



RAZUMKOV CENTRE

UKRAINE'S PARTY SYSTEM EVOLUTION: 1990-2017

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This publication presents an abridged version of the Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre that examines the emergence and further transformation of Ukraine's party system in 1990-2017.

We have examined key drivers of change at each evolution stage, such as legislation on political parties and elections; political regime; most significant societal cleavages, nature and consequences of their influence; analysed current trends in Ukraine's party system development.

The publication will be useful for everyone interested in post-independence nation-building processes in Ukraine, development of political parties and the party system, experience of political transformations in post-Soviet countries.

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Political parties are an important institution of a democratic society, which ensures aggregation and articulation of the interests of various social groups. Interaction among parties in their struggle for power and the exercise of political power by them form a party system.

The process of party system formation in Ukraine has been going on for more than 25 years. This publication represents a shortened version of the Razumkov Centre's report, which examines the fundamental stages of the party system formation in 1990-2017, including intra-party processes, institutional legal and socio-political conditions for their activities and inter-party relations.¹

1. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The Razumkov Centre's study uses an approach that combines elements of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the analysis of party system dynamics and takes into account changes of the three following components that define party system and/or affect it.

First, intra-party processes (primarily in parties that are part of the system). The characteristics that can be considered as "indicators" of certain changes should include the intensity with which new parties are being formed; the formation process and the nature of parties formed; the intensity of intra-party processes (splits, mergers, management changes); changes in leading parties' ideology.

Second, processes in the party system environment.² These comprise: the electoral legislation; form of government; a constitutionally determined role of parties in government formation process; political regime and conditions for the opposition activity; main (actual, politicised) societal cleavages and issue dimensions that shape party system³ and other peculiarities caused by internal processes in the country (in particular, the influence of business groups) and external factors.

¹ The full version of the report in Ukrainian is published in the monograph of Razumkov Centre "Transformation of the Party System: Ukrainian Experience in a European Context".

² The surroundings of the party system imply the specific socio-political (including political, legal, socioeconomic and sociocultural) conditions, within which political parties in particular countries function. Look: Shveda Y. Political parties: encyclopedic dictionary. – Lviv, 2005, p.194, 247.

³ Given the simultaneous use of the concepts of societal cleavage and issue dimensions, it is advisable to determine their correlation in more detail. Thus, the concept of cleavage (in the generic definition of A. Riomelle) in this work is used to characterise the main spheres in which the contradictions between the positions of different social groups define the lines of cleavage between the main political forces at a certain time period, and the concept of issue dimension – to characterise the intensity of use of these cleavages in inter-party competition. Thus, the actuality of a certain societal cleavage can be expressed through the intensity of the corresponding issue dimensions.

Third, processes in the party system and its characteristics:

- number of subjects of a party system (considering the peculiarities of Ukraine's electoral legislation, we have proposed to consider political parties that independently participated in elections by party lists and blocs of political parties before they were banned);
- relative size of parties (based on the classification of J. Blondel, adapted to national conditions, large political parties have more than 40% of votes, medium-sized – more than 20%, small to medium-sized – more than 15%, small – 10% and very small);⁴
- number of “centres” (poles) of a party system;
- main division lines between parties;
- presence of anti-systemic parties (as defined by G. Sartori);⁵
- type of system (as defined by G. Sartori).⁶

The specifics of the chosen approach is that the selection of stages is carried out on the basis of the choice of certain defining criteria – events, processes, tendencies in a particular component or several components that had the greatest influence on political parties and relations between them and could cause (but not necessarily) change of the party system type. At the same time, in our opinion, it is permissible to distinguish the difference between stages on the basis of changes in various components.

The starting point for analysing the process of forming a party system was the date of legalisation of the first non-communist political party on the territory of the former USSR – the Ukrainian Republican Party (URP), the constituent congress of which took place on 29 April 1990, and the official registration on 5 November 1990. Thus, this survey covers the formal period of a multi-party system formation in Ukraine.

The criterion for assigning parties to the party system is obtaining at least 2% of the votes in elections to the Verkhovna Rada by party lists.⁷ Until 1998, the number of parties in the party system is proposed to

⁴ Blondel J. Types of Party Systems. – From Peter Mair (ed.) The West European Party System. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.302-310.

⁵ Sartori G. Parties and Party Systems: a Framework for Analysis. – ECPR Press, University of Essex Print Centre, 2006, p.117-118.

⁶ Sartori G., Op. Cit., p. 109-110. Aware of certain limitations associated with the use of Western instruments to the analysis of the party systems in its formation, the authors consider the G. Sartori typology to be the most suitable for the research of the process of forming the party system of Ukraine, taking into account the peculiarities of the domestic context (in particular, in defining the ideological differences and distance between parties).

To assess the structural parameters of the party system of Ukraine, the typologies of O. Niedermayer and A. Siaroff were also being used.

⁷ This approach is used in particular by K. von Beyme. Look.: Beyme Klaus von. Political Parties in Western Democracies. – New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, p.255-264.

be determined by their representation in the Verkhovna Rada. The assessment of the dynamics of the results of the parties' participation in parliamentary elections starts with the 1994 elections, when political parties and blocs officially received the right to nominate candidates.

Taking into account the impossibility to precisely define changes in the party system by the degree of their intensity based on the quantitative data, some evaluative terms in this research are used in relation to the nature of such changes, taking into account, first of all, the structure of inter-party competition and the main division lines between parties.

2. FUNDAMENTAL STAGES OF PARTY SYSTEM FORMATION IN UKRAINE

The process by which the party system of an independent Ukraine was formed dates back to the moment when the first party was formed and legalised, which broke the CPSU-CPU monopoly on representing the political interests of the country's citizens. Over the course of this process, which continued for over twenty-five years, party life in Ukraine was characterised by a high level of intensity. That is true both with respect to intra-party developments, relations among them in the struggle to attain and exercise power, their activities and how they were perceived by society. Despite such significant variability, the use of the above-mentioned instruments makes it possible to distinguish six stages during which the party system of Ukraine was formed – time periods that saw substantial changes in the appearance of the system. Given a broad timeframe and how heavily saturated it is with events, the characteristics of the stages are given in a generalised form, with only the most significant features, tendencies and facts indicated.

➤ THE EMERGENCE OF A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM: 1990-1995 ◀

The main feature of this stage was the mass creation of political parties claiming to represent the central current political ideologies. Public organisations, movements, informal associations, political clubs and the like served as the organisational foundation for the creation of most parties. Party leaders were mostly a humanitarian and scientific and technical intelligentsia, as well as former party members.

This “bottom-up” approach to forming parties, remained typical during the first half of the period (until the 1994 elections); after that, we see a gradual transition to “top-down” party formation. During the creation of new parties, the importance of more pragmatic factors grew – the first parties created by representatives of business structures appeared (in particular, the Ukrainian Party for Solidarity and Social Justice, led by Eduard Lashutin, the Liberal Party of Ukraine (LPU), led by Ihor Markulov, and the People's Party

of Ukraine (PPU), founded by Leopold Taburyansky). In 1994, first of the most successful (for a period of time) parties of this type was legalised – the All-Ukrainian Association “Hromada” (Community).

Programmatic and ideological principles played a significant role in determining the structure of the party system being formed. Active participation of leading political parties in state-building, their connection with certain social environments, and the desire to position themselves as bearers of “classic” political ideologies have led to a considerable attention being paid to the content of their programme documents.

Most of the parties at the time were concentrated on the right (including right-wing radicals) and centre-right (national-democratic) of the political spectrum. Centrist parties formed as representing major political ideologies (e.g., Social Democrats, “Greens” or Liberals) or as “generally democratic” parties (e.g., the Party for the Democratic Rebirth of Ukraine (PDRU)).

The left was represented by parties that arose out of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR, banned in 1991 (the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU) and the Peasant Party of Ukraine (PPU)), as well as smaller left radical parties (for example, the AUCP(b)), as well as other parties with the aim of restoring the Soviet Union (the Civic Congress of Ukraine (CCU), the Party of Slavic Unity of Ukraine, etc.). In 1993, two of what would later become the most influential political parties were legalised – the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) and the People’s Movement of Ukraine (PMU), which were in principle ideological opponents.

Political parties (other than the Communist Party of the USSR) were unable to officially take part in the 10 March 1990 elections to the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR (hereafter, the “Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the first convocation”); in reality, they did designate their candidates. The structuring of the deputy corps by party affiliation took place directly in the process of Parliament’s activity. At the beginning of its first session, about forty-five parliamentary groups were created on the basis of regional, professional and political attributes.⁸

The basic principle by which the deputy corps was structured was the distinction between left and non-left political forces, which organised themselves into the pro-communist majority – the “Group of 239” (with 239 deputies) and the National-Democratic “People’s Council” (consisting of 125 deputies). According to data from the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, in November 1990, nearly 80 deputies out of 190, who worked on a permanent basis on committees in the

⁸ Ukraine: political history. From the Twentieth to the beginning of the Twenty-First Century. [editorial council: Lytvyn (chairman) and others; editorial collegium: Smoly, Levenets (co-chairmen) and others]. – K.: Parliamentary Publishing House, 2007, p.929.

Verkhovna Rada, were “representatives of the opposition and activists belonging to parties and political groups with an anti-socialist orientation”.⁹

As a result of the following parliamentary elections, in 1994, fourteen political parties were represented in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Left parties held a relative majority (133 deputies) with 53 for the right and right centrists, and 14 for the centrists. The majority of the deputy corps consisted of non-partisan deputies. When the Verkhovna Rada of the second convocation went into session, eleven parliamentary factions and groups were formed, both along party-ideological basis and on regional and corporate bases. In terms of the political parties' representation in parliament, the left had a numerical advantage, but insufficient to allow them to form a majority on their own. Voting outcome depended primarily on the position taken by “non-partisan” groups.

The parties had the right to nominate candidates in Ukraine's presidential elections (held in 1991 and 1994). In the 1991 elections, three of seven candidates were leaders of legalised parties (Levko Lukyanenko of the URP and Leopold Taburyansky of the PPU) or public associations that would later become parties (Viacheslav Chornovil of the PMU). In the 1994 elections one candidate – Oleksandr Moroz of the SPU – was a party leader. Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, both former Communist Party officials and formally non-partisan politicians, won the elections.

Throughout this first stage, a dynamic process led to the formation of a legal and regulatory basis for creation and conduct of parties, as well as electoral legislation. The legal basis for the operation of parties was provided by the Constitution of the USSR, which was at that time still in force, together with amendments adopted on 24 October 1990 and the Law of Ukraine “On the Association of Citizens”, adopted in 1992. After the adoption of the Law “On Elections of People's Deputies of Ukraine” in November 1993, elections were held in accordance with a majority voting system requiring an absolute majority. Parties and blocs were entitled, through their local branches, to nominate candidates in voting districts electing a single deputy.

The democratic nature of the political regime during this first stage led to conditions relatively favourable for the political opposition. This stage, too, saw a combative relationship between the President and the Verkhovna Rada. Governments were formed on a non-partisan basis.

The main societal cleavage over the course of the first stage was between the “post-communists” (the “heirs” of the Communist Party) and the “democrats”; this divide reflected the configuration of the party system. There were three fundamental issue dimensions in the party system. Socioeconomic and foreign policy dimensions generally coincided with each other and structured the party system along “left-right” lines; the cultural-ethnic dimension was

⁹ Ukraine: The Establishment of an Independent State (1991-2001). – K., 2001, p.160.

reflected in the distinction between the “left” and “integrationist” parties (national-democratic and nationalist parties).

The impact of business groups on the party system at the beginning of the stage was minimal, but was expressed in the creation of first business-based parties, a process that became increasingly intense and widespread after the 1994 elections.

External influence on the party system largely manifested itself in the form of support (both in moral and political, and also in material and financial terms) by party or community structures in foreign countries for the analogous political parties of various bents (in particular, national-democratic parties were supported by Ukrainian diaspora in the West, while Russian assistance was directed towards leftist and “pro-integration” parties).

The party system during this stage includes as many as fifteen of most active political parties that would form the basis for formation of a multi-party system. The main poles of the party system were the left (e.g., the CPU, SPU and PPU) and the right (e.g., the PMU and the URP), respectively, and the main line of division was the confrontation between leftist and national-democratic parties.

The main “anti-systemic” party was the CPU, working with small radical left organisations. The centrist parties that formed during this period were considerably less significant than those that were clearly in one camp or the other.

If to take parliamentary representation as a criterion, only the CPU could be considered a centrist party; the others were small, although, given the peculiarities of the electoral system at that time and the nature of parties, this criterion can be applied only conditionally. **As the result of the weakness of parties and instability of relations among them, the party system during the first stage was atomised, with a distinct tendency towards polarisation.** Given the distinguishing features of this first stage, it can be defined as a period when a multi-party system emerged.

➤ THE RISE OF “POLARISED PLURALISM”: 1996-1999 ◀

This stage is characterised by vigorous creation of new parties – twenty-four of them were established in 1999 alone. The nature of the party creation differs significantly relative to the previous stage. The first “parties of power” were formed at this point: the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the Agrarian Party of Ukraine (APU); state structures were used for their organisational development – central and local executive authorities in general (in the case of the PDP) and certain industries (in particular, the agro-industrial complex and the forestry industry – in the case of the APU).

The role played in the process of party construction by separate business entities and other structures concentrated in the financial and industrial sectors, which already have considerable economic power, has considerably increased. The evidence for this new trend include:

- The creation of political parties attached to the aforementioned business structures (for example, the National Economic Development Party of Ukraine (NEDPU), the All-Ukrainian Union “Batkivshchyna” (Fatherland), the Democratic Union Party, or the Regional Development Party of Ukraine (RDPU));
- The establishment of control (mainly through financial means) over existing parties, involving a change of leadership (either partial or total) or putting representatives in the parties’ governing bodies (the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united), SDPU(u) or the All-Ukrainian Union of Christians (AUUC));
- The partial funding of “parties of power” in exchange for support and assistance from government structures.

The degree of influence exerted by business interests and structures on political parties can be demonstrated through expert assessments, which show that over 90% of campaign funds of political parties and blocs in the 1998 elections were attributable to contributions from legal entities, i.e. companies, enterprises, etc.¹⁰

A significant number of parties created in the second stage can be considered “personal projects” of particular politicians, some of them businessmen,¹¹ who had participated in splits that occurred within existing parties and became leaders of the splinter structures (Natalia Vitrenko of the PSPU and Serhiy Peresunko of the SDC) or who held government positions and created “safety-net positions” in the form of such parties.¹²

A significant number of parties emerged, claiming to represent the interests of certain national, confessional, sociodemographic and professional groups, but none of these had any noticeable success. Only some of the newly formed parties had an ideological character (in particular, the Social-National Party of Ukraine (SNPU), which later transformed into the All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda” (Freedom)). Most of the new parties (with a very few exceptions) combined elements of social-democratic and liberal ideas in their programmes (largely on the level of rhetoric) and declared their position

¹⁰ Irina Kresina *Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine: Legal and Political Issues: A Monograph*. – K.: The Koretsky Institute of State and Law of NAS of Ukraine, 2003, p.50.

¹¹ This is an element these parties (the Uniform Family Party, “For a Beautiful Ukraine!”) have in common with the previous category.

¹² *Political Parties on the Eve of Parliamentary Elections: Status and Trends. An Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre*. – National Security and Defence, 2001, No.12, p.20.

a “centrist” one. As a result, formally, more parties placed themselves in the political “centre” than on any other part of the spectrum.

This stage saw no, significant changes in ideologies and programmatic documents of the leading political parties. Intra-party activity, however, played a central role. A considerable number of the existing political parties broke up or underwent changes in leadership.

In particular, the split of the PMU and, to significant extent, the tragic death of Viacheslav Chornovil, the leader of the party, led to the formation of the Ukrainian People’s Movement, which later became the Ukrainian People’s Party (UPP). Out of the Christian Democratic Party of Ukraine (CDPU) came the Christian-People’s Union (CPU) and the AUUC; part of the SPU split off, which led to establishment of the PSPU; the Liberal Party of Ukraine (renewed) LPU(r) separated from the LPU; the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (USDP) and the SDS split off from the SDPU(u); the Republican Christian Party (RCP) split off from the URP; and so on, and so forth.

In the 1998 parliamentary elections, which took place under a new electoral law providing for a mixed electoral system, the majority of registered political parties (40 out of 52) took part via party lists – twenty-one participated independently, as parties, while nineteen were part of the nine electoral blocs. The 4% barrier for participation in the elections was overcome by seven parties: the CPU, PMU, Party of Greens of Ukraine, NDP, the All-Ukrainian Association “Hromada” (Community), the PSPU, and the SDPU(u), and one bloc, the SPU-PPU; deputies elected in single-mandate districts represented thirteen more political parties. Thus, as a result of the elections, the Verkhovna Rada of the third convocation included twenty-two political parties.

According to experts, these parliamentary elections were the first in which the government used administrative resources and “peculiar” political technologies.¹³

In the early days, the Verkhovna Rada included factions from all eight political forces that overcame the electoral barrier; 395 deputies belonged to those factions. Later, however, the factional structure of the Verkhovna Rada underwent significant changes; factions arose representing parties that had split (for example, the PMU and the PMU-I), as well as factions of newly created parties and parties not represented in parliament when the elections were concluded. This happened, first of all, because people’s deputies shifted parties and due to frequent transitions between factions. The president was an important factor influencing these processes; his interest here was to create a parliamentary majority loyal to the head of state.

