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Monitoring of the pre-election situation in Ukraine (15.07.2012—15.08.2012)

The electoral process

05.07.2012-02.08.2012

Ukrainian political parties started to submit their lists to the public, and many experts noted the presence in the lists of relatives of politicians, and that the process of appointing candidates has not always been transparent. The trend appears to be that famous personalities from the spheres of culture and sport are placed at the top of the list. And so, occupying the second and third places in the list of the 'Ukraine - Forward!' are the famous footballer Andriy Shevchenko and the actor Ostap Stupka. Also featuring in second places in the party lists are: the famous actor Bohdan Benyuk (The Freedom Party), the pop singer Taisya Povaliy (the Party of Regions), and the writer Mariya Matios (The Blow).

Sources:

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http://news.dt.ua/POLITICS/yuschenko_ocholiv_spisok_nashoyi_ukrayini-106249.html

16-25.07.2012

61% of Ukrainian experts believe that the results of the upcoming parliamentary elections could be skewed, and 29% are confident that they will undoubtedly be rigged. These are the results of the expert survey, conducted by the "Democratic Initiatives" Foundation between the 16th of July, 2012 and the 25th of July, 2012. A total of 144 experts were surveyed, and they represented three groups: political scientists and sociologists, representatives of public organisations, and journalists. Experts believe that in order to prevent violations of the electoral process, the control of public organisations and guaranteed criminal liability of those involved in fraud is necessary. The CEC member Andrey Magera also believes that the return of the majority component will lead to an increase in the level of corruption in the electoral process.

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16.07.2012-07.08.2012

Cases of the repeated use of administrative resources, the bribery of voters and other irregularities in the electoral process have become more frequent. Thus, the 'Committee of Voters of Ukraine' NGO expressed its concern over the fact that on the 21st of July, 2012, the Deputy Head of the regional organisation of the Party of Regions, Andrey Shishatskiy, who is also the head of the Donetsk Region State Administration, agreed on the cooperation of local authorities and the party in addressing the socio-

economic problems of the city. Legislation, however, prevents the interference of the authorities in the campaign.

The public organisation "The Support" reports yet another serious violation: in the town of Romny, Sumsk Province, 122 hospital workers wrote a statement on joining the Party of Regions, and one of the doctors claims that this was forced upon them, and that the doctors agreed to join due to fear of losing their jobs.

Many cases of indirect bribery of voters were revealed. The member of the Central Election Commission Andrey Magera is inclined to believe that law enforcement bodies must deal with the candidates who bribe voters with food products and services. For example, as reported on the 18th of July by the Mayor of Donetsk Oleksandr Lukyanchenko, people's deputies from the Party of Regions will fund gifts for first-graders on the occasion of the Day of Knowledge. On the same day, representatives of the civil movement "Spilna Sprava" ('The Common Cause') reported that in Kharkov in the receiving room of the people's deputy of the Party of Regions Oleksandr Feldman, 1,000 hryvnia (approx. 100 Euro) was given to voters registered in constituency number 174. According to the voters, they were promised another 1000 hryvnia per person in October. Soon afterwards, on the 20th of July, 2012, it was reported that in the Donetsk Province, in the office of the Gorlovsk Province organisation of the Party of Regions, MP Nikolay Yankovskiy gave pensioners 100 hryvnia per person as financial aid. Also, on the 7th of August, 2012, it transpired that in the Vinnytsia Province, on behalf of the candidate of the Party of Regions Nikolay Kucher, medical kits were distributed to voters.

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<http://obkom.net.ua/news/2012-07-18/1752.shtml>

<http://www.spilnasprava.com/wp/?p=10739>

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08-15.08.2012

The Central Election Commission refused to register the following candidates for the election: Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko, as they are serving prison sentences, and according to the law, they cannot be elected to Parliament. On the 11th of August, 2012, the Kyiv Administrative Appellate Court recognised the decision of the Central Electoral Commission to be legal, which was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Administrative Court on the 15th of August, 2012. The United Opposition addressed international institutions, such as the OSCE, the EU, the Council of Europe, PACE, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with this issue, furthermore it intends to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in order to challenge the decision of the Ukrainian courts.

