

Presidential election as a mirror of transitional society in Ukraine.

1. Introduction.

Electoral campaigns in transitional societies are important landmarks on the way of entrenchment and stabilization (or, on the contrary, of degeneration and decline) of newly constructed political institutions. They reveal achievements of a society and its non-resolved problems, show the attained level of political democracy, cultural and moral climate.

Up to this time, Ukraine seemed to develop satisfactory in political dimension, despite its constant economic decline and impoverishment of a large percentage of people. After independence it successfully overcome some major political crises showing readiness and ability of different branches of political elite to compromise and to separate substantial problems from less important. In some of those political clashes, which ended in sum successfully, President Kuchma was a major player. He showed himself if not as a convinced democrat, then at least as a moderate sober-minded politician with a sufficient measure of flexibility who used his influence in order not to bring debates to their extreme and to achieve generally acceptable solution. The first political success was, of course, the democratic way of ahead-of-time resignation of the first President Leonid Kravchuk and election of Kuchma in 1994. Personal Kuchma's (or his team's) achievements in this field were Constitutional agreement in 1995 and adoption of Constitution in 1996. Though in those political battles a kind of President's judicial nihilism sometimes became visible, in general all went in the right direction, in a sense that democratic institutions and procedures were on the march.

The year of 1996 was a turning point in many aspects. Two major achievements of Kuchma's Government – adoption of the Constitution and brining in national currency – gryvna coincided with strengthening latent economic interests that did not want to share power with political forces. Steadily so called clans and oligarchs commenced the invisible struggle against the real influence of newly born political parties and achieved considerable success at the elections of 1998 and 1999.

What is seen on the surface in 1999 is that incumbent President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma won the “great battle” against the so called “red menace” which he and his team constructed themselves, both intentionally (by means of mass media) and unintentionally (by worsening economic situation and impoverishing people). This victory was not unexpected, especially after the failure of the group of four left-centrist candidates, who unsuccessfully tried to come to agreement about a single candidate. Still, many people, especially abroad, wonder how can it be that the President whose promises to launch vigorous reforms and to combat organized criminals remained the bare words has been supported again by a significant majority of voters. Voting for him Ukrainians doomed themselves for an additional five years of the leadership, which has been estimated by “The Times” as probably the worst in Europe.

What were the reasons for that victory and what it means for Ukrainian society? To what extent it confirms the widely spread visions of social and political situation in Ukraine with such features as regionalism, authoritarian tendencies, abuse of power and so on? What problems did it reveal and what are the most general directions of their solution? In a proposed paper I reflect on these questions, using some findings of the analysis of political attitudes of Ukrainian people, which have been done on the eve of election (especially in the western region) and the first observations that appeared in press immediately after October 31 and November 14, 1999.

2. The flow of campaign and the political will of Ukrainian people.

Each electoral campaign is a political market. Electors may buy what is available on the market, and what is available is a product of activity and competition of different wings of political elite. So, what was the proposition of political leaders for the country and how (to what extent) did they responded to the social demand of the electorate? To answer this question means to show, at first, what personalities and political forces participated in the campaign, what roles they played and what influence rendered.

The next candidates participated in the contest for presidency in 1999:

- 1) Incumbent President *Leonid Kuchma*. He was supported by part of the former “party of power” - Peoples Democratic Party which split on the eve of election, and by the so called Socialist Democratic Party