¹³ See *The Parliament in Ukraine: Trends and Problems in its Development*. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2003, No.2, p.6.

However, no permanent parliamentary majority arose in the Verkhovna Rada in 1996-1999.

Governments were formed on a non-partisan basis. Among the politicians who headed the Cabinet of Ministers during this period (Vitaliy Masol, Yevhen Marchuk, Pavlo Lazarenko, Vasyl Durdynets, and Valeriy Pustovoitenko), Pavlo Lazarenko was the leader of a political party (the All-Ukrainian Association “Hromada” (Community)), which, in essence, was his personal political base, while Valeriy Pustovoitenko was a member of the NDP leadership.

Political parties participated actively in the 1999 presidential elections. Thirteen candidates out of fifteen were nominated by political parties or blocs of parties. Although Leonid Kuchma, the winner of the elections, was nominated by voter assemblies, he was supported by the “Our Choice is Leonid Kuchma” Bloc, which included twelve political parties of a predominantly centrist orientation. The active use of the “leftist threat” as an incentive to consolidate the non-leftist political forces around the candidacy of the current President, as well as the discrediting of Oleksandr Moroz and Natalia Vitrenko, his competitors, ensured Kuchma’s victory over the CPU leader Petro Symonenko in the second round.

Significant changes had been made to the legislation governing the activities of political parties. The Constitution of Ukraine, adopted on 28 June 1996, fixed the status and functions of political parties (Article 36), as well as restrictions on their creation and activities (Article 37). The place of parties in the governmental system was limited to their right to participate in elections. Thus, Ukraine joined the European countries, where the status of political parties is determined by a constitution. However, the role and place of parties in the system of government was left essentially unchanged relative to the prior period.

In October 1997, a new Law “On Elections of People’s Deputies of Ukraine” was adopted, providing for a mixed (in a 50/50% ratio) proportional majority system with nationwide electoral party lists and a proportional barrier of 4% for party participation.

The relationship between the President and political forces represented in the Verkhovna Rada had a significant influence on the party system and its configuration. There was an ideological conflict between the left political forces that desired a return to the previous social order and the presidential “reform path”, which, according to the findings of prominent scholars involved in its development, was predominantly liberal.¹⁴ The government viewed this conflict as a “leftist threat”.

¹⁴ A. Alekseev “Anatoliy Galchynsky: “Yanukovych plus the donesation of the whole country – this is the essence of the “new order” built by the regionalists”. – Mirror of the week, 28 August – 3 September 2010, http://gazeta.dt.ua/ECONOMICS/anatoliy_galchinskiy_yanukovich_plyus_donezatsiya_vsieyi_krayini__taka_sut_novogo_poryadku,_yakiy_vi.html.

“LEFTIST THREAT” IN THE SECOND PART OF THE 1990s

The government viewed this conflict as a “leftist threat”. That phrase meant that left-wing political parties could achieve their political goals in the framework of the existing political system and parliamentary path: the restoration of the Soviet system on the territory of Ukraine; preventing market reforms in the economy, particularly in property relations; the restoration of the dominant role of the Communist Party and the curtailment of democracy; entering into an alliance with Russia, Belarus and other former Soviet republics, etc. These goals were actually asserted by the leftist political forces in such ways that made it possible to “get around” constitutional limitations to achieve their purposes.

It should be noted that society at that time provided a very favourable environment for such notions as “communist comeback”. The period 1994-1998 is marked by a steady trend characterised by deterioration of socioeconomic and social well-being for the majority of the population, which meant an increase in left-wing sentiment and support for left-wing forces.¹⁵ The latter enjoyed consistently high support in most regions of Ukraine (in particular, the East, the South and the Centre), which made it possible to speak of the existence of a “red belt”.

So, in the 1998 elections, left-wing parties and blocs came in first in elections by party lists in 20 out of 27 regions of Ukraine. The CPU, the SPU-PPU bloc and the PSPU received most of the mandates on a proportional basis – 127 out of 225 – and also had another 45 candidates elected in single-mandate districts. The parliamentary factions of these political forces included 192 people's deputies overall.¹⁶

The mass political activity of the citizens was high in supporting the actions organised by the left forces, in particular in the spring and autumn “workers’ assault on the government”. Thus, the left political forces, although they did not have a permanent majority in the Verkhovna Rada and the consequent opportunity to form their own Government, were able to have a significant influence on the legislative process and activities of the executive branch. In addition, they retained the potential to mobilise citizens and make use of their ability to protest.

Thus, at that time, there were real prerequisites in place for leftist parties to achieve their political goals by democratic means, which could be interpreted as a restoration of the prior social order and the liquidation of Ukraine’s independence.

This made it possible to identify the left-wing opposition to the presidential power with opposition to the Ukrainian state as such, and this was used to stimulate loyalty to the President (or, at a minimum, neutrality) on the part of non-leftist parties, primarily the national democratic parties.¹⁷ This

¹⁵ Serhiy Makeev Change in the definition of the situations that occurred in 1998. – Ukrainian Society-2003. Sociological monitoring (ed. Valeriy Vorona, Mykola Shulga). – K.: Institute of Sociology of NAS of Ukraine, 2003, p.146-151.

¹⁶ The Parliament in Ukraine: Trends and Problems in its Development. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2003, No.2, p.7.

¹⁷ During this period, the executive branch actively used the image of the “leftist threat”, trying to support the bipolar division of political forces into left and non-left and avert the formation of an opposition on other points on the political spectrum.

phenomenon was reflected in the term “constructive opposition”, which was used to denote moderately critical attitude of certain non-leftist political forces towards the President of Ukraine, in contrast to destructive criticism of the left-wing opposition.

However, sharp contradictions in the process leading to the adoption of the Constitution in 1995-1996 led to the appearance of a centre-right opposition to the President in Parliament (a group of deputies who later became the core of the Reforms and Order Party (ROP)). The source of conflict was, first of all, a divergence in views on the meaning of the new Constitution, in particular the correlation between the presidential power and parliamentarism. At the same time, most of the centre-right and centrist factions (and the political parties associated with them) supported the head of state. The pro-presidential position was also typical of the majority of centrist parties, including those created by government and business groups. This position was connected with a clear ideology based on the criterion of “supporting the presidential course”.

Thus, a division between pro-presidential and anti-presidential forces added up to the existing divide between the left- and right-wing political forces. At the same time, the opposition to the President has become bilateral, despite the government’s attempts to avoid precisely this through the use of the “leftist threat” to reinforce the bipolar division of political forces.

Although the opposition had generally acceptable conditions to operate, a tendency on the part of the authorities to apply pressure to opposition forces arose at this stage, leading to unequal opportunities for political competition. According to experts, the 1998 parliamentary elections were the first in which the authorities used the administrative resources and “dirty” political technologies to influence matters; and during the 1999 presidential elections these technologies were applied in full.¹⁸

The most relevant socioeconomic cleavage during this stage was the divide between the poor, to which the absolute majority of citizens of Ukraine belonged, and the rich (primarily representatives of big business). This cleavage now actively expressed itself in considerable support for the left-wing forces and in the popularity of the left-centrist (social-democratic) ideology. So, in the 1997-1998 election campaign, about twenty parties and blocs relied on social-democratic ideas.¹⁹

To the socioeconomic, foreign policy and cultural-ethnic dimensions relevant to the previous stage, a new dimension – measuring support for the regime – was added. This complicated the distinction among parties by adding a new line of division between pro-presidential and anti-presidential parties.

¹⁸ The Parliament in Ukraine: Trends and Problems in its Development. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre..., p.6.

¹⁹ Irina Kresina Parliamentary elections in Ukraine: legal and political issues: A monograph..., p.61.

As noted above, the influence of business structures during this phase was significant and contributed to increasing role of centrist parties in the party system. The influence exerted by foreign countries was moderate and turned out to consist primarily of support for left political forces by their foreign counterparts.

The second stage saw the group of “party leaders” stabilise in the wake of the 1998 elections, as their places in the ideological field and the nature of the relations among them became clearer. Thus, **the atomised multi-party system gradually acquired features of a party system.**

The party system at this stage includes twelve legal entities (parties and electoral blocs) that received more than 2% of the proportional vote in the 1998 parliamentary elections. The party system included primarily small parties (with the exception of the CPU, which could be classified as a mid-sized party).

At the second stage, the party system took a tripolar form (“left – right – centre”). The formation of a bilateral left- and right-wing opposition to the political centre (the President and pro-presidential forces), as well as the presence of anti-systemic parties (chiefly, the CPU and PSPU), makes it possible to categorise the party system in the second stage as a system of polarised pluralism. The fact that the authorities tried to prevent national democratic parties from nominating a single candidate in the 1999 presidential elections (as it later turned out, successfully) showed a real threat stemming from the right-wing opposition.

Taking into account features of the second stage, we can characterised it as the stage where polarised pluralism emerged.

➤ PARTY SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS MODERATE PLURALISM: 2000-2004 ◀

During this stage, the process of political party creation had somewhat slowed down. During this stage, political parties were formed “from above” (top-down). The parties created to represent the interests of financial-industrial groups (FIGs) and individual business structures (for example, Labour Ukraine (LU), Pragmatic Choice, and Solidarity), and the parties which, by their names, claimed to represent the interests of particular social groups, continuing the tendency of the previous period, constituted a majority of the parties formed during this period. Most of the newly formed parties declared a centrist orientation.

It is necessary to distinguish “clone” parties, which require a separate category of their own. These parties had names similar to those of well-known political entities, but were not actually related to them (this distinguishes such parties from parties formed as a result of a split). “Cloning” concerned

the most prominent opposition parties (in particular, the CPU and PMU) and was used as a political technology since the 2002 elections.

Also, a consolidation process began by which parties with similar orientations began to merge. In 2000, the five centrist political parties united (the RDPU, the Labour Party (LP), the Solidarity Party, the Party For a Beautiful Ukraine!, and the All-Ukrainian Party of Pensioners), resulting in the formation of the Party of Regional Revival “Labour Solidarity of Ukraine”. Structures representing the Donetsk region – the RDPU and the LP – were the foundation for the united party. A year later, the party changed its name to the Party of Regions (PR).

During this stage, the programmes of some leading political parties, and in particular the SPU and the SDPU(u), were revamped.

The stage is characterised by a rather moderate level of activity in terms of internal party processes, as new political parties, including “clones”, were formed largely not from party splits (although there were such cases), but as newly established structures.

Elections to the Verkhovna Rada in 2002, like previous elections, were held under a mixed electoral system. Over eighty political parties participated (on party lists and in single-mandate districts) – the majority of the registered parties.²⁰ Party lists were nominated by twenty-one political parties and twelve blocs. The tendency towards the “personalisation” of party politics begins at this stage and can be seen in the creation of “personal” blocs. It is a trend that will continue to develop over time.

The main line of distinction was between anti-presidential and pro-presidential forces. The main forces opposed to the President were the left Communist Party of Ukraine and the Bloc of Natalia Vitrenko, the left-centrist SPU, the right-centre Our Ukraine Bloc of Viktor Yushchenko²¹ (positioned as “moderately anti-presidential”) and the Election Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko²² (which positioned itself as a radically anti-presidential bloc). The pro-presidential forces included “For United Ukraine!” (For UU!), the SDPU(u), the All-Ukrainian Political Union “Women for the Future” and the Winter Generation Team Bloc, among others.

The elections saw an active use of administrative resources and “dirty” political technologies, in particular, the use of “technical” electoral subjects²³ to take votes away from the “main” parties and opposition blocs.

²⁰ This refers to the nomination of candidates on party lists and (or) in single-mandate districts (83 parties); at the 1998 elections this figure stood at 45 parties.

²¹ The Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, the Liberal Party of Ukraine, the Youth Party of Ukraine, the People's Movement of Ukraine, the Reforms and Order Party, the Solidarity Party, the Christian Democratic Union Party, the “Move on, Ukraine!” party, the Republican Christian Party, the Ukrainian People's Movement Party.

²² The All-Ukrainian Union “Batkivshchyna” (Fatherland), the Ukrainian People's Party “Sobor”, the Ukrainian Republican Party, and the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party.

²³ In particular, the People's Movement of Ukraine Bloc, the Communist Party of Workers and Peasants and the Communist Party of Ukraine (updated).

As a result of the elections by party lists, the electoral barrier was overcome by six political forces: the Our Ukraine Bloc (with 23.57%), the CPU (19.98%), the “For United Ukraine!” Bloc (11.77%), the Bloc for Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) (7.26%), the SPU (6.87%), and the SDPU(u) (6.27%). In all, representatives of twenty-eight political parties were elected to the Verkhovna Rada. A parliamentary majority was formed around pro-presidential factions consisting of deputies elected in single-mandate electoral districts, this despite the fact that the opposition forces had won the elections via party lists.

It should be noted that on the eve of the 2002 elections there were consultations between representatives of Our Ukraine and the authorities on whether the bloc might enter into a joint election campaign with the pro-presidential forces or, at a minimum, not oppose the President of Ukraine and become a member of a pro-presidential majority in the Verkhovna Rada. If this scheme had been carried out, it could have led to the formation of two “loyal” (pro-presidential) blocs in the political centre – the centrist (“For UU!”) and the centre-right (Our Ukraine), and, accordingly, the formation of an analogous party system. For a variety of reasons, however, these projects were not implemented (in particular, due to the competition between business groups supporting certain political forces and/or prospective candidates for the 2004 presidential elections, the “cassette scandal”, etc.).

During this stage, the tendency towards the formation of the Cabinet of Ministers on the basis of “pseudo-party” principles, where the President would submit candidates for the post of the Prime Minister (e.g., Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich) to the Parliament, relying on the majority. Despite a predominantly “external” nature of the majority formation, parliamentary support of the Government was largely situational.

Political parties took an active part in the 2004 presidential elections. Out of twenty-four candidates taking part in the elections, thirteen were nominated by political parties. Viktor Yanukovich, the leader of the Party of Regions, Viktor Yushchenko, Leader of the Our Ukraine bloc, were the candidates in the second round, supported by the Power of the People coalition, which was based on the Our Ukraine Bloc and the BYuT, and which were subsequently joined by the SPU and other parties. Thus, the 2004 presidential campaign reflected the basic division of political forces along pro-presidential and anti-presidential lines. The left political forces (the CPU, PSPU) nominated their candidates (Petro Symonenko and Natalia Vitrenko), but they garnered 6.5% of the vote combined.

The legal basis for political party activities has changed significantly. The Law “On Political Parties in Ukraine”, which regulated the procedure for

creation and operation of political parties, was adopted in April 2001, after nearly five years of efforts. The law was aimed at stimulating the development of nationwide political parties, their consolidation and regulation of their relations with government agencies. Despite the short-term positive effects, however, legislative regulation has not become an effective factor in achieving the goals set forth in the process of drafting and adopting the Law (in particular, to reduce “small-party” element).²⁴ In November 2003, legislation approving state funding of party activities conforming to the parties’ charter documents was passed; in practice, however, that funding was never actually provided.

The processes within the party system were significantly hampered by a sharp struggle between the President and parliamentary opposition for influence in the Verkhovna Rada. In February 2000, structures subordinate to the President and supported by business groups had resorted to “brute force” to eliminate the (leftist) Parliament leadership and formed a majority, which included almost all non-left associations of deputies.²⁵ However, this majority subsequently collapsed amid a growing “cassette scandal” and the resignation of the Yushchenko government, which was still supported by some centre-right factions and groups in the Parliament.

In order to limit powers of the Parliament and provide the President with additional tools for exerting influence upon it, structures subordinate to the President initiated a nationwide referendum, in whose preparation pro-presidential parties played an active role. The referendum was held on 16 April 2000, but the Parliament did not implement its outcome, adding to the conflict between Parliament and the President.

The “cassette scandal” and the Georgiy Gongadze case became highly significant factors of change in the distribution of political power. The political forces of the centre-left (the SPU), centre-right and right wings took radical anti-presidential positions and established lines of cooperation in the framework of the “Ukraine without Kuchma” movement. At the same time, the leading centrist political forces supported the position of the President. Left parties (CPU, etc.) declared anti-presidential positions, but abstained from active participation in protest actions. The aforementioned processes contributed in significant degree to reducing the relevance of the “left-right” divide and to increasing the chasm between anti-presidential and pro-presidential forces.

This stage is characterised by sharply conflicting relations between the government and the opposition, pressure exerted by the government upon

²⁴ Yuriy Yakymenko Political parties in Ukraine one year before the elections: the future that begins today. – National Security and Defence, 2005, No.3, p.2.

²⁵ For more detail see: Parliament in Ukraine: trends and problems of formation ..., p.9.

the opposition forces, their leaders and business groups that supported them, including the use of security forces, information blockade, and public campaign to discredit them. These factors prompted the opposition forces to radicalise and resulted in a high level of conflict within the party system.

