

## PARTY SYSTEM OF UKRAINE: DYNAMICS OF NATIONALIZATION AND REGIONALIZATION

### SISTEMA PARTIDÁRIO DA UCRÂNIA: DINÂMICAS DE NACIONALIZAÇÃO E REGIONALIZAÇÃO

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#### Abstract

Ukraine's complex political development is largely conditioned by the influence of the territorial factor. In this article, the authors present their vision of the theoretical and empirical aspects of the party system's nationalization and regionalization in Ukraine in 1998–2020. Electoral processes and the party system structuring in Ukraine are analyzed through the prism of the nationalization theory. The main factors that affect the processes of nationalization and regionalization of the party system are characterized. The degree of nationalization and regionalization of the Ukrainian party system is analyzed using a set of empirical indicators: the index of the effective number of parties (ENPS), the Pedersen volatility index, the territorial coverage index (TCI) and the nationalization index (PSNS). Comparison of empirical indicators testifies to the variability of the processes of parties' nationalization and regionalization based on the election results, and also demonstrates the ambivalence of the party system development in Ukraine and the low level of its institutionalization. A general conclusion is made about the low level of nationalization of the

#### Resumo

*O desenvolvimento político complexo da Ucrânia é amplamente condicionado pela influência do fator territorial. Neste artigo, os autores apresentam a sua visão dos aspetos teóricos e empíricos da nacionalização e da regionalização do sistema partidário na Ucrânia entre 1998 e 2020. Os processos eleitorais e a estruturação do sistema partidário ucraniano são analisados através da lente da teoria da nacionalização. Caracterizam-se os principais fatores que influenciam os processos de nacionalização e regionalização do sistema partidário. O grau de nacionalização e regionalização do sistema partidário é examinado com base num conjunto de indicadores empíricos: o número efetivo de partidos (ENPS), o índice de volatilidade de Pedersen, o índice de cobertura territorial (TCI) e o índice de nacionalização partidária (PSNS). A comparação dos indicadores empíricos evidencia a variabilidade dos processos de nacionalização e regionalização dos partidos com base nos resultados eleitorais, demonstrando igualmente a ambivalência da evolução do sistema partidário ucraniano e o baixo nível da sua institucionalização. Conclui-*



party system and the heterogeneity (regionality) of party preferences of the citizens of Ukraine.

**Keywords:** Ukraine. Party System. Nationalization. Regionalization. Parliamentary Elections.

*se, em termos gerais, que o nível de nacionalização do sistema partidário permanece reduzido, bem como elevada a heterogeneidade (regionalidade) das preferências partidárias dos cidadãos da Ucrânia.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Ucrânia. Sistema Partidário. Nacionalização. Regionalização. Eleições Parlamentares.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The development of party systems in transitional democracies is often accompanied by fluctuations between processes of political integration and territorial differentiation. Studies of the Ukrainian party system indicate that in certain periods of its development one of two tendencies could be clearly observed – either towards nationalization or regionalization, which depends on the combined influence of a number of factors, such as the specific features of post-communist transit, electoral system, form of government, political regime, etc.

This can be seen especially clearly in the results of the parliamentary and presidential elections. S. Huntington used the electoral map of the 1994 presidential elections in Ukraine as an illustration of the civilizational fault line in Ukraine, while many domestic and foreign scientists – as a confirmation of the concept of ‘two Ukraines’ – Eastern and Western (Huntington, 1996).

Thus, the results of the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2014, 2019 showed that, firstly, certain political forces overcame the electoral barrier only thanks to voting for them in one or several regions of Ukraine, and, secondly, voting in the regions for political parties differed along the East-West axis, which indicated that parties are working to attract voters in certain regions of Ukraine.

The exception is the parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2019, as a result of which the nationalization index turned out to be quite high. This shift is associated with the disappearance of the basic regions for many parties – Donbass and Crimea – from the electoral map of Ukraine, and the emergence of new national parties: European Solidarity and Servant of the People, which received equal support in all regions of Ukraine. But the increase in electoral homogeneity that has manifested itself in these elections does not

at all guarantee an increase in the level of nationalization of the country's party system, which was confirmed by the results of the 2020 local elections.

The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of nationalization and regionalization of Ukraine's party system in the context of its political evolution. In line with this aim, the objectives are to identify the key factors that have influenced the processes of nationalization and regionalization of Ukraine's party system, as well as to assess the degree of territorial homogeneity of support for political parties based on nationalization indices and other empirical indicators.

Using empirical tools to analyze the processes of nationalization and regionalization of party systems, the authors of the research study the specific features of the party system development in Ukraine, primarily based on the results of parliamentary elections from 1998 to 2020. This approach makes it possible to assess comprehensively the dynamics of changes within the party system and its principal structural characteristics.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The analysis of nationalization and regionalization was carried out on the basis of conceptual approaches and quantitative indicators that made it possible to trace the territorial features of the party system's development. The methodology of this research is based on the theory of party systems' nationalization (Jones and Mainwaring, 2003; Caramani, 2004; Bochler, 2010; Schakel, 2015). This theoretical approach makes it possible to trace how the territorial structure of electoral support shapes the relationship between nationwide and regional trends in the development of the party system. Through the prism of this theory, the development of the party system in Ukraine will be analyzed in the context of its nationalization and regionalization.

The nationalization of the party system is understood as the territorial homogenization of electoral support for political parties. The party system is considered fully nationalized if the shares of the votes received by the parties in different territorial units of the country are the same. As emphasised by Ignacio Lago and José Ramón Montero, "a perfectly nationalized party system is a party system with only national parties or, in other words, without sub-national parties" (Lago and Montero, 2014, p. 191). Such an understanding of nationalization highlights the nationwide character of party

representation. At the same time, it is important to take into account the territorial homogeneity of electoral behavior. As Daniele Caramani notes, “these processes of political integration translate in the territorial homogenization of electoral behavior, both electoral participation and the support for the main party families” (Caramani, 2004, p. 1).