- (united), which is headed by Victor Medvedchuk - Deputy head of the Verkhovna Rada and one of the most rich people in Ukraine (“oligarch”). Over two dozen political parties and civic organizations rendered him their support. Among them were either those parties, which did not have any political future without governmental support or those, which represented groups of new Ukrainian rich-men and powerful local officials.
- 2) *Petro Symonenko* - leader of the Communist party of Ukraine, which has taken about 25% of votes on the parliamentary election-98, making pensioners and unemployed parties major social base.
 - 3) *Natalia Vitrenko* - furious leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, with a great ability to make demagogic speeches. According to some polls she was the second or even the first in popularity, but the people usually did not believe in objectivity of that polls.
 - 4) The “Kaniv Four” (“Kanivska chetvirka”) — presumably left-centrist politicians who have made an agreement among themselves concerning control over the fair flow of electoral campaign and promotion of one of them for presidency by common effort. That was a challenge to the incumbent President who according to all assessments could loose only to some centrist politician. But the perspective of promoting one candidate at the expense of others was not plausible from the beginning. Contracted politicians represented different ideological orientations and political dispositions and were too ambitious for making trade-off. So, it was no surprise that their consolidating attempt failed. These four politicians were:
 - ✓ *Olexander Tkachenko* who became the Head of Verkhovna Rada as a result of compromise between the left parliamentary majority and the President. Later on he went out of control and often behaved like Belorussian President Lukashenka.
 - ✓ *Olexander Moroz* – the former Head of Verkhovna Rada, one of the leaders of the Socialist Party of Ukraine, the politician with old and non-realized in full pretensions. Often he presented himself as a left centrist but never refused to stand under a red flag alongside Symonenko.
 - ✓ *Yevhen Marchuk* – a former KGB officer who was the first Head of SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) after Ukraine got independence, a former Prime-minister of Ukraine, dismissed by Kuchma without any visible reason, a deputy of Verkhovna Rada elected from Socialist Democratic Party (united). He tried to play the role of charismatic leader and unite around himself all non-left (including conservative right) anti-Kuchma’s forces. Presumably left-centrist politician of social-democratic orientation, Yevhen Marchuk in fact was (and still is) a politician of the same formation as Kuchma, in spite of his irreconcilable rhetoric in the pre-election period. He has proved this, taking from Kuchma’s hands a post of Secretary of the Council of Defense after the defeat in the first round.
 - ✓ *Volodymyr Oliynyk* - local official from central agrarian Cherkasy oblast, with uncertain ideological orientation, hardly known by the broader public.
 5. Two candidates from disrupted on the eve of electoral campaign Rukh - a major right-centrist party of Ukraine, both viewed by electors as dissenters that do not deserve attention during this campaign. One of them was *Henadiy Udovenko*, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs who headed more conservative part of Rukh predominantly with statehood and cultural concerns. The other representative of national democratic forces was *Yuriy Kostenko* - the leader of younger and more pragmatically oriented branch of Rukh.
 6. Some minor political figures who either wanted to acquire some political capital through participation in the elections or were pushed into the race by a third (political or near-political, shadow) force with some, however, non-achieved purpose. This last group consisted of 7 persons and none of them gained more than 0.5% of votes.

Table 1. Results of the first round of election (October 31)

Candidate	Votes “FOR”	% of votes “FOR”
Kuchma L.D.	9598672	36.5
Symonenko P.M.	5849077	22.2
Moroz O.O.	2969896	11.3
Vitrenko N.M.	2886972	11.0
Marchuk Y.K.	2138356	8.1

Kostenko Y.I.	570623	2.2
Udoenko H.Y.	319778	1.2
Candidates that took less than 0,5% of votes:		
Onopenko V.V.	124040	0.5
Rzhavskiy O.M.	96515	0.4
Karmazin Y.A.	90793	0.35
Bazyliuk O.F.	36012	0.14
Haber M.O.	31829	0.12
Votes against all candidates		
	477019	1.8

Voting in the first tour of election showed that predictions about the most advantageous for Kuchma variant of the run-off came true and the communist party leader Petro Symonenko became the main rival of incumbent President. What does it say about the electors and their aspirations? Why did they prefer those two politicians out of 13 candidates?

