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PECULIARITIES OF UKRAINE'S POPULATION'S POLITICAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF RESULTS OF ELECTORAL PREFERENCES

Andrii Kuzyshyn (1), Inna Poplavska (2)

(1) Department of Geography Ukraine and Tourism, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Kryvonosa 2, 46027 Ternopil, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0003-3879-7337

e-mail: kuzyshyn_a@tnpu.edu.ua (corresponding author)

(2) Department of Geography Ukraine and Tourism, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Kryvonosa 2, 46027 Ternopil, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0002-0881-475X

e-mail: inna18@tnpu.edu.ua

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Abstract

Key features of the Ukrainian society as an individual political nation have been characterized. The research is based on the election process at the level of the election to the Verkhovna Rada. In the research, data from parliamentary election campaigns held in Ukraine during the 21st century were used. Key markers for estimation of the population's identity, the problem of language priority, the problem of historic memory, the issue of Ukraine's unitary formation and its spatial and territorial integrity were determined. The arguments offered and the objective grounds of state integrity worded in the research prove separate, formed and integral nature of the Ukrainian political nation.

Key words

Ukraine, political identity, electoral activity, election process, territorial identity, territorial integrity.

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1. Introduction

The specific nature of the course of the political process in Ukraine determines peculiar features of identification contradictions in the Ukrainian nation. To a large extent, elections are the agents of influence on social and political life, formation of values and society development strategies. The diversity of factors influencing the establishment of the Ukrainian nation – political, economic, and cultural ones – has become a subject to numerous worldview

speculations from those political parties and fractions that aimed at intensifying conflict dynamics of discrepancies between different regional groups in the Ukrainian society. They were quite often contrived, artificially formed structures aimed to “refeed” a thought concerning cloning or calquing an idea of borrowing such views from neighboring states, first of all, eastern and northern ones to Ukraine. These are the reasons that encouraged preparation of this publication to emphasize a special role and

meaning of the voting process in the Ukrainian national identification.

To emphasize the identity of the Ukrainian people and their pro-European positions, one should stress their sociopolitical cleavage, which is a customary phenomenon for European nations. The researchers underline that socioeconomic as well as so-called post-materialist cleavage lines are principal in the countries with a strong (political) national identity and a sustainable democratic management system. It is they that are the basis for support during the election process of the most influential parties and groups of interests competing for power and/or influence on it. Instead, ethnocultural, value-cultural (contrary to value-ideological) and regional divisions, developing political meaning, play a significantly more important role in the developing countries, emerging democracies and newly formed states (Kolodij, 2015).

2. Data and methods

Social cleavage is one of the key points in the formation of political identity. It has a dominant influence on the formation of a party system in a society and citizens' voting preferences. "Social cleavage", according to A. R emlele (2004), is a long-standing structural conflict leading to the emergence of opposite positions which, in turn, can be (or not be) represented by political parties.

A phenomenon of "cleavage", which is also translated as a "split", is described by M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (1967) in their joint work entitled "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignment. Party Systems and Voter Alignments". Based on the research of European history from the modern times, M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (1967) showed how the relationship of status inequality between the center and periphery, especially in language and ethnic issues; between the church and the state, first of all, regarding the influence on education, upbringing and culture; between the village and the town, mostly due to the resource distribution and the problem of equivalent exchange; between the class of owners of manufacturing tools and the class of hired employees/workers arose as a result of cleavage. These cleavages transform differences under indicators specified into politically significant social discrepancies (Lipset, Rokkan, 1967). Each of the cleavages corresponds to an ideological marker, which, in turn, is represented in the existence of particular political parties and electoral preferences, forming their different segments.

New communities politically interested in advocacy of their own specific interests arise with a complication of new social structures and diversification of forms of spiritual and sociocultural representation. Thus, new social and political cleavages and political groups based on them spring up. Both old and new cleavage lines include three structural components sequentially: differentiation between social groups, propensity to conflict and a degree of comprehending the differences between them, organization and protection of group identities and purposes.

Moreover, objectification of cleavage by political parties is a condition for transformation of social contradictions into a conflict. Political elites can conceal or, vice versa, actualize some social discrepancies regarding the advantage expected from this mobilization. This, in turn, is accompanied by an artificially generated wave of social discontent, refusal of dialogue, intolerance to opponents, search for enemies, etc.

Regardless of a large amount of new sociopolitical divisions existing in modern societies, in our research we shall analyze the ones specifying the peculiarities of political identification of Ukrainian citizens' voting preferences. Therefore, we shall focus on generalization of divisions based on territorial, ethnolinguistic, cultural and religious differences.

