

POLITOLOGY

Some attempts to predict voters' electoral behavior in Ukraine after "Revolution of Dignity" of 2013-2014

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Abstract. In the article the author makes an attempt to find out the features of socio-political processes in Ukraine after "Revolution of Dignity" held in 2013-2014 through predicting the voters' electoral behavior, prognostication of new party system, possibilities and limits of forecasting the political dynamics development in Ukraine. Through analysis of sociological data and experts' views, it is made an attempt to predict spontaneous social and political behavior of voters in today's Ukraine as well as strategy for gaining political power by various political forces.

Keywords: *electoral behavior, elections, political consciousness, forecasting, political culture, party system.*

The modern stage of development of Ukrainian statehood is characterized by rapid dynamics of social changes, which manifest themselves in the form of political, economic and socio-cultural positives and negatives of electoral orientation of citizens. The relevance of this study is determined by the acute need to find the main causes of the marginalization of Ukrainian society, the emergence of absenteeism in voters' behavior, and to define main vector of the development of Ukrainian political community. Despite the appearance of the first dawnings of civil society development in the form of various public associations and movements of different social trends, another product of the post-revolutionary events of 2013-2014 is the contempt of Ukrainian electorate in its political choice. Among the main subjective and objective reasons for its existence, it is worth mentioning the non-observance of election promises by political leaders, the corruption of the authorities, the low level of social security, the war in the east of Ukraine, and so on. Due to such a complex nature of political progress, the necessity of forecasting developments with the aim of identifying potentially promising political forces, simulating the behavior of the electorate in elections-2019, and pointing to the basic patterns of electoral behavior in Ukraine are underlined.

In modern Western social-political science, a number of theoretical and methodological directions of research have been developed, which are based on an understanding of the long practice of free electoral processes in established democracies, which allow to explain and predict mass electoral behavior. One of the first who began to investigate the behavior of the electorate is well-known French demo geographer A. Siegfried, the founder of the direction, known as "electoral geography." From his point of view, the formation of political views of the population, which underlies electoral behavior, is due to a variety of factors, including the peculiarities of the historical, administrative and socio-political formation of the country, social structure, religious preferences, the influence of external factors, as well as the ability of the research object to counteract such effects. The views of A. Siegfried served as the emergence of numerical studies aimed at identifying the connections between electoral behavior and objective living conditions of society. His follower and disciple F. Gogel devoted considerable attention to socio-structural influences. The key to solving the problem under study was the extrapolation of the social structure of settlement types into political behavior. Instead of "electoral geography", F. Gogel suggested speaking "sociology of

election". The sociologist R. Aron criticized this view of electoral behavior in the 1950s, as more attention was paid to the unique features of the social group than to the territorial units. M. Doogan and R. Herberle proposed to focus attention on using data from surveys of public opinion, statistical data and various socio-structural, historical determinants. At the same time, in the United States, electoral behavior begins to be investigated through the prism of behaviorism, with an emphasis on a representative sample of voters (Ch. Meriam, H. F. Gosnell, S. Rice). Subsequently, a significant contribution to the study of the behavior of the electorate was made by: representatives of the so-called "sociological approach" (P. Lazarsfeld, B. Berelson), focusing on the impact of the political situation and socio-political unions on electoral behavior; representatives of Michigan School (A. Campbell, F. Converse, W. Miller), where the main argument in determining electoral behavior was party identification; English researchers R. Rose, Y. McChrystal; German-G. Marcuse, R.-O. Schultze; modern prominent theorists – R. Wolfinger, S. Rozenstov (classic "American model"), A. Bentley, G. Lassvel ("theory of installations"), E. Downs, M. Fiorini (concept of "economic voting") and others.

Among Ukrainian experts in electoral behavior it is worth to mention R. Balaban, A. Balakireva, A. Vishnyak, E. Golovakha, A. Golod, V. Karasev, D. Lyashenko, M. Mirosh, N. Panin, V. Poltorak, G. Starovoytenko, V. Tokovenko, V. Shapoval, A. Yaremenko, A. Yarosh and others.

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The purpose of this study is to identify the peculiarities of socio-political processes in Ukraine after the "Revolution of Dignity" of 2013-2014 through predicting the voters' electoral behavior, prognostication of new party system, analyzing the possibilities and limits of forecasting the development of political dynamics in Ukraine.

