

# PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN UKRAINE

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**Abstract:** Ukraine's party system is not sufficiently stable to facilitate the democratic consolidation of the country. However, the problem with this fundamental Ukrainian political institution runs much deeper than its inability to provide for its own stability. Prior to stabilizing a political institution, it is necessary to standardize and secure its rules and ensure its recognition in society. This article employs quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine the factors promoting and hindering the institutionalization of the party system in Ukraine.

One of the most urgent tasks for post-Soviet Ukraine, a state with a difficult institutional legacy that creates obstacles in its road to democratic development, remains that of ensuring the stability, legitimacy, and durability of its institutions so they might serve societal interests. If an institution fails to serve those interests effectively, it becomes weak and short-lived.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to analyze a fundamental political institution in Ukraine – the party system – and the level of its institutionalization and support by Ukrainian society. Doing so will allow us to draw conclusions about whether the party system in Ukraine is stable and strong enough to guarantee that it will carry out its functions, particularly fully representing the interests of various societal groups in power and implementing appropriate policies.

The core conclusion of this article is that the party system in Ukraine has not yet achieved successful institutionalization. The quantitative analysis reported here demonstrates another important conclusion, namely that the Ukrainian party system entered into a stabilizing stage of development around the time of the 2006 parliamentary elections, when the indicators

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<sup>1</sup> P. Hall and K. Thelen. 2009. "Institutional change in varieties of capitalism." *Socio-Economic Review* 7: 7–34.

for voter preference volatility began to decrease slightly, though nevertheless remaining high. Taking into account the totality of arguments raised in the article, this conclusion suggests that the relative stabilization of the party system is taking place without a concomitant institutionalization, and may therefore have only a temporary effect.

The evidence to support this basic thesis is presented by explaining the influences of various factors affecting the institutionalization of the party system and political parties in Ukraine. Factors that weaken the institutionalization of the party system in Ukraine include institutional, societal, and organizational components. Institutional factors encompass the formal norms and rules governing the functioning of the party system, particularly weak legislation with respect to parties, insufficient monitoring over its enforcement, and groundless but significant changes to the electoral law. Societal factors are related to how rooted the party system is as a whole in society. Among the key indicators are the numerous changes to electoral preferences and the ability of new players to penetrate into the competitive electoral process. For specific political parties, societal factors include the absence of a stable electoral base, the failure to build reliable channels of communications with voters, as well as weak ideological and strong personalistic ties between voters and parties. Finally, organizational factors include the level of institutionalization of individual parties as organizational bodies, with metrics focusing on the high frequency of changes to party names and opaque financing.

This article proceeds in the following way. First, it argues for the importance of a well-institutionalized party system for new democracies. Second, it then describes the actual institutional “rules of the game” created by the state for functioning parties in Ukraine. Third, it focuses on the particularities of the development of the party system with the help of quantitative analysis and the application of the Party Replacement Index and the Pedersen Index of Electoral Volatility. These indices demonstrate the high level of instability in electoral support for political parties, a factor which hinders the institutionalization of the party system as a whole. Fourth, societal and organizational factors that hinder the institutionalization of individual parties are analyzed. The text illustrates each indicator of a weak institutionalization of political parties with examples that include all the Ukrainian parties that entered parliament as of 2013: the Party of Regions, Bat’kivshchyna/Front of Change, which formed a coalition before the 2012 elections, UDAR, the Communist Party of Ukraine, and Svoboda.

## Institutionalization

Why is it important for the party system of a new democracy to be well institutionalized? Theoretically, weak institutionalization, including large numbers of new parties each election, a high level of competition within the system, and the absence of predictable electoral processes, does not necessarily work against the development of democracy. Regardless, a number of factors render a weak institutionalization of the party system undesirable.

First, a poorly institutionalized party system in a new democracy creates significant obstacles for citizens to gain positive experience during the democratic transition.<sup>2</sup> Further, it is believed that the institutionalization of the party system is critically important for the process of democratic consolidation.<sup>3</sup> A weak party system also reduces accountability and decreases the level of long-term commitments between parties and supporters, thereby significantly increasing uncertainty among voters, politicians and parties.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a poorly institutionalized party system to a great measure raises the risks in the electoral “game:” The winners in all likelihood will not be interested in continuing to support the democratic process because they fear defeat in future electoral cycles and the unpleasant consequences of such defeat.<sup>5</sup> In other words, weak political systems are more vulnerable, which allows for anti-party politicians to come to power and negatively affect the general level of democracy in a country.<sup>6</sup>

Another key drawback is that low levels of institutionalization can bring about negative impacts on legislative activity. For example, in researching the two weakly institutionalized party systems of Ukraine and Russia, and, in particular, the behavior of parliamentary parties in the Verkhovna Rada (1998–2003) and the State Duma (1994–2003), political scientist F. Thames concluded that the low level of institutionalization of individual parties negatively influenced the level of parliamentary party discipline.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> F. Thames. 2007. “Discipline and Party Institutionalization in Post-Soviet Legislatures.” *Party Politics* 13 (4): 457–478.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mainwaring and T.R. Scully. 1992. “Party Systems in Latin America,” at <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/members/congress-papers/lasa1992/files/MainwaringScott.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> S. Birch. 2001. “Electoral Systems and Party System Stability in Post-Communist Europe,” at <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/papers/sbvolatility.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> S. Mainwaring and M. Torcal. 2005. “Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization,” Working Paper №319, at <http://kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/319.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> F. Thames. 2007. “Discipline and Party Institutionalization in Post-Soviet Legislatures.” *Party Politics* 13 (4): 457–478.

## Rules of the Game

In order to promote institutionalization of the party system, the stability of electoral rules is essential. In addition, one of the crucial aspects of the party system's institutionalization is the creation of an institutional infrastructure that provides for the articulation and implementation of the rules under which it operates.<sup>8</sup>

According to information provided by Ukraine's Ministry of Justice, there were 199 active political parties in Ukraine at the beginning of 2013.<sup>9</sup> During the period from 1990 to 2012, there were close to 255 functioning parties, some of which have ceased activity.<sup>10</sup> Such a large number of parties results not from social factors or numerous cleavages in Ukrainian society, but rather was largely facilitated by institutional factors, in particular a relatively simple party registration procedure and a weak level of official control in implementing existing law, particularly regarding the number of regional branches, the frequency with which they participate in elections, and the registration of founding charters.

