

Formation and Evaluation of Parliamentary Opposition in Ukraine

Evolution of the political opposition in Ukraine analyzed. Presented by the parliamentary and no parliamentary forms of opposition. Stages of the parliamentary oppositions in 2014 years. The evaluation of the latest stage of the parliamentary opposition in 2015 year in Ukraine.

Key words: political opposition, parliamentary opposition, non-parliamentary opposition, political authority, political actor.

А.Романюк

Становлення та оцінка парламентської опозиції в Україні

Розглянуто еволюцію політичної опозиції в Україні. Представлено два основні різновиди: парламентську та позапарламентську. Проаналізовано особливості опозиції після «Революції гідності». Дана оцінка актуальному стану парламентської опозиції.

Ключові слова: політична опозиція, парламентська опозиція, позапарламентська опозиція, політична влада, політичний актор.

The issues of formation and functioning of political opposition in Ukraine have become the objects of a number of studies. Mainly, current publications have obtained the form of setting and outlining the certain problem: S. Bondar¹, V. Varenko², D. Zubrytska³. The problems of institutionalization of opposition in Ukraine have come into the focus of studies by I. Polishchuk⁴, T.

¹ Bondar S. S. The Criteria of Oppositionality in the Political System of Ukraine / S. S. Bondar // Uzhhorod National University Bulletin. Series: Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology. – 2007. – № 7-8. – Pp. 344–350 (in Ukrainian).

² Varenko V. Formation and Development of Political Opposition in Ukraine during 1991-2002 / V. Varenko // Education of the Region: Political Science, Psychology, Communication. – 2008. – № 1. – Pp. 59–63 (in Ukrainian).

³ Zubrytska D. Smart Social Reality in the Programs of Oppositional Political Parties / D. Zubrytska // Collection of Research Papers. Ukrainian National Idea: Realias and Prospects for Development. – 2009. – № 21. – Pp. 71–76 (in Ukrainian); Zubrytska D. Theoretical and Methodological Grounds for Political Opposition Activity / D. Zubrytska // Ivan Franko National University of Lviv Bulletin. Series: Philosophical and Political Studies. – 2010. – Issue 1. – Pp. 205–210 (in Ukrainian).

⁴ Polishchuk I. O. The Institution of Political Opposition under the Conditions of Transitive State Regime in Ukraine / I. O. Polishchuk // State Building. – 2011. – № 1. – P. (in Ukrainian).

Tkachenko⁵ and V. Sychova⁶. The legal foundations of Ukrainian opposition activity have been studied by I. Pavlenko⁷. The format of parliamentary opposition has been described in the works by S. Kononchuk and O. Yarosh⁸ and V. Chumak⁹. The typologies of opposition have been reviewed by N. Vinnychuk¹⁰ and F. Rudych¹¹. The issues of political opposition activity in Ukraine have been studied in the monograph by Z. Bialoblotskyi¹² and papers by Yu. Shveda¹³.

The notion of political opposition in Ukraine is predominantly defined as: «...the complex of political forces, which oppose some views or actions in politics to the other or resist the official state policy or ruling party's course and propose alternative policy or another way of solution to various problems»¹⁴. In fact, this definition is considered to be a universal one and covers both parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition. Parliamentary opposition is leading in Ukraine, but non-parliamentary opposition, at the same time, is considerably associated with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Such connections mainly have two formats. The first one is applied to the political parties, which were represented in the parliament and according to the results of the next elections have not entered the parliament (the Progressive Socialist Party (the leader N. Vitrenko)¹⁵ after 2002, the SDPU (o)¹⁶ after 2006, the All-Ukrainian Association (VO) «Svoboda»¹⁷ after 2014 etc.). The

⁵ Tkachenko T. V. Opposition as a Political Institution and Form of Social Protest / T. V. Tkachenko // Political Management. – 2007. – № 5. – Pp. 40–45 (in Ukrainian).

⁶ Sychova V. V. Institutionalization of Ukrainian Opposition as a Factor of Renewal of the System of State Administration of Ukraine [Electronic Resource] / V. V. Sychova // Kharkiv Regional Institute of State Administration of the National Academy of Public Administration Attached to the Office of the President of Ukraine, 2009. – Access Mode: <http://www.kbuapa.kharkov.ua/e-book/apdu/2009-2/doc/1/07.pdf> (in Ukrainian).

