

## **Theoretical and Methodological principles of studying the party spectrum of Ukraine**

The article describes key approaches to understanding the concept of a political party, points to the peculiarities of electoral parties and emphasizes the importance of studying the program positions of the party in order to identify its ideological affiliation. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the programs of political parties in Ukraine to determine the party spectrum of political parties that formed parliament in 2019. The results of the study indicate a weak ideological articulation of parliamentary parties in Ukraine, a tendency to centrism. The author of the article also concludes that on a number of formal grounds, most parliamentary parties in Ukraine can be described as electoral, and in general, the Ukrainian party system - as a system of «moderate pluralism.»

*Keywords: political party, party system, electoral party, party program, ideology.*

## **Teoretyczne i metodologiczne podstawy badania spektrum partyjnego Ukrainy**

Artykuł opisuje kluczowe podejścia do rozumienia pojęcia partii politycznej, wskazuje na specyfikę partii wyborczych oraz podkreśla wagę studiowania zapisów programowych partii w celu identyfikacji jej przynależności ideowej. Głównym celem artykułu jest analiza programów partii politycznych na Ukrainie w celu określenia spektrum partyjnego partii politycznych, które utworzyły parlament w 2019 roku. Wyniki badania wskazują na słabą artykulację ideologiczną partii parlamentarnych na Ukrainie, tendencję do centryzmu. Autor artykułu konkluduje również, że z wielu względów formalnych większość partii parlamentarnych na Ukrainie można określić jako wyborcze, a ogólnie ukraiński system partyjny jako system „umiarkowanego pluralizmu”.

*Słowa kluczowe: partia polityczna, system partyjny, partia wyborcza, program partii, ideologia.*

## Теоретико-методологічні основи вивчення партійного спектру України

Стаття описує ключові підходи до розуміння поняття політична партія, вказує на особливість електоральних партій та акцентує увагу на важливості вивчення програмних положень партії з метою ідентифікації її ідеологічної приналежності. Основна мета статті - аналіз програм політичних партій України для визначення партійного спектру політичних партій, що сформували парламент 2019 року. Результати дослідження вказують на слабку ідеологічну артикульованість парламентських партій в Україні, тяжіння до центрizmu. Автор статті також доходить до висновку, що за рядом формальних ознак більшість парламентських партій України можна охарактеризувати як електоральні, а загалом українську партійну систему - як систему «поміркованого плюралізму».

*Ключові слова:* політична партія, партійна система, електоральна партія, програма партії, ідеологія.

Analyzing Ukrainian political realities, not every researcher will dare to avoid issues indirectly or directly related to the activities and evolution of Ukrainian political parties. Scientific interest in the problems of the functioning of parties and party systems in Ukraine is due to the fact that political parties remain an important political institution in Ukrainian society. However, a significant problem is the development of a theory of political parties adequate to Ukrainian realities, as Western theory does not have the necessary tools to conduct a holistic analysis of Ukrainian political parties.

The key function of Ukrainian political parties is the electoral, which allows the study of Ukrainian parties from the standpoint of the modern theoretical construct as electoral political parties. Understanding the formation of Ukrainian electoral parties remains difficult, as most of them are created only for elections, are constantly changing and acquire the features of ephemerality. Although Ukrainian parties fall under the sign of electoral parties as the dispersion of the ideological component of the party program, the ideological and programmatic factor remains significant in the exercise of electoral choice by citizens.

The programs of political parties in Western democracies are the main document on the basis of which voters prefer certain parties and thus form the main legislative body - the parliament. Each program of a political party contains an ideological component, which serves as a means of substantiating the parties' political identity. This opinion contradicts the position that modern Ukrainian parties lack ideology and points to the importance of ideological articulation and ideological positioning as components of electoral party programs. A consistent analysis of the programs of Ukrainian parties over time in terms of their ideological positioning

will make it possible to trace the evolution of party ideology, as well as the impact of ideological positioning on the cooperation and competition of parliamentary parties.

Modern research on the history and theory of political parties does not suggest a single approach to determine the nature and basic features of a political party. Therefore, it is advisable to distinguish the following approaches: structural, electoral, functional, structural-functional, ideological.