A peculiar feature of this stage was also an active creation of electoral blocs, including “personal” blocs (associated with Viktor Yushchenko, Yulia Tymoshenko and Natalia Vitrenko), relying on the electoral attractiveness of popular leaders, something that later became a trend.²⁶ When joining blocs of that kind, that were attached to certain parties that arose during the first stage of the party system development and had distinct ideological identities (for example, the PMU and the URP), this, along with other factors, led to the loss of their positions and their gradual marginalisation.

During the 2002 election campaign, the division of citizens’ electoral sympathies in various regions, on the basis of socio-cultural differences, largely coincided with the division on the basis of sympathies for pro-government or opposition forces. In particular, the Our Ukraine and BYuT blocs, which were part the opposition and had a national-democrat cast, gained the largest number of votes mainly in western and central regions of Ukraine, with less favourable results in the East and South. “For UU!”, the main pro-government bloc, in contrast, was less supported in the West and enjoyed the greatest support in the Donetsk region (the only region where it came in first).

This trend has expanded in the 2004 presidential elections, and, among other things, was artificially stimulated with the use of political technologies to help the government’s candidate win.

If previously, socioeconomic cleavage was a politically polarising issue, since the 2002 elections sociocultural orientations of residents from different regions became a factor exerting the greatest influence on the configuration of the Ukrainian party system.

Throughout this stage, the level of support for the regime came to the fore among the issue dimensions, to a great degree overlapping with cultural and ethnic issues. These dimensions characterised the distinction between the anti-presidential and pro-presidential forces. The distinction between left- and right-wing political forces was characterised by socioeconomic, foreign policy and cultural-ethnic considerations.

²⁶ The Constitution of Ukraine, as amended on 12 December 2004, actually equates the status of political parties and electoral blocs of political parties (Article 81). This creates the grounds for considering parties and electoral blocs as equivalent entities and treating them all as entities subject to the party system.

The influence of business groups on the party system was significant. In general, the process by which the main financial-industrial groups created their own “instrumental parties” (in different ways), for the most part, ended. Given a strong presidential power and threats to “disloyal” (to the government) businesses, parties created or controlled by financial-industrial groups had a predominantly pro-government character. However, a certain proportion of the business structures, despite government pressure, supported the political opposition, linking their prospects with that of the opposition leaders.

This stage was characterised by an increasing influence of external factors on Ukrainian political processes. This was largely due to the actions of the Ukrainian government, which had international resonance (the “cassette scandal”, the Gongadze case, and the “Kolchuga scandal”).

External influence exerted by Western states and international organisations (for the most part public) was primarily aimed at ensuring a level playing-field for political competition, honesty and transparency in the electoral process, freedom of the media, encouraging an active civil society for the protection of political (primarily electoral) rights and freedoms, that would objectively work to the advantage of the opposition parties and blocs. Influence exerted from the East (Russia, largely covert) was aimed at supporting pro-government political forces and their candidates in presidential elections.²⁷

One of the most effective external factors was the “import” of foreign political technologies, which was achieved by bringing in political technologists (spin doctors) from countries supporting one side or the other, to participate in the organisation of electoral campaigns in Ukraine. Often, the “imported” (primarily Russian) political technologies were destructive in nature, since they provided for the use of “dirty” technologies and were aimed at discrediting political opponents and deliberately exacerbating the existing interregional sociocultural differences (the politicisation of sociocultural divisions).

Thus, **at the beginning of the third stage, the party system retained features of a polarised pluralism system.** However, under the influence of processes going on around it, the relevance of the “left-right” coordinates gradually decreased, and the divide between anti-presidential and pro-presidential forces increased. There were three “poles” in the party system, but the importance of one of them – the “left” – had decreased. The basis for considering this stage a stage of transformation in the party system is a reduced relevance of ideological distinctions and a corresponding increase in distinctions drawn in terms of attitude towards the government, a consequence of which was the emergence of a tactical alliance between left- and right-wing parties.

²⁷ Irina Kresina Parliamentary elections in Ukraine: legal and political problems: A monograph..., p.155-157; “The external factor in the 2004 presidential elections”. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2004, No.5, pp.2-35.

The number of legal subjects of the party system active during this stage decreased from twelve to nine. Such changes can be considered a sign of evolution towards a system of limited (moderate) pluralism. In terms of size, the system mostly included small parties.

These rather significant changes provide grounds to characterise this stage as a stage of transition to a system of moderate pluralism.

➤ **PARTY SYSTEM STABILISATION: 2005 - FEBRUARY 2010** ◀

The stage is characterised by active creation of new parties, 177 of which were registered as of 10 May 2010. The peak in party formation came in 2005 (when twenty-four new parties were registered), spurred by the imminence of the elections in 2006.

The 2004 election campaign and the Orange Revolution influenced the process whereby new parties were created. It resulted in the formation of parties, like the People's Union "Our Ukraine" (PUOU, which later became the Our Ukraine Party), the Pora Civic Party, the Third Force, the New Democracy Party, and others.

The creation of parties as personal projects of individual politicians continued (in particular, Mykola Katerynchuk's European Party of Ukraine (EPU), Vasyl Volha's Union of Left Forces (ULF), Pavlo Zhebrivsky's Ukrainian Platform (UP), etc.). The ideological identification of newly created political forces was limited either to membership in the so-called "orange" or "white-blue" camps or, alternatively, a claim to play the role of a "third force".

Ideological parties were not created in this period. No impression can be formed of these newly formed parties due to their lack of activity. The ideological foundations of leading political forces remained almost unchanged (with the exception of the PR), as the main focus was on their election programmes.

The most nationwide election campaigns were held during this stage – for the parliamentary elections in 2006 and 2007 and the presidential elections in 2010. Election processes and relations among parties were largely influenced by such factors as the "political inertia" of the 2004 presidential campaign, "imperfections" in the constitutionally defined mechanisms governing actions of higher government institutions and their interactions; the upcoming 2010 presidential elections.

THE 2006 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Lists of candidates were nominated by forty-five legal subjects of the electoral process (seventeen blocs and twenty-eight parties). In total, this was the largest number of political parties – 94 – in the history of Ukrainian elections. Only five of them ended up with representation in Parliament, however – the Party of Regions (with 32.14%), the BYuT (22.29%), the Our Ukraine Bloc (13.95%), the SPU (5.69%) and the CPU (3.66%).

The main line of distinction for political forces at the time the elections were held was support for one or the other of the main candidates (Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych) in the 2004 election campaign.

The inability of the overwhelming majority of the electoral participants to even approach the electoral barrier (only six parties and blocs garnered 1-3% of the vote), together with a significant deterioration in the CPU's results (from 19.98% in 2002 to 3.66% in 2006), indicated **the formation of a new “group of leaders” in the party system and, accordingly, that the leading parties were losing the positions they had established during the first stage.**

The results of the election indicated the emergence of a new alignment of forces in the party system. In it, two poles had been formed – on the one hand was the PR, and on the other – the BYuT and Our Ukraine. The positions of the left forces and other parties that emerged during the first and second stages significantly weakened.

The failed attempt of factions of the BYuT, Our Ukraine and SPU to form a coalition ended in the formation of a coalition of Party of Regions, CPU and SPU factions, together with individual deputies of Our Ukraine. This process led to a developing parliamentary crisis and the early termination of the powers of the Verkhovna Rada.

THE EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 2007

The results of the early parliamentary elections, held in 2007, confirmed the presence of relevant trends. Significantly fewer legal entities – twenty in all (eleven parties and nine blocs) – participated in them, for an overall total of forty-three parties. The electoral barrier was overcome by five political parties: the Party of Regions (34.37%), the BYuT (30.71%), the Bloc OUNS (14.15%), the CPU (5.39%) and the Lytvyn Bloc (3.96%). Only two political forces achieved as much as 1-3% of the vote.

Political forces differentiated themselves according to the same pattern as in 2006. The competition between political forces in the “orange” camp, however, grew more intense, with focus on Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko. Therefore, the coalition of the BYuT, OUNS and Lytvyn Bloc was unstable, vulnerable to manifestations of political competition between its subjects and their situational arrangements with the Party of Regions.

THE 2010 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Eight out of eighteen candidates were formally nominated by political parties (blocs). The candidates nominated by the two most powerful political forces – the Party of Regions and the BYuT, – advanced to a second round, and the winner was the leader of the PR – Viktor Yanukovych.

The candidates who finished between third and ninth, each winning more than 1% of the vote, were all formal or informal leaders of political forces.²⁸ Candidates who claimed to be an alternative to the current political elite (Serhiy Tihipko, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Anatoliy Hrytsenko) created their own parties and political projects in the process of the election campaign, including the use of previously registered but insignificant or dormant parties.

During this period, the legal basis for functioning of political parties changed significantly. Under the constitutional amendments of 12 December 2004, which came into force in full after the parliamentary elections of March 2006, parties were given the right to form a coalition of parliamentary factions, whose powers would include the formation of the Cabinet of Ministers (with the exception of the posts of the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs). Thus, a model of government organisation was introduced in Ukraine which significantly increased the role of parties in the process of formation and implementation of state policy. The parties became the main entities exerting influence not only on the legislative, but also on the executive branch of government, and, indirectly (via parliamentary majority) – on the judicial branch.

An important aspect of these constitutional changes was the introduction of elements of the “party” (“imperative”) mandate (Article 81 of the Constitution), aimed at the stabilisation of the Parliament’s political structure and establishing restrictions on deputies’ transitions from one faction to another. Despite the fact that this provision was not fully implemented,²⁹ it contributed to the strengthening of party control over elected deputies.

Along with amendments to the Constitution, new laws were passed on the election of people’s deputies of Ukraine (in March 2004) and on elections to local self-government bodies (in April 2004). According to the new Law on elections to the Verkhovna Rada, all of its members were to be elected from party (bloc) lists in a single multi-mandate nationwide district. The electoral barrier was lowered from 4% to 3%. The members of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, regional, district, and city councils should be also elected via party lists.

²⁸ Serhiy Tihipko – A Strong Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk – the Front For Change, Viktor Yushchenko – Our Ukraine, Petro Symonenko – the Bloc of Left and Left-Centre Forces, Volodymyr Lytvyn – the People’s Party, Oleh Tiahnybok – the All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda” (Freedom), Anatoliy Hrytsenko – the Civic Position.

²⁹ Largely because of resistance within the deputy corps itself, as this limited the autonomy of individual deputies, and also because of negative assessments of this step by foreign institutions as inconsistent with European practice.

As a result of these constitutional and legislative changes, parties became the sole mechanism for forming the Parliament and most of the local self-government bodies, received the greatest possible ability to influence their activities, and as a result to implement their own political programmes at both national and local levels.³⁰

This stage witnessed a high level of conflict between leading political forces and higher government institutions with occasional escalations and political crises (2007 and 2008).

The Party of Regions and political forces, which supported Viktor Yanukovich as a presidential candidate, did not recognise the legitimacy of the second round of elections and the victory of Viktor Yushchenko, considering the Orange Revolution to be a product of outside interference in favour of the winner. Accordingly, the main force driving these political actors was the desire to regain lost political ground, the main task being to ensure the stability of the electoral district that had voted for Viktor Yanukovich until the next parliamentary and presidential elections. This, as well as the insufficiently balanced policy of President Viktor Yushchenko, helped to fix the division of the electorate on a regional basis following its attachment to one of the two candidates. This division reflected (and, to a large extent, was a consequence of) sociocultural differences in orientations between citizens from different regions and was the most relevant social division of this period.³¹

The imperfection of constitutional mechanisms for organising state power was the objective basis of conflict between the President and the Prime Minister, the President and the Parliament, within the Parliament regarding the creation of a coalition, etc.³² In addition, the Constitution's shortcomings were actively used by those interested in the political struggle. This factor caused constant tensions between political forces and prevented the normal functioning of parliamentary coalitions.

The approaching of the 2010 elections marked an increasing level of personification of party and political processes. The concentration of key political leaders, including those who held official positions, on their own presidential rating was manifested in growing populism of relevant political forces and determined their situational political behaviour. This factor also caused continual organisational and structural changes in the

³⁰ For more information on the redistribution of authorities in the system of power after the adoption of amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine, see: Constitutional reform in Ukraine: progress, condition and prospects. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2007, No.1, pp.20-22.

³¹ For more details, see: Yuriy Yakymenko, Oleksandr Lytvynenko. Regional aspects of the ideological and political orientations of Ukrainian citizens in the context of the 2006 election campaign. Article by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2006, No.1, pp.2-18.

³² For more information, see: Constitutional reform in Ukraine: progress, condition and prospects. Analytical report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2007, No.1, pp.23-28.

environment of the “orange” political forces³³ and was the main thing that led to their defeat in the 2010 presidential elections. The effect of this factor also resulted in significant activity in creating parties – the political “leadership” projects of presidential candidates.

The relationship between the President and the Parliament varied over the course of this stage. Before the 2006 elections, it was formed according to the pattern “strong President – weak Parliament”. After the 2006 elections, the balance of powers changed in favour of the Parliament, in which a majority opposing the President was created (illegitimately). The period before the 2007 early elections was characterised by extremely high tensions between the President, the Parliament (coalition) and the Government.

As a result of the 2007 elections, a majority “politically akin” to the President was created in the Parliament; however, relations of the Head of State with the BYuT and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko remained hostile. At the same time, in order to weaken their opponent, the parties resorted to temporary cooperation with the main rival, the Party of Regions.

After the victory of Viktor Yanukovich in the 2010 presidential elections, the formation of a pro-presidential parliamentary coalition and the illegitimate restoration of the Constitution in the wording of 1996, the President received decisive influence on all branches of power, including the judicial branch.

During this period, Governments were formed on the basis of different constitutional norms, and the parties took an active part in these processes. The position of Prime Minister was held by the BYuT leader, Yulia Tymoshenko (twice); the leader of the Party of Regions, Viktor Yanukovich; and the representative of Our Ukraine, Yuriy Yekhanurov.

The conditions for activities of the political opposition during this phase were generally favourable. The exception is the first period (2005), when a number of politicians from the opposition to President Viktor Yushchenko’s camp were persecuted, as well as the period after the 2010 presidential elections, when the new government resorted to similar actions against political opponents.

The main (and the most politicised) social division during the fourth period was the sociocultural division, reflected in two sets of citizens’ ideas (based on their language preferences and their belonging to cultural traditions) and, accordingly, political sympathies.³⁴

³³ In particular, changes in the composition of the blocs based on Our Ukraine and the BYuT in 2006-2007, intra-party processes in the PUOU, and reorganisation and change of leadership in the parliamentary faction of the Our Ukraine and the Our Ukraine – People’s Self-Defence Blocs.

³⁴ For more details, see: Yuriy Yakymenko Transformation of the Ukrainian party system in 2004-2007. – Political Management, 2008, No.2, pp.96-97.

Cultural, ethnic and foreign policy were the most intensive issue dimensions of this period, defining the distinction between “orange” political forces and their opponents. Based on their foreign policy focus, the leading political forces were conditionally divided into two groups: “pro-Western” (supporting European and/or Euro-Atlantic integration) and “pro-Russian” (supporting economic, political and sociocultural integration with Russia).

The importance of the issue dimension of regime support decreased due to, among other things, constitutional changes and an increase in the parties’ ability to shape legislative and executive powers. The importance of the socioeconomic dimension, which at the beginning of the stage fell into the background, began to grow again after the start of the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and continued to grow during the next stage.

This stage saw a decisive influence of FIGs on the parties’ (blocs’) activities. For the first time, the influence of FIGs spread to all leading parties and blocs, regardless of their ideological orientation or attitude towards power.³⁵ The main reason for their dependence was a significant increase in expenditures on election campaigns and the inability to provide for them at the expense of other sources. The position of FIGs largely determined the political behaviour of the respective parties and blocs.³⁶ Thus, ideological differences between parties and blocs were irrelevant in the process of the formation and realisation of power.³⁷ In addition, the electoral nature of the parties (blocs) largely caused the dependence of their popularity on the media (first and foremost, electronic ones), which were also under the control of FIGs; this provided the latter with additional leverage to influence parties.

The illegitimate influence of the FIGs and political corruption became direct components of the process of forming electoral lists of parties (blocs) at elections of all levels, and influenced the adoption of decisions by the Parliament and other institutions. As a result, the FIGs could be considered a dominant factor of influence on the party system.

The influence of external factor during this stage may be defined as high. This was manifested in financial support from the Russian Federation (via various channels) of “pro-Russian” political parties and civil organisations in Ukraine (primarily in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), in the direct disclosure of political sympathies towards Ukrainian political forces

³⁵ First of all, because of high tariffs for political advertising on television.

³⁶ See: Political corruption in Ukraine: the situation and means of countering it. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2009, No.7, pp.8-19.

³⁷ In particular, the CPU, in spite of its publicly declared “anti-oligarchic” principles, twice entered into a coalition with the Party of Regions, supported by the richest businessman of Ukraine, Rinat Akhmetov.

and individual politicians by higher officials of the Russian Federation, and in the activities of Russian “experts” in political technologies in the election headquarters of domestic political forces and presidential candidates.

Seven legal entities can be included in the structure of the party system of Ukraine at this stage, among which two were medium-sized (the PR, BYuT), and the others were small.

The party system of Ukraine can be characterised as a system of moderate pluralism. On a quantitative basis, it tends to evolve from a multi-party system towards a system of “two and a half” parties or a “two-bloc system”. Anti-systemic parties either changed their character (CPU) or were marginalised (PSPU). Over this period, two poles, represented by the largest political forces – the Party of Regions and the BYuT,³⁸ were created in the party system; left-wing parties lost their positions as a separate pole of the party system.

