

TRANSFORMATION OF UKRAINE'S POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE EVE OF THE WAR: WHAT'S NEXT?

There has been considered the process of formation and formation of political parties in Ukraine, their peculiarity in relation to the partogenesis of European political parties. There has been noted that the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on February 24, 2022 became a turning point in the political development of the country and all political institutions. There has been analyzed evolution of quantitative changes of political parties and three main groups among them have been identified. There have been outlined features of the programmatic and ideological characteristics of Ukrainian parties. The volatility parameters of political parties and indicators of the number of party members have been determined. The conclusion about the crisis of the personalistic party model, which dominated Ukraine during the period of independence has been substantiated.

Keywords: political party, party member, electoral volatility, party program, ideology

Transformacje ukraińskich partii politycznych w przededniu wybuchu wojny: co dalej?

Rozpatrzono proces powstawania i formowania się partii politycznych na Ukrainie, ich osobliwość w stosunku do partogenezy europejskich partii politycznych. Zauważono, że pełnowymiarowa agresja Federacji Rosyjskiej na Ukrainę 24 lutego 2022 roku stała się punktem zwrotnym w rozwoju politycznym kraju i wszystkich instytucji politycznych. Przeanalizowano ewolucję zmian ilościowych partii politycznych i wyodrębniono wśród nich trzy główne grupy. Nakreślono cechy programowe i ideologiczne partii ukraińskich. Określono parametry zmienności partii politycznych i wskaźniki liczby członków partii. Uzasadniono wniosek o kryzysie personalistycznego modelu partii, który dominował na Ukrainie w okresie niepodległości.

Słowa kluczowe: partia polityczna, członek partii, zmienność wyborcza, program partii, ideologia

Трансформація політичних партій України напередодні війни: що далі?

Розглянуто процес утворення та формування політичних партій в Україні, їх особливість щодо партогенезу європейських політичних партій. Зазначено, що

повномасштабна агресія Російської федерації проти України 24 лютого 2022 року стала рубіжним етапом політичного розвитку країни та всіх політичних інститутів. Проаналізовано еволюцію кількісних змін політичних партій і виділено три основні групи серед них. Окреслено особливості програмно-ідеологічних характеристик українських партій. Визначено параметри волатильності політичних партій та показники чисельності членів партії. Обґрунтовано висновок про кризу моделі персоналістської партії, яка домінувала в Україні протягом періоду незалежності.

Ключові слова: політична партія, член партії, електоральна волатильність, програма партії, ідеологія.

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022 qualitatively changed the situation in all spheres of the state's life. We will be able to do a full analysis of the obtained and potentially possible consequences of aggression only after the end of the war. However, the format of the changes that the country experienced during the war in the conditions of martial law indicate the possibility and need for a large-scale reboot of the political system and, accordingly, of its main elements. Political parties are one of the key institutions that perform a number of important social functions in a democratic society. Ukraine's acquisition of the status of a candidate country for EU membership in 2022, on the one hand, became a fact of international recognition of the level of social transformations, and on the other hand, it necessitates continuing changes, including in the democratic sphere, in order to meet the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria, which is the basis for a positive decision on accession to the European Union. The purpose of our publication is to analyze the state of Ukraine's political parties on the eve of the war and outline the main challenges for the country.

The restructuring process started in the USSR in 1985 and the declaration of Ukraine's independence on August 24, 1991 had a decisive impact on the political activity and attitude of citizens, one of the manifestations of which was the formation of political parties. Although formally the first political party was the Ukrainian Christian-Democratic Front founded in 1988 (Vasyl Sichko is the first leader)¹, but in reality the process of forming multi-party system in Ukraine began with the announcement and the beginning of the functioning of the People's Movement of Ukraine².

The NRU (PMU) was formed as an opposition to the "leading and directing role" of the CPSU and the Communist Party of Ukraine, as the republican part of a single party. Despite its formal socio-political status, it was a classical political institute of the movement format, which united supporters of different value systems and worldviews for the sake of eliminating the monopoly of the CPSU and achieving Ukraine's independence. After the collapse of the USSR, the declaration of

¹ Держава, влада та громадянське суспільство у документах політичних партій України (кінець 1980-х – перша половина 2011 рр.). Київ: ППІЕНД ім. І. Ф. Кураса НАН України. 2011. С. 15.