The antithesis of the party system's nationalization is its regionalization: the higher is the level of nationalization, the lower, respectively, the level of regionalization is, and vice versa. The indicators of the party influence regionalization are the formation of regional political parties and regional support for national parties.

Due to the lack of a unified approach to studying the territorial homogeneity of electoral preferences in political science, there were used the Party Nationalization Score (PNS) and Party System Nationalization Score (PSNS) indices to measure the level of the party system's nationalization, developed by Mark Jones and Scott Manwaring and successfully tested on huge electoral data array (Jones & Mainwaring, 2003).

To characterize the degree of fragmentation of parliamentary representation, the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPS) index is applied, which makes it possible to determine the actual number of parties that influence decision-making (Laakso & Taagepera, 1979). The Pedersen Index of Volatility is also used, as it enables the measurement of electoral shifts between consecutive elections and the assessment of the dynamism of the party system (Pedersen, 1979).

In addition, there was used the Territorial Coverage Index (TCI) proposed by Daniele Caramani, which is calculated as the percentage of constituencies where a party nominated its candidates out of the total number of constituencies. Although this index ignores the level of electoral support for parties, it allows drawing conclusions about the opportunities that parties have to be represented in all electoral districts, and, consequently, about the presence of party structures in the regions of the country.

Since the process of the party system's nationalization is the antithesis of the regionalization process, its analysis must necessarily include the identification of typical and deviant regions. This can be done by calculating the Euclidean distance (Manaylo-Prykhodko & Ostapets, 2020, p. 141). A low value of this indicator shows the typical nature of the region, a high value means deviance.

The calculations of the indices were carried out on the basis of open statistical data and in accordance with the classical formulas used in comparative studies of party

systems (PNS, PSNS, TCI, ENPS). The empirical foundation consists of the official data of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine derived from the results of the parliamentary elections of 1998–2019. The application of these instruments makes it possible to trace the dynamics of nationalization and regionalization of Ukraine's party system over time and to identify the structural factors that have driven the corresponding fluctuations.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Factors of nationalization and regionalization of Ukraine's party system

The study of the factors influencing the nationalization of party systems was important for this research. The process of nationalizing political parties and party systems in different countries depends on the degree of these factors' manifestation and their significance.

Given the Ukrainian specificity, the determinants of the process of nationalizing / regionalizing the country's party system include socio-cultural heterogeneity, features of post-communist transit, political regime, electoral rules, form of government, decentralization and strengthening of regional political influence, constitutional volatility (the form of government in Ukraine changed in 2004, 2010, 2014), the activities of subnational (regional) elites and the formation of regional political regimes in certain regions of Ukraine, the legal framework for political parties' functioning, and ethnic fragmentation. Let us consider the most significant (from the authors' viewpoint) of them.

*Socio-cultural heterogeneity associated with the historical division of Ukraine into Western and Eastern.* Historical, linguistic–ethnic and religious differences between regions shape specific political orientations of the population, which are often manifested in the territorial heterogeneity of support for political parties. As Daniel Bochsler notes, the nationalization of party systems in post-communist democracies is closely related to the territorial structure of social divisions, except for cases where the electoral systems provide for a high degree of nationalization, or where super-presidentialism inhibits the creation of strong nationalized parties (Bochsler, 2010, p. 807).

After the 1994 presidential elections, when the voting for Leonid Kuchma and Leonid Kravchuk coincided with the map of the spread of the Russian and Ukrainian

languages, the metaphor of ‘two Ukraines’ arose. This metaphor gained particular popularity with the release of the famous book by Samuel Huntington ‘The Clash of Civilizations’, where Ukraine was called a torn country, along the territory of which there is a fault line between Eastern and Western civilizations (Huntington, 1996). However, regional differentiation in Ukraine is much more complicated than the stereotyped division into Western and Eastern Ukraine. Empirical studies indicate that Ukraine is a fairly heterogeneous country. Most scholars agree that Ukraine consists of three (West, Center, South-East) or four regions (West, Center, East, South) with different historical traditions, different types of political culture and specific electoral behavior (Kľučkovič, 2014, p. 17). At the same time, Lowell Barrington emphasizes that the regional identity of Ukrainians is ambivalent and does not constitute a clearly defined political division, as people interpret the notion of “region” in different ways (Barrington, 2021). The key markers of socio-cultural, ideological and political differences between residents of different regions of Ukraine remain the Ukrainian language, an assessment of the historical past and the attitude to the country's foreign policy.

*Features of the post-communist transit, its intermittent nature, interspersed with serious socio-political conflicts.* Since the proclamation of independence (1991), Ukraine has experienced at least three large-scale political upheavals, accompanied by public confrontation, mass protests against the authorities (the campaign ‘Ukraine without Kuchma’ 2000–2001, Orange Revolution after the presidential elections in 2004–2005, Euromaidan 2013–2014). All this inevitably affected the actor's structure and configuration of the party system. In 2014, the changes were so dramatic that with regard to the results of the 2014–2015 elections (parliamentary and local) there can be identified the emergence of a fundamentally new party system with a completely different set of actors than before (the only exception is the All-Ukrainian Association ‘Batkivshchyna’). The party system underwent significant changes following the results of the parliamentary elections in 2019. Such a sharp change in the actor structure is associated with the lack of party preferences rooting in public consciousness, which is also one of the features of the Ukrainian post-communist transit.