⁷ Pavlenko I. Activity of Non-Parliamentary Opposition and Possible Forms of Its Legal Regulation [Electronic Resource] / I. Pavlenko // Analytical Proceedings Concerning Problems and Events of Social Development, December 2010. – Access Mode: <http://www.niss.gov.ua/Monitor/Desember/09.html> (in Ukrainian); Pavlenko I. Legal Status of Opposition. Experience of Developed Democracies and Ukrainian Prospects / I. Pavlenko // Political Management. – 2005. – № 5. – Pp. 16–30 (in Ukrainian); Pavlenko R. Opposition: Rights and Authority / R. Pavlenko // Person and Politics. – 2002. – № 4 (22). – Pp. 3–10 (in Ukrainian).

⁸ Kononchuk S. Parliamentary Opposition in Ukraine: Model and Implementation: Research of the Problem / S. Kononchuk, O. Yarosh. – K.: Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research, 2006. – 64 p. (in Ukrainian).

⁹ Chumak V. Activity of Parliamentary Opposition: Useful Experience for Ukraine [Electronic Resource] / V. Chumak // Political Reform through Experts' Eyes: the Significance of Public Advice: Collection of Papers. – K.: International Centre for Policy Studies, June 2007. – Access Mode: <http://www.icps.com.ua/files/articles/46/79/VChumak-ed11.pdf> (in Ukrainian).

¹⁰ Vinnychuk N. Typology of Political Opposition / N. Vinnychuk // Political Management. – 2007. – № 3. – Pp. 51–59 (in Ukrainian).

¹¹ Rudych F. Political Authority and Opposition in Ukraine: Methodological Context // Viche, 2013, № 17 (in Ukrainian).

¹² Bialoblotskyi Z. Stability and Effectiveness of Governments in Political Systems of Eastern European Countries. – Lviv: Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, 2013. – 470 p. (in Ukrainian).

¹³ Shveda Yu. R. Elections and Electoral Systems. European Standards and Experience for Democracy Consolidation in Ukraine / Yu. Shveda. – Lviv: Taras Soroka Publishing House, 2010. – 462 p. (in Ukrainian); Shveda Yu. Party System of Ukraine: State, Tendencies and Prospects for Development / Yu. Shveda // Lviv University Bulletin. Series: Philosophical Studies. – 1999. – № 1. – Pp. 198–201 (in Ukrainian).

¹⁴ Political Encyclopaedia. Ed.: Yu. Levenets (head), Yu. Shapoval (deputy head) and others. – K.: Parliamentary Publishing House, 2012. – P. 513 (in Ukrainian).

¹⁵ The Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine was created in 1996. During the parliamentary elections in 1998 it gained 4.05%. During the consecutive elections it got insufficient results to enter the parliament. Members of the party actively participated in numerous pro-Russian and anti-Western mass actions, mainly in the Crimea and in southern and eastern Ukraine.

¹⁶ The SDPU (o) «the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united)» was created in 1990, received its current name in 1996. During the parliamentary elections of 1998 and 2002 the party entered the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and joined the «ruling party». During the next elections it could not clear the electoral threshold, though actively participated in a number of political actions as the oppositional force.

¹⁷ All-Ukrainian Association (VO) «Svoboda» was registered in 1995 (till February 2004 it was called the Social and Nationalistic Party of Ukraine). During the long period of time it was the most noticeable oppositional nationalistic political force. For the first time ever it entered the parliament in 2012 (10,74 %). Based on the results of the early parliamentary elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in

second one is peculiar of the parties, which have already been formed and aspire to get into the parliament (the VO «Svoboda» till 2012). Simultaneously, we share the point of view, that political opposition in Ukraine is represented by parliamentary opposition, which, under certain conditions, must take different non-parliamentary actions. But it happens, when parliamentary practice does not allow official factions/parties to fulfill their functions (the example of such a state is the campaign «Ukraine without Kuchma»¹⁸). Otherwise, non-parliamentary forms of activity, carried out by the actors, not represented in the parliament, are rather limited in the format.