The first and the simplest explanation, of course, may be that Ukrainians are conservative and submissive-minded people. They just do not evaluate situation critically and/or do not want reforms at all. But this assertion is rather superficial and it does not sustain against the facts contained in sociological surveys. The latter show that during the first term of Kuchma's Presidency people evaluated his policy very critically. According to SOCIS-GALLAP service in Ukraine positive answers on the general question "Do you think that everything goes in the right direction in this country?" were equal to 13% in December 1994, 14% in December 1996, and 6% in December 1998. When asked on the eve of electoral campaign "Who in your view is able to lead the country out of crises", answers were:

- incumbent President – 6;
- other person, pretending on this post – 51;
- it's difficult to say – 33%;
- other answers – 10%.

Trust to the President dropped from 33% in 1995 to 17% in 1997. Nobody looked at Kuchma as a savior of Ukrainian economy though many might agree that it was difficult to achieve more under the existing circumstances and the alignment of political forces present at the parliament. As a result, despite lowering, trust to the President was, however, still higher than to other branches of state power. Level of trust to Government (Cabinet of Ministers) has fallen during the same period from 15% to 9% and the parliament (Verkhovna Rada) - from 9% to 7%.ⁱ

This may be accounted for peculiarity of political culture in post-communist era. As in many other post-communist countries (even in incomparably much more successful Poland) trust to public institutions in Ukraine is very low. About 34-35% of all respondents do not approve multi-party system, do not believe that any one of existing parties is able to implement the effective anti-crisis program, do not see any person who could govern country effectively (in 1994 there were about 24-29% of people with such attitudes).ⁱⁱ

The most disappointing features of mass consciousness were recently reflected in the next answers on the question "Do you agree with the assertion that a few powerful rulers may do more for the country than all that laws and discussions":

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------------------|
| | 1994 | 1997 |
| ▪ Agree: | 40.5 %; | 44.8% |
| ▪ Disagree: | 17.0 %; | 15.7% |
| ▪ Don't know: | 41.7 %; | 39.4% |
| ▪ Did not answer: | 0.8 %; | 0.0%. ⁱⁱⁱ |

In my view, the question was not formulated in a proper way, because it mixed "discussions" and "laws" into one point. Nonetheless, the answers confirmed constant suspicion of a society to collective decision-making in the parliament while being much more tolerant towards the President (whose policies were also ineffective).

Some analysts saw in these figures a sign of authoritarian inclinations of Ukrainian people. But comparing this survey with others (including my short-range expert inquiry in Lviv and Kharkiv¹), I came to a conclusion, that people actually look for charismatic or simply strong political figure, capable of leading the country out of the pit in which it has fallen. But their position looks more like orientation at a kind of *'delegative democracy'*, described by Guillermo O'Donnell, than like inclination to direct authoritarianism. The main characteristics of this kind of underdeveloped democracy are connected with the unwillingness of people in democracy-to-be to take responsibility for the successes and failures of government in transitional period on themselves and with delegating authority to the President who is expected to govern as he sees fit. In my view, this is actually what Ukrainian people would be glad to see.

Society as a whole has not yet appreciated all formal institutions that appeared in Ukraine as a result of social engineering in transitional period. The Constitution, which establishes hybrid (parliamentary-presidential) form of government, more or less elaborated system of checks and balances, multiparty system and mixed electoral system, was an invention of political elite while broader public was striving for means of life. Naturally, it had neither time, nor interest to go into details about the shortages and advantages of new mechanisms of decision making. Of all new political institutions only one is valued highly by ordinary people — *Presidency*. When asked about the expected functions of the President in Ukraine, 52.5 % in 1994 and 59.8 % in 1997 have chosen the answer: *"President should be the head of the Government fully responsible for the domestic and foreign policy"*. Other 10.3 % and 6.6 % expressed the view that favored the existing mixed form of government. And only 5 % in 1994 and 6.6 % in 1997 regarded that it is enough if the President will be the head of the state and the "symbol" of the nation; 6.6 % and 4.8 % correspondingly have chosen the answer: *"President is of no need"*.^{iv} This is probably the major reason why despite disappointment with Kuchma's first term policies he has comparatively has rating and voters' turnover in the election-99 appeared to be unexpectedly high.