In the structural approach, the political party is considered through the prism of the peculiarities of its structure, organization and activities. The essence of the functional approach is that a political party is considered in terms of its role assignments. The ideological understanding of a political party is more related to the generalization of certain ideas expressed by organized groups of society to achieve a common goal. The electoral approach to understanding a political party begins with the development of a theoretical model of a particular type of political party - the electoral or electoral party<sup>1</sup>.

However, the concept of “political party” should not be narrowed down to electoral functions, as parties can exist without participating in elections, achieve political power by undemocratic methods, and have specific features in autocratic political systems. Parties that prioritize the electoral function aim to influence and control the maximum number of their supporters, gain the largest number of votes. Such parties have transformed into a new type of political parties - electoral parties, which violated the traditional dichotomous classification of political parties into personnel and mass by M. Duverge<sup>2</sup>.

Modern researches on the theory and history of political parties are based on the changes that have occurred to political parties as political institutions in a dominant society in the field of services, information and knowledge. Most modern electoral political parties were formed on the basis of opposition views and movements that made the transition to the ideas of program pluralism. A new trend has been set in the development and activities of the political party - the creation of the most favorable conditions for establishing ties with all social groups, as the key role to which the party's activities are directed has passed from activists to voters.

The current state of research of political parties allows us to conclude that the electoral function of a political party not only determines the full value of the party system, the level of democratization of society, but also allows a separate approach to understand the political party and to form a separate type of political parties.

Gradually, political parties lose their ideological and social activities and become parties “for all.” In democratic political systems, electoral political parties serve to express the interests of the maximum number of voters as a result of competition between political and business elites. In non-democratic systems, with the help of electoral parties, the process of legitimizing the power of the ruling group takes place.

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<sup>1</sup> Slipetska, J. Electoral parties: ideological positions of parliamentary parties in Ukraine. *Grani*. 2018. № 21 (12). p. 5-15.

<sup>2</sup> Shveda J. *Theory of political parties and party*. Lviv. Publishing house of LNU. 2003. 325 p.

Electoral political party - is a modern type of political party, characterized by blurring the boundaries of the social base, professionalization and personalization of politics, de-ideologizing the party program, as well as recognition of the leading role of the electoral function.

Thus, over the years of work of prominent theorists a significant body of theoretical provisions on electoral political parties was formed. Its features allowed to distinguish several sub-types and become a classic type of political party, supplementing the dichotomous classification created by M. Duverger. The increase in the number of electoral parties is due to the facilitation of the possibility of participating in elections, the growth of the level of political culture and consciousness of the electorate, the integration of voters to jointly solve pressing problems.

Modern research on Ukrainian political parties is taking two main directions: the study of the process of atomization of political parties and party systems, as well as the analysis of the peculiarities of the ideological positioning of Ukrainian political parties. In our opinion, it is the analysis of party and election programs of Ukrainian parties in terms of their party ideology that will allow us to understand why political parties do not represent the interests of their electorate, have leadership character, and do not have a clear strategy for governance and development. In the process of formation and development of the party system of Ukraine there were intense changes caused by the reduction of the role of the ideological component of party programs, the orientation of political parties to socio-cultural and socio-economic divisions, personalization of politics and voter professionalization, connection of political parties with civil society.

The Ukrainian party system has come a long way in becoming a multiparty system: atomized, polarized pluralism, and moderate pluralism. The number of poles of the party system varied from two (left - right) to three (left - right - center) and again to two (both centrist). The distance between political parties was constantly changing depending on their ideological positioning. The party system also tends to reduce the number of political parties in it and there is a process of entry of new political parties after the election campaign.

I. Osadchuk and V. Lytvyn on the basis of comparative verification of theoretical typologies of party systems on the example of Ukraine 1990 - 2016 emphasize that the absolute number of parliamentary political parties in Ukraine is unstable, but it is possible to determine the number of relevant parliamentary parties to a greater extent, which will allow to study the real political actors influencing political life in Ukraine<sup>3</sup>.