According to the "Law on Political Parties in Ukraine," a prospective party must submit 10,000 signatures of registered voters, a charter, program, minutes from the founding congress, as well as other information.<sup>11</sup> Further, a new party is required to establish regional branches in most of the oblasts of Ukraine within six months of the registration date. Article 24 of the law provides for the nullification of a party registration certificate in the event that registration information has been found to be falsified within three years of the date of registration. In this way, the law effectively forbids the registration of parties without regional branches or documents that may not be genuine. Moreover, there is no legal requirement that the 10,000 signatures that a party collected for its registration have to be turned into 10,000 party members upon registration, meaning that many of the people who sign the petition may have no intention of actually joining the party.

By requiring the review of parties after their registration rather than before, the state facilitates the establishment of more marginal parties that only slightly exceed the minimum requirements to maintain state registration. These parties are able to continue operating for significant periods of time before the Ministry of Justice begins to review them. As practice has

<sup>8</sup> E. Golovakha and N.E. Panina. 2001. "The post-Soviet de-institutionalization and the formation of new social institutions in the Ukrainian society." *Sociology: theory, methods, marketing* 4: 5–22.

<sup>9</sup> State Registration Service of Ukraine. "Political parties," at <http://www.drsv.gov.ua/party>

<sup>10</sup> M. Karmazina. 2012. *Ukrainian multi-party system: Political Parties, Party Leaders, and Political Blocs (late 1980 – early 2012)*. Kyiv.

<sup>11</sup> State Registration Service of Ukraine. "Law on Political Parties in Ukraine," at <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2365-14>

shown, however, state bodies do not systematically review political parties. The only comprehensive review of parties took place in 2003, resulting in the nullification of registration certificates of close to 30 political parties for a wide range of legal shortcomings, including the noncompliance of founding documents, a failure to meet the official requirements for regional branches, violating the requirement that a party maintain a non-profit status, among others.<sup>12</sup> In the periods both preceding and following the 2003 review, party registration certificates were nullified in fewer than 10 cases in each period.

It is worth emphasizing that the level of institutionalization of the party system and that of the electoral system are to a great extent interdependent. Therefore, one of the obstacles to the democratic development of political institutions and the party system is that the law on elections is constantly being changed. For instance, the deputies of the first and second convocations of the Verkhovna Rada were elected under a single-member district system, the third and fourth convocations under a mixed system, and the fifth and sixth convocations under a proportional representation system. In 2011, the government returned to a mixed system, combining elements of single-member districts and proportional representation. Consequently, the electoral system has experienced a radical change in the rules of the game approximately every eight years. Moreover, the electoral system seems not to be finally shaped, and most likely the authorities will change the rules to suit their personal interests in the future. Such constant flux in the electoral system undermines institutionalization.

The switch of the electoral system from mixed to proportional in 2006, as well as the further changes made to the electoral law in 2011, can be explained by the desire of dominant parties to maximize their representation in parliament.<sup>13</sup> According to surveys performed between 2001 and 2007, the proportional system was the least popular type of electoral system among Ukrainians.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a proportional electoral system in 2006. Further, the expert consensus method to reform the proportional electoral system (without regular dramatic transformations) before the 2012 parliamentary elections was to implement a proportional system of voting by open lists of candidates that would serve to intensify communication between deputies and their electorate.<sup>15</sup> But this advice was not accepted, illustrating that neither the

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. "The Ministry of Justice of Ukraine has completed the third stage of political parties' inspection," at <http://www.minjust.gov.ua/news/3091>, accessed May 2003.

<sup>13</sup> K. Benoit. 2004. "Models of electoral system change." *Electoral Studies* 23: 363–389.

<sup>14</sup> Razumkov Center. "Do you support activities of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine? (dynamics, 2000–2011)," at [http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll\\_id=68](http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=68)

<sup>15</sup> O. Fisun and Y. Kalnysh. 2008. *Ukraine in 2008: Annual Assessment of the Socio-Political and Socio-Economic Development*. Kyiv.

demands of society nor experts' conclusions serve as the main motives for institutional transformations, in particular for electoral reform. The state's resistance to making the electoral system more stable consequently deepens social distrust and increases fatigue with further electoral reform initiatives, creating uncertainty among both parties and voters.

The unanticipated effects of electoral laws have led to the disorientation and poor electoral performance of Ukrainian parties. The continuously changing laws prevented many parties from developing new tactics and strategies which would facilitate success across electoral cycles. For example, the electoral law of 2011 prohibited the formation of party blocs for participation in the 2012 elections, a rule that became fatal for a number of small parties. During the previous four electoral cycles (1998, 2002, 2006, and 2007), these small parties were not invested in strengthening their individual positions because they were used to achieving success by cooperating with others. The change from the proportional system to a mixed system before the 2012 elections further weakened many parties by forcing them to actively attract and include regional leaders in their ranks. Such a "last minute" mobilization led to the filling up of parties with people who had only a weak connection to the party and therefore ended up having less of an inclination to comply with party discipline, support party policies, or implement ideological principles. As a result, trust in these parties on the part of the voters dropped, bringing about an increase in electoral volatility.

### **Party System Development in Ukraine**

It stands to reason that the political systems of less developed democracies are poorly institutionalized. Generally, these less developed systems are characterized by high electoral volatility, weak programmatic and ideological links between voters and parties, and more personalized connections between voters and candidates.<sup>16</sup> All three of these characteristics are inter-related to each other and reflect the weak "roots" of the parties in society. In this context, it is important to trace to what extent Ukrainian political parties and the party system as a whole are institutionalized in terms of their roots in society.

In Ukraine, the period of Soviet political control formally came to an end in 1991. The country gained a chance to throw off the institutional legacy of an authoritarian regime and select a new paradigm of development, tied in with the foundation of a multiparty system a year earlier, in 1990. At that time, the guiding role of the Communist Party of the Soviet

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<sup>16</sup> S. Mainwaring and M. Torcal. 2005. "Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization," Working Paper №319, at <http://kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/319.pdf>

Union was revoked while amendments to the Constitution of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic legalized the formation of public organizations, parties, and movements.