There is a significant contradiction, however, between the convincing victory of Leonid Kuchma in the run-offs and highly critical evaluation of his achievements by the electors. Thinking about these discrepancies, many observers emphasize such factors as unfair competition and inadequacy of the alternative, personalized in the Communist First Secretary P. Symonenko, that might significantly influence the outcome.

The factor of mass media. Representatives of watchdog international missions unanimously stated that during the campaign there was misuse of local officials in support of incumbent President. Besides, as Anna Reid noted in "The Times", he (Kuchma) "shamelessly promoted himself on state television", while agitation against him have been discouraged on all official levels. After the first round of election foreign observers declared that with regard the misuse of mass media fairness of campaign was highly questionable though "the voting was orderly and relaxed".^v After the second round representatives of international missions stated that "Mass media could not provide non-partisan and objective coverage of electoral campaign". According to D. Relich from European Institute on Mass Media, in comparison with the elections-98 he noted obvious regress.^{vi} OSCE mission recorded a lot of other violations of procedures which generally may be reduced to powerful pressure from state official on the voters to vote for one candidate — L. Kuchma. According to their observation, there was no slightest resemblance of equal access to media of all candidates.^{vii}

At the same time, international observers say that it was difficult (at least on the stage of preliminary reporting) to estimate to what extent unfair competition (with systematic biases in favor of incumbent President) influenced the final result of the election^{viii}. At least it is not obvious whether the results of the second round of campaign could be different at any conditions. Both candidates were very well known by previous activity and there have been little added about them during the campaign. In my view, the major harm for Ukrainian politics was made during the first round of electoral campaign when less known candidates did not obtain the opportunity to become more known and on pre-electoral stage when the right-wing opposition was destroyed. But this question is to be considered a little later.

What western observers are usually missing with regard to communists, is that the same standards, as those for democratic forces, cannot measure their behavior and resources. Communists avoid using such

¹ 75 person – leaders of NGO and political of organisations, predominantly of younger generation and having higher education, were interviewed on the subject of civil society and democracy in Ukraine. Only 7% of them in Lviv and 13% - in Kharkiv expressed unconditional thought that what Ukraine needs now it is "a strong hand".

“bourgeois” means as advertising on TV; they don’t rely on the press, except their own publications; but they build their electoral technologies on personal contacts, organization and ideological propaganda. And their main hope, of course, was that people would vote for their party because they were tired of living in poverty. Communists actually counted very well: Kuchma helped them, and they helped Kuchma.

No doubt, Symonenko was discriminated in his access to television and possibly to other means of communication at the final stage of the race, and it was bad for democracy. But he exploited his possibilities for self-advertising earlier, and was actually lifted (due to protection of power structures) over other candidates. Even if disproportionate time has been spent on reminding electors about humanitarian tragedies of soviet era it was not a direct agitation against the candidate and those tragedies were such that they are worth of reminding.

It is nothing new that after the defeat in a nation-wide contest Symonenko blamed “party of power” for his failure. But in fact, according to the evaluations of almost all experts, he had no chances to win. According to the widespread predictions getting into the run-offs with Symonenko was equal for Kuchma to his victory. Symonenko knew that and therefore, as many observers reported, he did not look grave after the defeat.

Petro Symonenko’s role playing. It was a surprise for many observers that central-western Vinnitsa oblast’s electorate have shown bigger commitment to the leftist parties than voters in eastern industrial region (except Luhansk). Some observers ascribed this to the poor abilities of Symonenko as a political leader.^{ix} I don’t agree with that.

Symonenko had some weaknesses, of course, but they hardly were much bigger than those of other political leaders in this campaign were. His contradictory behavior in many instances was just a necessity connected with mosaic and contradictory nature of his very specific electorate. But he was able to lead those people firmly through electoral campaign of 1998, when the CPU collected near the 27 % of votes, and now, when in the first round his success has been measured by 22%. There was some loss, of course, but not because he was a bad politician, but because there was a considerable overflow of votes to Vitrenko, whose party had only 4% of votes in 1998 and now — almost 11%.