² Як громадсько-політична організація НРУ проголосили 8-10 вересня 1989 р. Як партія був зареєстрований Міністерством юстиції України 1 лютого 1993 р.

independence and the banning of the Communist Party of Ukraine in Ukraine, the NRU (PMU) lost its common consolidating goal and became a platform for the formation of new parties. However, the formation of political parties in Ukraine had different reasons than in European countries where this political institution arose and developed. In the European case, political parties were formed as institutions for the representation and protection of group interests of workers, peasants, believers of specific denominations, representatives of ethnic and ethno-linguistic, territorial groups and communities, etc. This property was characteristic of political parties during most of the 20th century³, which was clearly demonstrated in the construction of sociopolitical divisions developed by S. Lipset and S. Rokkan. Instead, after the declaration of independence by Ukraine due to the active processes of transformation, the old structure of group affiliation was already dying, and the new one had not yet formed. Accordingly, the main driving force behind the creation of new parties was the ambitions of politicians; accordingly, the absolute majority of Ukrainian political parties were formed as personalist or leadership parties. They arose around an ambitious/influential politician primarily at the expense of his friends, sympathizers, who made up the core of the leadership and the party itself. Party leaders mostly were and are “for life”, regardless of the results of party activities.

At the beginning of 2022, about 370 political parties were registered in Ukraine⁴. In our opinion, we can structure them based on the participation rate in national/parliamentary and local elections.

From the formal point of view of the law on political parties in Ukraine, they should all have a national character⁵.

Table 1. The level of support for political parties in the parliamentary elections in the national electoral district

Year	Number of the registered p.p. (political parties) ⁶	Took part in the election ⁷	Elected to the Parliament
29.03.1998	37	30	8
31.03.2002	77	33	6
26.03.2006	117	45	5
Special election 30.09.2007	126	20	5
28.10.2014	181	21	5
Special election 26.10.2014	206	29	6
Special election 21.07.2019	349	24	5

³ Лише у 60-х рр. XX ст. О. Кіркхеймер обґрунтовує появу/існування «всеохопних» партій [1, 188], в подальшому цей тип отримав інші визначення, в тому числі «електоральних партій». Спільними ознаками цього типу партій вважали спрямування своєї діяльності/звернення до представлення інтересів більшості населення/виборців, а не секторальних/окремих суспільних груп.

⁴ Станом на 21 грудня 2021 р. в реєстрі політичних партій Міністерства юстиції України було зафіксовано 370 партій. Див.: Реєстр політичних партій Міністерство юстиції України [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: https://minjust.gov.ua/m/str_31094

⁵ Згідно статті 3 Закону України «Про політичні партії», політичні партії в Україні «створюються і діють тільки із всеукраїнським статусом» URL: zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2365-14#text

⁶ Реєстр політичних партій Міністерство юстиції України [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: https://minjust.gov.ua/m/str_31094

⁷ Результати обраховані автором на підставі даних Центральної виборчої комісії [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: cvk.gov.ua

However, based on the information of the CEC, which is displayed in Table 1, we can see that there is a clear tendency to reduce the share of political parties that are able to participate in parliamentary elections at the national level by forming their own list, and the share of parties that are able to send their representatives to the parliament is quite small. We can assume that the number of national parties should include those parties that are able to participate in parliamentary elections by nominating a list of party candidates. During the elections, we also deal with parties that, according to the legislation, have the status of the subject of the election process, which involves not only the nomination of party candidates, but also participation in the work of election commissions of various levels. For the parties that register their own list, this is an inherent property. Instead, there are parties that do not nominate their own candidates, but receive quotas in election commissions of various levels. These parties, in our opinion, should not be interpreted as national-level parties. Thus, the share of parties capable of participating in national elections is about 1%.

In addition to the parliamentary elections, we have a number of elections at the local level: to regional, district, city councils, mayors, and united territorial communities (UTCs)

Table 2. Quantitative parameters of political parties of Ukraine, taking into account the results of local elections⁸

Year of the elections	Number of registered political parties	Number of parliamentary parties	Number of registered candidates	Number of parties, who held their candidates
2010	151	5	124	124
2015	223	6	122	89
2020	352	5	144	112

Table 2 is compiled based on the results of three elections to local authorities. As we can see, the share of parties that registered their own party lists and managed to send their representatives to the councils of various levels is significantly larger compared to the parliamentary elections. If we calculate these shares based on the results of the last elections in 2020, the share of parties that nominated their candidates will be 40%, and the share of those that sent their candidates to the representative body will be 31.8%. The first and second groups will also include national-level parties, but in total, this second group with the first in its composition will make up less than half of all officially registered political parties. We can conditionally qualify the second group as regional political parties. Regarding the third group, in our opinion, it should be characterized as formal parties, since they have passed the registration procedure and the parties with the tentative title are fixed in the national register. Periodically, especially on the eve of elections, some parties from this group become the basis for the design of a new political actor. Less often, we can see among the parties of this group political forces that tried