However, at the end of this period, during the 2010 presidential election campaign, “new” political forces, which “did not fit” a bipolar scheme, emerged.³⁹

The fourth stage, in its results, can be described as a stage of stabilisation of the party system, which had taken the form of a system of moderate pluralism.

➤ **MOVEMENT TOWARDS A “HEGEMONIC PARTY”⁴⁰ SYSTEM: 2010-2013** ◀

The starting point of this period is the second round of the Ukrainian presidential elections and the victory of Viktor Yanukovich.

The process of creating new political parties continued: in the period of 2010-2011, over 25 of them were registered. As of November 2012, there were 200 political parties registered in Ukraine, but most of them still existed only formally.

Among the newly-formed parties that were active, almost all were “leadership” parties (in particular, Serhiy Tihipko’s Strong Ukraine Party, Arseniy Yatsenyuk’s Front for Change, Vitaliy Klychko’s UDAR, and Anatoliy Hrytsenko’s Civic Position). Somewhat later, Andriy Sadovyi’s “Samopomich” (Self-Reliance) and the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko were formed. Also during this phase, separate parties were created on the basis of public initiatives (for example, the Democratic Alliance).

The period of 2010-2013 saw two electoral campaigns: the 2010 elections to local government bodies and the 2012 parliamentary elections.

³⁸ The ideological qualifications of these parties in terms of “left-right” is problematic, and both political forces can be classified as centrist ones.

³⁹ Strong Ukraine, Front for Change, and Civic Position, mentioned above.

⁴⁰ According to the definition of Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner, hegemonic party systems are “quasi-authoritarian systems dominated by a single party”. See: Political parties and political development (edited by Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner). – Princeton University Press, 1966.

THE 2010 ELECTIONS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES

The new Law of Ukraine “On Elections of Deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Local Councils and Village, Town and City Heads” replaced the proportional system of elections to a number of local councils with a mixed one; electoral blocs were removed from the list of electoral subjects. This was done to ensure the dominance of the ruling political forces in local government bodies. The elections themselves were held amid large-scale use of administrative resources in favour of the Party of Regions, pressure on the opposition and limited participation of its representatives in the elections, including with involvement of judicial authorities.⁴¹

The election results demonstrated that the government was able to achieve the goal it had set. In particular, in the elections to councils at various levels by party lists, a total of 39.39% of deputies were elected from the Party of Regions,⁴² and together with its “political satellites” (Strong Ukraine, CPU, People’s Party) this figure amounted to more than 55%. For comparison, the leading opposition force, “Batkivshchyna” (Fatherland) Party, had 16.34% of elected candidates, while other opposition parties (“Svoboda” (Freedom) Party, Our Ukraine) had 4.47% and 3.26%, respectively.

The elections showed rather prominent support of the “new” parties such as the Front for Change and Strong Ukraine, which had 8.03% and 5.37% of the deputies, respectively, according to party lists.

Some “old” extra-parliamentary political parties (the PSPU, Union Party, SPU, PMU, SDPU(u), and others), as well as new political projects (the Unified Centre, UDAR, Civic Position, Conscience of Ukraine, etc.) also took an active part in the elections.

The Party of Regions took first place in the elections by party lists to 17 regional councils and the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, including in the central and some western regions, and had the largest number of deputies (including majoritarian districts) elected to 19 regional councils and the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In some regional councils (Zaporizhia, Luhansk, and Donetsk regions), the proportion of the Party of Regions deputies ranged from 76% to 93%.

In the elections to local councils, especially in the central and western regions, the success of the Party of Regions was mostly determined by the mobilisation of representatives of local authorities, heads of enterprises and institutions of various ownership types and public employees (doctors, teachers, cultural workers) to its ranks as candidates. On the other hand, a prerequisite for the success of the “party of power” became the dispersion of opposition forces, which proved unable to consolidate.

In general, the Party of Regions, together with the Communist Party of Ukraine and Strong Ukraine, dominated in the East and South; together they had significant representation in the Centre and in the West. “Batkivshchyna” and Front for Change were relatively better represented in the West and in the Centre, while “Svoboda” and United Centre were better represented in the West.

⁴¹ See: Local elections – 2010. The pulse of the state (edited by A. Kogut, K. Sidash). – K., Laboratory of Legislative Initiatives, 2011, 228 p.; Statement of the Public Network “Support” for conducting local elections 31 October 2010 – Website of the Public Network “Support”, 5 November 2010, <http://oporaua.org/news/867-2010-11-04>.

⁴² Local elections. – The official website of the CEC, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vm2010/wp001>.

THE 2012 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

In December 2011, the new Law of Ukraine “On Elections of People’s Deputies of Ukraine” came into force. Its main innovations were the return to a mixed electoral system, the increase of the election threshold to 5%, a prohibition on electoral blocs participating in elections, and the restoration of the institution of self-nomination. According to experts, these and other innovations reduced the role of parties in the formation of the Parliament, and also were aimed at providing pro-government political forces and candidates with more favourable conditions for victory in the elections.⁴³

21 political parties took part in the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine held on 28 October 2012 by party lists. In fact, there were even more parties, as due to the prohibition on forming electoral blocs, representatives of some parties ran on the lists of other forces as non-partisan candidates (including the representatives of Front for Change, People’s Movement of Ukraine, Reform and Order Party, Civil Position, “For Ukraine!”, and People’s Self-Defence, which stood for elections by the lists of the “Batkivshchyna”, while representatives of the People’s Party ran on the list of the Party of Regions). In total, 87 parties participated in the electoral process.

The elections were held with the extensive use of administrative resources by the authorities, and their results were affected by fraud, especially in single-mandate districts.

Five parties overcame the electoral barrier – the Party of Regions (30% of votes), “Batkivshchyna”, (25.54%), the UDAR (13.96%), the CPU (13.18%) and “Svoboda” (Freedom) (10.44%).

The 2012 election campaign slightly shifted the balance of power in Ukrainian party system. The Party of Regions and “Batkivshchyna” retained their dichotomy. The CPU increased its electoral outcome primarily at the expense of disillusioned supporters of the Party of Regions.

A number of political parties established in the early or mid 1990s either had completely lost or substantially weakened their position. The Socialist Party of Ukraine, the Peasant Party of Ukraine, the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (unified), the Ukrainian Republican Party, the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian People’s Party essentially disappeared from the political arena. The positions of the People’s Movement of Ukraine, the Reform and Order Party and the People’s Party weakened significantly, and they practically lost their subjectivity. The same is true of some parties formed following the Orange Revolution, especially the Our Ukraine Party.

The parties, claiming to be “new” political forces, perfectly fitted in the existing “government – opposition” chasm: Strong Ukraine decided

⁴³ The Parliament and the 2012 parliamentary elections in Ukraine: political situation, social attitudes and expectations. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2012, No.7-8, pp.19-27.

to merge with the Party of Regions, the Front for Change became part of the United Opposition “Batkivshchyna”, with UDAR joining it later in the Verkhovna Rada.

According to the election results, the territorial division of supporters of the leading political forces was largely preserved. As in the previous parliamentary elections, this is rooted in cultural differences between the residents of different regions of Ukraine. In particular, the Party of Regions and the Communist Party gained leading positions in the East and South of Ukraine, while “Batkivshchyna” led in central and western regions, and “Svoboda” in the West.

Despite certain expectations, in the 2012 election campaign, no political force could claim a uniform support of voters across all regions of Ukraine and become a nationwide party. Such expectations were initially placed on “new” political players, including the Front for Change and UDAR. However, the bipolar nature of the campaign did not provide any opportunities for “third forces”, requiring that the parties define themselves in terms of “government – opposition”.

During this stage, there were significant changes in the regulatory framework that determined the principles of party participation in the political system. The Resolution of the Constitutional Court as of 30 September 2010, adopted under pressure from Viktor Yanukovich, restored the validity of the 1996 wording of the Constitution. This Resolution significantly reduced the role of parties in the process of developing and implementing state policy, in particular by depriving the parliamentary factions of the right to form the membership of the Cabinet of Ministers and to programme its activities through a coalition agreement.⁴⁴

Significant changes were implemented in electoral legislation both for local and parliamentary elections. Based on the results of both campaigns, these changes improved the election results for the ruling parties and candidates.

Separate amendments were made to the Law “On Political Parties”, particularly aimed at ensuring gender equality, and the possibility to cancel membership by a party member. The work of parties was indirectly influenced by amendments to the legislation on civic associations. As a result of the Law “On Civic Associations” losing its force, with some of its provisions also applying to political parties, certain gaps emerged in legislative regulation of the latter.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For more details see: The Parliament and the 2012 parliamentary elections in Ukraine: political situation, social attitudes and expectations..., pp.3-7.

⁴⁵ For more details see: Political parties of Ukraine: expert opinion. – National Security and Defence, 2015, No.6-7, p.76.

The legal conditions for the opposition activities and opportunities for equal political competition among parties deteriorated considerably. Under the pretext of restoring the 1996 wording of the Constitution, the parliamentary opposition was deprived of legislative guarantees of its rights and powers in the Verkhovna Rada – the sections and provisions concerning both the coalition of parliamentary factions and the opposition were removed from the text of the Law on the Regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.⁴⁶

During this stage, the political regime saw a strengthening of authoritarian tendencies. The aforementioned resolution of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine on the restoration of the Constitution in the wording of 1996 created the basis for this.

Criminal procedures were instituted in 2010-2011 against the opposition leaders – the BYuT of Yulia Tymoshenko and the People's Self-Defence Party of Yuriy Lutsenko, with both of them imprisoned as a result of it. Thanks to long negotiations with authorised representatives of the EU, Yuriy Lutsenko was released on amnesty; however, the authorities persistently evaded the issue of releasing Yulia Tymoshenko, leader of the largest opposition party at that time, the All-Ukrainian Union “Batkivshchyna” (Fatherland).

The situation regarding the protection of civil rights and freedoms significantly deteriorated.⁴⁷ In particular, the president's entourage managed to monopolise the information space (primarily television), and pressure on journalists (including physical pressure) was intensified. The access to national broadcasting and the most popular TV channels was restricted for opposition.

Citizen rights to peaceful assemblies were continually violated using courts and law enforcement bodies, as well as semi-criminal structures organised and patronised by the authorities. The government resorted to using judicial and law enforcement bodies to exert pressure on opposition political powers, civic organisations, protest movements, and some politicians and public figures.

Over the course of the 2012 elections, a legal framework favouring the ruling forces and candidates was purposely shaped by authorities, administrative resources were applied on a large scale, voters were bought, and direct fraud, involving courts and law enforcement bodies, took place.⁴⁸

Authoritarian tendencies saw further development in 2013. All the efforts of the authorities were directed at its maximum centralisation, gaining full control over the judicial branch and local authorities, and concentration of power in the President's hands.

⁴⁶ The Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine” dated 8 October 2010.

⁴⁷ The Parliament and the 2012 parliamentary elections in Ukraine: political situation, social attitudes and expectations, ..., pp.32-43.

⁴⁸ Ukraine 2013: between the elections and in the face of choice (analytical assessment). – The Razumkov Centre, 2013, pp.3-4.

In particular, in October 2013, the Verkhovna Rada tentatively approved the presidential draft amendments to the Constitution, which strengthened the dependence of the judiciary on the President.⁴⁹ The adopted Law “On All-Ukrainian Referendum” (as of 6 November 2012) was to facilitate the implementation of these and other constitutional changes. Amendments were added to the legislation (October 2013), which could prevent participation of Vitaliy Klychko, the most popular candidate from the opposition at that time, in the next presidential elections in 2015.⁵⁰ Funding for security forces (other than the army) was significantly increased, and mainly representatives of Donetsk region were assigned to executive positions in them.⁵¹

The final stage in this process was the Mykola Azarov government’s decision to suspend the process of the European integration and the brutal dispersal of peaceful protests on Independence Square in Kyiv, that marked the beginning of a civil resistance to the Yanukovich regime, known as the Revolution of Dignity.

During this period, major social divisions and problem areas that affect the party system changed significantly. A decrease in the relevance of sociocultural cleavage was the most noticeable tendency of 2010–2011.

The main factors in such a decrease for voters in the East and the South were the election of Viktor Yanukovich as the Head of State and his revenge for his defeat in the 2004 elections (which many residents of these regions blamed on Western interference in the electoral process), changes to “unacceptable” policy of Viktor Yushchenko in foreign (pro-Western approach) and humanitarian policy (strengthening a Ukrainian-cultural component), refusal to join NATO and adoption of a “non-bloc status”,⁵² and hopes for a rapid improvement of relations with Russia.

The residents of the Centre and the West did not strongly condemn rejecting the prospects of Euro-Atlantic integration and Ukraine’s non-bloc status. At the same time, the new government had temporarily slowed down the resolution of more “sensitive” issues such as legislatively “raising” the status of the Russian language,⁵³ and the strengthening of the Russian

⁴⁹ For more details, see: Judicial reform in Ukraine: current results, prospects and risks of the constitutional stage. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2013, No.2-3, pp.2-61.

⁵⁰ See: The Verkhovna Rada supported a draft law that could prevent Klychko from running for president. – Mirror Weekly, 24 October 2013, http://dt.ua/POLITICS/rada-pidtrimala-zakonoproekt-yakiy-mozhe-pereshkoditi-klichku-balotuvatsiya-u-prezidenti-130622_.html.

⁵¹ See: Ukraine-2014: new prospects and new threats (analytical assessment). – The Razumkov Centre, 2014, pp.3-4, 8.

⁵² The amendments in question were made to the Law “On the Basis of Internal and Foreign Policy” dated 1 July 2010.

⁵³ One of Viktor Yanukovich’s election promises in the 2010 presidential elections was to give the Russian language the status of a second state language. See: Election programme of the candidate for the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich “Ukraine for the people”. – The website of the Central Election Commission, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2010/WP0011>.

vector in Ukraine's foreign policy was offset by declarations on the priority of European integration and intensification of the negotiation process on the signing of an Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.

At the same time, the significance of socioeconomic cleavage had grown. Residents of all regions felt the consequences of unpopular actions of the new government in the socioeconomic realm: a significant increase in utility tariffs, rising prices, and a decrease in the level of well-being. Among the reasons for dissatisfaction with the authorities in 2010-2011 were an unpopular pension reform, non-fulfilment of electoral promises, shifting the "burden of reforms" to the majority of the population and a continued enrichment of "oligarchs", growing corruption in power structures, and an ostentatious display of wealth by government officials.

All this led to a sharp decrease in the popularity of the Party of Regions and other parties, which were members of the parliamentary majority, while the ratings of opposition parties began to grow.

Reference. In 2011, the percentage of citizens who intended to vote for the Party of Regions in the upcoming parliamentary elections decreased from 20.5% in February to 13.5% in December, and the percentage of those, who planned to vote for the Strong Ukraine Party decreased from 5.6% to 3.6%. Ratings were falling in all regions, including eastern and southern Ukraine, where people were motivated to vote for the ruling party according to their sociocultural affiliations.

At the same time, support level for the main opposition forces increased: from 12.5% to 15.8% for "Batkivshchyna", and from 7.5% to 9.6% for the Front for Change. The CPU's rating grew from 3.2% to 5.3%.⁵⁴

Growing relevance of the sociocultural division meant that "the left" was winning back its position. Despite them joining the ruling majority in the Parliament of the 5th and 6th convocations, the Communists were still perceived by some voters as representing poor social groups that had "suffered" from actions of the authorities. The centre-left parties (socialists and social democrats) became more active, trying to restore their positions.⁵⁵ The parties were trying to lead or use to their advantage the protests of different social groups, such as entrepreneurs, Afghan veterans, and Chernobyl victims (their number increased significantly in 2010-2011), against the authorities, convert public initiatives to a "partisan" format, or even to "initiate" them on their own.

⁵⁴ For more detail see: Results of sociological research under the heading "Sociological surveys". – The website of the Razumkov Centre, <http://old.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/socpolls.php>.

⁵⁵ During 2011 there were negotiations on uniting the center's left-centrist parties around the two "centres of gravity", which were the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Justice Party. The once pro-government SDPU (unified) was also a participant of the negotiations.

People began to feel that Ukrainian society is divided not between equally poor inhabitants of different regions who speak different (Ukrainian or Russian) languages, but also between the majority of poor people, hired workers or small entrepreneurs and oligarchic, corrupt authorities. Most of their personal interests the Ukrainians now connected with the opposition.

This is confirmed by a general image of the policy of pro-government and opposition political forces which developed in public opinion during 2010-2011.⁵⁶

In socioeconomic policy, the citizens ascribed state support to major national businesses, strengthening the rights of employers compared to employees, raising taxes for all citizens, increasing utility prices and tariffs and increasing the retirement age to the pro-government political forces.

Opposition forces, on the other hand, were associated with protection of citizens with low income, employee rights, promotion of small and medium businesses, and prevention of the growth of prices and tariffs by increasing the taxation of big businesses and the “oligarchs”.

