissions, consultations, judicial decisions and government reports. The texts reviewed here do not establish that no discussion ever occurred, nor do they prove that the promised comprehensive assessment was fulfilled. Both conclusions require more detailed archival verification.
These presidencies therefore present a more precise comparison than a binary choice between nationalist closure and cosmopolitanism. Poroshenko combined international mobility with more extensive rules governing official-language use; Zelensky presented a less punitive language-policy rationale but inherited the statute and later governed during a broad military emergency. Neither the coexistence of Ryanair and language requirements nor their temporal succession proves a causal relation. The useful comparative dimensions are measurable: linguistic access to services, quality of public consultation, international contact opportunities, official accountability and the possibility of electoral sanction.

Ryanair's Ukrainian entry and cross-border learning

The chronology produces an important institutional contrast. Ryanair began its first Ukraine flights on 3 September 2018, initially connecting Kyiv Boryspil and Berlin Schönefeld, and advertising twelve Kyiv routes for the winter season. Petro Poroshenko was president at the time. The Verkhovna Rada then adopted the Law on Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language on 25 April 2019, and Poroshenko signed it before leaving office. The coincidence of these policies within one presidency does not by itself imply either inconsistency or complementarity: the first lowered some barriers to international mobility, whereas the second increased the formal place of Ukrainian in public administration and specified services (Ryanair, 2018; Library of Congress, 2019).

The Erasmus programme, founded in 1987, has institutionalized student exchange, whereas Ryanair and the Erasmus Student Network introduced a dedicated booking partnership in August 2017. The airline reported more than 800,000 ESN bookings by November 2024. This figure concerns reported bookings, not independent students, CQ scores or educational achievements. In research design, student participation, host-language practice, contact quality and repeated CQ measurements should be specified separately. A possible DAAD collaboration for researchers and lecturers is a policy proposal, not an established Ryanair partnership (Ryanair, 2017, 2024).

Revisiting cultural intelligence and the limits of low-cost mobility

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a set of capabilities for functioning effectively in culturally diverse environments, not a synonym for travel, patriotism or generic intelligence. Ang et al. (2007) distinguished four dimensions: metacognitive CQ (planning and revising cultural assumptions), cognitive CQ (knowledge of norms and institutions), motivational CQ (interest and confidence in cross-cultural encounters), and behavioral CQ (adapting verbal and non-verbal conduct). Their evidence links different dimensions to judgment, adaptation and performance, and does not establish that a specific airline causes these outcomes.

In the user-supplied preliminary essay on Ryanair and cultural intelligence, affordable flights are interpreted as a bridge between cultures, reinforced by the Erasmus experience, but the same essay identifies obstacles in customer communication, complaint processing, refunds and rescheduling. These concerns warrant institutional investigation. They should not be converted into unsupported quantitative assertions about safety, accident records, employee satisfaction, family cohesion or corporate motives. The scientifically defensible

claim is conditional: lower travel costs can increase opportunities for intercultural interaction, while deficient customer service can undermine that interaction, particularly for passengers using a second language or living abroad.

The propositions about cultural background developed in cross-cultural psychology by Berry and Dasen help explain why culturally patterned cognition must be interpreted within social and ecological circumstances. The GLOBE research program likewise situates leadership in institutional and cultural environments. Van Dyne and Ang extend these ideas to organizational decision making. For the Ukrainian case, these contributions yield a practical distinction: state-language rules may provide administrative coherence while multilingual encounters develop interpretive flexibility and trust. The political task is to safeguard both capacities rather than to infer that either alone produces democracy.

There is no evidence that passenger numbers, flight openings or ticket prices themselves measure cultural intelligence. Routes create opportunities; actual learning depends on exposure, reflection, language support, reciprocal engagement and participation. Any claim that the 2018 routes measurably raised cultural intelligence in Ukrainian society would require before-and-after observation or a suitable comparison group. The connection in this article is therefore a testable mechanism, not an identified causal effect.