The legal foundations of opposition activity in Ukraine involve: the Law of Ukraine «On the Status of the National Deputy of Ukraine» d.d. 1993, the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine «On Political Parties in Ukraine» d.d. April 5, 2001, the Law «On Procedural Regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine» d.d. September 19, 2008. In the law «On Political Parties in Ukraine»¹⁹ the freedom of oppositional activity, possibility to articulate and assert in public their position, concerning the issues of the state and social life, to make offers to the bodies of state authority and self-governing authorities, which are obligatory for consideration by the appropriate authorities, to criticize and evaluate government actions in mass media and etc. have been guaranteed. Chapter 13, dedicated to the activity of parliamentary opposition, was introduced in the law on procedural regulations²⁰. In particular, in Article 68.1 the notion of parliamentary opposition was given: «...the deputy faction, quantitative representation of which consists of more than the half of people's deputies, who have not entered the coalition, and the head or deputy head of which, during the plenary assembly of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, announced their oppositionality to the political course of coalition, and/or to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, formed by it». The procedural regulations presupposed the existence of only one oppositional deputy faction or the union of oppositional deputy factions. Article 72 of the procedural regulations stipulated formation of the shadow/oppositional government by the representatives of opposition. On October 8, 2010 after the decision of the Constitutional Court about abolition of the constitutional changes of 2004²¹, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the new wording of the law on procedural regulations. The deputies excluded from the regulations all clauses concerning formation of coalition and

2014 it gained 4,71% of votes and did not clear 5% electoral threshold.

¹⁸ «Ukraine without Kuchma» is a number of protests in Ukraine in 2000-2001 aimed at forcing the president L. Kuchma to resign. The grounds for protests became the fact of information disclosure, made by O. Moroz (leader of the Socialist Party of Ukraine) on November 28, 2000, concerning the accusation L. Kuchma of kidnapping and murdering the oppositional journalist H. Honhadze. The politicians' public performance took place both in the parliament and beyond it. All together 24 political parties and civil organizations took part in the protests under the slogan «Strive for Truth». The climax of the protest actions was marked by the mass conflicts between the activists and enforcers on March 9, 2001.

¹⁹ The Law of Ukraine «On Political Parties in Ukraine» [Electronic Resource]. – Access Mode: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2365-14>

²⁰ The Law of Ukraine «On Procedural Regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine» [Electronic Resource]. – Access Mode: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1861-17>

²¹ The Constitutional Court by its decision resolved that Law № 2222-IV d.d. December 8, 2004 «On Introduction of Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine» was non-constitutional due to the violation of the rules of examination and adoption procedure. Therefore, it meant revalidation of the previous wording of the Constitution, which was changed and amended during the «Orange Revolution» on December 8, 2004.

opposition. Besides, the regulation concerning the traditional «day of opposition», which presupposed formation of agenda by opposition on Wednesdays, was abolished.

The appropriateness of adoption of the special law on opposition has been discussed for a long time by the representatives of parliamentary political parties. One of the first laws was the draft law «On Organized Political Opposition», brought in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on February 2, 1998 by the people's deputies Yu. Tymoshenko and O. Yeliashkevych. In the course of 1998-2007 eighteen draft laws aimed at regulating activity of political opposition were introduced to the parliament. One peculiar feature, concerning the initiatives of introducing the laws, is that in most cases the projects were initiated by the parties, which were not in power. Consequently, not approving the proposed law was not the bases for backing up own, already worked out project, when a political party came in power. The examples are the draft legislation «On Parliamentary Opposition» (№2214-3 d.d. February 11, 2004) introduced by V. Filenko, the deputy from the party «Our Ukraine», and the draft legislation «On Oppositional Political Activity» d.d. May 25, 2006, proposed by R. Bohatyrova, M. Komar, T. Chornovil and V. Bevzenko, the deputies from the Party of Regions. On March 19, 2014 due to the reestablishment of some regulations of the Constitution of Ukraine in wording of 2004, the draft law № 4494 «On Parliamentary Opposition», introduced by the people's deputies V. V. Novynskiy, Ye. B. Heller, VV. Pysarenko was adopted in the first reading. The elaborated variant of this law (№0948) by the same authors was repeatedly registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on November 27, 2014 with respect to the second reading²². In article 1.3 of this law there is a definition of parliamentary opposition: «voluntary deputy union of factions (deputy faction) in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and (or) people's deputies of Ukraine, who have not entered the parliamentary majority, have placed a request for passing into the opposition and who do not agree with the official policy of the parliamentary majority and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and (or) the way of its implementation, who take control over the activity of parliamentary majority and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, criticize their activity and propose an alternative program of development of Ukraine and the ways of its implementation»²³. According to this document the oppositional activity, aimed at elimination of independence of Ukraine, change of its constitutionalism with the help of force, infringement of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, destruction of national security, unconstitutional seizure of power, advocacy of violence, incitement of ethnic, racial, religious hatred, encroachment on people's rights and liberties, people's health, and formation of paramilitary forces are considered unacceptable. It is presupposed, that deputy factions and separate deputies, who have not entered the parliamentary majority and have not claimed their entrance into the parliamentary opposition, will not be viewed as the representatives of opposition. Thus, to become a part of opposition, except non-alignment