Symonenko regained his losses in the run-offs. Of course, his victory in 9 oblasts where he gained over 50 % of votes to a large degree should be accounted for the discipline of the left electorate in general, including those people, who voted in the first round for Moroz and other left-wing candidates. Other important motivation was not to vote for Kuchma under any condition. Yet, this large portion of voters has not regarded Symonenko as inept politician and it was his personal success as well.

Whether he was ready to take the power or not – it is hard to say for sure. But he was flexible enough, promising, from time to time, “not to transfer the old mistakes in new times”, be more democratic and moderate. Of course, he could not be very consistent, especially in time of election, because his electorate was highly non-homogeneous and inconsistent and because of the contradictory role and position of communists in a post-communist country in general. I fully agree with the remark of O. Lavrynovich, that if communists had in mind strengthening and development of their party (with the help of last election), they “acted irreproachable”.^x

Concerning the real influence of the CPU, it will be safe to claim, I think, that permanent economic crisis naturally leads to strengthening of the positions of left-wing critics of the “anti-people’s regime”, as they call it. Voters’ preferences were moving leftward during last five years. It is not a mere coincidence that three upper candidates, who immediately followed Kuchma according to the results of multiple polls and the first round of presidential race, were representatives of leftist parties.

So, there is a tendency to the expansion of “red electorate”, but still it has its distinct limits. As it will be shown below, this electorate is leashed to some less economically developed, predominantly agricultural regions. But in general, as one reader of Ukrainian weekly “The Day” concluded, “Common sense of the majority of electors overweighed the protest aspirations, and of the two evils, which have been proposed, electors, just as the power structures expected, have chosen the least”. And there is at least one absolutely correct comment of President Kuchma after the victory, that in those regions where Symonenko gained majority (or near majority) of votes people voted against poor life, but not for communist leader.

Communist nominee achieved the biggest success in those areas where not one, but two or three leftist parties were influential (Vinnitsa, Chernigiv). In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts situation was different and communists pretended but could not win there. In Sumy oblast also, where Vitrenko collected the largest number of votes in the first round, Symonenko collected fewer votes than Kuchma. However, the victory of

Kuchma wasn't very convincing in this region and Symonenko had a good ground for assertion that there was cheating.

3. Parties, clans and oligarchs on the political arena of Ukraine.

There is another hypothesis, used in Ukrainian and foreign press for the explanation of election results. It is connected with *inadequate condition of Ukrainian political elite*:

- weakness of the parties, especially on the right side of political spectrum;
- absence (or shortage) of political leaders without heavy burden of communist-bureaucratic stereotypes in their minds and behavior;
- domination of the so-called oligarchs in real politics (in the meaning of acquiring and maintenance real power).

Present state of multi-party system is really dull. Former hopes (of 1996-98) that mixed (half-proportional) electoral system will help to strengthen the party system and structuralize politically the parliament are replaced now with deep disappointment and frustration. Formally, there are 75 parties in Ukraine now, but they have too little impact on real politics. There is no explicit ruling party or block and no definite opposition in the parliament. Eight parties that overcome 4% threshold at the election-98 and have their fractions², as well as the politicians that organized non-party groups in Verkhovna Rada are in the process of constant instability and reorganization. After very long and hard debates in 1998 left parties managed to make a temporary coalition with the centrist Party "Hromada" and elected left-wing Head and Vice-Head of Verkhovna Rada. But they did not have stable majority in the parliament. Coalition with other forces is problematic because of their peculiar position on economic problems and highly ideological rhetoric. In fact there is no party able to become a core of political coalition. There is a talk after the presidential election about formation of real majority in the parliament but it is not easy to achieve that goal. Influential right-wing parties are actually absent and the party system reminds a bird with a body ("the party of power") and one wing (leftist forces).