The problem for Ukrainian political parties remains inconsistency with the characteristics of classical political parties. Therefore, Ukrainian parties should be defined as electoral parties, as their main activity is aimed at participation and victory in elections. Well-known Ukrainian partologist Yu. Shveda noted that Ukrainian political parties operate within the unformed

<sup>3</sup> Lytvyn V. Osadchuk I. Theoretical and methodological parameters and approaches to the typology of party systems and empirical and comparative results of their verification on the example of Ukraine (1990–2016) [Electronic resource] - Mode of access to the resource: [http://filos.lnu.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/LytvynOsadchuk\\_Parties-conf.pdf](http://filos.lnu.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/LytvynOsadchuk_Parties-conf.pdf)

socio-political interests of party representatives, and the electoral function is performed only by trying to gain access to power through participation in elections. Elections in such conditions turn into a fair of demands of interest groups and business before the government, instead of competition of candidates for management of the main political institutions.

According to Yu. Shveda, political parties during the election campaign appear as intermediaries - "brokers" at the fair of business requirements to the government. If such a "broker" may have different interests from the interests of "clients" in developed democracies, in Ukrainian realities they are only agencies to maximize the interests of capital before the government due to the weakness of institutionalization and party autonomy. Since businesses are not interested in constantly "funding" political parties, only during election campaigns, this turns them into "voting machines," or election projects<sup>4</sup>.

The results of sociological research in 2012 showed a growing trend of the influence of ideological positioning of Ukrainian political parties on the results of the will of citizens. About 45% of Ukrainians focused on the ideological positioning and election program of a political party in the 2012 parliamentary elections. Despite traditional accusations against Ukrainian political parties regarding the lack of a clear ideological positioning, electoral parties need to take into account the demand of Ukrainian society for the definition of party ideologies.

Analyzes of ideological and programmatic aspects of the activities of Ukrainian electoral parties, which went to parliament as a result of the election to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2012 by the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) and the Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Studies (UCIPR) revealed the following features of ideological positioning of Ukrainian political parties:

- de-ideologization and unification of election programs of political parties;
- a great number of populist claims;
- unclear ideological identification of most parties;
- increasing the share of ideological parties in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine;
- growing ideological distance from the spectrum of parliamentary parties;
- the Party of Regions, the Fatherland All-Ukrainian Union, Vitali Klitschko's BLOW, and the Front for Change can be considered poorly articulated;
- highly articulated - CPU and VO Freedom.

The ideological principles of Ukrainian political parties are formally specified in the party's program, and can also be expressed through its ideological self-determination. This study analyzes the ideological positioning and articulation of Ukrainian parliamentary parties that overcame the 5% barrier in the 2019 elections and identifies the ideological spectrum of leading Ukrainian parties based on an analysis of their programs.

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<sup>4</sup> Shveda Y. Political parties of Ukraine: election parties or election projects? Bulletin of Lviv National University. 2013. №13. P.176 - 180

In order to test whether Ukrainian political parties can be considered electoral, it is necessary to impose a theoretical model of an electoral political party developed in the course of studying its basic definitions on the political situation in Ukraine.

Among the main features of Ukrainian political parties are the following:

- • “fluidity” and instability of development as a political institution;
- • short-term goals in activity prevail;
- • activities aimed at participating in elections;
- • underdeveloped organizational structure in the regions;
- • spreading populist tendencies;
- • close relationship with NGOs and civil society in general;
- • “leader’s” or “personalist” nature of activity and structure;
- • updating and constant rebranding;
- • virtualization of activities;
- • low level of ideological articulation<sup>5</sup>.

Many researchers believe that most Ukrainian political parties are only election projects, as they do not try to implement programmatic provisions and take responsibility for the country’s political course, but only try to get a parliamentary mandate to represent certain groups by turning politics into a show or performance. However, the characteristics of Ukrainian political parties fully fall under the generalized definition of electoral parties and can be considered through the prism of their ideological and value positioning.

Although electoral political parties are characterized by weak ideological positioning, party ideology continues to play a significant role in the desire of political parties to gain and retain power. Electoral political parties use ideological positioning to mobilize the electorate in elections. For “professional” voters with a high level of political culture and consciousness, political ideology helps to express the will. Electoral political parties also try to take into account the ideological factor to detail their program positions.