*Political regime.* The political regime that has developed in Ukraine in the course of the post-communist transit is called differently by scholars. In our opinion, its essence is most accurately conveyed by the term ‘hybrid’. The hybridity of this regime is

manifested in the fact that at different stages of its development it acquired the contours of electoral authoritarianism, a neo-patrimonial or oligarchic regime (Matsievsky, 2016).

Such a regime changes the very essence of democratic institutions, including, and perhaps most of all, political parties. Thus, Ukrainian parties are not a part of civil society reflecting the interests of its various segments, but “political machines” built around business structures or leaders.

*Electoral rules.* In Ukraine, elections to the Verkhovna Rada were held eight times, and at the same time, almost always according to different rules: if the electoral formula was not adjusted, then the conditions for holding the elections changed.

In 1994, elections to the Verkhovna Rada were held according to the majority system of absolute majority; in 1998, 2002, 2012, 2014, 2019 – according to a mixed unrelated system (half of the deputies were elected according to the system of a relative majority in 225 single-mandate constituencies, half - according to closed party lists in a single nationwide constituency with a 4% electoral threshold); in 2006 and 2007 – according to a proportional system with a 3% electoral threshold in a single nationwide constituency. In 2012, electoral blocs were deprived of the right to participate in elections, and the electoral barrier was raised to 5%. In 2019, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the ‘Electoral Code of Ukraine’, which established a proportional system for parliamentary elections with open territorial electoral lists.

The constant change in electoral legislation and the predominance of electoral formulas with a pronounced majority component, which did not contribute to the party system's structuring, had a negative impact on the process of its nationalization.

The second problem is the possibility of unpunished violation of the laws stipulating the political parties' functioning. In particular, there are not observed the norms of laws stipulating the suspension of activities of those parties that: a) have not participated in election campaigns for 10 years; b) have not created their cells in 2/3 of the regions of Ukraine; c) have less than 10 thousand members; d) have not submitted their financial statements to the National Agency on Corruption Prevention, etc (Law, 2001). Hence it can be concluded that the legal framework for the parties' functioning also did not promote a high level of the party system nationalization.

*Regionalization of political influence and the phenomenon of "regional" political parties.* The regionalization of the political process can be regarded as a society's response to such trends as the decrease in the competence of representatives of the

government authorities, the loss of trust in the latter, and the decrease in the citizens' interest in the national political discourse. As European experience confirms, voting in regional elections can take on a different form from national elections due to region-specific preferences (Folvarčný *et al.*, 2023).

Significant aggravation of this trend is associated with the decentralization reform. This provides grounds for considering decentralization-related changes as a factor influencing not only the structure of local government, but also the configuration of party competition at the national level. As Dawn Brancati argues, “political decentralization increases the strength of regional parties in national legislatures, independent of the strength of regional cleavages” (Brancati, 2008, p. 135).

One of the results of the political process regionalization was the emergence of "regional" political parties, although the formation of such parties is prohibited by Ukrainian legislation on parties. Regional parties in Ukraine have become a vibrant political phenomenon since 2010 when parliamentary and local elections began to be held on different dates.

The main reasons for the formation of such parties can comprise the following: a) the decline of public confidence in the central government authority against the backdrop of maintaining and strengthening confidence in local governments; b) getting new opportunities by local governments as a result of the successful decentralization reform (and especially financial decentralization); c) the inability of parliamentary parties to acquire the agenda of local elections, understand the citizens' needs and put forward adequate and realistic programs for regional and local development; d) "partisanship" of local elections; e) the desire of the regional elite to maintain influence and control over local resources.

It should be noted that the formation of "regional" parties and their participation in political life negatively influences the level of the party system nationalization. If there were no such parties, then in local elections voters would ballot only for national parties, and the level of the party system nationalization would be much higher. As scholars of nationalization note, differences in vote shares between regions are higher in subnational elections than in national ones, since in the latter strategic voter motivation plays a significant role (Schakel & Romanova, 2020). There is no special influence of these parties on the process of regionalization of the party system since they are unstable formations that are used by the local elite to participate in local elections.

This is the main reason why the analysis of local elections was left outside the scope of our study. At the same time, the ratio of voting results for parliamentary parties at the national and regional levels was shown using the calculation of the Euclidean distance. This suggests another conclusion, which concerns the legislation on parties. In order to increase the level of the party system nationalization in Ukraine, it is necessary to prohibit the functioning of "regional" parties, whose formation is mainly caused only by their participation in local elections.

Thus, the specificity of Ukraine's party system is shaped by a combination of factors that simultaneously sustain both nationwide and regional trends in its development.

### 3.2 Stages of development of Ukraine's party system

The transformation of Ukraine's party system has been inextricably linked to the evolution of political institutions and to changes in the structure of electoral competition. Three periods can be distinguished in the development of the party system in Ukraine (1991–2004, 2004–2014, since 2014), each covering several large electoral cycles (Manaylo-Prykhodko & Ostapets, 2020, p. 86). The regular parliamentary elections are considered to be the starting point for such electoral cycles, including parliamentary, presidential and local elections. However, given the status of the president in the system of state power in Ukraine, the scope of his powers and the level of influence on domestic policy, in relation to this country, it is more expedient to start the countdown of the large electoral cycle from the presidential elections. This approach is also supported by the fact that following the results of three presidential elections and the initiative of the elected presidents (2004, 2010, 2014), the form of government in Ukraine changed and new party structures emerged, which for a time occupied a dominant position in the Ukrainian political space. Such structuring makes it possible to proceed to a sequential analysis of the stages that characterize the dynamics of the development of Ukraine's party system.