The first Ukrainian parties coming onto the scene at the end of 1988 were formed either on the basis of already existing political organizations (for example, the Ukrainian People's Democratic Party, the People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh), and the Ukrainian Republican Party) and non-political civic organizations, such as the Green Party of Ukraine; because of the divisions in the Communist Party of Ukraine (Democratic Rebirth Party of Ukraine, Ukrainian Agricultural-Democratic Party); or as a result of the activity of individual societal leaders.<sup>17</sup> By the later part of the 1990s, there was an explosion in the creation of new parties.

In weakly institutionalized party systems, political parties regularly appear and disappear while the level of support for well institutionalized parties fluctuates substantially from election to election.<sup>18</sup> Public opinion polls show that the population of Ukraine does not support the existence a great number of parties, for example, a 2009 survey showed that the majority of respondents desired no more than five parties (64.2 percent) or five to ten parties (17.6 percent).<sup>19</sup> Regardless, new political parties continue to appear in large numbers each year. While many parties are formed over time, very few cease operations; excluding 2003 (when 31 party registration certificates were nullified), between 1991 and 2012, the average number of parties to cease activity was approximately 1.3 per year. During the two decades of independence, no fewer than 240 new parties appeared, while only 50 parties folded (see Figure 1).<sup>20</sup>

Traditionally before each set of elections, there has been a peak in the appearance of new parties. Nevertheless, the history of elections shows that new parties do not receive significant support from the population. In the last three elections (2006, 2007, 2012), among 21 parties which were independently elected or elected within electoral blocs to parliament, 16 began their activity in the 1990s, and only five parties were registered by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine after 2000.<sup>21</sup> While an analysis of the

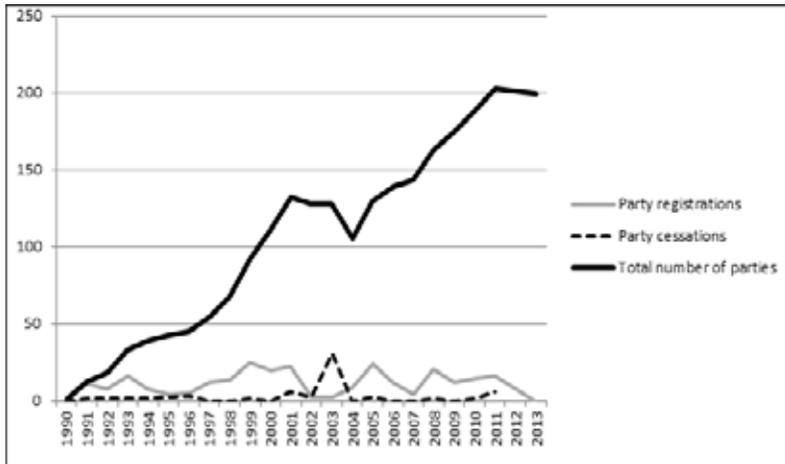
<sup>17</sup> M. Karmazina. *Ukrainian multi-party system: Political Parties, Party Leaders, and Political Blocs (late 1980 – early 2012)*. Kyiv.

<sup>18</sup> F. Thames. 2007. "Discipline and Party Institutionalization in Post-Soviet Legislatures." *Party Politics* 13 (4): 457–478.

<sup>19</sup> Razumkov Center. "How many parties should exist in Ukraine?" at [http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll\\_id=554](http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=554), accessed May, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> All of the calculations related to changes in parties' names, the number of newly created parties, and the number of parties that folded were made using data from the Encyclopedic Dictionary: Ukrainian multi-party system: Political Parties, Party Leaders, and Political Blocs (late 1980 – early 2012), Kyiv, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Civic Party PORA (2005), Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine (2000), European Party of Ukraine (2006), Political Party "Our Ukraine" (2005), Political Party "UDAR of Vitaliy Klychko" (2005).

**Figure 1. Number of Ukrainian Parties, 1990-2013**

growth of the number of parties in Ukraine provides a general picture of the party system's dynamism, it provides little information about the division of electoral strength among parties within the system.

### *Electoral Volatility in Ukraine*

The electoral preferences of Ukrainian citizens change radically from election to election. In order to conduct a quantitative analysis of the level of stability of the party system, I used Pedersen's Index of Electoral Volatility, making it possible to follow how party strength is being reallocated from one election to the next between winning and losing parties, resulting from individual vote transfers.<sup>22</sup>

The object of analysis was the fluctuation of the level of electoral support of all parties that compete for elections and, separately, parliamentary parties from election to election. Taking into account that the deputies of the two first convocations of the Verkhovna Rada (1990 and 1994) were elected by a majoritarian system, the analysis dealt with the period from 1998 to 2012 and included the parliamentary elections by a mixed system (1998, 2002, 2012) and a proportional system (2006, 2007).

Application of the Pedersen method to analyze the level of electoral volatility in Ukraine produced a number of peculiarities:

First, during the period of elections run by the mixed system in 1998, 2002, and 2012, the volatility calculation did not take into account the results of voting on the second part of the ballot for majoritarian candidates.

<sup>22</sup> M. Pedersen. 1980. "On Measuring Party System Change: A Methodological Critique and a Suggestion." *Comparative Political Studies* 12 (4): 387-403.

Second, the parties which changed their names, but did not change their registration information, were considered to have maintained continuity.

Third, the calculation process was greatly complicated by the fact that in the elections of 1998, 2006 and 2007, several blocs of multiple parties took part. Pedersen's Index is expected to be applied to the analysis of the dynamics of electoral support only among parties, but we were not able to exclude these blocs from the analysis or to count them as a single party. It is worth mentioning that the electoral blocs were made up of between two and ten parties, some of which were new in parliament, while others had longer tenures in the Verkhovna Rada (thus decreasing the general level of electoral volatility in the party system). In addition, from election to election, the blocs could change their names, formally creating "new units of analysis," but in their particular party makeup, they remained virtually the same. Therefore we included in the analysis all of the parties that make up the blocs and the percentage of votes that a particular party received within the bloc using the following formula:

$$\%_i = \frac{\%_b * n_i}{n_b - n_a}$$

Where  $\%_i$  is the percent of votes for the party  $i$ ;  $n_i$  is the number of members from the party  $i$  within the bloc;  $n_b$  is the total number of the bloc's members;  $n_a$  is the number of members with no party affiliation within the bloc; and  $\%_b$  is the percent of votes for the bloc.