²² On March 2, 2015 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the basis of the negative resolution made by the Committee on Procedural Regulations and Administration rejected the mentioned bill.

²³ The Draft Law on Parliamentary Opposition [Electronic Resource]. – Access Mode: http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf35. – Actualized on 1.03.2015

to the ruling majority, it is necessary to identify oneself publicly as a representative of opposition, by means of declarations, made by deputy factions and people's deputies as to their adherence to the parliamentary opposition, which must be officially announced by the chairman during the session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Moreover, the draft law stipulated that the personal membership of the parliamentary opposition must be published in the newspaper «Voice of Ukraine». The rights of opposition were presupposed. In particular, as to filling the posts of the chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of committees, including the position of the first deputy chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

In Ukrainian political science there are various approaches towards periodization of opposition activity. To F. Rudych's point of view, the first stage starts in 1990 and is related to the election of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 1990²⁴. The classification is based on the legal foundations of opposition activity²⁵. To our mind the key determinants of formation and activity of opposition are the form of the government and election legislation. The form of the government on the constitutional level determines the structure of authority, system of interrelation and influence of authoritative institutions – the president and the parliament – on government formation, the amount of their power and the place of opposition respectively. The election legislation determines the procedure of the parliament formation, correspondingly its structure and importance of political actors, who enter the parliament. Thus, in the process of evolution of political opposition in Ukraine four stages can be singled out.

The first stage had covered the period till 1998. The presidential-parliamentary form of semi-presidentialism with the predominating role of the president in the system of executive power functioned at that time. The parliamentary elections occurred in accordance with the majority election system, what ensured a great number of non-affiliated deputies in the parliament²⁶ and determined weakness of the main political parties. Consequently, determination of opposition depended on the president, who determined the format and personal composition of the government. Opposition, due to the weak structuring of the parliament, did not have a strictly formed prolonged construction, but in many cases it was an ad hoc one.

The second stage covered the period from 1998 till 2006. In 1998, for the first time ever, the elections to the Verkhovna Rada occurred on the majority-proportional basis, what promoted strengthening of the party structuring of the parliament. At the boundary between 1997 and 1998 the final formation of the phenomenon, known as the «ruling party»²⁷ took place. V. Pustovoitenko was the first head of the government, being the member of the political party. During his

²⁴ Rudych F. Political Authority and Opposition in Ukraine: Methodological Context // Viche, 2013, № 17 (in Ukrainian).

²⁵ F. Rudych has singled out four stages: I - 1990-2006, II – 2006-2007, III – 2007 – 2010 and IV – after 2010.

²⁶ Number of non-affiliated deputies under the conditions of the majority system in the course of parliamentary elections: 1994 – 168 non-affiliated deputies among 338 deputies; 1998 – 117 among 450; 2002 – 94 among 450 deputies.