*The first period (1991-2004).* Within the first period, the party system's structuring in Ukraine was determined by the constituent elections. These were the 1991 and 1994 presidential elections and 1994 elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. After analyzing the results of these elections, it can be concluded that their influence on political processes in Ukraine was ambivalent. On the one hand, they successfully

performed their functions in the context of a democratic transit: they established an institutional design that gave impetus to developing electoral competition and to the evolution of the party system, shaped models of electoral behavior that had a distinct regional tinge, and created the basis for legitimizing the future political regime. On the other hand, due to flaws in the electoral legislation, in our opinion, they did not ensure the rotation of the political elite, and with the introduction of the presidency, the party nomenclature was able to successfully integrate into the newly formed power structures. As a result, informal institutions and practices acquired a decisive significance in the economic and political life of Ukraine, which led to the formation of a hybrid political regime there.

The development of the party system in the period under review was also significantly influenced by the parliamentary elections of 1998 and 2002, which were held according to a mixed electoral system. More than 40 parties (out of 53 legalized) took part in the 1998 parliamentary elections. The election results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Results of the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine March 29, 1998\**

Name of the party, electoral bloc	NC**, mandates	NC, % of votes	PNS	TCI
Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU)	84	24.65	0.71	0.77
Narodnyi Rukh of Ukraine (NRU)	32	9.4	0.56	0.82
The Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Peasant Party of Ukraine	29	8.55	0.53	0.44
Green Party of Ukraine	19	5.43	0.86	0.51
People's Democratic Party	17	5.01	0.81	0.48
Hromada	16	4.67	0.52	0.80
Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine	14	4.04	0.55	0.33
Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United)	14	4.01	0.59	0.57

\* Hereinafter, the tables use data on voting for political parties and electoral blocs, which are posted on the official website of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (<http://www.cvk.gov.ua>).

\*\* Nationwide constituency

The 1998 elections reflected several trends in the national and regional political balance. Due to the sharp stratification in Ukrainian society and the poverty of the majority of the population, the left and center-left won the elections. At the same time, the electoral bloc of the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Peasant Party of Ukraine 'For the truth, for the people, for Ukraine' (SPU and PPU) received the greatest support in the Central region, while the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) was voted for in the Russian-speaking industrial regions of Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Territorial support

for the national democratic forces, which primarily include the Narodnyi Rukh (People's Movement) of Ukraine (NRU), the electoral bloc of 'National Front' and the party 'Reforms and Order', was mainly limited to the Western region.

A feature of the 1998 elections was the emergence of the phenomenon of one-region parties. Such parties are recorded in the Transcarpathian (Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United) (SDPU (u)), Dnipropetrovsk (All-Ukrainian Association 'Hromada') and Sumy (Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU)) regions. It is thanks to voting in these regions, where these parties received 31.17, 35.34 and 20.89% of the votes respectively, they managed to overcome the 4% barrier in Ukraine as a whole (Ostapets *et al.* 2016, p. 98).

The 2002 parliamentary elections became a bifurcation point in the development of the Ukrainian party system. If earlier the dominant influence on its evolution was exerted by socio-economic delimitation, after 2002 it was socio-cultural one. In the Western and Central regions, the victory was won by the opposition bloc of Viktor Yushchenko 'Our Ukraine', the basis of which was made up by parties of the national-democratic direction; in the South and Eastern regions, the most support was received by the pro-government bloc 'For a United Ukraine!', which included centrist parties ('Labor Ukraine', People's Democratic Party, Party of Regions, Agrarian Party of Ukraine).

Actualization of the socio-cultural delimitation simplified the tasks of political forces in subsequent election campaigns. In their electoral messages, it was used by both the National Democrats and their opponents (left and center parties). Consolidation of own electorate was achieved through an appeal to language, cultural values and foreign policy priorities, that is, to the issues on which residents of different regions had different viewpoints. And such an appeal was beneficial to all contestants. In turn, this had a negative impact on the formation of a stable party system, where political parties would have a nationwide high rating of citizens' trust.

On the eve of the 2002 parliamentary elections, there were 127 registered parties in Ukraine. 21 parties and nine blocs uniting 40 parties took part in the campaign. The election results are shown in *Table 2*.

**Table 2***Results of the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine March 31, 2002*

Name of the party, electoral bloc	NC, mandates	NC, % of votes	PNS	TCI
Viktor Yushchenko's bloc 'Our Ukraine'	70	23.57	0.55	0.78
Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU)	59	19.98	0.64	0.90
'For a United Ukraine!'	35	11.7	0.68	0.90
Yuliia Tymoshenko's bloc	22	7.26	0.64	0.01
Socialist Party of Ukraine	20	6.87	0.51	0.71
Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United)	19	6.27	0.67	0.35

Source: Authors; The Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

The 2002 parliamentary elections once again confirmed the adequacy of the metaphor of 'two Ukraines' (Eastern and Western). At the same time, the specificity of these elections was characterized by structuring of the main subjects of the electoral process in the form of nominal party blocs, which led to the loss of the parties' recognition, their 'dissolution' in the electoral blocs, and ultimately to oblivion.

*The second period (2004–2014)* was characterized by electoral confrontation along the 'East – West' axis. Its specific feature was the stability of the electoral map, which appeared as a result of the 2004 presidential elections, and then was reproduced in the 2006–2012 election campaigns (Manaylo-Prykhodko & Ostapets, 2020, p. 88–90).

The 2004 presidential elections clearly revealed the existence of two electoral Ukraines, whose expression of the will was absolutely opposite: in the west and in the center (17 regions), Viktor Yushchenko won, in the east and south (10 regions), Viktor Yanukovich did. The package of laws adopted on December 8, 2004 under the influence of the struggle that unfolded in these elections had a serious impact on the further development of the country's party system, which implied, in particular, the transition to a proportional electoral formula in parliamentary and local elections, which contributed to the institutional strengthening of the role of parties through shaping the parliamentary majority (Law, 2004).