The relevant research question is not whether national-language protection must be abandoned to permit mobility. Rather, under what conditions can a state consolidate an official language while respecting minority linguistic rights, enabling foreign visitors to communicate, and supporting the reciprocal learning generated through travel? English-language assistance and multilingual information in airports, universities, hospitals and consumer services can coexist with Ukrainian-language state functions. The institutional difficulty lies in proportionality and implementation, not in a simplistic choice between Ukrainian sovereignty and international openness.

A cross-sector conceptual model may connect (a) affordable international air access, (b) institutional and linguistic accessibility, (c) meaningful contact through education and travel, (d) the four CQ dimensions and (e) observed outcomes such as adaptation, collaboration and informed public deliberation. These links are hypotheses for later testing. For Ukraine, sanctions, security restrictions, displacement and the closing of civilian airspace after February 2022 interrupt the ordinary mobility pathway. The earlier Ryanair opening thus constitutes a pre-invasion institutional opportunity, not evidence of functioning air routes in wartime.

An inclusive mobility model requires multilingual notice of fares, additional charges, check-in rules, accessibility, compensation and complaint channels. Communication failures can impose disproportionate costs on migrants, students and visitors with limited command of the carrier's preferred language. This is not equivalent to arguing that a particular airline systematically profits from such failures; evidence of intent would require internal records or regulatory findings. A more suitable empirical framework would measure complaint response time, completeness of explanations, refund-processing duration, language availability, successful dispute resolution, and perceived fairness.

The article's earlier Ryanair essay argued that affordable fares, Erasmus mobility and intercultural exchange could build cultural intelligence while inadequate multilingual customer support could weaken that benefit (De Angelis, unpublished essay supplied for this revision). This proposition must be revisited as an empirical hypothesis: no credible design can infer changes in cognitive, metacognitive, motivational or behavioral CQ from seat prices alone. Longitudinal student surveys, complaint-processing records and validated CQ measurement would permit a more exact test. Airline safety claims, employment preferences and alleged commercial incentives for unresolved customer problems are not treated as proven findings.

IV. ZELENSKY, MARTIAL LAW, AND INTERNATIONAL WARTIME ELECTORAL COMPARISONS

19. From 24 February 2022 to a nationwide emergency

Russia launched its full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. Zelensky issued Decree No. 64/2022 imposing martial law, and the Verkhovna Rada approved it the same day. The Library of Congress's Global Legal Monitor provides a concise analysis of this legal transition. The initial decree is not merely a presidential announcement: the emergency framework involves parliamentary authorization and legislation that regulates exceptional administrative powers and limitations on civil liberties.

The need to document the invasion separately from the legal effects of martial law is fundamental. The military conflict is a documented event; the law governing elections and civil rights is an institutional response to that event. Treating the legal framework as irrelevant because of wartime necessity would weaken accountability. Conversely, treating the absence of an election as sufficient evidence that the war is invented would reverse the evidentiary relationship. The correct method begins with documented security events, constitutional provisions, legislative choices and observable effects on participation.

Comparative constitutional research demonstrates that war neither universally requires nor universally prohibits elections. International IDEA's work on emergency powers contrasts the United Kingdom's statutory postponement of elections in World War II with United States elections in 1944 and New Zealand's wartime election in 1943. Israel postponed its October 1973 parliamentary election to December through special legislation. These cases vary by parliamentary or presidential system, territorial exposure, voter mobility, external threat and constitutional design. They cannot be substituted for Ukrainian law, but they disprove a universal rule that wartime voting is always impossible. International human rights law additionally requires distinctions among necessity, legality, temporariness, non-discrimination and oversight. The ICCPR emergency derogation mechanism does not create a free-standing presidential power to erase electoral accountability.

20. Why scheduled elections did not occur

Under Ukraine's Law on the Legal Regime of Martial Law, national and local elections cannot be held while martial law remains in force. The Council of Europe's report on organizing and holding post-war elections explains that neither ordinary nor extraordinary elections may be called or held under the existing regime. Accordingly, the 2024 presidential election did not occur at the regular interval. It is legally inaccurate to describe this event as if Zelensky had simply cancelled a scheduled vote by an unconstrained personal order.