Fourth, it is important to emphasize that the net gains for winning parties numerically must be equal to the net losses of the parties that were defeated in the election.<sup>23</sup> Taking into account that the percentage of votes for the parties that compete for election were always different for two separate elections, the total percentage of votes received by the parties were taken for 100 and were divided among the parties in proportion to the actual division of votes. The level of volatility of separate parties was determined by Pedersen's formula<sup>24</sup>:

$$\Delta p_{i,t} = p_{i,t} - p_{i,t-1}$$

Where  $\Delta p_{i,t}$  stands for the change in the strength of party  $i$  since the previous election,  $p_{i,t}$  is the percentage of the vote, which was obtained by party  $i$  at election  $t$ .

The first phase consisted of creating a table of individual indices

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

of electoral volatility for each party in each pair of elections (1998-2002, 2002-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2012) using Pedersen's formula for each individual party mentioned above.

The second stage included calculating general indices of electoral volatility for each of the pairs of elections using Pedersen's formula<sup>25</sup>:

$$\text{Volatility (V}_t) = 1/2 \times \text{TNC}_t$$

$$\text{Total Net Change (TNC}_t) = \sum_{i=1}^n |\Delta p_{i,t}|$$

Where  $n$  stands for the total number of parties competing in the two elections,  $\sum$  is the sum of  $\Delta p_{i,t}$  (noting that sign differences are not considered).

The third stage entailed calculating a Party Replacement Index and several more calculations which are helpful for understanding the level of the Ukrainian party system's institutionalization. Party replacement has been defined as the degree of penetration of new players into the party system and was measured as the sum of the vote shares won by electoral contenders at election  $t + 1$  that had not contested election  $t$ .<sup>26</sup>

The results of calculations on electoral volatility (see Table 1) in each of the paired elections demonstrate that the volatility of Ukrainian voter preference from election to election has a tendency to decrease. This is confirmed by lower than average (39.6) indicators of volatility for the last two paired elections (Electoral Volatility Index of 17.5 in 2006-2007 and 35.63 in 2007-2012). Nevertheless, electoral volatility in Ukraine remains extremely high. In contrast, according to Birch, the average rate of electoral volatility in post-communist Europe in the decade following the communist collapse was 18.3.<sup>27</sup>

It is characteristic that in each of the elections, a large number of parties either entered parliament for the first time or disappeared from it. Regardless, the lower electoral volatility number of the Party Replacement Index is explained by the fact that such parties in general have tended to be extremely small parts of larger blocs. This research has shown that the total percentage of votes received by new parties (Party Replacement Index) at no time exceeded the extent of vote transfers between parties (Electoral Volatility Index).

It should be noted that a relatively high level of party replacement and electoral volatility in the 2012 elections was caused chiefly by the new "Law on Elections," (2011) which prohibits parties from uniting in blocs for the purpose of the elections (particularly significant for smaller

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> S. Birch. 2001. "Electoral Systems and Party System Stability in Post-Communist Europe," at <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/papers/sbvolatility.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> S. Birch. 2001.

parties) and raised the threshold for entering the parliament from three to five percent. However, since two of the five parties crossing the threshold into parliament in 2012 are new parties, “new faces” and “new policies” have not lost their currency in Ukraine.

**Table 1. Indicators of Parliamentary Electoral Preferences in Ukraine**

Year/type of electoral system	1998 mixed system	2002 mixed system	2006 proportional system	2007 proportional system	2012 mixed system
Number of parties competing (in blocs or independently )	40	63	79	40	21
Number of new parties which entered Parliament in blocs or independently (total number of parties in Parliament)	n/a (9)	17 (22)	1 (11)	8 (16)	2 (5)
Number of parties which lost their representation in Parliament	n/a	4	12	3	13
Total % of winning parties' votes and the threshold	65.8 (4%)	75.7 (4%)	77.8 (3%)	88.56 (3%)	93.12 (5%)
Party Replacement Index	n/a	29.47 (31.83*)	14.39 (8.43)	1.39 (11.92)	16.72 (24.40)
Electoral Volatility Index	n/a	40.46 (47.6)	64.83 (70.64)	17.5 (17.04)	35.63 (35.49)

\* Figures in parentheses represent Party Replacement and Electoral Volatility Indices only for parliamentary parties.

The dynamics in the number of parties that have won elections independently show that the number of independent parties that are capable of competing successfully in elections is decreasing. Although in the 1998 elections, the threshold barrier to enter parliament was a high four percent, seven parties were able to overcome it. In the 2002 (threshold barrier – four

percent) and 2006 (threshold barrier – three percent) elections, there were only three such parties, while in 2007 (threshold barrier – three percent) two parties and in 2012 there were five parties. The shrinking role for small political parties with the simultaneous strengthening of a small number of larger parties is positive for the stabilization of the party system.

Additionally, one can observe other indicators of the Ukrainian party system's stabilization. In particular, there is a decreasing percentage of "lost" votes (given to outsider parties that do not make it into parliament), from 34.2 percent in 1998 to 6.82 percent in 2012. From 1998 on, each parliamentary election saw new leading parties which were in opposition to the previous incumbent political power. As such, in 1998, the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) took first place, in 2002 Viktor Yushchenko's Bloc Our Ukraine was victorious, and in 2006, the Party of Regions won. Neither the 2007 nor the 2012 parliamentary elections led to a change in the leading party, serving as additional evidence that the electoral preferences of the population may be stabilizing.

### **Political Parties in Ukraine**

The institutionalization of particular parties and that of the party system as a whole are not one and the same. However, analyzing the level of institutionalization of Ukrainian political parties in the societal and organizational dimensions gives us the opportunity to draw some general conclusions with respect to the stability of the party system as a whole. Several general features of Ukrainian parties that affect the individual parties' institutionalization are worth discussing, including the continuous and unpredictable ebb and flow of party fortunes, the high level of personalization of parties, weak ideological platforms, organizational weakness (opaque financing, "party amnesia," changes to party names), and the low quality of communication with voters.