The ideological positioning of political parties is embodied in the intention to govern the state and control social processes for the sake of a clearly defined idea.

The ideological principles of Ukrainian political parties are formally specified in the party’s program, and can be also expressed through its ideological self-determination. This study analyzes the ideological positioning and articulation of Ukrainian parliamentary parties that overcame the 5% barrier in the 2019 parliamentary elections and identifies the ideological range of leading Ukrainian parties based on an analysis of their programs.

According to the results of the early parliamentary elections of 2019 in the national multi-member constituency 5%, the barrier was overcome by 5 political parties, which as a result became members of the newly elected Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the IX convocation,

<sup>5</sup> Slipetska, J. Electoral parties: ideological positions of parliamentary parties in Ukraine. *Grani*. 2018. № 21 (12). p. 5-15.

namely: political party “Sluga Narodu”, Political Party Opposition Platform – For life, political party All-Ukrainian Association” Batkivshchyna”, Political Party “European Solidarity “ and Political Party “Voice”. These political forces eventually received the support of 11,448,549 votes, which is 78.31% of those who took part in the vote.

The political party “Sluga Narodu” is a party project of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky, which resembles a typical prototype of the ruling party in the post-Soviet space. Previously, this political force existed under the name “Party of Decisive Change”, but in 2017 there was a rebranding in the direction of borrowing the name of the eponymous Ukrainian TV series, and later the film “Sluga Narodu “ produced by the Ukrainian creative association PJSC “Studio Quarter-95”, where the main role, namely the president, was played by V. Zelensky. Until the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections, the party remained virtual and did not have a single local cell with legal personality. The phenomenon of the party’s success in the elections is explained by the specifics of forming the brand of the leader and the party through the series, which has become a collective dream for many Ukrainians. The main task of the party is to challenge the system and bring topower qualitatively new politicians.

Officially, the party identified its party ideology as libertarianism during the election campaign, and after the election it set out to combine liberal, conservative, and social democratic ideas under the general name of “Ukrainian centrism.” 2019 was the first manifestation of participation in the national elections for the “Sluga Narodu “ and eventually brought it representation in all key institutions of state power: President V. Zelensky, a majority in the Verkhovna Rada, the right to form a government and appoint representatives of regional and district administrations. The party’s website states that they are going to early parliamentary elections in order to bring decent people to power and implement the program of President of Ukraine V. Zelensky to build the “Dreamland”. The party’s election program consists of 16 blocks and covers the following areas: cleansing of power, eradication of corruption, security and defense, Ukraine’s place in the world, judiciary, law enforcement, economic strategy, business, innovation economy, energy and tariffs, infrastructure, environmental protection, education and science, medicine, national identity and social harmony.

The content analysis of the “Sluga Narodu “ election program and the definition of its ideological articulation and positioning allows us to draw the following conclusions: the party is devoid of ideological dominants, as the program presents almost equally statements about “left” and “right” ideologies, and liberalism somewhat prevails over conservatism; the election program is poorly articulated, the liberal vector has significantly increased, due to the provisions concerning the independence of the individual from the state, reducing the influence of the state in the spheres of economy, government and social policy<sup>6</sup>.

The pro-Russian political force - the Political Party “Opposition platform – For Life” (hereinafter “OPZZh”) took the second place in the parliamentary elections of 2019. This

<sup>6</sup> Election program of the political party «Sluga Narodu». URL: showdoc2pf7171=403pid409=27 (5) (date of application: 24.03.2021).

political force was formed as a result of the renaming of the All-Ukrainian Association “Center” in 2016 to the political party “For Life” with the leader V. Rabinovych. In 2018, the political party merged with the NGO “Ukrainian Choice” (V. Medvedchuk) and part of the former party members of the Opposition Bloc, led by Yu. For a long time, the party existed as a “television”, as it actively promoted through such Ukrainian TV channels as “Inter”, “NewsOne” and “112 Ukraine”.