Prognostication is a multifaceted process of studying social reality, based on a broad methodological basis and on using a set of scientific methods. In the article, we used such methods as prognostication, method of systematic analysis of sociological researches results and expert views.

The electoral behavior can be understood as a form of manifestation of citizens' political behavior towards the

delegation them powers. It has a rather complex structure, which can include political information circulating in the media, communication between voters, reflections on their own political choices and, in fact, voting act.

The complication of political forecasting is provoked by the specifics of the formation and peculiarities of Ukrainian political consciousness and culture functioning, which have undergone a regressive transformation during the last 20 years. To such negative acquired features of electoral behavior and, in general, citizens' political consciousness we include:

- Weak individuality as a low status of personal aspirations of power and political participation [3];
- The absence of clearly expressed ideological beliefs as an individually endowed ideological support. Consequently, it is observed the emergence of conformation, the constant reappraisal of political principles and values;
- General cultural immaturity of public positions, which, on the one hand, inhibits the institutional development of civil society, and, on the other hand, complicates the political choice of the electorate;
- Low level of citizens' awareness and competence in the peculiarities of management and administration of state affairs, insufficient knowledge of Ukrainian legal framework, political platforms and programs of party forces;
- Lack of party self-identification as an important element of democratic party system structuring;
- Orientation to irrational settings in electoral behavior, when the emotional-affective component as a synthesis of feelings, moods, emotions is the main criterion in political choice, etc.

The results of the named trends in the formation of electoral behavior are:

- Distancing of Ukrainian citizens from power;
- Undeveloped mechanisms of society self-government and self-organization;
- Formation of various massive spontaneous democratic and populist orientations;
- Mythologization of cultural and political space;
- Increasing the role of regional political subcultures;
- Formation of the fragmentary nature of Ukrainian national consciousness;
- The lack of social lifts in the political system, which leads to its "canning", etc.

In addition, the political organization of Ukrainian society has the features of oligarchy, kleptocracy and nepotism, and power and property have no fundamental divisions. As a result, political processes are highly dependent on the covenants of business elite groups in politics. In turn, this gives rise to the domination of the "subjective factor" in terms of political will and the implementation of political decisions – in veiled form, personal mercantile interest is proclaimed by an overwhelming public need and, subsequently, can be integrated into the law.

From the point of view of political science in Ukraine, short-term factors of electoral behavior are dominant. They include economic conditions, media influence, influence of political leaders' personal features, peculiarities of election campaign conducting, etc.

Due to this, from the point of view of some Ukrainian scholars, classical western methodological paradigms have shown their inadequacy to Ukrainian realities [6, p. 10]. For example, Ukrainian politologists V. Belopoly and S. Rudenko state that it is inappropriate to apply the characteristics of the third wave of democratization of

S. Huntington and three distinct "epochs" of German researcher R. Darendorf in Ukraine to achieve the "first world" democracy [1, p. 10-12].

At the same time, the above-mentioned concepts of electoral behavior ("sociological", "socio-psychological", "economic") are unlikely to be fully applicable to Ukrainian political realities.

In our opinion, it is appropriate to monitor the political messaging of Ukrainian experts, political technologists regarding prediction of electoral behavior and future political elections based on statistical data, as this may be the most successful attempt to predict the spontaneous socio-political processes in Ukraine.

Thus, for example, this "spontaneity" is underlined by the opinion of Oleksiy Koshel, chairman of the committee of voters of Ukraine. He notes that the elections have a significant impact on the work of Parliament: "I saw the registration of a number of bills that coincide with the election slogans. We have received bills that are clearly directed at certain electoral groups. Political autumn will be characterized by the fact that there will be a large number of populist decisions of parliament... One should expect political speculation around all issues" [2]. This once again proves the idea that the irrational component of the Ukrainian electorate consciousness is well known to politicians themselves, and the pressure on this component of Ukrainian consciousness will only intensify.