⁸ Результати обраховані автором на підставі даних Центральної виборчої комісії [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: svk.gov.ua

to participate in elections of various levels, but did not succeed, they are mostly transformed into second group/regional parties. Regardless of these two peculiarities, this group acts as a reservoir of formally registered and actually inactive parties. Unfortunately, this group constitutes the absolute majority among the political parties of Ukraine represented in the register⁹.

However, the selected quantitative parameters of political parties require additional analysis to understand the state of political parties in Ukraine.

The Law “On Political Parties in Ukraine” gives the following definition: “... this is a registered in accordance with the law voluntary association of citizens-supporters of a certain nationwide program of social development, whose purpose is to promote the formation and expression of the political will of citizens, participates in elections and other political events”¹⁰. Now we plan to consider the characteristics of the citizens’ association: programmatic and ideological orientation, participation in elections and the state of membership. Now we plan to consider the characteristics of the citizens’ association: programmatic and ideological orientation, participation in elections and the state of membership.

All political parties during their formation and during the registration process presented their own program, but we cannot always talk about a certain correspondence of the party program to a specific ideology. We are proceeding from Roger Eatwell’s definition that: “political ideology is a relatively coherent set of empirical facts and normative beliefs and opinions, focused on the problems of human nature, historical processes and socio-political events/processes. It is traditionally formed in connection with a program aimed at solving short-term problems. Depending on its relationship with the structure of dominant values, ideology is able to perform stabilization or revolutionary functions”¹¹. The researcher also emphasized that political ideology is a product of collective but not individual thought. It is also worth adding that each ideology is not a standard, non-changing construct, on the contrary, it constantly changes over time, is modified in response to numerous challenges. We analyzed the programs of all parliamentary parties that were elected to the Verkhovna Rada in 2019. We can state that all party programs are characterized by similarity and a noticeable vagueness of the declared provisions. We consider the following to be the general conclusions of the examination of pre-election programs: 1) the main feature of pre-election programs of parliamentary parties is populism; 2) no program can be considered as an example of a specific political ideology. As a rule, all programs are characterized by a mix of provisions that we can interpret as markers of different ideologies. Such ideological diversity indicates the weakness of the ideological component of parliamentary parties. Unfortunately, a similar situation is characteristic of the majority of active political parties and the absolute majority of registered ones. To some extent, this

⁹ Реєстр політичних партій Міністерство юстиції України [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: https://minjust.gov.ua/m/str_31094

¹⁰ Закон «Про політичні партії в Україні» URL: zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2365-14#text

¹¹ R.Eatwell, *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, New York – Londyn, 2014. – P.17.

situation can be explained by the fact that all political parties in their activities, and especially during elections, focus on the entire population, and not on specific social groups.

However, according to the statistics of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, only 40% of registered parties participate in elections of various levels. At the same time, the parameters of parties' participation in the elections also differ significantly. Stability in the form of constant or repeated participation in elections, which manifests itself in voter support for the party program and its candidates, characteristic of not many parties in voter support for the party program and its candidates characteristic of not many parties.

Accordingly, in our opinion, attention should be paid to indicators of electoral volatility¹². Based on the data on the results of the parliamentary elections posted on the website of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, with the help of a mathematical display of various options of the electoral volatility index formula, we calculated the indicators of general/total electoral volatility and separately intra-system and extra-system electoral volatility.

Table 3. Changes in the level of electoral volatility in parliamentary elections in Ukraine, 1998–2019.¹³

Election years	General/Total Electoral Volatility (V)	Intrasystem electoral volatility (B.V)	Extra systemic Electoral Volatility (A.V)	
	Index indicator,%	Index indicator,%	Index indicator,%	Share in% of total electoral volatility
1998/2002	69,21	6,63	62,58	90,40
2002/2006	56,01	26,99	29,02	51,81
2006/2007	53,86	19,43	34,43	63,92
2007/2012	37,02	14,69	22,33	60,32
2012/2014	84,13	20,87	63,26	75,19
2014/2019	86,04	12,58	73,46	85,37
Average indicator	64,37	16,86	47,51	71,17

With the exception of the case of 2007/2012, during five other parliamentary elections in Ukraine, the electoral volatility index exceeded the 50% mark. This means, that more than half of the citizens of Ukraine at regular or special parliamentary elections left or traditionally leave their previous choice and gave and prefer another political agent/actor, i.e. changed and are changing their electoral choice. If the average indicator of general or total electoral volatility during the specified period of time was 64.37%, then in it extra systemic electoral volatility was 47.51%. In our opinion, high volatility indicators indicate: a weak level of political responsibility of parties, reveal and determine the formality of party programs and the absence of party ideology and the active spread of populism.