The ideological platform of the party has pronounced elements of social democracy, as well as in its positions there are signs of Russophilism, Euroscepticism and neutrality. The party’s election program in 2019 was called “Peace! Responsibility! Care!” and was positioned by the party as a social contract between them and the citizens. The program is divided into the following blocks: “Peace. Unity. Consolidation”, peaceful settlement of the conflict and reintegration of Donbass, Ukraine - a democratic state governed by the rule of law, effective government, policy of economic pragmatism,” No “to the policy of tariff genocide, building a welfare state, affordable medicine, foreign policy of peace, partnership and security. These program provisions became the basis for the analysis of the ideological positioning of “OPZZh”.

Thus, the election program of the political party “OPZZh” can be defined as the most articulated in the direction of “left” ideological positions, and in the socio-cultural vector of the party the number of liberal and conservative slogans is not significantly different. This ideological positioning of the political force is due to the absence of a powerful left-wing party in the electoral field. The reduction of conservative tendencies in the party’s program is due to the shift of emphasis towards the issue of “peace”<sup>7</sup>.

Yulia Tymoshenko’s political force, the All-Ukrainian Batkishchyna Association, has once again entered the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The political party was partly founded on the basis of the center-left Hromada party, and Yulia Tymoshenko has been the party’s political leader for 21 years. VO Batkishchyna be considered an exemplary example of an electoral political party, as it has been represented in the Verkhovna Rada since 2002, has an extensive system of branches in the regions, is characterized by a weak ideological position and traditionally focuses on the leader. In general, the political party is based on left-populist ideology and tends to centrism.

The program of the political force was formed on the basis of Yulia Tymoshenko’s election program for the 2019 presidential election under the general name “New Course of Ukraine”. The comprehensive document was reformatted into a short party program and included the following main positions: a new peace strategy, a new social doctrine, a new youth policy and a new economic strategy. The content analysis of the program of the “ party in the 2019 Verkhovna Rada elections showed a large number of social democratic ideas that correspond to the “left” political ideology and highlighted in the block a new social doctrine on social security,

<sup>7</sup> Election program of the political party “Opposition Platform - For Life”. URL: showdoc2pf7171 = 403pid409 = 27 (4) (appeal date: 24.03.2021)



tax reduction and increasing social spending. As well as the growing share of “liberal” ideas in the program aimed at developing civil society, youth, the middle class and entrepreneurship

Although «Batkishchyna» took into account the demand of civil society to increase the level of ideological positioning in comparison with populist positions, it still remains a weakly articulated electoral party with a predominance of “left” ideas and a slight advantage of the political doctrine of liberalism. This result is explained by the party’s desire to become a “people’s” and efforts to build a socially oriented state while preserving Ukrainian values, but at the same time focus on building an innovative economy<sup>8</sup>.

The party of the ex-president of Ukraine P. Poroshenko also entered the Ukrainian parliament, but with much less representation than in 2014. Thus, the rebranding of Petro Poroshenko’s Solidarity Bloc lost the personal characteristics of a leader who had a high anti-rating in society, and the party received a new name - “European Solidarity”, which in the form of an abbreviation is consonant with the abbreviated name of the European Union, which offers a political force. In addition, the colors of the political force reproduce the national and patriotic colors of Ukraine and the European Union.

The ideological basis of the party was Christian democracy, liberal conservatism and pan-Europeanism. The new version of the EU Party Program, which contains provisions on deregulation of the economy, reduction of social benefits, changes in pensions and health care, shows the party’s transition from social democracy to center-right. Therefore, the content analysis of the party’s election program should confirm the general tendencies to change the party ideology.

The ideological positioning of the EU political party can be defined as weakly positioned right-wing liberalism. The dominant component of the election program is weakly articulated liberalism. In general, the party tried to successfully compare its ideological coordinates in order to gain the support of the national-patriotic population and all sympathizers of pro-European and pro-American values<sup>9</sup>.

The last political force to overcome the barrier was the «Voice» party, which was formed by the famous Ukrainian musician and performer Sviatoslav Vakarchuk in May 2019 by renaming the Platform of Initiatives party. The main resource of the party was directed to the branding of the political project and the image of its leader, namely the use of orange as a symbol of the ideals of the Orange Revolution and the activities of S. Vakarchuk during the two Maidans in 2004 and 2013-14.