#### *Rise and Fall of Parties*

Between 1998 and 2012, 133 political parties participated in parliamentary elections at least once, mainly participating in blocs. This means that a large number—close to 50 percent of all of all active parties during various periods, never took part in parliamentary elections by party lists. Obviously, the large number of parties does not actually mean the existence of a similar quantity of interest groups in Ukrainian society that differ from each other. According to the results of a 2008 public opinion poll, only 4.7 percent of respondents replied that they are political party members.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, on average during the period from 2001 to 2011,

<sup>28</sup> Razumkov Center. 2008. "Can you say that you are a member of a political party?" at [http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll\\_id=347](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=347) accessed June, 2008.

only 2.7 percent of the respondents replied that they have full confidence in political parties (36 percent do not have any confidence in them).<sup>29</sup> Such a high level of distrust in Ukrainian parties negatively influences the recognition of parties and elections as being legitimate and effective channels for the articulation of social interests, one of the basic indicators of the institutionalization of the party system.<sup>30</sup>

Several powerful Ukrainian political parties that have performed well in past elections have practically disappeared from the political arena as a result of drastic changes in the level of electoral loyalty. In this way, the Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (united) and the People's Democratic Party which made it into parliament in 1998-2006 and the Socialist Party of Ukraine (in parliament 1998-2007) failed to win parliamentary representation in subsequent elections. As another example, the 2012 elections demonstrated that Our Ukraine, the once powerful party of former president Victor Yushchenko, fell drastically to gaining just 1.1% of voter support. Large scale losses of supporters for various reasons, often involving "fatal" political mistakes, the "treason" of party allies, and loss of access to administrative resources, additionally reflect the under-institutionalization of the leading parties in Ukraine. Leading Ukrainian parties, as practice has shown, frequently do not have a stable and loyal electorate that is forgiving of the party's errors. In other countries, discredited but well institutionalized parties in such circumstances can survive in the long run due to their reputations. In order to renew their positions in the majority of cases, it would be sufficient for a well-institutionalized party to go through, using the terminology of institutionalists, a procedure of "cleansing"<sup>31</sup> by addressing problems that lower electoral trust, such as a change of party leadership and strategic activity or the formulation of new slogans and performance principles.

Among parliamentary parties, only the CPU took part in the elections of 1998, 2002, 2006, 2007, and 2012 independently and successfully won election to the Verkhovna Rada. The success of this party lies not only in its ideology, which still wins approval from some segments of the Ukrainian population. Undoubtedly, the high level of the institutionalization of the CPU as an organizational structure – including a rigid hierarchy, strong party discipline, stable leadership, and a large network of party branches in various parts of the country – facilitate the stable position of the CPU in the electoral arena. Despite the historical and organizational factors

<sup>29</sup> Razumkov Center. "Do you trust political parties? (2001-2011)," at [http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll\\_id=82](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=82)

<sup>30</sup> S. Mainwaring and T.R. Scully. 1992. "Party Systems in Latin America," at <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/members/congress-papers/lasa1992/files/MainwaringScott.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> B.G. Peters and J. Pierre. 1998. "Institutions and time: Problems of conceptualization and explanation." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 8 (4): 565-583.

bolstering the strong position of this party in Ukrainian society, calculating the dynamics of electoral support for the CPU shows significant fluctuations from election to election; during the 2002 and 2006 elections, the party lost 4.67 and 16.32 percent of the national vote total, though during the following elections, the CPU was able to somewhat improve its results (by 1.7 percent in 2007 and 7.79 percent in 2012).<sup>32</sup> The electoral support of the traditionally-powerful Party of Regions has also fluctuated greatly from election to election. The number of its supporters has drastically declined by 25 percent over the past 5 years, from 8,013,895 votes in 2007 to 6,116,746 in 2012.

The situation is much worse with respect to popular support for the newer, less institutionalized Ukrainian political parties. During the 1998-2012 period, only 33 political parties successfully entered the Verkhovna Rada. The majority of these parties were forced to join blocs with other parties in order to overcome the minimum threshold. During this period, only twelve parties successfully won representation in parliament independently: eight parties won on their own once,<sup>33</sup> while an additional four parties were successful in entering the parliament independently more than once.<sup>34</sup>

### *Personalization and Ideology of Parties*

One of the important criteria in evaluating party institutionalization is the level of de-personalization of the party,<sup>35</sup> or the extent to which the party is able to appeal to voters independently from the personalities of its leadership. It seems that the association of parties with their leaders is a successful election strategy; according to public opinion polls carried out in 2009, 58 percent of respondents who voted for a political party based their vote on who the leader of the party is, while only 14 percent of the respondents did not feel this was of any importance.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the tendency of the majority of Ukrainian parties to concentrate their attention

<sup>32</sup> Pedersen's formula for calculating the level of volatility of separate parties was used ( $\wedge P_{it} = P_{it} - P_{it-1}$ )

<sup>33</sup> People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) (1998), People's Democratic Party (1998), Political party All-Ukrainian Union "Community" (1998), Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (1998), Party of Greens of Ukraine (1998), Bat'kivshchyna (2012), UDAR (2012), and Svoboda (2012).

<sup>34</sup> CPU (1998, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2012), PARTY OF REGIONS (2006, 2007, 2012), Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (United) (1998, 2002), Socialist Party of Ukraine (2002, 2006.).

<sup>35</sup> S. Mainwaring and M. Torcal. 2005. "Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization," Working Paper №319, at <http://kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/319.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Razumkov Center. 2009. "How important to you when voting for a political party is the head of this party?" at [http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll\\_id=557](http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=557)

on the personalities of their leaders does not seem to conflict greatly with the preferences of the population.

As a consequence, it appears that Ukrainian parties have reconciled themselves with “personification,” which is to say that the greater majority of party PR campaigns are built on the creation of a positive image of their party leaders, while recognition among the population of other key party members is low. In addition, internal party conflicts (for example, who holds the “first” and “second” place in the party) are supposed to be either absent or carefully hidden from the public. In general, the rotation of party leaders in Ukraine is rare and takes place most frequently in cases where increasing party effectiveness is not the goal.