²⁷ Romaniuk A. Government of Ukraine: between Non-party and Party Formats // Face a Choice. Future of Ukraine under the Conditions of the Systematic Destabilization. Ed. A. Gil, T. Stempnevski. – Lublin-Lvov-Kiev, 2013. – P. 260 (in Russian).

appointment as Prime Minister, the NDP (the People's Democratic Party)²⁸ declared its responsibility for the Prime Minister's activity²⁹. Nowadays, we can reckon the existence of experience among a number of «ruling parties». Besides the NDP, after L. Kuchma's re-election for the second presidential term and V. Pustovoitenko's resignation of the head of the government, the position of the «ruling party» was occupied by the SDPU (o), headed by V. Medvedchuk, presidential chief of staff. The period of its predominance in political life lasted to the presidential elections of 2004 and V. Yushenko's election to the presidency. After the presidential elections in 2004, the role of the «ruling party» belonged to the presidential party People's Union «Our Ukraine».

Despite the formation of the «ruling party», which was represented in the government, real power belonged to the president. Correspondingly, the opposition was determined as the president's opponent. Thus, in the draft law №2214-1 d.d. February 3, 2003 «On Parliamentary Majority and Parliamentary Opposition in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine»³⁰ opposition was defined as «voluntary union of the people's deputies of Ukraine – members of deputy factions (groups), non-affiliated people's deputies of Ukraine, who do not support political and social and economic policy of the President of Ukraine, activity of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and offer the society an alternative program of development». It should be mentioned, that the absence of party affiliation of the president and the head of the government, existence of a great number of non-affiliated deputies, largely influenced the opposition. Left (the Communist and Socialist parties) and/or right parties (the NRU (the People's Movement of Ukraine), the URP (the Ukrainian Republican Party), «Sobor» etc.) acted as the opponents to the head of the state. The parliamentary opposition was parted and its functional strain consisted in criticizing the policy of the current authority, real alternatives were not offered. At the same time, very often representatives of the opposition, at the personal level, cooperated with representatives of the authority, trying to get some ruling positions in the country. In general, the parties, which showed their opposition to the president, were characterized by various models of conduct: demonstration of oppositionality, neutral position and ad hoc cooperation.

The third stage of Ukrainian opposition development started in 2006. The grounds were the following: firstly, in accordance with the law of Ukraine «On Introduction of Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine» d.d. December 8, 2004, a number of the Constitutional changes were to be implemented on January 1, 2006. In particular, the system of government formation was changed. According to Article 83, subsequent to the results of elections and coordination of political positions, the coalition of deputy factions, consisted of the majority of people's deputies form the constitutional composition of the parliament, had to be formed in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Correspondingly, the majority coalition was to submit an offer to the president as to

²⁸ The People's Democratic Party was created in 1996 as a result of the union between the Labor Congress of Ukraine and the Party of Democratic Revival of Ukraine involving a number of civil structures. V. Pustovoitenko was the head of the People's Democratic Party during 1999 - 2006.

²⁹ Vysokyi Zamok, № 111/112 d.d. 18/20 1997.

³⁰ The project was prepared and introduced by the people's deputies of Ukraine S. Havrysh, O. Karpov and K. Vashchuk.

the head and composition of the government³¹. Secondly, the regular elections of 2006 were to take place without a majority constituent, solely on the basis of party lists.

The fourth stage of opposition transformation started as a result of the Constitutional Court's decision, d.d. September 30, 2010. In accordance with paragraph 5, part 6 of this decision, the Constitutional Court considered the Law of Ukraine № 2222 – IV «On Introduction of Amendments to the Constitution» to be unconstitutional due to the violations of examination and adoption procedure. Thus, it meant revalidation of the previous wording of the Constitution of Ukraine, which was changed and amended by the mentioned law. Simultaneously, all norms concerning parliamentary opposition were excluded from the law «On Procedural Regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine». The additional factor of the qualitative change of the situation was reestablishment of the mixed electoral system, which became the basis of the parliamentary election of 2012. To the already distinguished formal and legal determinants, one should add significant qualitative changes, which lay in strengthening the authoritarian tendencies of V. Yanukovych's regime, concurrently with reduction of democratic practice. It resulted in restriction of mass media activity, criminal prosecution and conviction of a number of oppositional leaders (Yu. Tymoshenko, Yu. Lutsenko and others), factual isolation of oppositional deputies in the parliament, winning some deputies from the oppositional factions over to the ruling or formally neutral deputy groups, neglection of the parliamentary procedural regulations while adopting the laws, which were of benefit to the authority. Rather demonstrative was voting for laws on January 16, 2014, which were acquired in the society as the dictatorial ones (the representative of the counting board named the necessary number of deputies' votes without preliminary counting). Under such conditions, oppositional parliamentary factions/parties had to cooperate closely. On June 15, 2013 took place the congress, where the party «Batkivshchyna» united with the party «Front of Changes» and a chain of other parties. The additional factor was the preparation to the presidential elections of 2015. On the one hand, pro-presidential political forces started comprehending the complexity of achieving positive results by means of fair elections and began taking a complex of measures, in particular aimed at isolation and discrediting of the opposition. This, in its turn, determined the necessity of coordination of actions among the oppositional parliamentary parties, their gradual transformation into a single oppositional bloc, comprised of the «Batkivshchyna», «UDAR», «Svoboda». Despite their ideological and program differences, the leaders of these three political forces managed to stay united, taking into consideration the threat on the part of the powerful authority. The parliamentary opposition during 2012 – February 2014 appeared to be a complex unity. It consisted of the party factions of the mentioned above political parties and deputies elected on the basis of a majority rule. If the representatives of the oppositional party factions were more or less consolidated, due to