Kuchma struggled against left opposition and for better or for worse he won. As O. Lavrynovych has remarked, communists "have been crowned for the role of official opposition" during and after the presidential campaign. But they were able to play "presidential game" in favor of Kuchma during last election and some analysts therefore say, they do not constitute a genuine opposition (see, for example, comment of Myroslav Popovych in "The Day", November 25, 1999). Besides, communists make dangerous opposition is in the circumstances when there is no countervailing right-wing force. Ideologically neutral "party of power", no matter what name it has (L. Kuchma confessed that he represented "some interests" but did not designate them), may use the existence of this extreme, non-democratic left opposition as a pretext for introduction of autocratic rule.

A large number of political cleavages combined with low popularity of party organizations as such are the result of transitional state of society (post-totalitarian and post-colonial at the same time). Multidimensional systemic crisis predetermines influence on political life of such factors as:

- non-structuralized social sphere;
- huge size of latent unemployment with all uncertainty that arises out of it;
- instability of regime;
- low level of trust in social institutions;
- cultural and ethnic fragmentation of population;
- different lingual-cultural and foreign orientations of the regions, etc.

² These parties are (from left to right): PSPU -- Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (radical left); CPU -- Communist Party of Ukraine, (left); SPU -- Socialist Party of Ukraine; PPU -- Peasants Party of Ukraine (all three -- left); SDPU (u) -- Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (united) (left center according to the written program, but in practice -- a present day "party of power" the major pillar for Kuchma's Presidency; GPU -- Green Party of Ukraine (center); Party "Hromada" (center, split after its leader Lazarenko left Ukraine); PDP -- Peoples' Democratic Party (center, former "party of power", split during election-99', more conservative fraction still support the President); PMU - People's Movement of Ukraine (right center, split on the eve of election 1999).

Another reasons for the degrading of older parties and emergence of new and new ones are intentional policies of the forces in power. In the period of electoral campaign-98 they were directed on creating pocket parties in order to divert or deceive the electors (these practices have already become a tradition and were repeated in presidential race with a number of individual candidates). Long before the presidential campaign a chain of deliberate actions have been undertaken in order to get rid of any serious right-wing claimant for presidency and to destroy organized forces able to give him support. But, on the other hand, if right-wing politicians and parties that supported them were strong enough (in terms of clearness of their programs, deliberateness of their strategy, support of the people) it would be impossibility for the ruling elite to crack them and to reduce almost to nothing. In fact, anti-rightist attack coincided with naturally emerged crisis in Rukh and other right-wing parties and it was rather easy to get success in destroying them. Even NDP, then regarded as “party of power”, has been hooked on in the course of that struggle and split into two wings.

Especially important for the “party of power” and painful for opposition was the break down of the most active and influential party — Rukh (Peoples Movement of Ukraine). One part of it (former romantics and idealists, who followed the former Minister of Foreign affairs Udovenko) were regarded by broader citizenry as a satellite of presidential forces, another part, led by Yuriy Kostenko, has little influence because it was blamed for schism. And, in fact, presidential election was going on without right-side opposition, which experiences deep crises now. In my view, there are three main groups of causes of such situation:

1. connected with the nature of right-wing parties in Ukraine, the way they emerged and their inability to adapt to the new circumstances;
2. connected with negative attitude and actions of the ruling elite ;
3. connected with the general condition of the whole society.

Weakness of the parties on the right side of political spectrum and domination of the so-called oligarchs in real politics (in the meaning of acquiring and maintenance real power) is one of the most important and hazardous weaknesses of present-day political situation in Ukraine. Quite natural, that both politicians and political analysts recognize an urgent need for the structuralization of legal, institutionalized, systemic ruling force and right-wing opposition as a major problem of further democratic development of Ukraine. According to wide spread view, there is an urgent need for unifying reform-oriented political forces into one or may be two political parties. Only in that case rightist parties will be able to countervail the power of communist block and the power of arising Ukrainian “oligarchy” (new rich men, trying to combine in their hands economic and political power).