Thus, before the 2004 elections, although the socio-cultural split was reflected in the results of the elections (parliamentary and presidential), it was only one of the factors in structuring the party system. Later it began to determine its configuration.

The electoral demarcation, clearly observed in the 2004 presidential elections, remained relevant in the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections. In the regions where Yushchenko won, the first place was taken by the Yuliia Tymoshenko Bloc and the 'Our

Ukraine' party, which supported him in the election campaign, and in the regions where Yanukovych won, – by the Party of Regions.

In 2006, 28 parties and 17 electoral blocs, uniting 51 parties, were included in the ballot. The election results are shown in *Table 3*.

**Table 3**

*Results of the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine March 26, 2006\**

Name of the party, electoral bloc	NC, mandates	NC, % of votes	PNS
Party of Regions	186	32.14	0.54
Yuliia Tymoshenko's bloc	129	22.29	0.70
Our Ukraine	81	13.95	0.60
Socialist Party of Ukraine	33	5.69	0.63
CPU	21	3.66	0.72

\* Due to the absence of a majority component in these elections, TCI was not calculated in relation to them.

The results of the 2006 parliamentary elections showed the regional influence of Ukraine's main parliamentary political parties: in the west, voters balloted for national democratic political forces (the Yuliia Tymoshenko Bloc, Our Ukraine electoral bloc); at the same time, voters in the east balloted mainly for political parties with a regional eastern social base - the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine. The voters of Central Ukraine evenly supported well-known political forces.

Local elections in 2006 were held simultaneously with the parliamentary ones, and in each region, as a rule, they reflected the parliamentary electoral choice of citizens. At the same time, they also had their own specificity, related to the fact that a somewhat higher level of competition in local elections led to a decrease in the results of parliamentary parties. Consequently, electoral blocs created by the local elite were more popular with voters.

The 2010 presidential elections, which were again held against the backdrop of the Ukrainian east and west opposition, became a kind of continuation of the 2004 elections. As then, the eastern and southern regions voted for Yanukovych (who won), and most of the western and central regions voted for Tymoshenko.

The political context of the local elections on October 31, 2010, was predetermined by the victory of V. Yanukovych in the presidential elections, which significantly strengthened the position of the Party of Regions in the regions of Ukraine. According to the election results, it won in 19 regions of Ukraine, the Autonomous

Republic of Crimea, and the city of Sevastopol. Thus, the results of the local elections in 2010 significantly changed the alignment of party-political forces in the regions due to a significant increase in the influence of the Party of Regions in the west and in the center of Ukraine.

Local elections in 2010 were for the first time held separately from parliamentary ones, which led to the active participation of "regional" parties in them, which in many regions, districts, and cities enjoyed considerable support from voters (for example, Transcarpathian, Khmelnytsky, Vinnytsia regions). At the same time, the formation of such parties and their participation in elections did not have a significant impact on the level of the party system regionalization, since such parties cease to function actively at the end of the election campaign.

21 parties participated in the 2012 parliamentary elections (out of 195 registered). As already noted, in these elections, according to the law, parties did not have the right to create electoral blocs. This rule of law was beneficial to large parties, one of which was the ruling Party of Regions. The election results are shown in *Table 4*.

**Table 4**

*Results of the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine October 28, 2012*

Name of the party, electoral bloc	NC, mandates	NC, % of votes	PNS	TCI
Party of Regions	72	30	0.67	0.90
Batkivshchyna	62	25.54	0.76	0.67
UDAR	34	13.96	0.83	0.81
CPU	32	13.18	0.67	0.48
Svoboda	25	10.44	0.53	0.16

Source: Authors; The Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

If the regional distribution of electoral support is discussed, the Party of Regions won in nine regions of Eastern and Southern Ukraine, Crimea and Sevastopol, and Batkivshchyna won in 15 regions of Western and Central Ukraine and Kiev.

Thus, although according to the results of the 2010 local elections in Ukraine there was a pronounced tendency towards the formation of a party system with a dominant party (such was the Party of Regions), the results of the 2012 parliamentary elections allow concluding that the party system is moving towards a two-bloc configuration: on the one hand, these are the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU),

and on the other, the parties ‘Batkivshchyna’, ‘Svoboda’ and ‘Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms’ (UDAR).

*The third period (since 2014)* in the development of the party system of Ukraine begins with a transformation in the structure of the electoral space (the victory of pro-European parties in the 2014 extraordinary parliamentary elections in most regions of Ukraine) and the formation of new political parties.

The early parliamentary elections in 2014 radically changed the format of the party system in Ukraine and its actors’ structure. As a result, five new parties entered the Rada: People's Front, Petro Poroshenko's Bloc, Opposition Bloc, ‘Samopomich’ (Self-Help) Association and Oleg Liashko Radical Party. Of the former parliament, only Batkivshchyna has overcome the electoral barrier. The election results are shown in *Table 5*.

**Table 5**

*Results of the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine October 26, 2014*

Name of the party, electoral bloc	NC, mandates	NC, % of votes	PNS	TCI
People's Front	64	22.14	0.75	0.53
Bloc of Petro Poroshenko	63	21.81	0.89	0.65
‘Samopomich’ Association	32	10.97	0.81	0.05
Opposition Bloc	27	9.43	0.42	0.42
Oleg Liashko Radical Party	22	7.44	0.81	0.74
Batkivshchyna	17	5.68	0.846	0.73

Source: Authors; The Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

Regionally, electoral sympathies were distributed as follows: the ‘Opposition Bloc’ won a victory in five regions of Eastern Ukraine, while the South, Center and West preferred the ‘Bloc of Petro Poroshenko’ and the ‘People’s Front’.