That distinction does not remove presidential agency from analysis. The president proposes and issues martial-law measures within the constitutional process, and parliament exercises its authorization and extension functions. Judicial review, access to information and independent oversight remain relevant dimensions of democratic governance. The proper empirical questions include how renewals are justified, what evidence is made available to legislators, what emergency restrictions are necessary and how the public can examine the timetable for eventual restoration of normal electoral processes.

Three voting populations require separate legal and administrative treatment: deployed military personnel, citizens displaced internally and citizens outside Ukraine. For each population there are questions of registration, secrecy, freedom from command pressure, fair campaign access and mechanisms for challenge. Remote voting may improve reach but can introduce cybersecurity, coercion, secrecy and verification risks. Polling in refugee-hosting countries adds legal negotiations and administrative capacity questions. Rather than announce a universal technology solution, the article proposes an inclusion audit to be published before the election is called, followed by independent review and documented remedial procedures for voters excluded from the initial register.

21. Presidential continuity under Articles 103 and 108

The Constitution provides for a five-year presidential term and also states, in Article 108, that the president exercises powers until a newly elected president assumes office. The coexistence of a regular election timetable and a continuity provision is not inherently contradictory: each addresses a different institutional problem. Article 103 concerns periodic election; Article 108 prevents a vacancy in the exercise of executive functions when succession has not been completed. The legal relationship becomes politically consequential when war prevents a national contest.

Media pluralism matters in two directions. Wartime security restrictions may address operational risks while simultaneously restricting the information voters need to evaluate incumbents. Election observation requires access to campaign organization, financing, ballot production, registration, voting and counting, not simply the presence of foreign observers on polling day. Changes in the attention of international media should not be mistaken for an end to hostilities: coverage is a communication variable, while electoral feasibility is a legal and logistical variable. A robust comparative article therefore treats media attention, military intensity and legal status as separate indicators requiring different evidence.

The Council of Europe's legal analysis and the Ukrainian martial-law framework should be read alongside the constitutional text rather than as stand-alone slogans. Continuity in office is not the same as an unlimited fresh electoral mandate; nor does expiration of a nominal interval automatically establish that all official acts are constitutionally void. For a journal article, one must distinguish legal validity, democratic legitimacy and prudential assessment. Political arguments often combine those three registers, obscuring what a particular statute actually provides.

22. The October 2026 extension

A democratic emergency regime should create public records sufficiently detailed to allow criticism without requiring citizens to trust the executive's own assessment. Relevant institutions include parliamentary committees, electoral authorities, courts, public auditors, independent researchers and civil society associations. In a comparative governance perspective, these actors can scrutinize repeated renewals, safeguards affecting minority groups, media access and the financial administration of emergency measures. Constitutional

continuity also requires public reasoning: when a scheduled vote cannot take place, authorities should identify the applicable rule, communicate the grounds, and describe the conditions under which the prohibition will cease to apply.

On 26 October 2026 Ukraine's parliament adopted additional ninety-day extensions of martial law and general mobilization. Reporting on the published legislation identifies Law No. 5029-IX and Presidential Decree No. 1060/2026, with the new martial-law period beginning at 05:30 on 31 October. This is the most recent time-specific legal development incorporated in the present article, dated 29 October 2026. It illustrates the continuing importance of checking legislation rather than repeating assumptions from 2024 or 2025.

A decision to renew the emergency has several separate consequences. It maintains the security regime, preserves legal restrictions affecting the electoral calendar and continues the need for oversight. One cannot infer from this decision alone whether a particular person would win a hypothetical election. Nor can one determine a secret motive without relevant evidence. The demonstrable institutional result is that ordinary presidential electoral competition remains unavailable while the legal regime remains in force. The democratic question is how the public can assess necessity, duration and proportionality over time.

This article proposes a five-part readiness test: (1) the legally operative emergency status and mechanisms for terminating it; (2) territorial and physical security of voters and polling personnel; (3) inclusive registration and candidacy for refugees, displaced persons, service members and occupied-territory residents; (4) freedom of information, linguistic access, impartial administration and independent observation; and (5) public adjudication of complaints and credible results certification. Each dimension should have published criteria and evidence. Failure to meet a threshold does not necessarily justify an open-ended postponement without review. Conversely, an attractive election date cannot resolve a legal prohibition still in force. The objective is a repeatable institutional decision rather than an intuition about when war looks sufficiently prominent in the news.