Some experts believe that a qualitative change in the political system is possible due to the emergence of new faces in the parliament. According to Taras Kuzio, a researcher at the Transatlantic Relations Center: "Despite the request of our compatriots to new faces in politics, none of the new politicians could earn political points that would allow him to compete for the highest office in the country" [10]. Also, the analyst noted that the elections in Ukraine on March 31, 2019 will be reduced to confrontation between P. Poroshenko and four populists – Y. Tymoshenko, O. Lyashko, Yu. Boyko, V. Rabinovich. Such forecasts are partly confirmed by a recent sociological survey (fig.1). But there is still plenty of time till the election, and analysts say that the situation can change cardinally. The indicated infographics [5] is somewhat different from other sociological data [9], according to which participation in elections can be taken by young unbiased candidates who began to raise interest at a time when they had not yet had time to register their own political party and determine their own participation in the pre-election race (S. Vakarchuk – 7.3%, V. Zelensky – 6.6%).

However, the vast majority of experts agree that infusion of "young blood" into the echelons of Ukrainian government will not change the situation for the better. For example, a well-known Ukrainian contemporary philosopher, an analyst, notes in this regard – "Changing people in government will not change the negative situation in Ukraine if we do not change the system of life itself. The system of life is rooted in the very way of our society existence, in its Social Contract. The Social Contract needs to be changed. It should contain a long-term strategy for change, based on new principles, new installations, with new strategic benchmarks, with new reference resources" [4].

Mass media as a key tool for the formation of political culture in Ukraine plays a major role in manipulating the political consciousness of the electorate. According to Igor Popov, who is People's Deputy of Ukraine, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on the Prevention and Counteraction of Corruption, "private owners of the four main media

groups have a decisive influence on the formation of electoral preferences. "The conspiracy of the oligarchs" is the terrible dream of the candidate who will not be the object of such a conspiracy" [7].

Here are some sociological data that indicate somehow the low level of political activity, consciousness, culture and education in Ukraine. Thus, only 38% of Ukrainians are in fact interested in politics; 56% of all respondents never read programs of political parties; almost half of respondents were unable to assess the activities of a deputy from their constitu-

ency (33% did not know who he/she is at all). Only 8% consider themselves involved in active social activities and 31% are ready to unite with others in public organizations to protect their rights and interests. 92% of citizens never addressed a deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. 82% of the respondents did not participate in the work of trade unions over the past 15 years. Only a third of citizens believe that their personal involvement is needed in order for the situation in the country to change for the better [8].

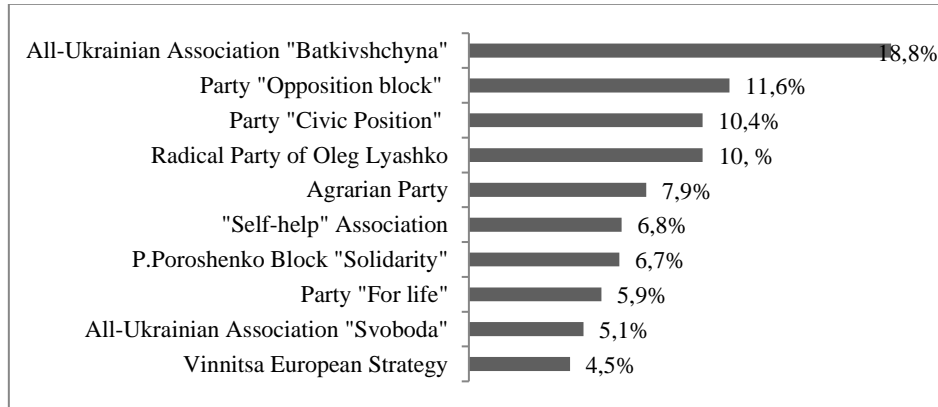


Fig. 1. Sociological survey: "For which party would you vote if the next Sunday the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine were held?" (2018)

Thus, the level of interest of Ukrainians in the political life of their country, as well as their awareness of the peculiarities of political system functioning, is low. In turn, this leads to the marginalization of political culture and the emergence of absenteeism, the spread of irrational orientations in electoral behavior. These are often used and abused by politicians. Therefore, it can be predicted that next features will characterize the elections-2019 in Ukraine, both parliamentary and presidential:

- a large number of candidates from both the old nomenclature and new one;
- the use of a large number of populist slogans, manipulation of political consciousness;
- "trade" by votes through nominating technical candidates, etc.

In the upcoming presidential election, there is a high probability of a victory of old nomenclature representative, due to the use of black PR and broad financial support of the election campaign by interested stakeholders.

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