The 2015 local council elections completed the “revolutionary electoral cycle”, consolidating the existing configuration of the party system. A characteristic feature of these elections is the participation in them of a large number of regional and sub-regional parties, such as the ‘Party of Ordinary People of Serhii Kaplin’ (Poltava), ‘Cherkashchane’ (Cherkasy region), ‘Trust Deeds’ (Odessa), ‘United Center’, Party of Hungarians of Ukraine, Democratic Party of Hungarians of Ukraine (Transcarpathian region), etc. (Yanishevs’ky, 2016).

It should be noted that many parties that received representation in local government in 2015 used new campaigning tactics, concentrating their forces at the regional or sub-regional level and nominating candidates only for some local councils.

The early parliamentary elections in 2019 again radically changed the actor structure and configuration of the party system. The elections were held under the influence of the presidential campaign (March – April 2019), which outlined the format of its organization, the main vectors of political competition, while showing the rating of political parties that supported candidates for the presidency.

V. Zelensky won the presidential elections, having received 73.22% of voters in the second round and winning in all regions of Ukraine, except Lviv. V. Zelensky's candidacy was nominated in the presidential elections by the Servant of the People party, which began its formal existence in December 2017 as a result of rebranding the Party of decisive changes. And its name is associated with the name of the series of the same title, where V. Zelensky starred in the role of a common people representative who became a president. The organizational basis for the presidential election campaign was the Ze-team (social network), which worked to promote the image of V. Zelensky.

As a result of the parliamentary elections, five political parties overcame the electoral barrier. The election results are shown in *Table 6*.

**Table 6**

*Results of elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine July 21, 2019*

Name of the party	NC, mandates	NC, % of votes	PNS	TCI
Servant of the People	124	43.16	0.89	0.84
Opposition Platform – For Life	37	1.05	0.55	0.61
Batkivshchyna	24	8.18	0.77	0.64
European solidarity	23	8.10	0.73	0.57
Holos (Voice)	17	5.82	0.58	0.30

Source: Authors; The Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

Against the background of the crisis in electoral support for old parliamentary parties, the Servant of the People party achieved the greatest success, receiving 43.16% of the votes in the general constituency (124 deputy mandates) and 130 mandates out of 199 in majoritarian districts, which allowed it to form a one-party majority (mono-majority / mono-coalition).

According to the parliamentary elections results, the configuration of the Ukrainian parliament looked as follows: the centrist party Servant of the People, the opposition pro-Russian party ‘Opposition Platform – For Life’, the opposition patriotic party ‘European Solidarity’ and the center-left ‘Batkivshchyna’. The structuring of the Ukrainian parliament took place on the basis of the same main socio-cultural demarcation ‘East – West’. In general terms, it has acquired the outlines of a system with a dominant party.

Regionally, the Servant of the People party won in 21 regions and the city of Kiev. The ‘Opposition Platform – For Life’ party got a victory in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, the ‘Holos’ party – In the Lviv region.

Unlike the Servant of the People party (PSN – 0.89), most of the others had mainly regional influence, which is confirmed by the calculation of the nationalization index and the zonality of their electoral support: European Solidarity - 0.73, Holos - 0.58, ‘Opposition Platform – For Life’ – 0.55, ‘Opposition Bloc’ – 0.56. All of them lost their votes as they moved from west to east (European Solidarity, Holos, Svoboda), or vice versa – from east to west (‘Opposition Platform – For Life’, ‘Opposition Bloc’, ‘Party of Sharii’). For this reason, the overall nationalization index of the party system of Ukraine (PSNS) amounted to 0.74 (this is an average value compared to developed European democracies) (see Table 7).

The 2020 local elections completed the electoral cycle launched by the 2019 presidential campaign and were particularly significant given the formation of regional party structures. The specificity of these elections was due to two factors: the change in the electoral legislation on local elections after the adoption of the Electoral Code of Ukraine (introduction of a proportional electoral system in local elections) and the completion of the next stage of the decentralization reform, which, in turn, increased the importance of local elections and the political subjectivity of local elites.

Valentyna Romanova notes that the 2020 elections in Ukraine were characterised by simultaneous nationalization and regionalization. Nationalisation of the 2020 regional elections is attributed to weak regional authority, the diminishing regional diversity of Ukraine, and the de facto strengthening of presidential powers, whereas the regionalisation of the 2020 regional contests is linked to the combination of their non-simultaneity with national elections, their simultaneity with local elections within the region, and the decentralisation of competences to local government (Romanova, 2022).

The parties ‘Servant of the People’, ‘Batkivshchyna’, ‘Opposition Platform – For Life’, ‘For the Future’ and ‘European Solidarity’ received the largest number of parliamentary mandates in the 2020 local elections. These elections demonstrated high electoral results for parliamentary and “regional” political parties, along with a high level of local councils' fragmentation. In fact, in every region, the elections showed the existence of their own special party structure and its configuration. Regional political parties became leaders in Vinnytsia (the party ‘Ukrainian Strategy of Hroisman’), Transcarpathian (party ‘Native Transcarpathia’), Poltava (party ‘Trust’), Kharkiv (party ‘Kernes Bloc – Successful Kharkiv’), Khmelnytskyi (party ‘Team of Symchyshyn ‘), Cherkasy (party ‘Cherkashchane’), Chernihiv (party ‘Native Home’) regions (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2020).

The election result is the evidence that the majority of political parties rely only on voters’ regional support and on the regional location of their party cells. For this reason, the work of parties aimed at gaining support in the regions “foreign” for them was practically not carried out. The point is that political parties do not develop their structures on an all-Ukrainian scale. The introduction of martial law in 2022 has deepened the crisis of Ukraine’s party system, as political parties have reduced the level of their activity and citizens’ trust in them has weakened.