³¹ The Constitution of Ukraine Amended and Revised by the Law of Ukraine d.d. December 8, 2004 № 2222-IV. – Kyiv: Atika, 2006. – Pp. 24-25.

party control and discipline, then non-affiliated deputies could cooperate or were made to cooperate ad hoc with the ruling party. Thus, the opposition at this stage was characterized as the opponent both to the president and government. In general context, the confrontation in the line of «authority – opposition» stepped out the desire to change authority and took the format of anti-system opposition to the authoritarian power in Ukraine. As a result, the opponents represented their counterpart as an enemy, while addressing people with the dichotomy of choice between good and evil. The confrontational format of relations between the authority and opposition became stronger due to the absence of tradition and culture of compromises in the Ukrainian political life. All this logically led to the large political crisis and acute street confrontation during the end of 2013 – February 2014. The most dramatic were the events of February 18-20, 2014, when the confrontation grew into the power struggle. According to the Ministry of Health's data during that period 82 people (71 demonstrators and 11 law enforcers) were killed and 622 persons got hurt in Kyiv.

Under the conditions of V. Yanukovich's and a number of executives' escape from Ukraine, on 21 February, 2014 the Verkhovna Rada reinstated the wording of the Constitution of Ukraine d.d. December 8, 2004. On February 22 acting chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine V. Rybak, of his own free will, resigned the post and O. Turchynov was appointed new Speaker of the parliament. At the same time, by 328 of votes, people's deputies dismissed V. Yanukovich from the position of the President of Ukraine and this gave the grounds to announce early presidential elections. By this, Ukraine has returned to the construction of prime minister-presidential model of semi-presidentialism. It gives the basis to state the next stage of Ukrainian opposition evolution. The reformatting of deputies in the Verkhovna Rada took place without new parliamentary elections, which resulted in the formation of the new parliamentary majority and the PRU's (the party of Regions of Ukraine) and the KPU's (the Communist Party of Ukraine) official declaration, d.d. February 24, as to their passing into opposition. Despite a short period of time between the end of February 2014 and March 2015, within the limits of the mentioned stage two substages can be singled out. To our mind, the early parliamentary elections in October 2014 became the symbolic boundary line. During the first substage, the political opposition, represented in the parliament by the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine, was to a large extent demoralized and organizationally parted. The complex of internal and external factors was the grounds for this. To the external factors belong: annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation; formation and development of separatist movements in a number of regions in eastern and southern Ukraine, which were traditionally the electoral regions for the PRU and KPU; power struggle and human losses and finally armed conflict in the part of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which led to the extensive military operations between separatists, which were fully backed up by Russia, and Ukrainian military forces. In public consciousness «The Revolution of Dignity» and social shock from the numerous victims in Kyiv were supplemented by the shock from the