In Ukraine, parties traditionally use the “personal” factor before elections. While a small percentage of Ukrainian parties include the name of the party leader in the party name (as in the Party of Natalia Korovevs’ka “Forward Ukraine”, Vitaliy Klychko’s Political Party UDAR [Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform], or Oleh Liashko’s Radical Party), the names of these political units clearly illustrate that the parties focus on the image of their leaders in order to appeal to the public during campaigns. Moreover, there has been an observable increase in the use of leader names in bloc titles. In the 1998 parliamentary elections, there was no bloc using the name of its leaders, while in subsequent elections, this number has been relatively high. In 2002, 25 percent used the names of party leaders (three of 12 blocs), in 2006, 47 percent (eight of 17 blocs), and in 2007, 30 percent (three of 10 blocs).<sup>37</sup>

Ideology is an effective instrument and fundamental basis for creating strong ties to the electorate, and hence for rooting parties in society. Unfortunately, Ukrainians are not well informed about the differences in ideological principles which are espoused by the parties. According to surveys, only 16 percent of voters are well aware of or somewhat knowledgeable about the differences between right, left, and centrist parties, while 80 percent know nothing or know little about these differences.<sup>38</sup> As a result, it is difficult for voters to identify their preferences with the ideological principles of specific parties, which in effect creates obstacles for the development of routinized relationships.<sup>39</sup> It is telling that during the 2012 electoral campaign, members of UDAR were not even able to come to an agreement between themselves with respect to the ideology that

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<sup>37</sup> Data of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, at <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/>

<sup>38</sup> Razumkov Center. 2009. “Parties can be left, right, and centrist. Do you know or have some idea of how differ, for example, right-wing party from the left-wing?” at [http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll\\_id=555](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=555)

<sup>39</sup> F. Thames. 2007. “Discipline and Party Institutionalization in Post-Soviet Legislatures.” *Party Politics* 13 (4): 457–478.

they followed: some called themselves left-centrist<sup>40</sup> while others called themselves right-centrist.<sup>41</sup>

Politicians and party members do not usually attach any real substance to the notion of ideology. Typically, the parties try to assert that their ideology is broad and vague enough to appeal to a wide spectrum of people. For example, UDAR claims that “the youth who come into our party, determine their own ideology as ‘contemporary patriotism.’”<sup>42</sup> In another case, UDAR claims that its ideology amounts to the idea that “A strong and successful person in a strong state is the quintessence of our program and ideology.”<sup>43</sup> Other parties, like the Agrarians, are similarly vague: “Our party’s ideology – this is the peaceful ideology of an agrarian party.”<sup>44</sup> Likewise, the ruling Party of Regions proclaims that “the ideology of the party ... is an ideology which does not tend towards being all encompassing nor does it claim a monopoly on the truth, rather it orients itself on the concrete problems facing the person, his family, and the region where he lives.”<sup>45</sup>

In their founding documents, the majority of Ukrainian parties avoid mentioning any specific ideological principles. Usually, parties limit their platforms to a populist recounting of general-democratic principles, which tend towards “centrism.” Thus, the Bat’kivshchyna party calls itself an all-national democratic, patriotic political party, which reflects the views of a broad stratum of the Ukrainian people and defends their interests.<sup>46</sup> The program for the Front of Change party (which formed a coalition with the Bat’kivshchyna party to take part in the 2012 elections) proclaimed that its goal is “to unite the Citizens of the country not on the basis of some ideology but on the idea of a Common Ukrainian Goal, a goal of transforming Ukraine into a country with a high level of human development, a country of free, educated, and materially and spiritually rich Citizens.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Larysa Fedoriv. 2012. “UDAR – a party of a European type,” at <http://lviv.klichko.org/news/show/1439>, accessed August, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Iryna Gerashchenko. 2012. “UDAR is a lifebuoy for the opposition,” Glavcom, at <http://glavcom.ua/articles/8214.html> accessed October, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Larysa Fedoriv. 2012. “UDAR – a party of a European type,” at <http://lviv.klichko.org/news/show/1439>, accessed August, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Lvivska Gazeta. “In order to win the regime we need one strong and accurate strike.” *Lvivska Gazeta*. January, 2013, at <http://www.gazeta.lviv.ua/print/politic/2013/01/24/8010>.

<sup>44</sup> Mykhaylo Hladiy. “The Agrarian Party has one of the strongest administrative resources.” *Mirror of the Week*, October, 2001, at [http://gazeta.dt.ua/POLITICS/glava\\_lvivskoyi\\_obldierzhadministratsiyi\\_mihaylo\\_gladiy\\_agrarna\\_partiya\\_mae\\_odinz\\_naypotuzhnishih\\_adm.html](http://gazeta.dt.ua/POLITICS/glava_lvivskoyi_obldierzhadministratsiyi_mihaylo_gladiy_agrarna_partiya_mae_odinz_naypotuzhnishih_adm.html)

<sup>45</sup> “Party of Regions begins the New Year with the new strategy and ideology,” January 2013, at <http://www.semynozhenko.net/events/489/>

<sup>46</sup> The Statute of Batkivshchyna. Accessed at: <http://byut.com.ua/statute.html>

<sup>47</sup> The ideological platform of Front of Change. Accessed at: <http://frontzmin.ua/ua/party/ideology.html>

Despite the attempt of most parties to maintain a non-ideological stance, the Communists and nationalist Svoboda party have taken strong ideological positions. Surprisingly, rigorously ideological parties received an unanticipated high level of support during the 2012 parliamentary elections, with the CPU receiving 13.18% of the vote and Svoboda receiving 10.44%. The Communist Party charter proudly proclaims that it unites “supporters of the communist idea.”<sup>48</sup> Svoboda does not hide its former name, the Social-National Party of Ukraine, and proclaims that it advances the development of the state “on the principles of social and national justice.”<sup>49</sup>

### *Organizational Weakness of Parties*

To become well institutionalized, parties should demonstrate a high level of organizational coherence, financial autonomy, and continuity in their adherence to a set of well-defined principles. However, political parties in Ukraine frequently are not formed for ideological reasons and can redefine their allies and principles in order to attract funding. Such issues are evident from the frequent name changes for parties. Opaque party financing may indicate problems with membership dues and financial autonomy.