In view of the upcoming elections, the authorities faced the undesirable prospect of a combination of the social discontent factor with sympathy for the opposition parties, which could lead to social and economic cleavage coming to the forefront of attention during the electoral confrontation. Under such circumstances, the campaign would be held according to the scheme “power of the rich” against the “opposition of the poor”, in which case the opposition would have received a guaranteed majority in the future Parliament.

To prevent this scenario from occurring, the authorities resorted to preventive measures of various kinds, ranging from repressions against the opposition and amendments to the electoral legislation to targeted measures aimed at strengthening the segmentation of the electorate, reducing socioeconomic factors in the structure of voter motivation (first of all, in the East and South) (which led to a decline in support for the Party of Regions) and a sharp increase in the role of sociocultural factors.

COMPONENTS OF THE PARTY OF REGIONS' ELECTORAL STRATEGY TO DECREASE THE URGENCY OF SOCIOECONOMIC DIVISION

The “EURO-2012” campaign, which was aimed at reducing social tension, strengthening a sense of unity in society, diverting attention from social and economic problems, and demonstrating the capability of the authorities.

“Social Initiatives” of President Viktor Yanukovich – a new set of social promises, in particular, mortgage lending for housing construction at 2-3% for 10-15 years, raising pensions for various categories of citizens and increasing the size of social benefits, which, even according to the estimates of representatives of Viktor Yanukovich’s entourage, required UAH 8 billion in additional costs.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See: Opposition in Ukraine: status, context of activities, relations with the authorities. An Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2011, No.7-8, pp.13-19.

⁵⁷ See: Social initiatives of the President need 8 billion UAH by the end of the year. – Information agency RBC.ua, 7 March 2012, <https://daily.rbc.ua>.

Targeted allocation of budget funds in the baseline regions and single-mandate districts in order to ensure the victory of the candidate from power.

A media campaign to discredit the opposition by placing responsibility for the current situation in the country on it (the issues of “predecessors”, “ruins”, gas prices, etc.).

The campaign for the adoption of the Law “On the Principles of the State Language Policy”, which envisaged the possibility of granting the Russian language a regional language status, which was done by a number of local councils at various levels. The adoption of the Law caused considerable public uproar and protests among the Ukrainian-speaking community. At the same time, these actions were favourably received by residents of the Eastern and Southern regions, and the Russian-speaking population of other regions.

The government introduced the contrast of “fascists – antifascists” into the public space, where the opposition (national-democratic, pro-European forces) was identified as “fascists” and the ruling, pro-Russian forces, as “anti-fascists”.⁵⁸

Thus, the Party of Regions was able to increase its own rating and to a large extent limit chances for non-leftist opposition parties in the East and South of Ukraine. In particular, in October 2012, 22% of the respondents noted an improvement in their attitude towards Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions after the adoption and signing of the language law; 43% of such respondents were in the South of Ukraine, and 38% in the East.⁵⁹

The Party of Regions also succeeded in converting the election campaign into a format favourable to them, using sociocultural cleavage between parties and their attitude towards the authorities: the West and the Centre, which was the electorate of the opposition, and the East and the South, which was the electorate of the “party of power”. As in previous campaigns, this was the result of a deliberate use by the authorities of the most “convenient” sociocultural cleavage as the basis for electoral strategy, which had been observed since 2002.

The indicator of support for the regime once again came to the forefront among the issue dimensions of the party system. At the beginning of the stage it tended to overlap with the socioeconomic dimension. Cultural, ethnic and foreign policy dimensions came to the forefront over the course of the electoral campaign and after it.

⁵⁸ See: In Kyiv, under the guidance of the Party of Regions, the All-Ukrainian anti-fascist march “To Europe – Without Fascists!” was organised – The website of the Party of Regions, <http://partyotregions.ua/ua/news/event/5197a8fec4ca42047c00038b>.

⁵⁹ See the data of the sociological research of the Razumkov Centre. The research was conducted in all regions of Ukraine on 7-14 October 2012. 2,006 respondents aged 18 and over were polled. – The Razumkov Centre website.

The influence of the FIGs on the party system remained significant, with some changes in its character. The pressure of the government on opposition forces made them a considerably less attractive object for political investment and led to the withdrawal of most groups from supporting the opposition (primarily the BYuT). And conversely, competition for the opportunity to be represented among the PR deputies increased. At the same time, some FIGs, including those associated with the authorities, also tried to have their candidates on the lists of parties that made up the opposition.

High external influence on the party system throughout the period is, first of all, connected with the prospect of concluding the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU. Taking into account the intra-political context, European institutions considered the elections in Ukraine to be an extremely important test for democracy and respect for European values.

The parties represented at the European Parliament, partners of national parties publicly, publicly judged the political processes in Ukraine. In particular, leaders of the European People's Party (a political partner of "Batkivshchyna") had raised such issues as democracy in Ukraine and the release of imprisoned opposition leaders. The position of the European parties affected the EU's foreign policy on Ukraine, and was one of the elements in informational confrontation between the government and the opposition. The US position was in solidarity with the position of European countries.

After a brief period of improvement of relations in 2010, Russian leadership held a rather restrained position on the situation in Ukraine, avoiding direct support of authorities or certain political parties (despite the partnership of the United Russia party with the Party of Regions). However, as the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU approached, the influence of Russia grew into large-scale political and economic pressure with elements of a "trade war" and political blackmail, using their own agents of influence in Ukraine.⁶⁰

There were two poles in the party system – the PR and the BYuT, although the importance of one of them (BYuT) declined following the defeat of Yulia Tymoshenko in the 2010 election campaign and her imprisonment. The Our Ukraine – People's Self-Defence Bloc ceased to exist as a separate part of the party system.

At the beginning, the "new" parties (Strong Ukraine of Serhiy Tihipko, Front for Change of Arseniy Yatsenyuk, UDAR of Vitaliy Klychko), which had succeeded in local elections and gained a sufficient level of support to overcome the electoral barrier in parliamentary elections, could have claimed the role of an independent pole. However, these expectations were not realized.

⁶⁰ See: Ukraine's European integration: internal factors and external influences. Analytical report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2013, No.4-5, pp.2-54.

The position of the “Svoboda” (Freedom) party in 2011 had somewhat strengthened, and the Communist Party of Ukraine gradually began to recover its electoral support.

According to the results of the 2012 elections, six parties could be included in the party system of Ukraine: the Party of Regions, “Batkivshchyna”, Front for Change, UDAR, the CPU and “Svoboda”. Medium-sized and small parties remained in the system.

During 2010-2012, the party system retained features of a moderate pluralism system with a tendency towards polarisation as a result of the increased ideological distance between the extreme parties (after the elections, they were the Communist Party and “Svoboda”).

However, the maximum concentration of power actually belonged to one political force – the Party of Regions (whose representatives held all senior positions in the country); establishing control over the judicial branch and law enforcement system and the use of the “state machine” and criminal structures to put pressure on the political opposition, civil society and ordinary citizens dissatisfied with the government (including physical pressure) **showed a clear-cut tendency towards the evolution of the party system towards a “hegemonic party” system.**

➤ TRANSFORMATION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM: SINCE 2014 ◀

This stage starts in January 2014 – the activation and radicalisation of the Maidan – and continues to this day.

Internal processes. The period of 2014-2016 is characterised by extremely intense changes in the party environment caused by the victory of the Revolution of Dignity, the renewal of power at the central and local levels, Russian aggression against Ukraine and its consequences, the beginning of the European integration reforms and the socioeconomic crisis.

The most significant changes at the beginning of this period were, on the one hand, the removal from power and the actual cessation of the activities of the Party of Regions, as well as its political satellites (the CPU, etc.), and, on the other hand, the creation of new political parties by Maidan political leaders on the basis of already existing parties or parts thereof (BPP “Solidarity”, People’s Front), which legitimised their power status as a result of the elections.

A stimulus for the formation of patriotic parties was given by the self-organisation of the society to resist Russian aggression and counteract separatism. They arose on the basis of public formations of the Maidan participants (The Right Sector), CTO participants in the volunteer battalions (in particular,

the National Corps Party, created on the basis of the Azov Civil Corps), and as a result of divisions of already established structures (National Movement “State Initiative of Yarosh” (DIYA)). Some of these parties were created in the traditional way – “top-down”, with the support of FIGs, such as the party UKROP. There were also the attempts to create such parties around “charismatic personalities”, such as the Ukrainian servicewoman Nadiya Savchenko, released from Russian captivity.⁶¹

The beginning of the decentralisation process and the 2015 local elections led to the active creation of new regional and local parties (for example, the Kherson People’s Party, the Vinnytsia European Strategy Party), as well as parties claiming to represent the interests of national minorities (the Romany Party of Ukraine, the Georgian Party of Ukraine, etc.).⁶²

The increased activity of civil society, in its desire to control actions of the authorities and fight corruption, stimulated the creation of a number of parties in this area (for example, The Will of the People, The Power of the People, Civilian Control). There were attempts to create a united anti-corruption party, which would include Georgian reformers who had acquired Ukrainian citizenship, led by former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Ukrainian anti-corruption activists (Serhiy Leshchenko, Svitlana Zalishchuk, etc.).⁶³

The cessation of the activities of some political parties (including the CPU) on the basis of the laws on decommunisation⁶⁴ and the sharp drop in the level of support for the “old” left parties (the SPU, PSPU) freed up the left niche of the political spectrum. Such parties as, for example, the Socialists and the Social-Democratic Party (previously, the Party of Ordinary People of Serhiy Kaplin) were formed, sensing a demand for leftist ideas on the “European interpretation” amid the declining living standards of most citizens.

The Opposition Bloc Party was formed on the basis of the Party of Regions (which officially did not cease to exist). The former electorate of the Regions was also claimed by the newly formed parties Our Land and For Life and

⁶¹ The media reported that in April 2017 the constituent congress of the Social and Political Platform of Nadiya Savchenko Party was held. See Savchenko held a congress of her own party – The media. – Ukrainian Pravda, 13 April 2017.

⁶² For more details see: Serhiy Yanishevsky. Local political projects: factors of the emergence and prospects of political activity (based on the results of the 2015 local elections). Analytical note. – The website of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, <http://www.niss.gov.ua/catalogue/8>.

⁶³ See: “The Movement of New Forces” of Saakashvili will become a party and may be united with “Samopomich”. – Ukrainian Pravda, 26 November 2016.

⁶⁴ The Laws of Ukraine “On Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and a Ban on the Propaganda of Their Symbols”, “On the Perpetuation of Victory Over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945”, “On Access to Archives of Repressive Agencies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991”, “On the Legal Status and Honouring the Memory of Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th Century”.

a revived “Vidrodzhennya” (Revival) Party. The Agrarian Party of Ukraine resumed its activity with new leadership.

The intention to create a party “on the principles of conservatism” was announced by the ex-leader of the Donetsk Regional State Administration, the well-known businessman Serhiy Taruta.⁶⁵

In general, the process of registering new parties was very active. In particular, in 2014 thirty-eight parties were registered; in 2015, seventy-nine parties (which is the absolute record for the entire period of Ukraine’s independence); and in 2016, forty-two parties. As of 18 January 2017, 352 political parties were registered in Ukraine.⁶⁶ At the same time, the overwhelming majority of parties registered in this period did not conduct intensive political activity and were created, obviously, for subsequent “commercial use”.⁶⁷

Most active political parties were created mainly “top-down”, but there were examples of their creation “from the bottom-up”. Some of the new parties were openly technological and were used to perform certain functions in political campaigns.⁶⁸

Parties involved in protest activity and election campaigns. In the last stage of party system development there were mass protests against the Yanukovich regime’s rejection of the European integration of Ukraine (the Revolution of Dignity), and three nationwide election campaigns – presidential and parliamentary in 2014 and the 2015 local elections campaign.

PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE REVOLUTION OF DIGNITY

Leading political parties actively participated in the events of late 2013 - early 2014, taking diametrically opposed stances in relation to the Maidan. Ultimately, this has determined their current place in the party system.

Thus, the opposition parliamentary parties (“Batkivshchyna”, UDAR, “Svoboda”) were initially actively involved in the protests, despite the fact that in the early stage the public activists and some party leaders put forward the demand for “non-partisan” actions. However, after the fierce beatings of participants in a peaceful demonstration on Independence Square in Kyiv on the night of 29-30 November 2013, the parliamentary opposition took on a major role in the organisation and coordination of the protest movement.

⁶⁵ See: Taruta announced the creation of a new party. – Ukrainian Pravda, 9 April 2017.

⁶⁶ See Website of the Department of State Registration of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine: http://ddr.minjust.gov.ua/uk/ca9c78cf6b6ee6db5c05f0604acdbdec/politychni_partiyi.

⁶⁷ Ukraine has a “shadow market” for political parties, for which registration documents can be bought through classified advertisements. See, for example, the advertisements on the forum of the website “Liga-net”: <http://forum.liga.net/Messages.asp?did=140109>.

⁶⁸ In particular, the party “People’s Control” and the Party of Ordinary People of Serhiy Kaplin, in a campaign against the Government of Arseniy Yatsenyuk in 2015-2016.

Some other political parties established before the Maidan developments, in particular, the Civic Position (Anatoliy Hrytsenko), the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, the Democratic Alliance (Vasyl Hatsko) and Andriy Sadovyi's "Samopomich" (Self-Reliance) party, played a prominent role in protest activity. During the protest actions, a new political party – "The Right Sector" – was formed on the basis of formal and informal movements participating in the Maidan.

The parties that belonged to the ruling coalition in the Verkhovna Rada of the 7th convocation, the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine, officially supported the activities of then President Viktor Yanukovich and the Government. The Party of Regions actively participated in the organisation of the "Anti-Maidan" – organised actions to counter the Maidan, in which even criminal elements were involved.⁶⁹ The adoption of the "dictatorship laws" on 16 January 2014 was the culmination of the activities of the parliamentary faction of the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine during the Maidan.⁷⁰ The entry into force of these laws provoked a new wave of violent confrontation between the government and protesters, which saw the first victims. Thus, the Party of Regions and the Communist Party actually acted as the catalyst of confrontation.

The end of the Party of Regions' activity was marked by the victory of protest actions that had engulfed most of the country, Viktor Yanukovich fleeing the country and the change of government that took place in late February 2014. The Maidan developments, the victory of the Revolution of Dignity, the beginning of Russian aggression in the Crimea and the conflict in the East of Ukraine caused significant changes in public support for political parties.

In particular, the rating of the Party of Regions during December 2013 - May 2014 decreased from 26% to 3%. Unexpectedly, the Solidarity Party led by Petro Poroshenko⁷¹ came out on top; its rating increased from 1.8% in October 2013 to 22% in May 2014.

During the Maidan, levels of support for the "Batkivshchyna" and UDAR parties significantly decreased, while the rating for the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko increased. The last survey of the Razumkov Centre before the 2014 presidential elections recorded the following results: Solidarity – 22%; "Batkivshchyna" – 10%; UDAR – 7%; CPU – 5%; Radical Party – 5%; Strong Ukraine – 4%; "Svoboda" – 3%; Party of Regions – 3%.⁷²

⁶⁹ See: The Party of Regions is mobilising an anti-Maidan. – ZN, UA, 12 December 2013 https://zn.ua/POLITICS/partiya-regionov-provodit-mobilizaciyu-antimaydana-134878_.html.

⁷⁰ These are five legislative acts aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms of citizens to take part in protest actions, criminalisation of opposition and protest activities, strengthening of control and enabling of repression against civil society, adopted with gross irregularities of the Verkhovna Rada Regulations. For more details see: "More than five people may not go out without the knowledge of the police" – the Verkhovna Rada has limited the rights of protesters. – Ukrainian Pravda, 16 January 2014, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/01/16/7009721>.

⁷¹ The Solidarity Party, despite its predominantly formal existence, was mentioned in the surveys given the activities of Petro Poroshenko, with whom this structure is associated, as a potential presidential candidate.

⁷² The survey was conducted by the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Centre on 14-18 May 2014 in all regions of Ukraine, except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. 2,011 respondents aged over 18 years were polled. The theoretical sample error is 2.3%.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 25 MAY 2014

The 2014 presidential elections were early ones; the election campaign was conducted in a shorter term of three months.⁷³

The pre-election situation in Ukraine was characterised by a number of peculiarities. *First*, there was a considerable potential for distrust in society towards leaders of the parliamentary parties who personally took part in the Maidan and participated in negotiations with Viktor Yanukovich (in particular, Oleksandr Turchynov, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Vitaliy Klychko, and Oleh Tiahnybok). But during the protests, the rating of President Petro Poroshenko rose significantly. His rating (21%) as of March 2014 was almost double that of Vitaliy Klychko and Yulia Tymoshenko (12% and 11%, respectively).⁷⁴ In view of this, the previous favourite of the electoral competition, the leader of the UDAR Party, Vitaliy Klychko, declined to run for president in favour of Petro Poroshenko.

Second, the political forces opposing the new government failed to nominate a single candidate. Five candidates came out of the Party of Regions, and the party itself split during the process of determining its candidate. At a time when the support of the Party of Regions had gone down because of its identification with the Yanukovich regime, its candidates could not claim success.

The CEC registered 23 candidates for the presidency, among which political party leaders formed the majority (in particular, the Civic Position Party, Party of Regions, UNP, PMU, RPL, CPU, "Batkivshchyna", "Svoboda", and The Right Sector). 21 candidates made it to election day, three of whom (including the Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko) announced that they were declining to run.