### **3.3 Nationalization vs regionalization in Ukraine’s party system**

To identify the level of nationalization/regionalization of the party system in Ukraine, there was calculated a number of empirical indicators: the party system nationalization index (PSNS) and parliamentary (ENPS) indices (*see table 7*). Besides, Table 7 summarizes the number of parties that overcame the electoral barrier in the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections; the percentage of votes received by the ‘old’ parties, that is, the parties that overcame the electoral barrier in the previous elections; number of non-party deputies.

**Table 7**

*Nationalization index of parliamentary parties / electoral blocs based on the results of the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections*

<b>Parties / Electoral blocs*</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
Narodnyi Rukh of Ukraine	0.56					
Green Party of Ukraine	0.86					
The Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Peasant Party of Ukraine	0.53					
CPU	0.71	0.64	0.73	0.67		
Hromada	0.52					
Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine	0.55					
SDPU (u)	0.60	0.67				
NDP	0.81					
National Front	0.28					
Viktor Yushchenko's block 'Our Ukraine' / 'Our Ukraine' (2006)		0.55	0.60			
For the United Ukraine!		0.68				
Yuliia Tymoshenko's bloc / Batkivshchyna (2012, 2014)		0.64	0.71	0.76	0.85	0.77
SPU		0.514	0.633			
Party of Regions			0.54	0.69		
UDAR				0.83		
Svoboda				0.53		
People's Front					0.75	
Petro Poroshenko Bloc (2014) / European Solidarity (2019)					0.89	0.73
Association Samopomich					0.80	
Opposition bloc					0.42	
Oleg Liashko radical party					0.81	
Servant of the People						0.89
Opposition Platform – For Life						0.55
Holos						0.58
PSNS	0.65	0.62	0.66	0.72	0.76	0.74
Pedersen Volatility Index	–	46	50	36	61	69

\* Electoral blocs took part in the parliamentary elections in accordance with the electoral laws until 2012.

As can be seen from the table, according to the results of the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections, the nationalization index of the Ukrainian party system ranged from 0.62 to 0.76. The rather low values of this index in comparison with the party systems of other countries can most likely be explained by the sociocultural heterogeneity of Ukraine, which determined the nature of voting. The maximum PSNS level was reached in 2012 (the emergence of a trend towards forming a stable two-bloc system), in 2014 (consolidation of the party system after the Euromaidan), in 2019 (protest voting against old political elites), and the minimum – in 2002 (actualization of the socio-cultural delimitation 'East – West').

Calculation of the nationalization index for individual parties (that is, the degree of homogeneity of voting for them) (see Table 8) allows fixing the following regularities:

1. The values of the index for parliamentary parties are relatively small, which is due to both regional features of the political development of Ukraine and the exploitation of socio-cultural markers by parties in their struggle for voters' sympathies. Indicators of nationalizing parties that relied on the electorate of Eastern Ukraine in the election campaign (Party of Regions, Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), Opposition Bloc, Opposition Platform – For Life (OPFP), etc.) and Western Ukraine ('Svoboda', 'Our Ukraine', 'Batkivshchyna', 'Holos', etc.) are approximately the same and range from 0.42 to 0.8.

2. The index of nationalization among ideological parties (NRU, Svoboda) is lower (from 0.5 to 0.6) than that of electoral-pragmatic parties (Green Party of Ukraine, People's Democratic Party of Ukraine) (from 0.7 and above) and populist ones (Oleg Liashko Radical Party).

3. The indices of individual parties' nationalization, as well as the index of the party system's nationalization, had the highest value in 2014 and 2019. This indicates the weakening trend towards regionalization in the development of the country's party system

It is possible that the increase in the nationalization index following the results of the parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2019 was explained (at least in part) by the disappearance from the electoral map of Ukraine of the regions that are basic for many parties – Donbass and Crimea, as well as the low voter turnout in Southern and Eastern Ukraine.

Comparison of nationalization indices and those of territorial coverage (*see Tables 1–6*) indicates a discrepancy between these indicators for some political forces. High territorial coverage does not always entail a high level of nationalization (for example, in the 1998 parliamentary elections, the TCI of the Narodnyi Rukh of Ukraine was 0.82, and the PNS was 0.56). This discrepancy is due to the fact that a number of parties, despite the presence of structures in all regions of Ukraine, consider only a few of them basic for themselves. The opposite situation also happens when a low index of territorial coverage is combined with a high index of nationalization. This is typical for parties in power (People's Democratic Party), populist parties, as well as parties of post-material values (Green Party of Ukraine). The set of indices indicates the stable coexistence of nationalizing and regionalizing tendencies, which together shape an ambivalent and territorially heterogeneous trajectory of the evolution of Ukraine's party system.

### 3.4 Euclidean distance and regional deviations

To identify deviant and typical electoral regions, there was calculated the Euclidean distance for all regions of Ukraine (see Table 8). Among the deviant (Euclidean distance greater than 1) are Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, partly Rivne, Donetsk and Lugansk regions, as well as Crimea and Sevastopol. It should be noted that in the three western regions deviations from the national voting indicators are significantly higher than in the eastern ones. This can be explained by the fact that during the period under review, the electoral variability in the east of Ukraine was less than in the west, and the corresponding regions consistently supported the so-called ‘parties of the East’ (CPU, Party of Regions, ‘Labor Ukraine’, etc.). It is more difficult to identify typical regions, since deviations often go beyond the typicality boundary (0.5). Nevertheless, a number of regions can still be qualified as typical. These are Zhytomyr, Odessa, Kherson, Chernihiv, Sumy, Cherkasy and some other regions. It is noteworthy that they are all located either in the center or in the south of Ukraine.