Since the beginning of the post-Soviet period, 65 parties, or a full 25 percent of all parties to have existed since independence, have changed their names one time, while no fewer than 15 have changed their names two or more times. In most cases, the name changes have been related to a change in the leadership, a thorough remake of the party’s image, the “selling” of a party to a new financial sponsor, preparations for new parliamentary elections, or simply a reformulation into a more recognizable brand. Sometimes, the changes to party names are somewhat irrational at first glance. For example, in mid-2012, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine registered the new official name of the ruling party as PARTY OF REGIONS (formerly Party of Regions). But most often, party name changes have appeared to have a specific reasoning: the names either deleted or added the last names of their leaders (Luk’yanenko’s Ukrainian Republican Party, Radical Party of Oleh Liashko, Vitaliy Klychko’s UDAR Party), formulations were deleted which narrowed the electoral basis (Party for Members of the Military, Party for the Defense of Pensioners, Party for the Economic Rebirth of the Crimea, Party for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped of Ukraine, Party of Putin’s Policies), or changes simply were abstract (Light from the East, Our Party, Concern for the Euro, Party for Beer Fans, Party of Health). In most cases, the changes to party names made them appear new to voters who do not follow the intricacies of party life. Despite the

<sup>48</sup> The Statute of CPU. Accessed at: <http://www.kpu.ua/statute/>

<sup>49</sup> The Statute of Svoboda. Accessed at: [http://www.svoboda.org.ua/pro\\_partiyu/statut/](http://www.svoboda.org.ua/pro_partiyu/statut/)

name change, many parties did not alter their official registration.

An analysis of the “party history” segments on official party websites shows that sometimes parties can fully or partially “forget” about the history of their previous activities and position themselves as “new” parties. Usually in their “histories,” parties do not mention the names of all of their former political leaders, the results of their participation in parliamentary elections, activities under a previous name or previous party platforms.

For example, the Front of Change party underscores on its website that the “Civic Organization Front of Change”<sup>50</sup> became a civic platform for forming the “Front of Change” political party.<sup>51</sup> This actually hides the fact that in 2007, the Popular Labor Party was formed under the leadership of V. Vashkevych and then in 2008, this party was re-named the Democratic Front and in 2009 it became the Front of Change. Similarly, UDAR in its history does not mention the date of its founding, its first name, or the founder of the party, but rather begins the description of its history with information about the VII Party Congress.<sup>52</sup> In such cases, the parties begin the narrative of their histories with the election of the current party leader.

A large number of parties do not place any information about their party history or decisions passed at their conventions on their websites (Party of Regions, Bat’kivshchyna, Our Ukraine, Youth Party of Ukraine, Party of Popular Trust, Single Center, and others.). In this way, parties simply elide information that has become inconvenient. By doing so, they prevent the interested voter from understanding the party’s evolution, and its achievements and failures. At a minimum, this does not establish a relationship of trust between parties and voters in Ukraine.

In addition, information on how Ukrainian parties are financed in reality is extremely difficult to obtain. This issue remains largely opaque and funding sources are concealed. Although the party charters, according to legislative requirements, show that they are financed through membership dues and charitable donations, there is no strong evidence that this indeed is the case. The parties under no circumstances advertise the frequency and size of their membership dues and do not publish annual reports which are freely accessible. Typically, they avoid naming the main sponsors of their expensive electoral campaigns.

The fact that parties finance themselves from sources that are not transparent and not through membership dues raises the question of what the majority of Ukrainian political parties today actually are. Do they

<sup>50</sup> This organization was established on the initiative of Arseniy Yatsenyuk on December 15, 2008. – Accessed at: <http://frontzmin.ua/ua/public-life/ngo.html>

<sup>51</sup> Front of Change website. Accessed at: <http://frontzmin.ua/ua/party/about-party.html>

<sup>52</sup> UDAR website. Accessed at: <http://klichko.org/ua/about/history>

represent the interests of groups in society, which trust the party and are ready to make financial offerings to provide for their activities? Or are they political organizations whose activities carry out policies defined and funded by key “investors?” Such opaque activities, which have now become the norm, only reduce the level of trust among Ukrainian voters in the entire party system.

### *Party Communication*

A party that is accountable and transparent in its activities should communicate intensively with its voters and potential supporters, particularly informing them about its activities in the party press, forums, and official websites. For example, the communication opportunities offered by on-line electronic media allow parties to define their policies in ways that are more understandable, responsible, and far-reaching. Additionally, these resources lay the groundwork for regular and easy discussions among party members.<sup>53</sup> In this way, the party is able to facilitate its institutionalization by developing excellent communications with the public through its media-channels, planting “roots” in society.

The internet has the potential to give small, weakly-institutionalized parties that lack sufficient financial reserves and do not receive adequate attention from traditional media the ability to effectively communicate directly with the voters.<sup>54</sup> In Ukraine, however, the opposite takes place. Only large, relatively well-institutionalized parties upload current information to their internet portals while very small parties either do not have websites or do not regularly update them.

According to our calculations during the first half of 2012, among the more than 190 registered active political parties, a little more than half had their own websites that included basic information on platform documents and party activities. Among existing party sites, almost 66 percent were active, meaning that they uploaded information more than once a year. The remaining 34 percent did not update their sites at least once a year or uploaded only founding documents.

In developed democracies, political parties utilize their own web portals to attract citizens who do not have the ability to participate in more traditional party activities.<sup>55</sup> The interaction between the party and the voter as a rule includes email, open online discussions, periodic distribution of electronic informational bulletins, and special “Q&A” sessions.<sup>56</sup>

In general, the websites of Ukrainian parties are not interactive,

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<sup>53</sup> A. Rommele. 2003. “Political Parties, Party Communication and New Information and Communication Technologies.” *Party Politics* 9 (1): 7–20.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

with only a listing of founding and programmatic documents, a short history of the party, contact information, information about the leadership and regional branches, and political news, and less frequently with party announcements, petitions, questions, and appeals. For example, the site of the CPU,<sup>57</sup> one of the most institutionalized parties of Ukraine, uploads more than ten articles of party news on a daily basis. On the other hand, the articles do not have a mechanism for feedback, such as a forum or blog, although in some cases it is possible to leave comments. Of 690 pieces of news published on the site from December 1, 2012 to February 10, 2013, only 110 articles (16 percent) were commented on by site visitors, making for an average of three comments per article. This level of activity seems relatively low, especially taking into consideration that the CPU has 6,989 party branches throughout Ukraine, and that during the 2012 elections, 2,687,000 voters cast ballots for that party. As another example, on the website of the ruling Party of Regions, there is no ability to add comments to news articles, and as of the end of February 2013, the search function for key words on the site does not provide any results.