The election campaign was conducted under the conditions of the occupation of the Crimea by Russia, armed riots in the East and South of Ukraine, the proclamation of the so-called "People's Republics" with the support of Russian troops in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the deployment of a counter-terrorism operation to respective territories by the Ukrainian authorities.

The elections were held in one round, and their winner, Petro Poroshenko (self-nominated), received almost 55% of the votes. The runners-up were the leaders of the "pro-European" parties – Yulia Tymoshenko ("Batkivshchyna" (12.81%)), Oleh Lyashko (the Radical Party (8.32%)), and Anatoliy Hrytsenko (the Civic Position (5.48%)). Among representatives of the former authorities, Serhiy Tihipko received 5.23% of the votes, leader of the Party of Regions Mykhailo Dobkin – 3.03%, and the leader of the CPU Petro Symonenko received 1.5%. Representatives of Tiahnybok's "Svoboda" and Yarosh's Right Sector received 1.16% and 0.7% of the votes, respectively.

⁷³ See: The Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Self-Removal of the President of Ukraine from the Exercise of his Constitutional Powers and the Appointment of Early Elections of the President of Ukraine" No.757 dated 22 February 2014.

⁷⁴ The survey was conducted by the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Centre on 5-10 March 2014. 2,008 respondents aged over 18 were polled in all regions of Ukraine. The theoretical sample error is 2.3%.

The result of the elections was largely determined by the society's aspirations for the early stabilisation of power. There was a widespread belief in society that Russia would hinder the election of a legitimate Ukrainian President in any way, and until one was elected, the threat of an armed invasion would remain high. The plea of Poroshenko's team for society also played a role in determining the winner in the first round for the sake of saving time and resources.

Thus, the 2014 presidential elections marked a new alignment of political forces in the country. In particular, the focus on European integration became the "mainstream" in the party and political environment: all the candidates who held the highest positions in the elections were representatives of the pro-European part of the political spectrum. The candidates nominated by the right radical forces did not receive a significant result. The former "party of power" lost its support: none of the candidates connected with the previous regime had a chance to win.

THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 26 OCTOBER 2014

Political agreements between the factions of a new majority in the Verkhovna Rada of 7th convocation created constitutional prerequisites for an early termination of powers of the Parliament and holding early elections, which was formalised by the corresponding Presidential Decree.⁷⁵

Elections were held according to the electoral law of 2011, with a majority-proportional electoral system in the ratio of 50/50 and an electoral barrier of 5%. Elections were not held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or in the territories of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions controlled by terrorist groups.⁷⁶ Elections were held in 198 out of 225 single-mandate electoral districts, and about 30.5 million voters were added to the lists.⁷⁷

An important feature of the elections was the double reformation of the party-political field: the first after the victory of the Maidan and the fall of the Viktor Yanukovich regime, and the second as a result of the early presidential elections. According to the results of these processes, only two parties – the CPU and "Svoboda" – out of the five that had factions in the Verkhovna Rada of 7th convocation (the Party of Regions, "Batkivshchyna", UDAR, "Svoboda" and CPU) remained unchanged by the start of the new electoral campaign.⁷⁸

Election lists were registered by 29 political parties (in the previous elections, 21 parties). The main contenders for getting into the Parliament were mainly parties that supported the Maidan or were created by politicians who took active part in it (Block of Petro Poroshenko, "Batkivshchyna", "Svoboda", Civil Position, People's Front, "Samopomich"). The former pro-government camp was represented by the Strong Ukraine Party of Serhiy Tihipko, the Opposition Bloc and the CPU.

⁷⁵ See: The Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Early Termination of the Powers of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the Appointment of Early Elections" No.690 dated 27 August 2014.

⁷⁶ Citizens who left these regions for other regions of Ukraine had the opportunity to participate in elections at the place of their actual stay by party lists.

⁷⁷ The official website of the Central Election Commission, section "Early elections of people's deputies of Ukraine 2014" – <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp001>.

⁷⁸ Neither party overcame the passage barrier in the elections by party lists.

The core of the campaign was constituted by the following topics: restoration of peace/protection of the country; maintenance of the economic situation/fighting the economic crisis; implementation of reforms/realisation of the European choice; and renovation of power (lustration)/fighting corruption. Accordingly, the main trend in the formation of electoral lists was the involvement of “new faces” – participants of the CTO, public activists, volunteers, and journalists. The campaign was predominantly conducted in electronic media through shorter timeframes.

The election barrier was overcome by six parties: the People's Front, the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko, “Samopomich”, the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, the Opposition Bloc, and “Batkivshchyna”. The vast majority of candidates elected in single-mandate electoral districts were nominated or supported by pro-government political forces.

The most unexpected thing in these elections was voter support for the Popular Front Party, the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko and “Samopomich”. The People's Front, starting from the fourth position, rose to the leading position, with 22% of support. However, the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko lost almost half of its initial rating (38%) during the campaign⁷⁹ and finished up in second place. “Samopomich” was able to get out of an impassable position (less than 2%) to third place (10.97% of votes).⁸⁰

The Coalition of deputy factions “European Ukraine”, which included the factions of the People's Front, the BPP, “Samopomich”, “Batkivshchyna” and the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, was formed on 27 November 2014 in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 8th convocation. The Coalition agreed upon and approved a Coalition Agreement and formed a new composition of the Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the leader of the People's Front, Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

THE 2015 LOCAL ELECTIONS

Elections of deputies to local councils, as well as of village, town and city heads, were held on 25 October 2015 under the new law.

The Law “On Local Elections”, adopted on 14 July 2015, provided for: elections under the relative majority system in single-mandate electoral districts in the elections of village, town heads, city heads in cities up to 90,000 voters, as well as in elections to village and town councils; an absolute majority system (voting in two rounds) in the elections of heads of large cities (more than 90,000 inhabitants); and voting by a proportional system on party lists in regional, district, city district, and city councils. Parties could nominate candidates in single-mandate electoral districts and electoral lists with attachment of candidates to electoral districts. The law provided for an increase in the electoral barrier from 3% to 5% and a prohibition on creating blocs.

⁷⁹ Based on the survey conducted by the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Centre on 5-10 September 2014 in all regions of Ukraine except the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. 2,014 respondents aged over 18 were polled. The theoretical sample error is 2.3%.

⁸⁰ The official website of the Central Election Commission, section “Early elections of people's deputies of Ukraine 2014”. – <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp300?PT001F01=910>.

The election campaign of the vast majority of parties stressed problems of the national rather than local level. The vast majority of parties, including members of the coalition – the All-Ukrainian Union “Batkivshchyna” and RPL – opposed the Government’s policy, using the topics of raising utility tariffs, prices, corruption, etc.

Voter turnout was significantly lower than at the early presidential and 2014 parliamentary elections; according to the CEC, ballots were received by 46.6% of voters. In general, the elections were held in accordance with international democratic standards.

The majority of elected deputies were self-nominated (99,287, more than 70%). Subsequent to the results of the elections, the largest number of deputies were nominated by BPP Solidarity (8,371) and “Batkivshchyna” (7,458). Other parties were as follows: Our Land – 3,800 deputies, the Opposition Bloc – 3,766, the Agrarian Party of Ukraine – 3,072, the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko – 2,329, UKROP – 2,129, “Svoboda” – 1,587, Revival – 1,572, “Samopomich” – 878.⁸¹

During the elections to the regional councils, over 25 parties overcame the 5% threshold, but in more than a third of regional councils, nine parties were represented, and only BPP “Solidarity” and “Batkivshchyna” were represented in all 23 regional councils. The People’s Front Party did not take part in the elections; its representatives ran with BPP “Solidarity”.

The elections confirmed stable support for parties belonging to the parliamentary coalition in all regions, as well as the relative success of a number of local and regional political parties that were actively established on the eve of the elections (in particular, the Native Place Party – Poltava Region, “Cherkashchany” – Cherkasy region, “For Concrete Actions!” – Khmelnytsky region).

Processes in the party system environment. After the change of government there have been significant changes in the legal environment of political parties.

Restoration of the 2004 wording of the Constitution. One of the first decisions of the Parliament after the fall of the authoritarian regime was the adoption on 21 February 2014 of the Law “On Restoring the Effects of Certain Provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine”. This decision restored the leading role of parties in shaping the legislative and executive power and determining the content of their political activities. On the basis of the restored Constitution, the parties participated in the formation of a coalition in the Verkhovna Rada of the 7th and 8th convocations and two coalition governments.

Electoral legislation. The 2014 early elections to the Verkhovna Rada were held under the same electoral law as the 2012 elections. This happened despite the significant public demand for the introduction of a proportional electoral system with open lists. As a result, two non-partisan deputy groups with weakly expressed identities were formed in the political structure of the Parliament, and there were a significant number of non-factional deputies.

⁸¹ The official website of the Central Election Commission, section “Local elections 2015”. – <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vm2015/wm001>.

On 14 July 2015, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a new Law “On Local Elections”. The law provides the parties with the right to nominate candidates in single-mandate electoral districts in the elections of deputies to village and settlement councils; candidates for the positions of village, settlement, and city heads; and lists of candidates in multi-mandate electoral districts for the deputy elections to the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, regional, district, city and city district councils, and assigning candidates to territorial electoral districts into which the corresponding multi-mandate district is divided.

The electoral barrier for the party’s participation in the distribution of mandates in multi-mandate electoral districts was increased from 3% to 5%. A “gender quota” for party lists was introduced – “the representation of persons of one sex in the electoral lists of candidates for deputies of local councils in multi-mandate electoral districts should be not less than 30% of the total number of candidates in the electoral list”.

During the discussion of the draft bill in the second reading, the following provisions were withdrawn: on participation of electoral blocs in elections and admission to participation in the elections only for those parties that were established not later than 365 days before the elections.

The consolidation of the proportional electoral system in the Law and the attempt to personify representation in local councils through assigning candidates from the list to territorial electoral districts can be considered a positive aspect for the parties. However, this innovation, despite the term “open list” chosen for its definition, cannot, in fact, be considered open.⁸² Some statutory provisions (in particular, the increase of the electoral barrier, the prohibition of the creation of blocs, the system of elections in multi-member electoral districts) have created certain advantages for more powerful parties.

The Law “On Lustration”. On 16 September 2014, in view of the negative social and political consequences of the previous government’s activities and the significant public demand to clean up the power structures, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law “On Lustration”.⁸³ Pursuant to Part 3, Article 1 of the Law, a prohibition on holding positions in government and local government bodies (other than elected positions) was imposed for different terms (5 or 10 years) on various categories of persons, particularly those who held high positions in central and local bodies during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich. Given the status of the Party of Regions during this period, it can be assumed that the Law resulted in the dismissal of a certain number of members of this party, as well as of other pro-government parties, from positions in state and local government bodies.⁸⁴

⁸² See: Interim report of the ENEMO International Election Observation Mission, 5-21 October 2015, p.4. – http://www.enemo.eu/press/Ukraine2015/Interim%20report%20UKR_23.10.2015.pdf.

⁸³ The Law “On the Purge of Power” dated 16 September 2014.

⁸⁴ It is not possible to obtain accurate data on this matter, given the lack of data on the party membership of lustrated persons in official sources.

At the same time, the unsatisfactory, according to society, conduct of lustration policy by the new government and the retention of many officials of the Yanukovich regime in their positions led to the spread of the phenomenon of spontaneous “garbage lustration”, which some people’s deputies of the 7th convocation from the Party of Regions were subjected to. Representatives of some radical parties (the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, the Right Sector) participated in these actions.

Laws on decommunisation. On 9 April 2015, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a number of laws known as the “laws on decommunisation”.⁸⁵ These laws have a significant impact on the appearance of the party system of Ukraine, in particular, through the judicial prohibition of the CPU’s activities.

The said laws have significant implications for the party system. Firstly, a taxing reason emerges for termination of activities and prohibition of participation in elections of existing parties which are based on communist ideology and use the “legacy” of the communist regime in their names, program documents and practical activities.⁸⁶ It also becomes impossible to create new parties of respective ideology.

The same relates to the parties which could use national socialist symbols (though there are no such parties in Ukraine as of the present moment). In general, this limits the creation and activities of “ultra” parties, mostly leftwing ones, and, at the same time, it can stimulate creation of leftofcentre parties of the modern European type.

Secondly, the adopted laws provide significant complications for the agitation and propaganda activities of parties which exploit post-Soviet, “nostalgic” mood of some voters.

Implementation of budgetary funding of political parties, increasing transparency of party finances. On 14 October 2014, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law “On the Principles of State Anti-Corruption Policy in Ukraine (Anti-corruption Strategy) for 2014-2017”, which provided for the introduction of direct budgetary funding of political parties’ statutory activities on the basis of election results, as well as a series of measures aimed at increasing the transparency of party and election campaign funding.

In order to implement the Strategy, on 8 October 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Preventing and Fighting Political Corruption”.

⁸⁵ “On the Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of the Promotion of Their Symbols”, “On the Perpetuation of the Victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939-1945”, “On Access to the Archives of Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991”, “On the Legal Status and Honouring the Memory of the Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the Twentieth Century”.

⁸⁶ As of 24 March 2015, there were four political parties registered in Ukraine which contained the word “communist” in the name; concerning three of them the Ministry of Justice made a decision on their non-compliance with the requirements of the aforementioned Law. See: Minister of Justice Petrenko: Three communist parties were prohibited from participating in the electoral process, being considered to be in violation of Ukrainian legislation. – Interfax-Ukraine, 24 July 2015.

Also on 8 October 2015, the Law “On Amendments to Article 87 of the Budget Code of Ukraine” (regarding the funding of political parties) was adopted, according to which the State Budget for 2017 and budgets for subsequent years will provide funds for “state financial support of political parties in the forms prescribed by the law”.

Starting 1 July 2016, pursuant to the Law “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Preventing and Fighting Political Corruption”, parliamentary political parties began to receive state funding for statutory activities; starting 1 January 2016, mandatory quarterly reporting of all registered parties on property, income, expenses and financial obligations was introduced and submitted to the National Anti-Corruption Agency.⁸⁷

According to the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, budget funds amounted to 90% of 179.8 million in total expenditures of parliamentary parties. Almost half of the received budget funds were spent by the parties on the use of mass media.⁸⁸ At the same time, according to CVU estimates, after the introduction of state funding, the number of official party employees has increased.⁸⁹

The Law “On Party Dictatorship”. On 27 February 2016, the so-called Law on Party Dictatorship came into force – amendments to the Law “On Elections of People’s Deputies of Ukraine”, which allows political parties to exclude candidates for people’s deputies from the electoral lists after the elections, including the extension of their influence to the lists of candidates for the 2014 elections.

The law was adopted after many unsuccessful attempts, despite the protest of NGOs and the negative conclusions of domestic⁹⁰ and international experts.⁹¹ A group of people’s deputies appealed to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine regarding the Law. At the same time, the Law has been repeatedly applied in practice by various political forces.⁹²

⁸⁷ Analysis by the Agency of reports of parliamentary parties for the fourth quarter of 2016 found certain violations of the legislation only in the report of the All-Ukrainian Union “Batkivshchyna”. For more details on funding amounts and reporting, see the Website of the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, <https://nazk.gov.ua/derzhavne-finansuvannya>.

⁸⁸ For more details see: Information and analytical materials of the CVU for the International Conference “Party Reform as a Key to Stabilising the Political Situation in Ukraine” on 27 February 2017, p.19-21.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Poroshenko legitimised the ‘party dictatorship’”. – Ukrainian Pravda, 25 February 2016.

⁹¹ See: Opinion on the Amendments to the Law on elections regarding the exclusion of candidates from party lists adopted by the Council of Democratic Elections at its 55th meeting (Venice, 9 June 2016) and by the Venice Commission at its 107th Plenary session (Venice, 10-11 June 2016). – The website of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2016\)018-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2016)018-e); “Venetian”: the Law “On Party Dictatorship” must be revised”. – Ukrainian Pravda, 11 June 2016.

⁹² In particular, it was applied by the BPP, RPL, and “Samopomich”.

Conditions for opposition activity. In the early stage, due to the victory of the Maidan there was a rotation of parties in terms of “government – opposition”. Accordingly, the Party of Regions and the Communist Party became the parliamentary opposition. The stage is characterised by the emergence of specific conditions for the “new” opposition’s activity.

On the one hand, democratic norms and free political competition were restored in the country, and opposition candidates and parties were able to participate in presidential and parliamentary elections. On the other hand, the opposition parties experienced the consequences of their leadership at different levels and a part of their members during the Maidan, as well as during the period when the occupation of Crimea and the separatist movements in the East and South of Ukraine began.⁹³ Their opinions on assessments and interpretations of Russian aggression, the activities of terrorist groups in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, actions of new Ukrainian authorities aimed at countering aggression, restoring Ukraine’s territorial integrity and settling the conflict also played a part.

Among the legal consequences for opposition parties were criminal cases instituted against the former senior state leadership, a number of people’s deputies and deputies of local councils, ordinary members of parties accused of criminal offenses (in particular, the shooting of protesters on the Maidan, theft of state property and other economic crimes, attempts to violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine, supporting terrorism, etc.). These actions were individual in nature and were not generally directed against the parties. Currently, none of the defendants of a high level has been brought to responsibility under the law.