¹² Romanyuk A., Lytvyn V. Electoral Performance of New Political Parties in Ukraine. The Context of Electoral Volatility at the Parliamentary Level (1998-2019)//Czech Journal of Political Science/Politologicky Casopis. 2021. # 3. P. 274-292.

¹³ Результати обраховані автором на підставі даних Центральної виборчої комісії [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: cvk.gov.ua

According to the legislation of Ukraine, political parties act as an association of members who must meet a number of requirements and undergo appropriate procedures to acquire their status. Unfortunately, researchers do not have a resource that would give us reliable information about party members. Therefore, we are forced to turn to the results of sociological surveys regularly conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Table 4. Dynamics of the level of membership in political parties of Ukraine according to the data of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine 1994-2020,%¹⁴

1994	95	96	97	98	99	2000	01	02	03	04	05	06	08	10	12	14	16	18	20
0,7	0,6	0,5	0,7	0,9	1,5	0,8	1,7	2,2	2,0	1,9	2,5	4,6	2,8	3,0	1,2	1,4	1,4	1,1	1,7

The table materials show that the situation with the number of members is relatively dynamic. In particular, an interval of one or two years, in a number of cases, shows significant differences in the number of party members. At the same time, another angle of perception of the given indicator will be an assessment of its compliance with the number of citizens. According to the State Register of Voters, during the 2020 local elections, the number of citizens of voting age was approximately 28 million. Accordingly, for this year, the percentages obtained by sociologists should be equal to 476-560 thousand voters.

We interviewed members of political parties in the Lviv region in November-December 2021, who brought their own representatives to the regional and city councils¹⁵. In the course of the interview, we received mostly estimated parameters of the number of members of party organizations: "Bat'kivshchyna", "European Solidarity", AUU "Svoboda" and the People's Movement of Ukraine were outlined in the range of several thousand; Ukrainian Galician Party – 450-500 members; AUU "Samopomich" – 180 members; "Voice" – about 150 members; "Servant of the people" and "For the future" – less than 50 members. The rest of the political parties that did not make it to the regional council, but participated in the elections to councils of various levels, also modestly estimated the number of available members. Thus, the newly created party "Varta", which passed to the Lviv City Council and relied in the process of creation on representatives of several small parties, previously represented in the political life of the region, has an estimated number of less than 100 party members.

And the "Spiritual Ukraine" party, as it participated only in the elections to the Lviv City Council, but regularly, during a series of recent elections, declares the presence of about 10 members of the party. The given indicators mostly confirm skepticism regarding the hypothetical estimate of the total number of members of political parties of Ukraine in the range of 450-500 thousand and indicate a significantly smaller number of party members.

¹⁴ Українське суспільство: моніторинг соціальних змін. Вип. 7 (21). Київ, 2020. С.449

¹⁵ Romanyuk A. Membership in Ukraine's parties: membership crisis of the party model? Studium Europy Środkowej Wschodniej. – Polrocznik, 2021, #17. – P.6-21.

The interviewed representatives of regional party branches singled out the following main categories of party members (we do not take hired workers into account):

1. colleagues and acquaintances of the leader/leaders of the party cell (they come to the organization at the same time as a certain leader, he relies on them during party work, they act as his reliable support in conflict situations and mostly leave the party organization along with this leader, or when he loses its leading position;
2. persons who count on the political success of the organization and the opportunity to receive certain dividends through this success: getting into deputies or administrative/management positions, provided that the party organization comes to power, the opportunity to lobby for projects via the regional party organization within the region or at the national level, provided that the party is represented in various branches of government through specific individuals or deputies of various levels, the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process within the representative body;
3. Ideologically determined ones or supporters of the values/provisions of the party's program, even more the party's position represented through the public statements of party representatives. This forms a kind of attitude in this group of people that all party members will adhere to, express, discuss/broadcast this attitude/attitudes in the public space in the future;
4. Party members who perceive the party organization as a club where you can communicate on a wide range of topics, under certain conditions get the opportunity for additional or main work.