Communication between parties and the electorate is overall quite poor; among the 67 active party websites between late 2011 and early 2012, only nine had active forums and blogs, two had Q&A applications, five had questionnaires, and party media information was available on 10. These numbers underscore the inability of parties to gain the attention and increase the interest of voters in order to be able to establish an active exchange of ideas on their official internet pages.

Overall, we can draw several conclusions about the majority of Ukrainian party websites: namely, they generally work in a one-way regime, directly copy reports from general Ukrainian news outlets, and do not provide regularly updated information between elections. One of the criteria for a higher level of institutionalization of the party system is the existence of tight psychological links between the electorate and political parties.<sup>58</sup> The poor communication between parties and the electorate during the inter-election periods further demonstrates the low level of party institutionalization.

In most modern democracies, the majority of the population has access to the internet and alternative sources of political information. While in developed countries, an average of 71 percent of the population has internet access, just 33 percent of the Ukrainian population (15.3 million people) had regular internet access as of January 1, 2010, according to official sources.<sup>59</sup> The Ministry of Justice was able to conclude,

<sup>57</sup> Communist Party of Ukraine (official website). Accessed at: <http://www.kpu.ua/>

<sup>58</sup> R. Dalton. 2007. "Weldon S. Partisanship and Party System Institutionalization." *Party Politics* 13 (2): 179–196.

<sup>59</sup> Print media: problems of registration [the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine' Explanation],

“Taking into account the restricted access to the internet for the majority of the population, print media, along with TV and radio, remain the most accessible sources of mass information”<sup>60</sup> In other words, for Ukrainian citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, traditional television and newspapers remain the main source of information.

Of almost 30,000 newspapers and magazines in Ukraine, officially only 41 were political party newspapers and journals, showing that the party press made up only a tiny fraction of the overall media, according to a 2007 statement by Justice Minister Oleksandr Lavrynovych.<sup>61</sup> Taking into account that some parties had a few print media publications, of the 144 active parties registered in 2007, only 29 had a party newspaper or journal. Most of these publications appear irregularly, in small quantities, and usually just before elections or other important events. As a result, in general, the party press in Ukraine has little impact among citizens and is limited in its ideological and educational work, particularly because it is sporadically financed “from election to election.”<sup>62</sup>

The Ukrainian political press can be categorized as a press that produces a large quantity of subjective political materials, does not work toward building consensus on the issues facing the state, and encourages an atmosphere of conflict by stressing issues of principle.<sup>63</sup> In this way, the opposition media in Ukraine is traditionally full of negatively charged terms while the pro-government media utilizes positive and calming language.<sup>64</sup> Media tools, such as newspapers and websites, become active on the eve of every election and cannot be characterized as stable channels of party-voter communications. Generally, most Ukrainian political parties focus instead on conveying purposeful, short-term messages directly to voters through television, rather than engaging in long-term communication with regular supporters through newspapers and internet pages.

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Apr. 2011, at <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/n0025323-11>

<sup>60</sup> Print media: problems of registration [the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine’ Explanation], Apr. 2011, at <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/n0025323-11>

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. “Among approximately 30,000 print media sources in Ukraine, there are only 41 political party newspapers and magazines,” at <http://www.minjust.gov.ua/0/10525>

<sup>62</sup> Y. Ipatov and V. Pavlovskyy. 2010. “Realities and contradictions of the party leadership in the Ukrainian society: Political Aspect.” *NTU KPI Herald: Political Science. Sociology. Law* 1 (5): 13–17.

<sup>63</sup> J. Blumler and M. Gurevitch M. 2005. *The Crisis of Public Communication*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>64</sup> A. Beletska. “Emotivity of polemics in party press in Ukraine,” *Scholarly notes of Institute of Journalism*, at <http://journalib.univ.kiev.ua/index.php?act=article&article=1605>

## Conclusion

The institutionalization of the party system in Ukraine is a protracted process, which is undermining the democratic development of the country. The Ukrainian party system has experienced a lack of institutionalization due to numerous factors: institutional, organizational, and societal, all of which hinder the institutionalization of individual parties as well as that of the party system as a whole.

Institutional rules that regulate the party system's functioning are both insufficiently developed and dramatically unstable. To a great extent, this causes a high level of uncertainty among parties with regard to key issues, including future electoral support and the ultimate survival of the party. Of course, the need to constantly react to unanticipated challenges from new electoral rules makes it difficult for parties to engage in the kind of long-term work necessary for strengthening their own institutionalization. In addition, the most crucial factor that inhibits the party system's institutionalization is the low quality of political parties as public servants and providers of public goods, resulting in low levels of party identification in society and a high level of instability in electoral preferences. Opaque financing, frequent name changes, uncertain ideological platforms, and the poor use of channels of communication with voters show that Ukrainian political parties are short on transparency and accountability in their political activity, and are reluctant and unable to establish close bonds with voters.

Results received from the application of several indices (Party Replacement Index, Electoral Volatility Index, percentage of lost votes) demonstrates that the party system in Ukraine is stabilizing as electoral preferences among voters become more fixed. This stabilization of the party system may be temporary because it is not supported by the more important prerequisites of successful institutionalization: established electoral rules, strong roots in society, ideological linkages, a high level of trust between voters and parties, and a sufficient level of individual institutionalization among the most important political parties.

The central conclusion from this article is that in contemporary Ukraine the political parties lack the ability to inspire the confidence of society. The fault lies firstly with the state, which is either unable or does not wish to create a strong legal basis that would make it possible to exert fundamental quality control over the parties. Secondly, a large part of the fault lies with the parties themselves. They scorn the principles of transparency in their activities and do not approach people with all possible means for communication. Thirdly, voters are at fault. They are not yet able to formulate clear demands of the parties, are not knowledgeable about ideology, and do not organize civic control over the parties' activities. Taking

into account that the formation of civil society is a much longer process than simply rewriting formal rules, a powerful impetus for change in the existing state of affairs in the party system of Ukraine should come from policy makers and party functionaries. Whether Ukrainian society will soon be able to trust parties to represent their interests when they are in power will greatly depend on the political will of the state to implement these reforms.