annexation of the Crimea and military operations in Donbass. All this led to intensification of Ukrainian national identity on the one hand and on the other hand to the increase of requirements for political responsibility on the part of various parties, which were the cornerstones of V. Yanukovich's regime and stood on the course for closer cooperation with Russia. The internal factors are: departure of many members and party organizations from the PRU, withdrawal of many members «into the shadows» (just to be forgotten), active discussions within the party over the reasons and ways out from the situation, as well as the process of overestimation of the Russian Federation's role in the events which occurred in Ukraine, controversial attitude towards some party members, who in public backed up the events in the Crimea and separatist movement in eastern Ukraine etc. Similar processes were peculiar of the KPU as well. The additional factor for this party was the conflict between the top echelon of the party and its leader P. Symonenko, who was accused by the party members of financial fraud, concerning party funds. As a result, oppositional position and activity were less native to these two parties as organizations and were more characterized by the non-system actions of separate politicians, namely N. Shufrych and Yu. Vilkul. This process logically ended with the statement made by the secretary of presidium of the Party of Regions B. Kolesnikov on September 14, 2014, that the party would not participate in the early parliamentary elections.

To some extent intensification of oppositional activity took place on the eve of the early elections. The key oppositional actors were the revived party «Strong Ukraine» headed by S. Tyhipko, the KPU and the party «Oppositional Bloc», which was created in September 2014 on the basis of the «Party of Development of Ukraine», parties: the «Centre», the «New Politics», the «State Neutrality», the «Forward Ukraine», the «Labor Ukraine» and a part of the representatives from the Party of Regions. Despite the classical activation of pre-election confrontation, the critical constituent within the activity of three oppositional actors was rather moderate. The main peculiarity of their oppositionality concerned their positioning as the adherents of the peaceful solutions to resolve the military conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, avoiding the question of the Crimea's future and membership and evaluation of the Russian Federation's role in the conflict of 2014 in Ukraine. They also actively accentuated the necessity of preservation and development of social programs and social protection for people. It was latent opposition to the position of the ruling coalition, which stood for continuation of the antiterrorist operation, conviction the role of the Russian Federation's annexation of the Crimea and declaration the necessity of reforms. The significant constituent of the pre-election activity of these three forces was their electoral geography – they referred to and worked with the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, which traditionally, during the previous elections voted for the PRU and the KPU. The results of the early parliamentary elections were rather interesting. Firstly, the KPU with the result of 3,88 % and the party «Strong Ukraine» with the result of 3,11% within the frames of the national multi-mandate constituency did not manage to clear the electoral threshold and did not enter the Verkhovna

Rada. Secondly, the «Oppositional Bloc» gained 9,43% and their two deputies were elected on the majority basis. Besides, the «Oppositional Bloc» in a single national electoral constituency won the first place in the following regions: Donetsk (38,69), Luhansk (36,59), Kharkiv (32,16), Dnipropetrovsk (24,27) and Zaporizhzhia (27,18).

Table 1. Voting of Deputies' Factions and Groups (in %)³²

	Faction/Group	«For»	«Against»	«Abstain»	Absent	Vote withheld
1	Faction of the party «Petro Poroshenko Bloc»	62,45	0,54	0,79	17,06	19,16
2	Faction of the party «People's Front»	75,19	0,35	0,11	7,87	16,47
3	Faction of the party «Oppositional Bloc»	8,06	3,52	0,17	43,04	45,21
4	Faction of the party «Samopomich» (Self-Reliance) Union	58,22	1,86	0,54	15,17	24,21
5	Faction of Oleh Liashko Radical Party	69,29	0,92	0,59	10,12	19,08
6	Faction of the All-Ukrainian Association «Batkivshchyna» (Motherland)	63,36	0,93	0,45	20,11	15,15
7	Group «People's Will»	20,31	0,45	0,17	52,75	26,32
8	Group «Economic Development»	20,91	0,91	0,5	33,25	44,44
9	Non-affiliated Deputies	28,98	4,03	1,29	45,59	20,12