Despite a very deep social stratification in Ukraine (both in the regional and the individual dimension), a socioeconomic factor has not become the main criterion for political cleavage. Due to peculiarities of social transformation, "sublimation" of the society's strata and formation of discontent and ideological polarities related to it unfolded in the country; they were substituted with interregional differences which really were less deep but more actualized by the political environment that raised them to the level of main issues of internal political fight (ethnolinguistic factor and cultural values). This is where the role of Russia, on the one hand, and of Ukrainian oligarchs, on the other hand, were determinant. They appeared to be natural allies in their attempts to use available cleavages and divisions, bringing them to the stage of split, which neither Ukrainian governmental institutes nor civil society could properly resist to (Kolodij, 2015).

After the systemic transformation out of communism started in 1991 followed by the first elections in Ukraine, one could observe significant regional differences both in the elections and in voter turnout. Nowadays, scientific literature on electoral geography distinguishes two main aspects of space-related differentiation of voters' behavior. According to the first one, the main reason for electoral disproportion is historic and cultural circumstances while the

other one focuses on social and economic indicators (Zarycki, 1997). The first theory underlines the topicality of integration of Ukraine's territory into different state formations (control of these territories by the Russian and the Austrian-Hungarian empires and later by the Soviet Union, and integration of individual territories of Western Ukraine, in particular, into Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia) had an impact on the worldview of the local population, which periodically tried to declare independence for individual regions of Ukraine or its integral union within the borders of one state. That became a basis for the historical formation of political views. This pattern is often explained by long traditions of parliamentarism, which was typical of the society developed in the Polish and Austrian states, whilst eastern communities developing as part of the Russian empire did not have relevant conditions for progress owing to an autocratic regime. Here one can draw a certain parallel to the formation of voting preferences in different parts of Poland (Kowalski, 2004). Life in this environment led to the formation of clear social standards and political views (Krzemiński, 2009). The other concept does not admit the historical influence explaining voters' behavior mostly by the use of modern social and economic situations. This approach is used, first of all, in the research by A. Lasoń & A. Torój (2019).

A study by A. Casaglia et al. (2020) analyzing the role of populism in the electoral process is interesting for studying the mentioned issue. They discuss the role of this phenomenon in the national identification process (based on an example of Italy) and specify the spread of populism as a kind of response to outer threats which obligatorily form behavioral borders that may be real or conventional.

A. Kuczabski & T. Michalski (2014) noticed the specifics of cleavage formation within the borders of the Ukrainian space. They rightfully state that the process of democratic transformation in Ukraine is not linear and specified by frequent changes of transformation stages, caused by the change of the political vector of the state itself, which was the mirroring of changes in governmental structures formed as a result of the latest electoral processes. The authors mention a negative role oligarchs played in the frequent change of political views in the state. They developed their research (in further scientific publications) with an idea that it is the unsystematic nature of the changes and implementation of reforms that became a reason for a failure in the transformation process in Ukraine. The role of Russia was significant as it used the existence of "homo sovieticus" and a significant Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine. This became an identity problem of the Ukrainian

citizens (ethnic diversity and, then again, "homo sovieticus") as well as an obstacle for political elites, which during almost a century were not able to create a real civil society in Ukraine (Radchenko et al., 2014).

Researching the spatial and temporal measurements of the electoral process in Ukraine, the problem of political identity of the population was covered in publications by O. Vistak & M. Myrosh (2017), B. Buyak & A. Kuzyshyn (2021) and A. Kuzyshyn (2020).

3. Results and discussion

Voting preferences have been formed, to a significant extent, by external influences and can play a role of social sentiments identifier. The parties participating in election popularize their beliefs and form electoral support using different technologies. During the national elections in Ukraine, these technologies are traced quite clearly. That is why, it is important to estimate the manifestations of Ukrainian society's identification as a mature community through the analysis of voting preferences. That can be seen in a form of voting preference to particular political parties which, in turn, represent particular views and beliefs.

A gradual deviation from an idea of contraposition in the Ukrainian electorate's views can serve as an example of national identity comprehension. In this way, the political community of Ukrainian citizens received pre-set identities: western, eastern, Crimeans, representatives of Donbas, etc., with seemingly incompatible economic problems and deep historical and cultural contradictions between the East and West of the country. Manipulation by the theme of unitary mechanism of the Ukrainian state became an important element fixing oppositions in values in mass consciousness of Ukrainian citizens and aggravated the contradictions between them. Future parliamentary parties espousing this doctrine had a significant support from the electorate during the last two cadences. In 2014, "Petro Poroshenko Bloc", "People's Front", political party of "Samopomich" Union, All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" intensively propagated this idea. They received support in terms of regions and thus revealed the position of almost 79% voters.