23. International rights law and necessity

International human-rights law recognizes that some obligations may be derogated from during a public emergency threatening the life of the nation, subject to conditions and notification requirements. The Library of Congress notes that Ukraine's 2022 decree instructed authorities to notify the United Nations of derogations from obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Derogation is not a general waiver of all rights. Necessity, non-discrimination, proportionality and protection of non-derogable rights retain importance under the relevant treaty framework.

It would overstate international law to claim that one universal treaty simply orders Ukraine to conduct a presidential election during an active nationwide invasion regardless of security conditions. It would be equally mistaken to infer that emergency law creates a permanent exemption from all democratic accountability. The normatively relevant inquiry is narrower and more practical: which restrictions are necessary now, what periodic review exists, and what administrative preparations could take place without threatening civilians or military operations? A distinction between holding an election and planning one makes room for debate beyond unconditional demands and indefinite postponement.

The strongest comparative finding is conditional rather than categorical. Ukraine has a legal basis for continuing the presidency while elections cannot be held under martial law, yet history and comparative constitutional practice show that indefinite political insulation would require especially demanding scrutiny. The six elected presidents of independent Ukraine demonstrate that electoral alternation has been an important, if imperfect, component of political life. The analysis of the 2019 language-law debate identifies another form of accountability: elected leaders must explain how their pre-election commitments relate to subsequent legislative action. Neither inquiry is resolved by presuming personal bad faith or by treating wartime emergency as self-justifying. The proposed contribution is a documented, testable framework for reviewing democratic continuity during exceptional conditions.

Comparative election cases and constraints on inference

The United Kingdom suspended ordinary general-election renewal during World War II through parliamentary legislation and held the next general election in 1945. The United States, by contrast, proceeded with its 1944 presidential election despite a global war. New Zealand held an election in 1943. Israel postponed its scheduled 1973 parliamentary election after the October war. These examples establish that wartime elections are neither universally mandatory nor universally prohibited; the binding domestic constitution, geography of fighting, functioning of public administration and protection of franchise determine legal options.
International human-rights law protects meaningful political participation but allows carefully regulated emergency derogations under stringent conditions. Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires a formally proclaimed public emergency threatening the life of the nation and limits derogations

to measures strictly required by the exigencies of the situation. Whether a postponement is proportionate requires evaluation of access for displaced persons and soldiers, the ability to campaign without intimidation, transparent legislative review and credible alternatives to indefinite non-renewal. An American precedent cannot simply be transplanted into Ukraine's legal framework.

Three analytical errors must be avoided. First, a state's decision to conduct wartime elections is not a general command addressed to every belligerent country. Second, the existence of a legal prohibition under martial law is not the same as a conclusion that every extension is beyond scrutiny. Third, falling press attention after another international conflict does not demonstrate the end of hostilities. A rigorous comparison separates material security, legal authorization and media salience into distinct explanatory variables.

V. RECONSTRUCTING ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND A FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

24. Displacement and electoral inclusion

A credible post-war election must define the electorate in a way that accounts for refugees abroad, internally displaced persons, service personnel, people whose documents were destroyed and residents of occupied territories. These are not minor logistical questions. They determine whose votes are possible, which authorities can verify eligibility and whether citizens have comparable opportunities to register and receive reliable information. The problems became visible after 2014 and grew following 2022. The Council of Europe's post-war election study identifies the need to establish prerequisites before a normal election can be called.

A national election held before registries, voting arrangements and complaint systems are sufficiently prepared could risk systematically excluding parts of the population. Yet waiting for perfect conditions is not a measurable constitutional plan. A defensible process would publish criteria, institutions responsible for certification and a timetable for addressing gaps. Such criteria must be examined independently of the popularity of the incumbent or any opposition candidate. Citizens' practical ability to participate should be treated as the object of institutional design.