The exception is an attempt to get an injunction against the Communist Party of Ukraine. On 8 July 2014, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine filed an administrative suit in the Kyiv District Court, in which the state body requested that the Court ban the Party on the basis of “commission by the Communist Party in the person of its leaders and members of actions aimed at violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine” and other grounds established by the Constitution.⁹⁴ As of July 2017, no ruling had been made in this case yet. At the same time, as noted above, the court banned the activities of the CPU under the decommunisation law.

The political consequences for the opposition parties were reflected in the “freezing” of the Party of Regions’ activities and its partial reformation into the “Opposition Bloc” Party, and in a significant decrease in the level of

⁹³ It should be noted that none of the parties supporting the Yanukovich regime recognised its responsibility for the victims of the Maidan and other, even more tragic consequences of their stay in power in the period in question.

⁹⁴ The Ministry of Justice vs. the CPU. Administrative lawsuit. – Historical Pravda, 9 July 2014, <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2014/07/9/143697>.

support for the parties of the Yanukovich regime, which affected the results of their participation in the early presidential and parliamentary elections. Deputies of factions and groups which did not form a part of the coalition in the Verkhovna Rada of the 8th convocation from the start of its activities are not represented in its leadership and do not take the lead in any of the parliamentary committees. The sections eliminated in 2011, in particular, the section that defines the rights of the parliamentary opposition, have not been restored in the Law “On Regulations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine”.

In 2014-2015, there was a sharp increase in the negative attitude towards the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine and their representatives among residents of various regions, especially Western and Central ones. This led to such radical manifestations as the demolitions of the offices of these parties in Kyiv and other settlements and “spontaneous lustrations” of their representatives. In April 2015, Oleh Kalashnikov, one of the activists of the Party of Regions and organiser of the “Anti-Maidan” and the journalist Oles Buzyna, known for his anti-Ukrainian and anti-Maidan position, were killed in Kyiv. The investigation of these cases continues.

Even during actions on the Maidan, the Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Poltava, and Chernivtsi regional councils decided to ban the activities and symbols of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Party of Regions in the territory of their regions.⁹⁵ In general, despite the lack of legal consequences of such “prohibitions”, the mood of society in the first years after the Maidan led to a decrease in the activity of opposition parties, especially in the conduct of mass political and campaign activities, due to the possibility of various negative consequences.

At the same time, opposition parties had opportunities for full-fledged, unhindered activity in most regions, which was shown by their active participation in the 2015 local elections and election results. And a growing dissatisfaction of citizens with the authorities in 2016-2017 resulted in the transition of some of the ruling parties that were in power after the Maidan to the opposition and formation of new opposition forces (for example, the For Life Party).

Main societal cleavage and issue dimensions. In the early stage, the main social division that determined the line of inter-party distinction was the sociocultural cleavage that at the end of 2014 gave way, in terms of relevance, to the socioeconomic one.

The most relevant issue dimensions of the party system at this time are, first of all, the socioeconomic dimension and the indicator of support for the regime. Cultural-ethnic and foreign policy dimensions remain relevant, but to a lesser extent.

⁹⁵ A ban of the Party of Regions and the CPU was initiated in Ukraine. The first to implement the ban are Ternopil, Poltava and Ivano-Frankivsk. – The website “Mukachevo.net”, 26 January 2014, <http://www.mukachevo.net/ua/News>.

As mentioned above, during this stage, changes took place in the hierarchy of societal cleavages that define the main lines of inter-party division. The socioeconomic cleavage is relevant again due to a significant decline in the living standards of citizens, in particular, because of the Russian aggression that resulted in huge territorial losses and damaged Ukraine's economy, as well as due to unpopular actions of the authorities dictated, among other things, by the conditions for obtaining assistance from international financial organisations.⁹⁶ While in 2014, 51% of respondents indicated a difficult financial situation, in 2015 their number increased to 75%; 56% of Ukrainians began to economise on groceries, 53% on clothes.⁹⁷

In modern conditions, socioeconomic cleavage manifests itself as dissatisfaction of a majority of population with social and economic policy of the government and implementation of reforms.⁹⁸ Ukrainian society often identifies the government with oligarchic groups that control national economy. Both pro-government parties and their opponents used the slogan of "deoligarchisation".

The shift of the sociocultural cleavage to the second place, in turn, is determined by significant changes in public sentiment in Ukraine, in particular, the growing level of patriotism in the face of Russian armed aggression, and a reduced urgency of social and other sensitive issues (in particular, linguistic and confessional ones), and an increase in the level of support for the Western vector of foreign policy, and an increasingly negative attitude towards Russia spreading to the East and South regions.⁹⁹

The influence of this factor is evidenced by both the course of political processes in 2014-2017 (the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections, the political crisis of 2015-2016) and a change of emphasis in the inter-party polemics in Parliament, where most of the debates and conflicts now concern socioeconomic rather than sociocultural or foreign policy issues.

⁹⁶ In particular, the increase in prices for gas and heat supply for the population, the implementation of pension reform with a gradual increase in the retirement age, and the lifting of the moratorium on the purchase and sale of agricultural land. See: The IMF put forward new conditions for Ukraine: the text of the memorandum on cooperation has been published. In order to continue receiving funding from the IMF, Ukraine will have to raise the retirement age. – The Apostrophe, 16 September 2016, the Letter of Intent to the International Monetary Fund and the Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies dated 18 August 2014. – The website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/n0360500-14/page>.

⁹⁷ Results of sociological research of the Razumkov Centre (May 2014 and 2015) – The Internet website of the Razumkov Centre, <http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/polls.php>.

⁹⁸ See: Results of the sociological study "Citizens' opinion on the situation in Ukraine and the status of reform implementation". – The website of the Razumkov Centre, 11 June 2015, http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/news.php?news_id=635.

⁹⁹ See: The identity of Ukrainian citizens in new conditions: status, trends, regional peculiarities. Information and analytical materials of the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2016, No.3-4, pp.46-51.

Impact of the FIG on the party system. The Maidan and armed conflict with Russia have significantly affected relations between the political parties and FIGs. *First*, one of the demands of the Maidan was the removal of the oligarchs from power; accordingly, “deoligarchisation” became a demand for political parties that claimed to represent Maidan’s interests, and funding by oligarchs was a factor that reduced electoral support. Accordingly, in the 2014 election campaign the parties tried to demonstrate the transparency of their own sources of funding and their lack of involvement in oligarchic finance.¹⁰⁰

Second, there have been significant changes in the balance of power between the main oligarchic groups. The removal of Viktor Yanukovich from power, international sanctions and criminal proceedings against his entourage, the loss of Crimea and armed conflict in Donbas, as well as the “deoligarchisation” policy of the new government, led to a deteriorating position of oligarchic groups that supported the Party of Regions and parties that were “technological projects” of the government.

There was an undisguised connection between oligarchic groups and the Opposition Bloc Party, which various deputies were oriented to the business groups of Dmytro Firtash, Serhiy Lyovochkin and Rinat Akhmetov.¹⁰¹ After the appointment of Ihor Kolomoisky as the head of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Administration, the positions of the “Privat” Group strengthened for a while. Representatives of the Group created their own political project, the Ukrainian Association of Patriots Party (UKROP), and the Group is thought to have influence on other parties as well.¹⁰² After the dismissal of Ihor Kolomoisky from office, relations between the Group and the government acquired a conflicting nature.¹⁰³

At the same time, the media reported on the attempts by some representatives of the FIGs to work out a “joint decision” on how to influence the government, where an initiative to create a new party was put forward.¹⁰⁴ The initiative to create a new party by the head of the board of directors of the company “Industrial Union of Donbas”, people’s deputy of Ukraine Serhiy Taruta, was mentioned above. The intentions of representatives of

¹⁰⁰ Although there were representatives of business structures of various levels in the lists of all parliamentary parties in the passing parts. See the analysis of party electoral lists on the website of the Information Agency “Slovo i dilo”, <http://www.slovoidilo.ua>.

¹⁰¹ See: R. Kravets, M. Zhartovska Akhmetov filed for divorce. What’s going on in the Opposition Bloc Party. – Ukrainian Pravda, 25 January 2017.

¹⁰² In particular, on the Vidrodzhennya Party. See: Vicious Circle. The President, the Government and oligarchs. – Ukrainian Pravda, 7 September 2015.

¹⁰³ An illustrative example of such a conflict in the party and political arena has become the fierce competition between the representatives of UKROP, Hennadiy Korban, and BPP Solidarity, Serhiy Berezhenko, in the midterm elections to the Verkhovna Rada in district No.205 (Chernihiv Region).

¹⁰⁴ The oligarchs had a secret meeting at which they discussed what to do with the authorities – a deputy. – Ukrainian Pravda, 4 August 2015.

business groups of the former government, now located outside of Ukraine, to create a party have also been reported.¹⁰⁵

As of 2017, the parliamentary parties did not have “monopoly donors”, using, as a rule, the support of business groups and structures of a different scale.

Fewer cases of lobbying the interests of specific FIGs in the legislative process were observed in activity of the parties of the parliamentary coalition. However, the growing interest of business in creating local political projects on the eve of the 2015 local elections testifies to the fact that political parties continue to be seen as an effective instrument for realisation of economic interests.

External influence. During this stage, external influence played a significant role. It acquired an extreme character on the part of Russia – open armed aggression and the annexation of parts of Ukraine’s territory. Western moral and political support was an important factor in the victory of the Revolution of Dignity, and Western partners’ reaction to Russian aggression (*support of Ukraine by the EU and the USA, the introduction of international sanctions against Russia, economic and financial assistance to Ukraine*) gave the country the opportunity to withstand armed conflict and begin internal reforms.

The external impact on the party system of Ukraine has been an increasing influence of “pro-European” political parties and, accordingly, a significant weakening of the pro-Russian political forces. In addition, Western influence manifested itself in the implementation of sanctions against a number of Ukrainian politicians who were leaders of the Party of Regions; and Russian influence – in the provision of asylum and protection from criminal prosecution to some of them.

Western influence resulted in a significant intensification of contacts between the Ukrainian pro-European political parties and their representatives and European parties. Now two Ukrainian parties (“Batkivshchyna” and UDAR) are members of the European People’s Party. Active contacts with the EPP with the prospect of membership are being carried out by the BPP and the People’s Front Party.¹⁰⁶ At the beginning of this stage, Russia continued to support the CPU, which is part of the Union of Communist Parties – CPSU; leader of the Communist Party, Petro Symonenko, is a member of the Secretariat of this Union.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ See: Azarov and Klyuyev are preparing for the creation of a new political party in Ukraine – the media. – UNIAN, 17 June 2015, <http://www.unian.net/politics/1090574-azarov-i-klyuyev-gotovyatsya-k-sozdaniyu-v-ukraine-novoy-politicheskoy-partii-smi.html>. See also: S. Adamenko. the “Successful Ukraine” of Oleksandr Klymenko: who funds the fifth column”. – Economic Pravda, 15 December 2016, <https://www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2016/12/15/614537>.

¹⁰⁶ The representative of the National Front, people’s deputy Georgii Logvynskiyi, even became the vice-president of the EPP Group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. See: The people’s deputy Logvynskiyi was elected vice-president of the European People’s Party Group in the PACE. – RBC-Ukraine, 23 June 2015, <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/nardep-logvynskiyi-izbran-vitse-prezidentom-1435045952.html>.

¹⁰⁷ See: The UCP-CPSU website, <http://skpkpss.ru/rukovodstvo>.

The activities of foreign institutions in Ukraine continue, contributing to the institutional development of domestic political parties (in particular, the NDI, IRI, German political foundations).

The activities of international partners to support reforms in Ukraine are carried out with active involvement of political party representatives, both from the parliamentary corps and experts, which helps to develop the capacity of pro-European political parties.

At the same time, there are certain problems connected with Western influence. In particular, the international pressure on Ukraine for the unconditional implementation of the Minsk Agreements, despite their non-implementation by the other side, Russia, creates tension in relations between the pro-European parties (in particular, between the presidential BPP, on the one hand, and the RPL and “Samopomich”, on the other), and contributes to strengthening of the positions of ultra-right parties.

Another problem is that Western partners fail to fully consider political and other separate aspects of fighting corruption in Ukraine. In actively supporting (including financially) anti-corruption non-governmental organisations, individual politicians and public activists, who shift the responsibility for corruption exclusively to pro-governmental political parties, Western partners do not always pay attention to the politicised¹⁰⁸ and not always sufficiently substantiated nature of such accusations. Under such conditions, members of the parliamentary coalition bear a double burden: as a result of certain socially unpopular reforms which Western partners insist on (see above), and because of constantly “generalised” accusations of corruption.

The same is true for the assessment of certain anti-corruption measures that were identified as necessary for Ukraine to obtain a visa-free regime (for example, the introduction of a general electronic declaration of incomes and property by politicians and civil servants with free access to the content of declarations).

Under such conditions, the political forces that are now in power and are ready to continue to carry out necessary but unpopular reforms (for example, pension and land reforms) risk losing majority in the future composition of the Verkhovna Rada. On the other hand, the positions of populist parties, which will have corresponding consequences for state policy, are significantly strengthened.

¹⁰⁸ This is aimed at the realisation of the political interests of certain politicians and the parties related to them, for example, the early termination of the powers of the functioning Verkhovna Rada and the appointment of early elections, in case of which the relevant parties would have a better chance of getting into the new Parliament or strengthening their positions therein, as well as discrediting political opponents.

It should also be noted that in the “hybrid” war with Russia, one of the tasks of the aggressor state is the delegitimisation of the power institutions of Ukraine, including through the creation of a “totally corrupt” image of them, with a view to their subsequent replacement by more “convenient” ones or destabilisation of the situation in the country. This aspect of anti-corruption activity is still not sufficiently investigated in Ukraine.

Processes in the party system. At this stage, the structure of the party system in Ukraine includes 10 political parties, which are represented in Parliament or are able to influence the political process. The medium-sized and small parties continue to coexist within the system. At the same time, during this stage, significant changes have taken place in the system.

In 2014–2015, the system remained a bipolar one. One pole was represented by the parties of the parliamentary coalition (the BPP, People's Front, "Batkivshchyna", RPL, "Samopomich"), and the other (whose weight has decreased considerably), by the Opposition Bloc. The level of representation of extreme right political forces in the Parliament has decreased significantly; "traditional" left parties were not represented at all.

The main lines of division in the party system took place between the pro-government coalition and the opposition, first of all, in terms of their attitude to the conflict in Donbas, actions of the government against the FIGs that support the opposition, and the lustration and decommunisation policies. Anti-systemic parties disappeared from the political arena after the ban on the activities of the Communist Party of Ukraine.

However, in 2015–2016 the situation changed significantly. The main factor of changes in the party system was the actualisation of the socioeconomic cleavage in the society.

Because of the economic crisis and the decline in the standard of living of citizens, their attitude towards the government grew significantly worse; they were disenchanted with reforms, which were expected to bring about an improvement in the standard of living rather than a decline.

As a result, the support for the two main parties of the ruling coalition, the BPP and especially the Popular Front, declined.¹⁰⁹ However, socially unpopular reforms, especially the increase in tariffs for utilities, were actively used to criticise the authorities not only by opposition forces (the Opposition Bloc), but also by coalition members ("Batkivshchyna", Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, "Samopomich").¹¹⁰

Further, the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, "Batkivshchyna" and "Samopomich" left the coalition and started a campaign for the resignation of the Government of Arseniy Yatsenyuk, early termination of the powers of the Verkhovna Rada and the holding of early parliamentary elections.

¹⁰⁹ According to surveys conducted by the Razumkov Centre, in November 2014, 15% of respondents were prepared to vote for the People's Front, and 19% for the BPP. In November 2016 these indicators were, respectively, 1.3% and 9.5%.

¹¹⁰ While these parties were still in the coalition, they did not support government bills that had socially unpopular consequences, publicly criticised the Government, organised mass protest campaigns in the regions against its decisions (in particular, the campaign against the increase in tariffs organised by the All-Ukrainian Union "Batkivshchyna" involving the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko and the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" (Freedom)).

These actions were also supported by the Opposition Bloc. Some representatives of the faction of another member of the coalition, BPP Solidarity, “anti-corruption” activists, social movements and newly created parties of the corresponding direction (in particular, the People’s Control and the Party of Ordinary People) actively joined the campaign.¹¹¹

Formally, the reason for resignation was meant to be the Government’s report on the results of its annual activities (11 December 2015), following which the Parliament was to adopt a no-confidence resolution on the Government. However, given the risks of destabilisation from such a step, the presidential faction in the Parliament refused to support this initiative.