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The reaction of the international community to the political situation in Ukraine

20.07.2012

Ukraine does not heed warnings about its deviation from democracy, says David Kramer, the president of the human rights organisation 'Freedom House'. In an interview for 'Svoboda' ('Liberty') Radio, he stressed that since the time when the organisation released the latest critical report on Ukraine, and the European Court of Human Rights issued a decision regarding the imprisoned opposition politician Yuriy

Lutsenko, the Ukrainian government has shown no desire to improve the situation.

Sources:

<http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/24651468.html>

10-14.08.2012

The European Commission has expressed its concern over the refusal of registration for election of Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko and believes that selective justice has been applied against them as government opponents, which does not help improve relations between Ukraine and the EU, a European Commission representative Peter Sano announced on the 14th of August, 2012. The decision of the Central Election Commission was also condemned by the President of the European People's Party Wilfried Martens, also noting that it signifies the abandonment of democracy and that it will have consequences for the EU-Ukraine relationship.

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Pre-election voter menu: the analysis of the political manifestos of Ukrainian parties

On the 30th of July, Ukraine has officially started its election campaign for the people's deputies of Ukraine. Parties were to submit their lists and finally approve their political manifestos. In order to carry out analysis of the electoral process in Ukraine, it is very important to establish: what the Ukrainian parties have prepared for the elections? After all, the quality and performance of the election promises represent the level of democracy and the political system as a whole. This is not an easy task because behind the tinsel thread of the populist rhetoric it is very difficult to find principal differences in the political manifestos of Ukrainian parties. Still, a comparative analysis of policy documents provides very interesting results.

Almost all of the most popular political parties in Ukraine have common stances on key social and economic issues that determine the well-being of citizens. This question therefore arises: why then is the consensus in Ukrainian politics and, in particular, in the parliament, such a rare phenomenon? And another question that any Ukrainian party should ask itself: if our manifesto is so similar to those of our opponents, what motivates us to compete with them?

A possible answer is that the political manifestos simply mean nothing to Ukrainian politicians and are merely election requisites. In fact, in Ukraine, there are no political battles fought by means of coherent policy forming aimed at the development of the country, but rather competition of party leaders and group interests, which is manifested through fervent cheers and chants, and which all sound very much alike.

Getting the best of both worlds or "Win everybody!" approach

According to the latest sociological research, to date, the highest level of popularity amongst voters has been attained by six political forces: the pro-presidential Party of Regions, the United Opposition (the leaders - Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Yulia Tymoshenko), The Blow (the party of Vitaliy Klitschko), The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), The Freedom (the nationalist party) and the "Ukraine-Forward!" party (the leader - Nataliya Korolevskaya) [1].

If one tries to identify the leaders in the electoral race on the scale of ideologies ("left" and "right"), the situ-

ation appears such: The United Opposition, the Party of Regions, The Blow and the "Ukraine-Forward" - are predominantly liberal parties, the differences between them should be sought not in the ideological framework, but rather in the personal, political, and even politechnological component. Also, based on the analysis of the policy document, one can claim that both the Freedom and the Communist Party, being radical, are founded on the common liberal-socialist platform. The only difference is that The Freedom uses the nationalist rhetoric, and the communists - the pro-Russian and Soviet rhetoric.

Ukrainian parties of liberal orientation are committing sins with the adoption of the "Win everybody!" principle. Trying to please everyone, the politicians wish to avoid conflict with any part of the electorate. But it means that such politicians cannot effectively represent the interests of any segment of the population. For example, it is impossible to simultaneously increase pensions and reduce taxes. But the United Opposition thinks that it is possible to meet the needs of businessmen and pensioners equally without ruining the economy. [2]

In foreign policy, it is also impossible to move simultaneously in opposite vectors and not set priorities. For example, the Party of Regions supports the strengthening of economic cooperation in the framework of the free trade zone with CIS countries. [3] This could include the establishment of a common customs tariff, the introduction of common rules in the field of competition and subsidies, the harmonisation of the principles of taxation, the creation of a common labour market with the CIS countries, etc. All this hinders the implementation of the next item on the manifesto of the Party: the creation of a visa-free regime and a free trade zone with the EU, because two customs unions cannot be concluded at the same time: one with CIS and the second one with Europe.