Traditionally, several parties supporting this idea and forming a relevant electoral field participate in elections. Since the beginning of the 2000s, this thesis has been used in their ideological views by the left-wing parties (Natalia Vitrenko's Bloc of "People's Opposition", The Farmers' Party of Ukraine, Elective

Bloc of Political Parties "To Soyuz", Party of "Russian Bloc", "Opposition Platform – To Life"). It is rewarding that the support of such views decreases (Fig. 1) with each election cadence. Dating back in 2008, the then leader of "Ukrainian Choice" and until recently – a leader and deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine from the "Opposition Platform – To Life", V. Medvedchuk (2012) declared: "Federalization of our country is the only and single medicine against its split, a threat and a danger of which exist". Statements of this type fed up social and political antagonisms in the country provoking discussions concerning similarity/difference of the historical destiny of Ukraine and ethnic Russians who live in the territory of current Ukraine; they fed up the conflicts of historic memory, formed negative stereotypes in the perception of bilingualism of Ukrainians, their religious heterogeneity, etc.

These identification contradictions, in turn, were used by political parties as instruments of political fight for enlargement of their own electoral circle and, as a result, access to economic resources both as a whole nation and its individual regions. Electoral programs of Ukraine's political parties continue using the theme of polarization of Ukraine in linguistic, religious, historic and political contexts. They stress a necessity of systemic reforms to decentralize the authorities and extend the rights of local authorities. For example, at snap elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, on October 26, 2014, the top 5 electoral front-runners in the multi-seat countrywide constituency, particularly: the "People's Front" Political

Party, the Party of "Petro Poroshenko Bloc", the Political Party of "Samopomich Union", the Political Party of "Opposition Bloc", Oleh Liashko's Radical Party in their pre-election programs declared a necessity of power decentralization and extension of local authorities' rights. Such unification in positions of the representatives from different political forces certified, in particular, increasing populist tendencies in the Ukrainian political class. In general, this position had a relevant correlation to the electoral initiatives of many European states – France, Italy, Hungary, where the populist ideas had a significant support and became mainstream (Casaglia et al., 2020). Thus, identification discrepancies between the local authoritative elites and communities were harmonized at the declarative level owing to an emphasis in the programs of the political parties on the uniqueness of each region in the country, their right to an extended use of their own administrative and financial resources (Superechnosti..., 2015). Let us emphasize that these approaches, intrinsic for the parties of different ideological courses, are also a good confirmation of political maturity and self-identification of the Ukrainian electorate that has made a significant step forward during the last decades.

In this case, we consider it appropriate to provide an example of this process formation based on the regions of the Carpathian-and-Podil territory of Ukraine. If the ideas of national uniqueness have always had a positive response and habitual support from the electorate in this region, the idea of decentralization as an accompanying component of