25. Security, media and observation

An election entails more than a ballot deposited on one day. Candidates must be able to travel and speak, media outlets must disseminate competing positions, observers must access sites and voters must be able to assemble or communicate without intimidation. Aerial attack, occupation, mine contamination and troop deployments can undermine these conditions in very different ways. An election plan needs transparent risk assessments at national and regional levels rather than a generic declaration that war either makes all participation impossible or makes every restriction inevitable.

The OSCE/ODIHR's 2019 observation report provides a useful institutional benchmark even though the 2026 situation is materially different. Its attention to media concentration, election administration, misuse of public resources, campaign finance and effective remedies shows which integrity questions existed before full-scale war. After an emergency, election planners must address both old problems and newly created security and displacement barriers. International observation can assist accountability but cannot replace domestic legal ownership of the election.

26. Parliament, courts and civic accountability

Presidential elections are central but not the only means by which constitutional government is constrained. The Verkhovna Rada authorizes extensions of martial law; courts interpret legal rules; journalists and civil-society organizations examine government performance; and constitutional and statutory procedures govern presidential responsibility. The Law Library of Congress's discussion of the 2019 impeachment law helps document formal checks, although their practical effectiveness requires empirical investigation beyond the legal text.

During wartime, not every normal instrument can operate fully. Public assemblies and public information may be constrained by operational security. That makes the distinction between temporary restriction and permanent executive discretion especially important. Reporting requirements, publication of reasons for extensions, parliamentary hearings and independent audit can preserve accountability without requiring disclosures that endanger military operations. A historically grounded article should evaluate actual practices and reforms rather than using the presence or absence of a single presidential election as an exhaustive proxy for democracy.

27. A framework for assessing election readiness

This article proposes five publicly reviewable criteria for assessing readiness to resume national elections. First is a lawful trigger, meaning that the procedures for ending or modifying martial law and calling an election have been clearly identified. Second is physical safety for voters, administrators, candidates and observers. Third is inclusion of displaced, military and otherwise inaccessible citizens. Fourth is a pluralistic information environment and credible dispute settlement. Fifth is institutional independence in certification and publication of results. These are analytical dimensions, not a mathematical threshold or a prediction.

No president should be presumed guilty of unconstitutional motivation solely because a military emergency postpones voting; equally, no president should be considered beyond question because emergency restrictions have a legal basis. A transparent readiness framework allows scrutiny of decisions over time. It connects the peaceful alternation of 1994 and 2019, the judicial corrective of 2004, the exceptional election of 2014 and the prolonged interruption after 2022 without pretending that these events occurred under interchangeable conditions.

Future studies: testable questions and datasets

First, a document-tracing study should collect every presidential, parliamentary and constitutional-court decision relevant to the 2019 language act from April 2019 through October 2026. The dependent variable would be the observable response to Zelensky's promised review, coded separately as consultation, legal amendment, administrative guidance, judicial challenge or absence of a located document. This would test implementation without mistaking incomplete retrieval for proof of nonperformance.

Second, a paired longitudinal study of Ukrainian and comparison-country university participants should measure cultural intelligence with validated four-dimensional scales before and after international mobility, controlling for pre-existing language competence, income, motivation, length of stay and institutional support. A separate airline-service dataset should record multilingual response time, refund resolution and successful correction of booking or check-in problems; travel opportunity and consumer protection should remain analytically distinct.

Third, researchers should construct a comparative legal-events register for wartime election decisions in Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Israel, distinguishing legislative postponements from elections actually administered. A fourth study should quantify electoral feasibility by region, refugee destination and military service, using administrative data on voter-register integrity, polling infrastructure, physical risks and the possibility of independent observation. Each study requires research ethics safeguards for displaced persons and participants exposed to ongoing conflict.

VI. Discussion of Results

The historical evidence does not support a linear picture in which Ukraine was steadily becoming either more democratic or less democratic across successive presidents. The 1994 transfer of office, the litigation surrounding the 2004 contest and the 2019 defeat of incumbent display different channels of accountability. Conversely, the 2014 emergency succession and 2022–2026 martial-law period show how constitutional practice can move outside ordinary electoral cycles. The first result is institutional differentiation: election chronology is necessary, but it does not exhaust democratic performance (Kuzio, 2015; Kubicek, 2023; Risch, 2026).