Comparative analysis of the manifestos: Spot the differences

All the manifestos of the most popular parties differ by way of beautiful declarative slogans and promises, the concrete implementation of which cannot be verified. Especially the United Opposition excels in it as its political manifesto is constructed around the notion of coming to power, and not around their intentions should they gain this power. However, it is very

difficult to assess the potential for fulfillment of the opposition proclamations as they contain such vague promises as: "normal life", "confidence in the future", "quality education", "protection of human dignity from criminal assault."

The same applies to certain provisions of the manifesto published by the "Ukraine-Forward!" party - such as "an effective and non-repressive tax system," "the land of opportunity, and not repression" or "real fight against corruption". [4] Without explaining the mechanisms, such statements are vague to say the least. However, we can find many specific figures in the programme of the Party of Regions, but for ordinary voters it is difficult to determine, to what extent, for example, the change of macroeconomic indicators will have a real impact on improving the living standards of citizens.

It can be argued that all of the main contenders for membership of parliament to a greater or lesser extent, speak for: the fight against corruption, the abolition of parliamentary immunity, improvement of the mechanisms of the effect of the voter on the deputies, strengthening local self-government, reducing dependence of the state on imports, provision of incentives and grants to young citizens, development of healthcare, education and science; rearmament of the army. Based on this, the only issues that fundamentally divide some of the parties are foreign policy (Russian or European direction), and the language issue (which is relevant only for 4% of Ukrainians [5]).

The proclamations of 'the Blow' [6], the 'Ukraine-Forward!', the Party of Regions and the Communist Party Of Ukraine [7] include almost the same issues: the reduction of dependence of citizens on official workers, deregulation, reduction of bureaucracy. With regards to the issue of corruption, the United Opposition, The Freedom [8] and The Blow call for lustration. Also, The Blow and the 'Ukraine-Forward!' party, more than other parties, are interested in the introduction of e-government.

The point of the programme regarding the provision housing was described particularly thoroughly by the Freedom and the CPU. The Freedom speaks about state loans for large families, and the Communist Party - about social housing and rent allowances. Interestingly, in the manifestos of those, as it would seem, completely dissimilar parties, almost identical phrases are used. Both the Freedom and the Communist Party of Ukraine want the return of the previously privatised enterprises that are of strategic importance to the state ownership and favour the ban on the sale of agricultural land, strengthening the

position of state-owned banks, and would welcome the introduction of the tax on luxury.

However, some parties have formulated unique policies that their opponents did not reproduce. In the case of the Blow, they are: a compulsory test on the Ukrainian language for civil servants, the right to vote in local elections from the age of 16 and the settlement of gender policy. Original lines of the Freedom regard the quotas on the use of the Ukrainian language in the media, the introduction of the column 'nationality' in the passport, the ban on communist ideology, recognition of the OUN-UPA soldiers and the provision of benefits to them. However, only the Party of Regions mentioned the building of the sarcophagus over the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, and only the Communist Party supported the canonical Orthodox Church.

The crisis of ideology

The manifestos of Ukrainian parties became a kind of tribute to political fashion and procedure. Most of these publications are fragmented and non-ideological. It seems that even the political elite do not have a clear vision for the development of the country. Building a consensus among the elite does not depend on the issues of strategic development, but rather the issues of the struggle for power and its rotation.

There are ideological parties in Ukraine except for The Freedom and the Communist Party. While in the West the gap between 'the left' and 'the right' in the sphere of economy is still valid, Ukraine has no such gap. The society is perceived as a tool and a means of gaining power, and not as a primary value. And the quality of political manifestos is a good example of how politicians treat voters.

On the other hand, this problem does not only pertain to the authorities, but also to society. Elections in Ukraine are not a tool to express its position. As, predominantly, there is no such clear position. So the low quality of political manifestos and broken promises of the politicians can be explained by the fact that the citizens poorly communicate their requests to the authorities. Instead, electoral preferences are indicative of an unmotivated, irrational, impulsive choice. This distinguishes the Ukrainian political arena from the economic one.

So far, in their manifestos, the Ukrainian politicians have been unable to convincingly answer the question: Why am I striving to gain power? More worryingly, their answer is: "because I am good, and they

are bad, and I will make the life of my people better."
But can the voters be satisfied by this answer?

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