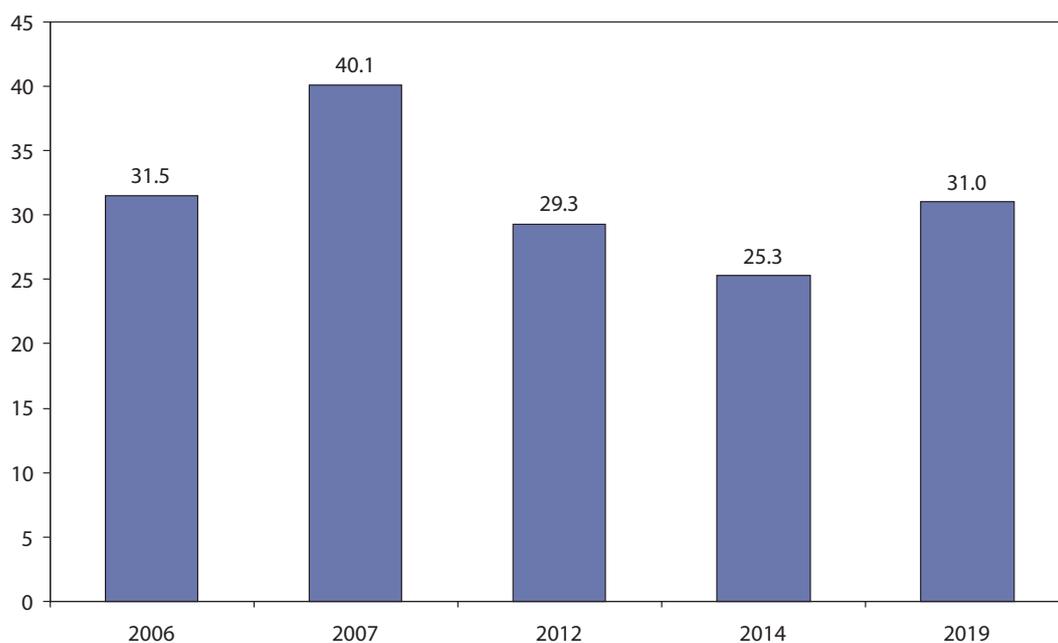


Fig. 1. Support of political parties [%] of Ukraine by the criterion of Ukraine's territory federalization (2006–2019).

Source: own work based on the open data of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (www.cvk.gov.ua), analysis of election programs of the parties and personal statements of the People's Deputies from relevant political forces.

the ideology of center-right parties has become an embodiment of a craving to comprehend the feeling of an “owner” and private property as a component of the territorial development. Before the elections of 2014, the Transcarpathian, Chernivetska, Khmel-nitska and Vinnytska Regions had a relatively passive position concerning the center-right parties that expressed this idea; later, in 2014 and 2019, this was one of the key theses concerning an increase in support for such party ideologies. The diagram below illustrates the support of this idea at All-Ukrainian level (Fig. 2).

Based on the support of parties and blocs that propagate “blurring” of the Ukrainian nation’s borders through establishment of local political regimes and intolerance to “others”; their recognition as “alien”, a threat of distributing the separatist moods was kept until 2014. The representatives of the local authoritative elites understood the slogans to local government reforms in their own way. Regional leaders often chased their civil position and geopolitical orientations correspondingly to customer-patron communications established with the central authorities in Kyiv or in the capital of the neighboring state – Moscow under the title of democratic transformations. It is indicative that impediment to the destructive manipulations around the content of the Ukrainian nation’s identification discrepancies was complicated by the fact that on the face of it a number of non-governmental and political parties and their activists’ work conformed with the Ukrainian

statutory regulations. However, in practice, the activities of these organizations implicitly undermined the foundations of the Ukrainian statehood and were avowedly anti-Ukrainian and antihuman.

The support of the parties that held monolithic structure and self-identification of the Ukrainian nation, usually socialist ones, actually stimulated the formation of a peculiar market of identities in Ukraine which was used as a method of fostering interregional contradictions, undermining the foundations of social solidarity, denying the unity of the Ukrainian society as a community of the Ukrainian state, and cultivating antihuman methods of political struggle. The laws of the identities market were subject to utilitarian principles aimed at an increase in advantages and they became a subject to bargain, an instrument to receive political and economic preferences for local political leaders for whom the state policy of the national solidarity did not play a leading role, and democratic values of freedom and sanctity of human life were completely declarative (Superechnosti..., 2015).

Since the elections to the Verkhovna Rada in 2014, we have had clear confirmations that the idea of incompatibility of regional identities, propagation of ideas of federalism and autonomization of the regions were, to a large extent, artificial constructs that confirmed their destructive nature and unpopularity in the Ukrainian society. An attempt to introduce a strategy of “identities implanting” through them does not correlate in reality with the positions of