**Table 8**

*Euclidean distance based on the results of the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections*

	1998	2002	2006	2012	2014	2019
<b>West</b>						
Ivano-Frankivsk region	1.35	2.31	1.65	1.41	0.78	0.81
Lviv region	1.27	1.72	1.47	1.49	0.68	1.3
Ternopil region	1.30	1.93	1.46	1.33	0.71	0.83
Rivne region	1.02	1.29	1.10	0.76	0.51	0.45
Volyn region	0.79	1.42	1.34	0.89	0.61	0.49
Chernivtsi region	0.41	0.99	0.92	0.71	0.51	0.39
Transcarpathian region	1.24	0.80	0.69	0.39	0.44	0.39
<b>Centre</b>						
Kyiv	0.56	0.69	0.99	0.96	0.55	0.55
Kyiv region	0.34	0.43	1.18	0.61	0.40	0.36
Vinnitsia region	0.56	0.75	1.05	0.87	0.71	0.68
Kirovohrad region	0.42	0.60	0.60	0.32	0.26	0.44
Poltava region	0.52	0.89	0.54	0.89	0.55	0.45
Khmelnyskyi region	0.51	0.55	0.98	0.64	0.39	0.42
Cherkasy region	0.69	0.60	1.03	0.64	0.35	0.48
Zhytomyr region	0.37	0.19	0.59	0.51	0.34	0.36
Sumy region	0.70	0.45	0.92	0.54	0.29	0.39
Chernihiv region	0.50	0.36	0.81	0.57	0.48	0.42
<b>South-East</b>						
Dnepropetrovsk region	1.18	0.80	0.65	0.45	0.73	0.64
Zaporizhzhia region	0.43	0.84	0.90	0.68	0.77	0.52
Donetsk region	0.74	1.29	1.87	1.59	1.43	1.5
Luhansk region	0.97	1.08	1.72	1.40	1.39	1.7
Kharkiv region	0.54	0.83	0.87	0.67	1.13	0.68

Odessa region	0.37	0.70	0.79	0.66	0.75	0.56
Mykolaiv region	0.60	0.79	0.84	0.59	0.51	0.52
Kherson region	0.43	0.65	0.37	0.45	0.38	0.39
Crimea	0.75	0.87	1.16	1.06	–	–
Sevastopol	0.91	1.01	1.46	1.24	–	–

Source: Authors; The Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

The indicators of the Euclidean distance indicate some anomalous deviations in the results of individual elections (Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil regions, 2002: 2.31 and 1.93, respectively; Donetsk region, 2006: 1.87). Such deviations could be explained by the influence on the election results of national parties with a specific territorial location, the intervention of an administrative resource, as well as the specific features of the political forces' alignment in the region at the time of the elections.

It should also be noted that there was a decrease in the indicators of the Euclidean distance in 2019, which resulted from a protest vote against the current government and the old political elite in general. For most regions, the indicator ranged from 0.36 to 0.52 (typical regions), and only in Luhansk (1.7), Donetsk (1.5), Lviv (1.3), Ternopil (0.83), Ivano-Frankivsk (0.81) regions, it was significantly higher, that is, there was a deviation.

An analysis of the Euclidean distance demonstrates the persistent territorial asymmetry of electoral preferences in Ukraine, reflecting the enduring structural differences between its regions.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the results of parliamentary and local elections in the period from 1998 to 2020, the calculation of the indices of nationalization of political parties, the party system, and the Euclidean distance allows drawing the following conclusions regarding the development of the party system in Ukraine.

In the development of the party system in Ukraine, two trends are clearly visible - towards nationalization and towards regionalization. At the same time, in certain periods, one of them manifests itself more clearly, which depends on the combined influence of a number of factors. The main factors influencing the process of nationalization/regionalization of the party system include the following: sociocultural heterogeneity, features of the post-communist transition, political regime, electoral rules, form of government, decentralization, and strengthening of regional political influence,

constitutional volatility (the forms of government in Ukraine changed in 2004, 2010, 2014), the activities of subnational (regional) elites and the formation of regional political regimes in certain regions of Ukraine, the legal framework for the functioning of political parties, and ethnic fragmentation.

The values of the indices of parliamentary parties' nationalization are very low throughout the study period, which indicates the regional influence of national parties. The low values of the index show the uneven support of one or another party in the elections in the regions of Ukraine. The talk is about the fact that national parties have base regions, which allow them to get high results in elections. The availability of such regions indicates the regional nature of the party system. At the same time, it should be noted that the formation and functioning of "regional" political parties do not have a serious impact either on the process of nationalization or on the process of regionalization of the Ukrainian party system. Such parties function as multilevel political structures or as political franchises. Undoubtedly, their absence would have had a positive impact on increasing the level of nationalizing the party system as a whole.

High level of electoral volatility during the period 1998–2019 testifies to the instability of the party system and the formation of new parties, which, using network technologies, receive a nationwide level of support. But unfortunately, the electoral results of such parties, as a rule, have a one-time effect and do not contribute to an increase in the level of the party system nationalization (see Table 7). Very often, such parties do not “survive” until the next electoral cycle.

Analysis of the electoral support of various political forces in parliamentary elections and the success of "regional" parties in local elections allows concluding that the party structure of Ukraine, both at the national and regional levels, consists of the following parties: 1) national parliamentary political parties; 2) national non-parliamentary parties; 3) regional parties; 4) subregional (local) parties operating within one or more regions, which are situationally used by the local elite to provide electoral support in elections to local governments (regional, district, local councils).

Under the current conditions of martial law, Ukraine's party system is experiencing a state of crisis. Following the end of the Russian–Ukrainian war and the restoration of full political life, it may be expected that the coexistence of nationalizing and regionalizing tendencies will remain a key factor shaping the development of Ukraine's party system.

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### Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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