We must also be aware that many party members interpret their presence in the ranks of the party organization as a patriotic act. Interviews with party representatives also show that party organizations treat groups 2, 3 and 4 with great caution, especially the latter, since its representatives mostly have enough spare time and try to direct the work of party organizations in the format of a discussion club or to solve sensitive problems for them, what, according to party leaders, diverts time and certain resources from the problems or directions of work that are urgent on the part of the party leadership. Actually, they mainly explain the regulation/restriction of entry and the small number of their own party organizations with the fear of representatives of the specified groups joining the party organizations. Thus, our analysis allows us to draw the following conclusions:

Political parties of Ukraine are characterized by a small number of members, at the same time, low quantitative indicators are characteristic of parties throughout the entire time since the formation of the national party system; the small number of party members is due to the weakness of the party structures themselves, the dominant leadership format of the parties, their close connection with sponsors and, accordingly, a low level of trust in the institution of political parties, and a correspondingly low level of intra-party democracy; the need for party

organizations to perform functions related to elections and the functioning of representative institutions of various levels determines the involvement of salaried workers in the work of the party and the inclusion of non-party candidates in the party lists, involving them in the public presentation of the party and the entire process of party functioning; there is a trend that requires further additional analysis, when the parties that emerged and continue to function for a long time (NRU (PMU), Fatherland, Freedom, European Solidarity) and have greater similarity regarding the requirements/parameters of the mass party are relatively more numerous, and the newly created political parties (Servant of the People, For the Future, Vgolos and others), mostly have a minimal or conditional number of members and at the same time are characterized by a significant number of hired workers, show signs of parties of a network format.

At the same time, we need to outline the factors caused by the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022. In our opinion, we can highlight the following factors:

First, virtually all political parties, with the exception of the “Servant of the People” party, have ceased their active activities. We can use other synonyms – frozen, or are in a latent/dormant state. In fact, party work at the regional level is reduced to the media activity of individual party deputies, mainly of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. At the same time, this activity can be interpreted as personal activity designed for the future, when a publicly promoted person will have better chances of getting involved in new political projects. A part of the party deputies is characterized by the attitude of “party consumers”, which manifests itself in solving certain issues with the help of the party’s presence in the institutions of power.

Secondly, as a result of the war, we expect a significant reduction in the influence of the Ukraine main oligarchs. Accordingly, they will not be able to invest in political parties and party projects the amount they invested before the war.

Thirdly, a significant contraction of the economy, as cynical as it may seem, will also affect the ability of wealthy Ukrainian business figures to invest in party projects. We understand you shouldn’t expect the rejection of such attempts, but the amount of investments must be significantly reduced and, accordingly, political life, especially elections, will no longer be astronomically expensive, but must become cheaper, which will pave the way for truly authoritative citizens.

Fourthly, the decision of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine confirmed by the Supreme Court of Ukraine in September 2022 to ban the activities of pro-Russian parties, in particular Opposition Platform – For Life¹⁶ (OPFL) and the loss of deputy mandates by some of the deputies of this party symbolized the collapse of an entire political trend oriented towards Russia. The fact of the war and numerous terrible crimes committed by the Russian invaders should significantly limit or put an end to the Russophile political aspirations of a part of the voters in Ukraine.

Fifth, sociologists record a strong demand for changes in the country in all spheres, including politics. This will also be influenced by the fact of the candidate’s status and the desire

¹⁶ Радіо Свобода: Верховна Рада ухвалила закон про заборону проросійських партій в цілому – «Слуга народу». [Електронний ресурс] – Режим доступу: radiosvoboda.org/a/news-rada-zaborona-prorosiiiski-partii/31832306.html (03.05.2022).

to become a member of the EU. The war changed the main part of the citizens and they will transfer these changes to political parties. Undoubtedly, inertia is persistent and will not disappear immediately, and we have confirmation of this, but the demand for civilized politics, including in parties, may have a qualitatively new level.

All of these things, in our opinion, indicates the exhaustion of the resource of personalistic/ leadership parties, or a powerful crisis of this model. The crisis was noticeable on the eve of the war; the war made it more salient and deepened it. The way out of this situation appears to us in the possible decline of most of the currently active political parties, which we can qualify as "old parties". A manifestation of this will be the lack of electoral support for these parties and the formation of new parties that will be oriented towards the expression of group interests.

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