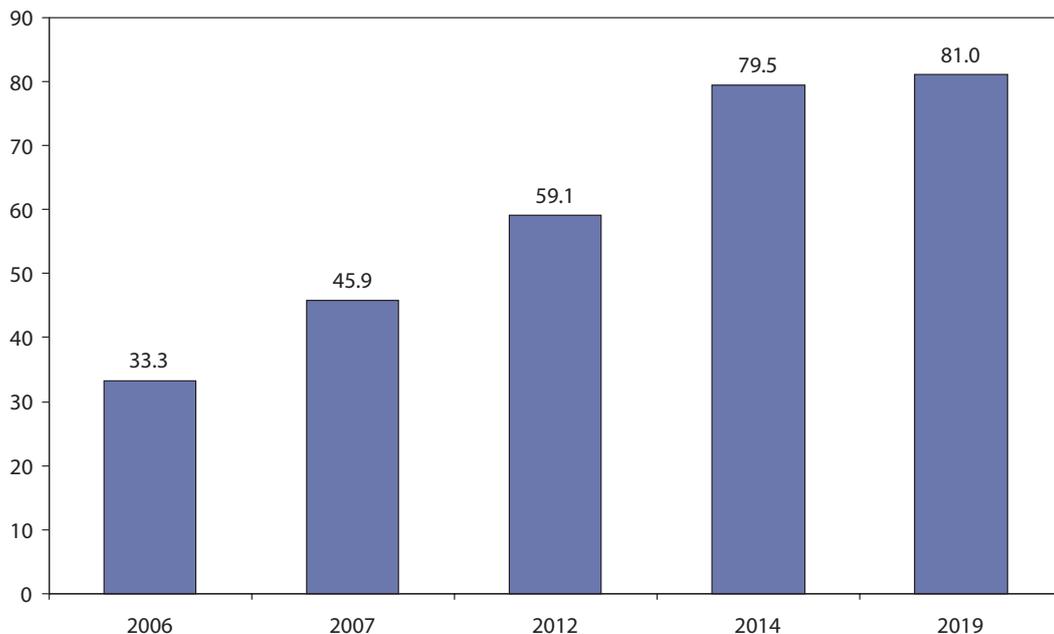


Fig. 2. Support of political parties [%] of Ukraine by the criterion of power decentralization and extension of local authorities’ rights (2006–2019).

Source: own work based on the open data of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (www.cvk.gov.ua), analysis of election programs of the parties and personal statements of the People’s Deputies from relevant political forces.

the majority of the Ukrainian citizens. In particular, that certifies more moderate voting preferences of the bigger part of the Ukrainian citizens, a decrease in the efficiency of manipulative and populist technologies of opposing Eastern and Western parts of Ukraine in a pre-election campaign and a shift of value-based reference points both in the world-view attitudes of the voters and in the program documents of the political parties. Particularly, pre-election programs of the political parties at the last parliamentary elections were built around the ideas of consolidation of the nation, for example: establishment of peace, defense of territorial integrity of Ukraine, struggle against corruption, introduction of economic reforms, etc. (Superechnosti..., 2015).

One of the key problems mirrored in the programs of political parties of different ideological courses was language. Unfortunately, until recently, it encouraged the escalation of identification discrepancies of the Ukrainian nation. Almost since the first election in independent Ukraine, this problem has been disputed by representatives of individual political forces and non-governmental organizations as a factor forming two large historical and cultural areas of the Ukrainian people – Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking ones. Language and cultural attitudes of the West and the East of the country formed a certain axis of the political discourse around which there have been intense discussions during the whole period of the latest independence of Ukraine. The initial position of the pro-Russian political forces and non-governmental organizations laid in provision that the Russian language be given a status of the second official language, taking into account its so-called insufficient development in independent Ukraine. The “Party of Regions”, characterized as ruling and dominating during 2010–2014, was an apologist of this theme. Having its electorate under the slogan of democratic initiatives, this party was able to pass a draft law “On Measures of the State Language Policy” stipulating a possibility of official bilingualism in the regions where the number of national minorities exceeded 10%. In February 2014, the law was cancelled. Its theses were being imposed on the electorate by forming negative stereotypes among the residents of the East of Ukraine concerning the situation of the Russian language in Ukraine; particularly, they always mentioned an idea about its permanent oppression and eternal unity of the Ukrainian and Russian language spaces.

The division of the Ukrainian citizens by the language principle was one of the most obvious mechanisms for structuring the electoral field of the country, a method of differentiating “us” and “them”, stressing an otherness of Ukraine, the antipode

nature of its regions and impossibility to find a “common language” within one state. In that way, a kind of “hate speech” was fired up in the political discourse; it provoked conflictogenity of identification diversity of the Ukrainian nation. Estimating a share of the voters supporting this idea, a continuous positive trend of decreasing its perception as a key one and relevant separation from Russia owing to this powerful argument is observed. This is also another step of the Ukrainian nation's self-identification at the local and state levels.

During the electoral cadences in the 21st century, at the nation-wide level, significant fluctuations concerning the society's estimation of this issue were observed. There have been performed many sociological cuts and mass meetings, which grounded particular thoughts; there was a discussion in media. At the level of the programs of the political parties nominated for the title of “parliamentary” (participating in the election), there were also essential fluctuations.