The second substage was characterized by the change of political actors in the newly elected parliament of Ukraine. The factions of the parties «Petro Poroshenko Bloc», «People's Front», «Samopomich» Union, All-Ukrainian Association «Batkivshchyna» and Oleh Liashko Radical Party signed the coalition agreement and created the parliamentary majority and the government. In total they numbered 303 deputies. The short work period of the Verkhovna Rada of the eighth convocation does not give grounds for the precision evaluation of the opposition. The opposition can be defined on the basis of self-identification (when a faction/group announces its oppositionality in public) and according to the results of activity, concerning voting for the laws, initiated by the government/majority. As to formation and functioning of the opposition, we can single out a number of characteristics. Firstly, negative treatment of the opposition is still kept on the part of the parliamentary majority. The basis for this are: 1) besides the tradition of letting the opposition hold the posts of chairmen of a number of parliamentary committees (in the Verkhovna Rada of the sixth convocation the opposition headed 10 committees, during the seventh convocation it headed 12 committees) and in the newly elected parliament the representatives of the «Oppositional Bloc» were not appointed chairmen of any committee. Such situation causes a number of questions, as in accordance with Article 81 of the Law on procedural regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine quotas on the chairman of the parliamentary committees are fixed on the proportional amount to the quantitative composition of parliamentary factions as to the overall composition of

³² GO «OPORA»: The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine: the First 100 Days of Activity [Electronic Resource]. – Access Mode: http://opora.ua.org/index.php?option=com_conter

the parliament. Taking into consideration the numerical composition of the faction, the «Oppositional Bloc» (40 deputies) was to have headed at least three committees. The opposition also did not get any post of the deputy head of a committee; 2) as we have already stated the parliament rejected the draft law on parliamentary opposition (№0948), introduced by the oppositional deputies and did not propose any alternative project. Such situation does not correlate with P. Poroshenko's pre-election promises, when he was a candidate for President of Ukraine: «The law on parliamentary opposition will be urgently introduced to the Verkhovna Rada»³³. However, the majority, in spite of all oppositional experience, gained in the course of V. Yanukovych's regime, does not want to limit itself with the fixed power of opposition.

Secondly, in the parliament of Ukraine formally there is only one oppositional party, namely the «Oppositional Bloc», which had publicly announced its opposition to the government majority coalition. Mainly, the representatives of the opposition do not give their support to the governmental laws, are critical of new appointments, oppose the process of bringing to responsibility former top-level state and party officials etc. The alternation of the state development policy, chiefly concerns social issues, which is treated by many experts as unabashed populism, and the problems of war and peace in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Thirdly, ad hoc oppositional position is occupied by the group «Revival»³⁴ (headed by Khomutynnyk V.) and the group «People's Will» (headed by Yermeev I.). Oppositionality of these groups is characterized by the fact, that they usually do not support the laws, initiated by the ruling coalition. Such policy can have different explanations, including an extortion/pressure attempt towards the government, aimed at achieving some desirable benefits.

Development of political situation in Ukraine is presupposed by the military events, threat of destabilization on behalf of the Russian Federation, difficult social and economic situation and expected deprivation of many people, due to tariff increase, reduction of budget expenditure, absence of reforms, high level of corruption etc. Under these conditions, we believe that there are two main tendencies. The first one is a good chance for the «Oppositional Bloc» to accumulate their electorate support, especially in southern and eastern regions. The paradox is that such an increase is possible not due to the activity of the party, but as a result of its successful name and opposition to the government. The second one lies in the attractiveness of the oppositional status for a number of parties, which, in the context of future elections to the local authorities (in accordance with the current legislation, the elections to the local authorities in Ukraine are to be held at the end of October 2015), do not have high chances for a good result. It can «de facto» provoke strengthening of oppositional activities on the part of some members of the parliamentary majority. Such actions can be represented by negative

³³ Poroshenko P. Live in a New Way! P. Poroshenko's Pre-Election Programme of the Candidate for Presidency [Electronic Resource]. – Access Mode: www.cvk.gov.ua/vp2014/wp009pt021f01=134pt001f01=702.doc.

³⁴ After the early parliamentary elections the deputy group «Economic Development» was created, which was re-registered under the name «Revival» («Vidrodzhennia») on March 06, 2015.

voting for government legislative intentions, not to be responsible for them and criticizing the position and activity of the government institutions at the regional and local levels. Thus, the period of formation and existence of independent Ukraine has been marked by the process of institutionalization of political opposition, its mastering immanent functional attributes. Concurrently, this process has been delaying due to a number of factors, among which one can single out: absence of legislative definition of opposition, existence of various practices aimed at restriction of opposition's activity in the parliament etc.