The second result concerns the apparent paradox of Poroshenko. The same presidency oversaw Ryanair's entry, which could facilitate contact across national borders, and a statutory consolidation of Ukrainian as the sole official language across many public domains. These actions are not logically contradictory: sovereignty policies and outward mobility can coexist. Their effect on inclusion is conditional on the design of exemptions, accessible multilingual services, costs and actual opportunities for social exchange. A correlation in timing cannot be treated as evidence that Poroshenko intended mobility to compensate for linguistic regulation.

The third result is a documented difference in presidential language-policy framing. Zelensky called for incentives rather than prohibitions and promised scrutiny of rights protection in April 2019. This provides a clear benchmark for accountability. Yet an argument that he never initiated a serious review cannot be certified solely from the sources presently collected. More specific archival tracing is necessary to determine whether formal consultations or revisions were completed, rejected, or rendered politically secondary by later emergencies.

The fourth result is conceptual. Cultural intelligence, as defined by Ang and colleagues, is multidimensional and cannot be proxied by cheaper fares or route availability. Mobility may expand exposure; institutions determine its quality. The user-provided Ryanair essay makes a productive contribution when

treated as a hypothesis linking affordable travel, educational exchange and reciprocal knowledge creation while asking whether poor customer communication defeats some benefits. The robust interpretation requires validated measurement, a control group, and differentiated service outcomes.

Finally, the legal comparison demonstrates contingency rather than a universal wartime election rule. The US and New Zealand continued elections during war; the UK and Israel used postponement mechanisms. Ukraine's prohibition must be assessed against its constitutional structure, domestic martial-law legislation, voter access, safety conditions, and periodic parliamentary authorization. It is therefore equally unsound to say that wartime elections are always impossible or that Zelensky alone extinguished the constitutional right to vote. The unresolved issue is how to make emergency continuation publicly reviewable while creating feasible routes to genuine electoral competition.

VII. Conclusion and Future Studies

This third article relates electoral history to language governance and international mobility without converting any one policy into a verdict on an individual president. Across six elected presidents since 1991 and an interim presidency in 2014, Ukraine built a contested record of alternation and political accountability. Under Poroshenko, affordable travel links expanded in 2018 and comprehensive language rules were passed in 2019. Zelensky's subsequent public commitment to scrutinize the latter law requires a documented implementation audit. The differences between the two presidents are thus in rhetoric, inherited institutions, timing and security conditions, not in the simplistic opposition of an open presidency to a closed one.

The review of cultural intelligence shows why routes and fares are insufficient indicators of intercultural competence. In the interpretation developed here, low-cost transport creates potential encounters; Erasmus and related academic exchanges may provide structured interaction; multilingual public and private services may reduce frictions; and cultural intelligence emerges only through learning, reflection, motivation and behavioral adaptation. Ryanair's 2018 entry is an institutional event that can be documented. A subsequent change in Ukrainian cultural intelligence cannot be inferred without participant-level evidence. The contribution of the earlier Ryanair essay is to identify a testable link between accessibility and cultural learning while warning that communication and complaint-handling can erode the quality of the experience.

Finally, wartime electoral law requires a more discriminating international comparison than the repetition of opposing political positions. Different democracies have conducted or postponed elections under radically different war conditions. Ukraine's current electoral impasse must be studied through its own constitutional rules, the continuity provisions for the presidency, the formally authorized martial-law regime and observable constraints on candidacy, campaign freedoms and voting access. The appropriate scholarly objective is to specify verifiable thresholds for restoration, review emergency decisions and prevent temporary rules from becoming unexamined institutional habits.

Future research should prioritize four linked investigations: a comprehensive legal archive of Zelensky-era language-policy decisions; repeated measurement of cultural intelligence across Erasmus and other exchange populations; multilingual consumer-service audit data in the airline sector; and a harmonized wartime electoral feasibility dataset with security, displacement and oversight indicators. Such evidence would replace speculation about hidden motives with empirical tests and allow a future study to identify where sovereign language protection, educational mobility and electoral legitimacy complement one another and where they create avoidable institutional exclusions.

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