Complexity of the language issue also lied in the fact that “a range of political parties that have a long and not very long history of activity in Ukraine as well as other so-called “third” forces known for their pro-Russian vision of socioeconomic, geopolitical and humanitarian development of Ukraine not only in their narratives but also in reality are Russian-speaking. Despite an obligation to keep the document flow in Ukrainian, Russian remains the language of social interaction and it is often a language of the documents in private companies. State and regional leaders maintain the policy of publishing Russian-speaking issues, publishing their speeches in Russian. Flirting with voters, the Ukrainian political class often uses a regional “language game”, which does not encourage national consolidation. The logical consequence of these manipulations was politization of a range of non-governmental pro-Russian organizations' activity operating under the claim of cultural and educational mission on protecting ethnic Russians from language discrimination. Each following electoral cadence confirms an idea that the manipulations around the language theme do not find response wanted by some pro-Russian political and non-governmental organizations; the prevailing share of Ukrainians stay on the position of supporting Ukrainian as the only state language.

A significant step forward regarding the identification of Ukrainians at the current stage was the idea of decommunization of historic heritage and minimization of its maintenance in the form of space references, names and events. It elicited response, first of all, in the programs of right-wing and center-right-wing parties becoming more and more

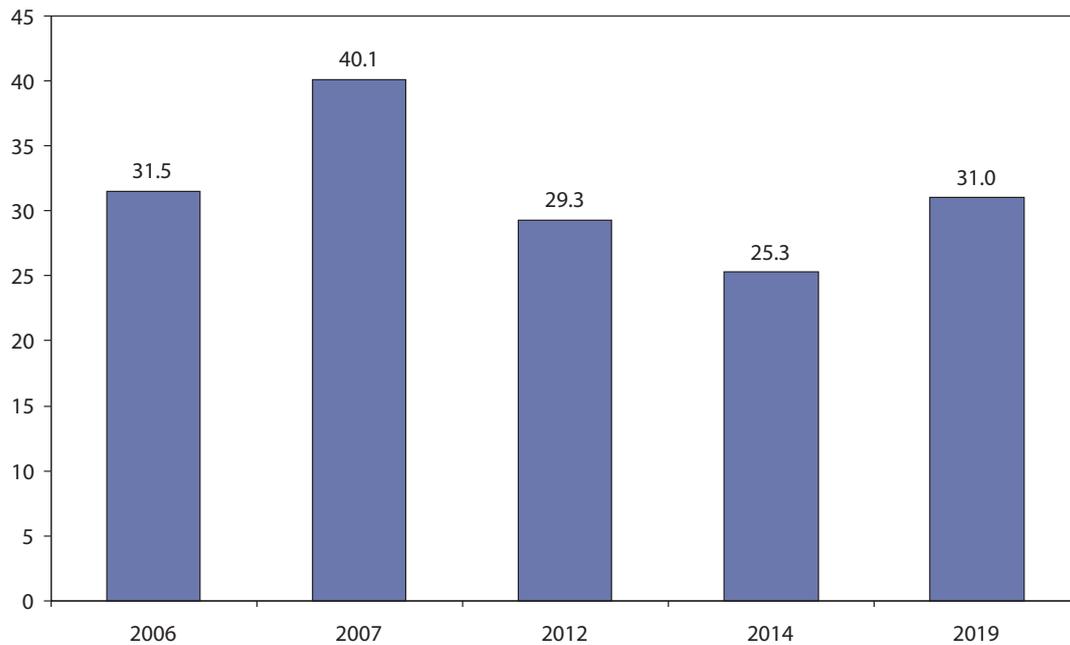


Fig. 3. Support of political parties [%] of Ukraine by the criteria of attitude to language policy (2006–2019).

Source: own work based on the open data of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (www.cvk.gov.ua), analysis of election programs of the parties and personal statements of the People's Deputies from relevant political forces.

powerful in the Ukrainian establishment. Being influenced by exactly these political forces and their electorate, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine in July 2015 banned the left-wing parties: the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Communist Party of Ukraine (updated), the Communist Party of Workers and Farmers) to be subjects of election. In 2015, there was another attempt to legalize these political movements (foundation of the "Left Opposition" Bloc). They were involved in the development of ideas of antinational identity. The first of them is an identity of a fascist, which, in steady stereotypes of the population, had to be fixed after the representatives of the European political forces, as well as an identity of an antifascist, which was for the ruling party. This was another camouflaged attempt to preserve the identity with the Russian people; however, the quantity of the electorate that responded to it confirms its marginalization. Based on an untrue identification of the fighters for independence of Ukraine with "fascists" that has been intensively propagated in Soviet historiography during decades, a persistent association of Western Ukraine representatives, who wanted independence, with fascists has become a foundation for a new ideological policy of the "Party of Regions", as well as a stem of mass information campaign aimed at discrediting the pro-European course of Ukrainians.