The situation stabilised in April 2016, when the BPP “Solidarity” and People’s Front factions reached a compromise, formed a new parliamentary coalition and approved a new Cabinet of Ministers headed by Volodymyr Groysman. Accordingly, other parties in the parliament declared their opposition.¹¹²

A significant public demand to fight corruption, the ineffectiveness of the new government’s actions to hold Yanukovich regime members responsible for corruption, and corruption by its representatives, together with the decline in the standard of living of the overwhelming majority of citizens, brought this problem to the highest level of public agenda.¹¹³ **The fight against corruption began to play an independent role as the basis for creation of new political parties.**

As noted above, the People’s Control and the Party of Ordinary People were created on this basis; they both accused the government of corruption and populism. Significant expectations (combination of anti-corruption issues with “radical reformism”) were associated with the activities of Mikheil Saakashvili and his “team” and the group of “Eurooptimists” in the Ukrainian Parliament.¹¹⁴ It was predicted that a new unified political force with an anti-corruption focus would emerge from the process of the public anti-corruption forums initiated by Saakashvili.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ During the campaign, the main instrument was the public but unproven accusations of corruption of the Government and its individual representatives, voiced by well-known journalists, public activists and politicians led by Mikheil Saakashvili.

¹¹² In the summer of 2016 the leader of the BYuT Yulia Tymoshenko tried to form another “united opposition” in the Verkhovna Rada with the participation of the RPL, Samopomich and other anti-government parties (except the Opposition Bloc). However, this idea has not been realised yet.

¹¹³ Actualisation of the problem was promoted by the active public activities of non-governmental organisations, anti-corruption activists and politicians involved in the implementation of various anti-corruption projects funded by foreign partners of Ukraine, as well as a very significant presence of this topic in the media.

¹¹⁴ People’s deputies Serhiy Leschenko, Mustafa Nayem, Svitlana Zalischuk, Viktor Chumak and others.

¹¹⁵ According to the preliminary estimates of sociologists, based on the level of support of the Head of the Odesa Regional State Administration, such a party could expect 10-15% of the votes of the electorate.

However, representatives of Saakashvili's entourage declared the creation of their own "Khvylya" (Wave) party;¹¹⁶ the active formation of its structures took place after the resignation of its leader from the position of the chairman of the Odesa Regional State Administration and his transition to opposition to all the authorities, including the President.¹¹⁷ In turn, people's deputies who were members of the "Eurooptimists" group, Svitlana Zalischuk, Serhiy Leshchenko, and Mustafa Nayem, joined the leadership of the Democratic Alliance Party in July 2016.

Despite negotiations in various formats,¹¹⁸ consolidation of efforts by leaders of various anti-corruption forces did not take place, and leaders themselves (including Mikheil Saakashvili) have largely lost the vote of confidence of the electorate.¹¹⁹ At the same time, the sensitivity of society to anti-corruption rhetoric feeds the tendency towards populism in most opposition parties, exploiting the dichotomy of "society" vs "corrupt government".

Another trend in the party system in 2015-2016 was strengthening of the right wing. The return from the CTO area of a large number of operation participants who fought in the volunteer battalions and regular units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, etc., created a favourable ground for the strengthening of already established political structures and the formation of new ones involving former combatants.

In general, these parties had a predominantly national-patriotic orientation with a tendency towards radicalism because of their history of origin and certain ideological characteristics of CTO participants.¹²⁰

Today, "Svoboda" (Freedom), UKROP (created with the support of the "Privat" Group), the National Movement "Yarosh State Initiative", the

¹¹⁶ The initiative group on its creation was represented by the former Deputy Prosecutor General, member of the "Saakashvili team" David Sakvarelidze; another Deputy Prosecutor General, Vitaliy Kasko; and people's deputy Viktor Chumak.

¹¹⁷ The Movement of New Forces of Saakashvili will become a party and may be united with Samopomich. – Ukrainian Pravda, 26 November 2016, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/11/26/7128018>.

¹¹⁸ The Democratic Alliance, Civic Position and Samopomich were considered as possible partners of the political force of Mikheil Saakashvili at different times.

¹¹⁹ According to surveys, less than 3% of voters in general were prepared to vote for Saakashvili's "Khvylya" and the Democratic Alliance in September 2016. Press-release "The level of support for political parties in the Verkhovna Rada elections: September 2016". – The Internet website of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, <http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=647&page=1>. After disclosure of information on the purchase of expensive real estate by Serhiy Leschenko and Svitlana Zalischuk, which caused some resonance in society, they, as well as Mustafa Nayem, were withdrawn from the governing bodies of the Democratic Alliance Party. See: The new leadership of the Democratic Alliance Party does not include Leshchenko, Nayem and Zalischuk – Ukrainian Pravda, 20 November 2016, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/11/20/7127358>.

¹²⁰ See: Identity characteristics of citizens involved in the armed resistance to Russian aggression. – National Security and Defence, 2016, No.3-4, pp.105-112.

Right Sector, and the National Corps party¹²¹ operate in this wing. On 13 April 2017, the constituent congress of the Social and Political Platform of Nadiya Savchenko was held.¹²² On 16 March 2017, three of the mentioned parties – “Svoboda” (Freedom), the Right Sector and the National Corps – declared unity of efforts and their opposition to the current government.¹²³

Thus, in 2014-2015, the Ukrainian party system retained features of a moderate pluralism. However, in April 2016, the “ruling formula” of the party system changed,¹²⁴ and the system itself began to move towards polarisation.

As of June 2017, the party system of Ukraine included a “political centre” in the form of a coalition between the BPP, the People’s Front Party and several opposition groups.

The first of them is represented by the Opposition Bloc and the new political project “For Life” (Vadym Rabynovych, Yevhen Murayev), which mainly focuses on former electorate of the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine, and is close to passing the electoral threshold.

The other opposition group consists of “Batkivshchyna”, RPL and “Samopomich”¹²⁵ (whose parliamentary factions, however, show different levels of opposition to the coalition and the Government), as well as the Civic Position party. These parties are focused on the “post-Maidan” electorate. This opposition group can also comprise parties, which are positioned as “anti-corruption” ones (although all opposition parties tend to accuse the government of corruption).

The ultra-right parties form the third opposition group.

Thus, the tendency towards polarisation of the party system in Ukraine re-emerged in the form of the existence of various opposition groups. Obviously, the Ukrainian party system will have to go through another stage of polarised pluralism in the near future, when the opposition is formed both on ideological grounds and from among populist and radical parties.

¹²¹ The party was established in October 2016 on the basis of the Azov Civilian Corps; it was headed by Andriy Biletsky.

¹²² After the release of the Ukrainian servicewoman and people’s deputy of Ukraine Nadiya Savchenko from Russian captivity, the chances of a hypothetical party of CTO participants which she could head were considered to be high in political science circles. However, after the beginning of her active political activity as a people’s deputy of Ukraine, the optimism about the chances of such a party has significantly decreased.

¹²³ See: Svoboda, RS and National Corps unite – they signed a manifesto. – Ukrainian Pravda, 16 March 2017.

¹²⁴ According to Meier’s approach, this is considered to be a significant change in the party system. For more details see p.8 of this edition.

¹²⁵ The Samopomich Association during 2016-2017 suffered rating losses which were caused by a fire in the garbage dump in the city of Lviv and other problems around the activities of the leader of the party, Head of the city of Lviv Andriy Sadovyi.

This situation will not be unique to Ukraine, but part of a general global trend. However, for further stable development of the country along the European vector, it is of fundamental importance that the party system has a powerful “centre” able to take responsibility for government activity, including the responsibility for necessary or compelled, but socially unpopular actions.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Party systems in transitional countries, including Ukraine, are classified by an overall state of society, citizens’ sociopolitical affiliations, the experience and practice of their self-organisation, nature of political regime, attitude of the ruling elite to political parties and their development, and general structure of the political system.

During all stages of its development, party life in Ukraine was defined by extremely high level of intensity, matching the development pace of society and formation of Ukrainian political (civic) nation in new conditions. This refers to intra-party processes, inter-party relations in a struggle to attain and exercise power, conditions for their activity and societal perception.

Party system formation in Ukraine underwent six stages of development (time periods) on the basis of which the system substantially changed its appearance. The party system has evolved from being atomized (the initial stage) to a system of moderate pluralism with a tendency towards polarisation – at an ongoing, unfinished stage. During the evolution, it took a shape of polarised and moderate pluralism system, and during the fifth stage – a “hegemonic party” system.

Throughout the history of the formation of Ukrainian party system, the number of its subjects tended to decrease. Each subsequent parliamentary election saw a decrease in the number of effective parties at both the electoral and parliamentary levels.

There has been an increase in the degree of party system institutionalisation, the most prominent indicators of which are: increasing level of parliamentary representation and party participation in formation of a new government; gradual stabilisation of electoral sympathies and reduction of electoral variability; and a certain increase in geographic uniformity of voter support for leading political forces.

Political parties played a leading role in setting the main goals for society development and state-building during the first and second stages of the party system evolution. Subsequently, this role was subject to change. If processes of “power partitioning” gained a new momentum at the fourth stage, the

fifth stage saw attempts to monopolise power by one party (Party of Regions). After the Revolution of Dignity, political parties gained an increasing role in defining main directions of state policy and its implementation, along with substantial (both quantitative and qualitative) changes to the party system.

The nature of the party system of Ukraine was largely determined by the way its subjects – political parties, were formed. From the initial stage of multi-party system and until the early elections of 1994, parties in Ukraine were organised from “bottom-up”. Further, a gradual shift to a “top-down” party formation took place. The pragmatic factors exerted growing influence during the creation of new parties at each stage of the party system development.

In the course of social evolution, division lines between political parties operating within the party system have changed.

At first stages, ideological component played a significant role, and the division took place along the “left-right” line. From the third stage, along with formation of the non-partisan power and promotion of the “centrist” ideology, the situation had changed, and attitude towards the existing political regime (pro-presidential opposition parties) started to play the main role. At the end of the third – beginning of the fourth stage, sociocultural factors formed the basis for inter-parliamentary division. The sixth stage marked a reduced importance of sociocultural factor and a growing role of socioeconomic cleavage coupled with party attitude to existing political regime.

The process of party system formation and development in Ukraine was influenced by a number of factors, among which institutional (political and legal conditions for the functioning of party systems) and social factors (those arising from the state of society) can be distinguished – main societal cleavages, influence of financial-industrial groups (“oligarchic influence”), external influences (Russia and the West). At various stages, these factors were of different value and nature, and had disparate repercussions on party system.

Among institutional factors, the electoral system, the place of parties in the system of power and nature of the political regime had the most influence. These factors stimulated the development of political parties (both positive and negative, depending on electoral system and political regime), gradual crystallisation of the “core” of the party system, and determined changes in its configuration (the number of centres or “poles”, the main lines of divisions).

Socioeconomic and sociocultural cleavage in particular, exerted strong influence on party system at various stages. Influence of the latter determined the nature of political parties, first of all, electoral behaviour and content of their activity; also affecting the configuration of the party system, by placing sociocultural cleavage as the main division line between its centres at several stages.

Influence of business structures – financial-industrial groups (FIGs), on the party system grew and in the third/fourth stages, it became dominant. If in the second/third stages only some political parties were the instruments of FIGs, further the oligarchic structures gained full control over all major political parties in Ukraine. The influence of FIGs and political corruption became immediate components of the process of forming electoral party (bloc) lists in elections at all levels, and in adopting decisions by Parliament and other institutions. Starting with the first stage, the process of “power partitioning” has increased the interest of FIGs in political parties. At the same time, the influence of FIGs on the party system has somewhat decreased during the last stage.

If, at early stages, the influence of FIGs contributed to multi-party pluralism, and hence the development of democracy, subsequently, the control of FIGs over the activity of parties limited their ability to perform their true functions, contributed to increasing social distrust and devalued democratic values in the eyes of society.

The external factor influencing the party system at various times was different in terms of direction, intensity and nature. A growing influence of this factor was observed during the third/fourth stages. Russian and Western influences during the fifth and sixth stages were of the highest intensity and their vectors were directed diametrically opposite each other. At the same time, only the Russian factor had a powerful destructive effect on the situation.

The fourth stage of the evolution of the party system saw a growing dependence of leading political parties and their leaders on media, television in particular (mostly owned by FIGs), which only amplified “oligarchic” influence on parties and party system.

Intense changes in political parties and party system of Ukraine (they reached the greatest intensity at initial stages, as well as from the fourth stage of the party system development) were: the creation of ideological parties filling main ideological niches; formation of “parties of power”, “parties as business-projects”, “technological parties”; the gradual establishment of control over the leading political forces by the largest financial-industrial groups; “de-ideologisation” of politics and parties as its subjects; the evolution of parties from ideological to “pragmatic” and from class-oriented (socio-structural) to catch-all parties.

Representing the interests of society by political parties in Ukraine became predominantly instrumental in nature, when certain public moods, socioeconomic interests, sociocultural and geopolitical orientations of citizens were used to fight for power. This resulted in a reduced role of programmatic

and ideological component, growing importance of the “leader” factor, and placed some limitation on intra-party democracy. During several stages, tendencies towards regionalisation of voter support appeared, which was interrupted only at the last stage, as well as the establishment of the so-called “bloc” format of the party system.

Civic protests in 2013-2014, which led to events known as the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and Russian military aggression against Ukraine together with change of the society’s outlook caused a significant reformatting of the existing party system – its subjects have changed – political parties, relations between them and new division lines.

An important feature of this period was the increasing influence of civil society on the overall situation, politics, and political parties. A new defining feature of the evolution of the party system at this stage was the fact that new political forces based on civil society organisations were formed and their representatives joined the government.

At the same time, difficult socioeconomic situation, low income of the population, numerous mistakes in carrying out national policy and implementation of key reforms have led to a drop in public confidence in leading political parties and growing support for frankly populist rhetoric. The necessity to confront external aggression led to the militarisation of public consciousness and influenced the activity of a part of political parties.

The sixth stage of the party system evolution saw the creation of “leadership” political forces, reduction in the value of programmatic and ideological component, communication between parties and the society shifting to the virtual space, reduction in direct contact with voters, and further weakening of the level of accountability to society.

The introduction of mechanisms for state financing of political parties and financial control by authorised bodies give grounds to hope for a gradual shift towards increasing financial transparency of parties, reducing their dependence on FIGs. But this process, obviously, will be long lasting. Another important and fundamentally new institutional factor of influence was the policy of “decommunisation”, which resulted in the activities of the Communist Party of Ukraine and other communist parties losing their legal status.

The problems of Ukrainian political parties such as lack of attention to programmatic and ideological components, weak ties with society, lack of accountability and responsibility to voters, the influence of FIGs, and the lack of intra-party democracy still persist. Main problems of the party system at this

stage are: poor representation of the existing spectrum of interests of various social groups; the conflicting relations between main subjects and “poles” of the party system, which damage the stability of the political system and hamper effective implementation and timely adjustment of political course.

The inability of major political parties and party system to adequately represent the interests of society and their noncompliance with social problems have resulted in a critically low level of public confidence in existing political parties and a clearly articulated public demand for new political forces and new leaders.

According to public opinion polls,¹²⁶ citizens would like to see political parties protecting national interests and interests of their voters, fulfilling their election promises and engaging in active dialogue with the society on actual problems.

Citizens are ready to accept parties of different organisational type – built on a fixed membership, “personnel” or “electoral”, both ideological and aimed at achieving certain socially important goals. Voters pay special attention to non-corrupt nature of party financing, their independence from FIGs and the authority of the party leader.

Preserving current nature of political parties and the party system may hinder democratic development of Ukrainian society and obstruct formation of strong and effective state institutions that would enjoy public confidence and implementation of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration path. At the same time, the functioning of a democratic state is impossible without political parties; therefore, non-partisanship and the decreasing role of political parties or their replacement with other public institutions should not be viewed as potential alternatives to the imperfect multi-party system.

Changes to political parties and party system are necessary, which should aim at ensuring real and effective fulfillment of their functions by parties, first of all – representative ones. These changes can occur both by transforming the existing parties, and creating the new ones, and reshaping the nature of relations between subjects of the party system.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, the main tasks and directions of further development of political parties and the party system of Ukraine are:

- ensuring the compliance of the party system with the structure of society; formation of a stable social base of parties representing the interests of different social groups;

¹²⁶ See more details on the sociological research: Party System of Ukraine before and after Maidan: Changes, Development Trends, Society's Demands. Report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2015, No.6-7, razumkov.org.ua/uploads/journal/eng/NSD155-156_2015_eng.pdf.

- ensuring the parties' compliance with their nationwide status; encouraging the development of organisational structures of parties in all regions of Ukraine; restricting the use of issues in election campaigns that provoke social conflict;
- limiting the FIGs influence on political parties; ensuring transparency of party financing; preventing and counteracting political corruption in parties;
- introducing effective mechanisms for accountability and liability to citizens by party representatives elected to the authorities and local self-government bodies;
- increasing the effectiveness of party activity in government bodies, the quality of their programmatic and normative activities, party members' professionalism and limiting the impact of populism;
- strengthening the role of parties as an institution of political socialisation and recruitment; establishing an effective, continuous communication of parties with voters and developing intra-party democracy;
- reducing the level of conflict among the subjects of political system; preventing the ruling party from using administrative resources in the electoral process and using power to exert pressure on the opposition; introducing civilized rules for political dialogue between government and opposition.

As the process of party system formation in Ukraine shows, incentives for reforming political parties emerge from both their own environment, institutions of power, civil society organisations, and public opinion. At the same time, the influence of society may have no less effect than legal regulation mechanisms, since the existence of a formulated “public demand” for certain qualities of political parties, implemented via elections, is a powerful stimulus to ensure intra-party transformations.