The self-identification of a political force points to a center-right and pan-European ideological basis where man is at the center of public policy. The party has established its ideological position in the “Voice of Change” program, which is posted on the site and includes the

<sup>8</sup> Election program of the All-Ukrainian Union Batkivshchyna party - “Ukraine will win!” URL: showdoc2pdf7171 = 149pid409 = 27 (1) (access date: 14.03.2021)

<sup>9</sup> Election program of the political party “European Solidarity”: “Let’s protect the European future of Ukraine”. URL: showdoc2pdf7171 = 335pid409 = 27 (4) (access date: 24.03.2021)

following key items: justice, justice, corruption, welfare, high-tech economy, demonopolization, financial system, state for man, quality and affordable medicine, social policy, culture, education, new methods of governance, parliament, state apparatus, European security and diplomacy, Donbass, Crimea, protection of internally displaced persons and Ukraine's place in the international arena.

The results of the study of the ideological positioning of the political party "The Voice" indicate a very weak ideological articulation of the election program, which has no dominant ideological and value vector, due to the aspirations of the political party to associate itself with civil society. The program contains almost the same ratio of connotations of all proposed vectors. The right-liberal vector, which was determined during the content analysis, indicates that the majority of the party's electorate are residents of Western Ukraine<sup>10</sup>.

The ideological positioning revealed during the analysis of the election programs of Ukrainian parliamentary parties makes it possible to build the ideological spectrum of the Ukrainian party system, which was formed as a result of the early parliamentary elections in 2019. The ideological spectrum of Ukraine's leading parties will make it possible to compare and classify the spread of ideas and values in Ukrainian society, as well as to find common and different in Ukrainian political parties that try to play a key role in the struggle for power. The construction of the ideological spectrum of leading Ukrainian parties is based on the statement that political ideologies do not exist in their pure form, and Ukrainian political parties use the positions of various political doctrines in developing party ideology, so it is possible to single out only the ideological positioning of the party. In general, Ukrainian political parties can be generally classified as left-liberal, right-liberal, left-conservative and right-conservative.

The analysis of the programs of Ukrainian parliamentary parties through the prism of their ideological positioning revealed a general tendency for them to have populist allegations and attempts to take a centrist position. The following trends were recorded for all parliamentary parties:

- the program of the presidential party "Sluga narodu" is devoid of ideological dominants, as it contained topical issues that met the most popular demands of the population;
- a study of OPZZh program documents confirmed the party's move towards a "left" ideology due to the dominance of this political doctrine in eastern Ukraine;
- Fatherland maintains tendencies towards populism, and also strengthens the block of ideas of social democracy in the program;
- Pro-European and pro-NATO statements of the EU party program, supported by a national-patriotic platform, demonstrated the party's orientation towards Western values;
- The young political force "Voice" has a weak ideological articulation, which is due to the party's desire to speak on behalf of civil society;

<sup>10</sup> Election program of the party "Voice": "Voice of Change". URL: showdoc2pf7171 = 389pid409 = 27 (4) (access date: 24.03.2021).

- The ideological spectrum of Ukrainian parliamentary parties actually reproduced their potential for coalition, opposition and situational cooperation.

Thus, according to the results of the analysis of the programs of parliamentary parties it is possible to determine the ideological identity embodied in their ideological positioning: “EU” and “Voice” - weakly positioned right-liberal parties, “Sluga narodu” and VO “Batkivshchyna” - weakly positioned left-liberal “- positioned left-liberal. The ideological spectrum of modern parliamentary parties is devoid of strong conservative tendencies.

The analysis of the election programs of Ukrainian parliamentary parties based on the criterion of political ideology revealed the following features: parliamentary political parties have a weak ideological articulation, which means that ideological articulation correlates with the concept of relevance as of 2019; since all parliamentary parties are poorly articulated, this allows us to define the Ukrainian party system as a system of “moderate pluralism”; the vast majority of parliamentary parties tend towards centrism. Therefore, in our study, we confirmed the hypothesis of a weak ideological orientation of parliamentary parties in Ukraine, which on a number of formal grounds are essentially electoral.

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