In general, one can talk about the availability of two leading strategies of building (and, correspondingly, collision) political identities of the Ukrainian citizens used in the activity both by non-governmental

organizations and political parties – pro-Ukrainian (with a stress on a necessity to rehabilitate national heroes, reveal authentic history of Ukraine, free from ideological clichés and cliché of the Soviet period), and imperial (with a dominating worldview attitudes of "conservation" of Soviet artefacts and a conformist attitude in the perception of symbols and signs of the totalitarian past, and the persons embodying it) which avertedly co-exist in the public space.

The quantity indicator of the political parties participating in the elections in Ukraine requires a special attention. Here two points of view dominate. The first one is based on the idea that society's party structuring and quite frequent changes of electoral preferences are still being formed in Ukraine (a bright example – support of a fledgling party structure of "Servant of People" in 2019 – we have already conducted and published relevant studies (Buyak, Kuzyshyn, 2021; Kuzyshyn, 2020)). The other group of views is based on the idea that parties are instrumentalization in political struggle, i.e. transformation of the parties into so-called electoral machines. That is why, political parties in Ukraine have now a narrow corridor of access to the leverage of influence on performance of policy in national and regional scales, since they are formed as an instrument to legalize the interests of a narrow circle of people, as a rule – representatives of financial and industrial groups and do not perform regular political activity. Currently, the party system of Ukraine is characterized by a clan nature, patronage of different oligarchs, who have a status of obvious or latent

"sponsors" of a party or several parties. This paralyzes possibilities for democratic advance of the party system in the country and formation of an activist-type political culture among Ukrainian citizens. According to the monitoring data of Institute of Sociology of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the prevailing majority of Ukrainians (87.2%) are not members of any non-governmental, political organizations or movements (Superechnosti ..., 2015). That certifies an insufficient use by the citizens of their right for participation in non-governmental organizations and political parties even when, on its face, a quantitative parameter – a non-governmental sector in Ukraine looks like a kind of a social phantom.

Against the background of these dominating areas, the political life is only a mediate link that comes into counterfactual contradiction with the work of the majority of non-governmental organizations and political parties that become actualized in the pre-election period and then come into a phase of "freezing" their activity undermining the resource of loyalty in the society to non-governmental organizations and political parties. The key challenge in the work of non-governmental organizations and political parties is that the citizens of Ukraine do not identify themselves as a united consolidated community that operates the instruments of influence on and feedback with the representative institutions.

In general, speculative-populist technologies based on radicalization of cultural and ethnic as well as foreign policy identification contradictions of the Ukrainian nation that provoked polarization of the Ukrainian society have taken on a new meaning at this stage of the development of the political system with maintenance of a general strategy on policy holding: in the public discourse of the country, non-governmental organizations and political parties emphasize a necessity to save peace and consolidate the Ukrainian nation. However, the methods of implementing these slogans into life remain non-articulated and vague, which does not meet available social requests and expectations. Moreover, a change of elites in the country is rather imitative, which can be generalized with the expression of "old faces of a new policy". That increases the risks of degradation of the country's political system and can also become a powerful catalyzer of new massive social protests.

Outlining the problem of national identity in the context of voting preferences will be incomplete without focusing attention on the issue of its sovereignty and territorial and political integrity. In general, it concerns all above-mentioned determinants of the national identity of Ukrainians. To solve these issues, maximum attention should be

paid the sociocultural connection of the regions in the context of establishing the common Ukrainian political identity, maintaining historical and mental barriers of interregional mutual perception, non-consolidation of the population in the regions of the state with regard to the perspectives of cultural development of Ukraine and its place in the current political world (Dnistrians'kyj, 2015). All election cadences in the 21st century were noted for imposing a narrative about the existence of cultural and civilization differences and event interciviliation standoff of different parts of Ukraine from the point of view of voting preference, which was favorable for the Russian propaganda and provoked by their political strategists. Powerful convergence of geopolitical and information realia occurred in 2004 when electoral and political preferences of the population from western and central Ukrainian regions significantly consolidated, shifting a conventional "border" of electoral discrepancies further east- and southwards of Ukraine. The following crash of the political identification in the spatial dimension falls onto the 2014 election campaign when a question of the country's consolidation around one development program but without differently vectored information and administrative pressure was due. That is why, it is worth agreeing with the statement by M. Dnistrians'kyj that

under the results of all presidential campaigns, taking also into account parliamentary election, from the political and geographical point of view there are more grounds to speak about districts with quite persistent and notably expressed differences in electoral activity rather than two poles of electoral and political preferences. If to take lines of drops (quantity leaps) in differentiation of the voter turnover and votes for main candidates and political parties as a basis between such electoral districts, one can receive a model of territorial division, which, in general, corresponds to the model of macrodistricting in the territory of Ukraine, distinguished on the grounds of historical and geographical and ethnographical principles (Dnistrians'kyj, 2015, p. 77).

That is why the statement that both ethnic and national area and historic and geographical pre-requisites are the indicators determining the differentiation of mental and political environment of Ukraine and secure basic foundations of state integrity, as at the core, around 95% of its territory is the area of settlement of the Ukrainian state-constituting ethnic nation which has absolute majority in all other regions except the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Also, it should be noted that, in fact, all regions have different experience of common residence as part of state formations at particular periods and were involved in the uniform Ukrainian state-constituting

process of the 19th–20th centuries to different extent, i.e. the ideas of integrity and independence of Ukraine were determining both for the core of the territory and for Ukrainian lands when they were parts of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania. This, in turn, is one more confirmation that in Ukraine there are quite favorable prerequisites for consolidation of the country's unity and identification of the nation as independent and formed.

4. Conclusions

Identification of the Ukrainian society as nationally formed through the prism of voting preferences has a range of aspects.

Owing to the electoral activity and pluralism concerning participation in elections one can specify the freedom of will as an instrument intrinsic to democratic societies.

Voting preferences of non-governmental organizations and political parties in the modern Ukrainian society is specified by conflictogenity and contradictory worldview models of the country's development.

Imposing and systemic reproduction a semiotic pair "Us" – "Them" in the rhetoric of individual political forces participating in the election in Ukraine formed a persistent stereotype concerning the division of Ukrainians by regional principles with incompatible values. At the same time, it was a politically strategic trick to minimize an idea of political identification of the Ukrainian nation. This political strategy was and is an important resource of electorate mobilization and ensuring the controlled status of the wide strata of society with paternalistic attitudes.

Imposing the identities being positioned as polar, opposite, conflicting jointly with "pocket nature" of significant number of political parties and non-governmental organizations, intensively undermine the trust of citizens to the institutions of democratic representativeness as they do not meet their authentic identification reference points.

Polarization of Ukraine by a regional principle is artificial, it was provoked by Russia's idea regarding implementation of its imperial plans on re-establishment of the former USSR and relies on dependent political forces involved in election to level the principles of political identity of the Ukrainian state. One of the ways in performance of this geopolitics became provoking regional counterstanding on the conditions of actualization of individual events in history, idealization of persons and events of the Russian period, imposing neocolonial relations in the information and cultural area. A range of the most

disputable themes among which there is an issue of country's federalization, language policy, necessity to rehabilitate national history become important components in the ideologies of the political parties that represent the ideas of their electorate in the Parliament of Ukraine or during the election campaign. Current sociological research shows that the above-mentioned markers of identities only have a particular influence on Ukrainian citizens, whose system of value-based preferences includes dominating economic interests related to the provision of an appropriate level and standards of life in the state and the priorities of general welfare.

To some extent populist mechanisms of advancing the above standards through the election programs of the parties had consequences in the form of social apathy and disappointment, but did not form a successful ground for spreading the ideas of new "general Russian identity". On the contrary, each following election campaign in the 21st century reinforced the position of state policy of the national unity and support of foundations of Ukraine's sovereignty as an independent and democratic state.

Among basic principles provided in the election programs of political parties with the maximum support among the electorate, there is lustration, peace, control over power branches, protection of human rights and democratic freedoms. These priorities are basic for harmonization of identification contradictions of the Ukrainian nation and formation of value-based markers of the civil self-determination of the Ukrainian society as a community of one state.

Reference to the progressive examples of the European values allows forming restoration of the community's trust to institutionalized forms of collective life, which, in turn, must be a foundation for the formation of the civil society.

Non-governmental organizations and political parties as generators of leading directions and key theses of social dialogue at the national level are becoming, in this system of axes, key ones in searching the foundations of social solidarity, harmonization and humanization of identification contradictions of the Ukrainian nation.

Despite the social and cultural differentiation in Ukraine specified by objective historic and geographic as well as ethnogeographic prerequisites, the Ukrainian ethnos is characterized by a detached political identity, complicated by regional and political relationships in the beginning of the 21st century and which can be reinforced with efficient domestic geopolitics and purposeful large-scale geopolitical resistance to Russia.

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