Political leaders in contemporary Ukraine. The problem of the elite composition and behavior during the last campaign may be linked also to the question of the quality of propositions available on political market and in this sense to the quality of Ukrainian political leaders.

Unpleasant confession, but it is true that all more or less important figures on Ukraine’s political scene in 1999 represented political elite of yesterday’s generation. Most of them were old-style politicians unable to use new means of doing politics. Their electoral technologies were unsustainable. Instead of promulgating stronger sides of their own programs candidates focused on criticizing those of their opponents. I almost agree with Ukrainian sociologist Nikolay Slusarevskiy that in a case if anybody of them won the presidential race he hardly would be able to implement effective policy, or just introduce some fresh stream into the trend of Ukrainian political life. Pretending for another term of Presidency and preparing the basis for future victory, he might waste time in the same manner as Kuchma did it during his first term of Presidency. The most likely behavior of anybody of them might be:

- declaration of a new program of reforms (which was usually done as an important accessory of each new government) at the beginning;
- “paying debts” to their direct and indirect sponsors;
- looking around if there are some younger pretenders for their chair and concentrating on political struggle against them instead of thinking about policies.

In this case the adventure of new generation of politicians should be hold back. ^{xi}

At the same time, two major reservations may be put against this assertion. The first one consists in the allegation that not every younger politician is better than the old one. It makes a difference what part of new political generation: ideological-political or oligarchic-economical will capture political power. In the second case, unfortunately, nothing new will happen in public policy of Ukraine.

The second one reminds that Kuchma belongs to the same old generation and has the same old-fashioned manners and ambitions. The only advantage of him in this connection is that he, probably, won't strive for power any more if, of course, a new subject of the necessity of authoritarian rule will not appear. Even if not, there is a deep doubt if he personally can behave in more decisive way as before and if he will be allowed to do so by existing "the elite of influence". Successful electoral campaign elevates him over his rivals, but not over oligarchs who helped him to gain that success. More likely that they will wait for reimbursement. And very soon we should see who most likely will get use of that victory, and what kind of younger generation may count for promotion to the highest positions.

Anyway, the problem of real and possible changes within political and near-political elite is extremely important for the future development of Ukrainian democracy. One of the regularities that characterise the transitional process in all countries with catching-up development is that all new institutions are being established there from above, not growing from below. The success in establishing them predominantly depends, therefore, on the strength of democratically and market oriented elite. According to this "rule" what is done in the sphere of "building" democratic institutions in Ukraine thus far and what will be done in the nearest future has to be regarded as function of renewed elite which, unfortunately, happened to be not so new. Besides, the competition for making real politics between political elite and behind-the-scene economic interests ("elite of influence" which took the form of the so-called oligarchs) has been lost by the former in favour of the latter. Provided Ukrainian oligarchs are not yet very strong, the regaining of political power by elected politicians is not altogether impossible. Still, it requires will, energy and, perhaps, of leaders capable to persuade people and to get their support.

5. Regional factor in Ukraine's presidential elections.

Now I turn one more explanation of Kuchma's and Symonenko's relative successes – by different views and attitudes of Ukrainian electors in different regions of the country. Before discussing the problem of regionalism it is worthwhile, I think, to look at the table 2, which presents the results of runoffs by regions.

Table 2. *Results of presidential election in Ukraine by region*
 (second round, November 14, 1999).

I. Kuchma gained over 50% of votes

A. 7 western oblasts with overwhelming majority of votes gained by Kuchma			B. 7 southern, eastern and central oblasts, where Kuchma won rather convincingly		
	Kuchma %	Symonenko %		Kuchma %	Symonenko %
1. Ivano-Frankivsk	92.3	4.5	1. Kyiv-city	64.8	26.0
2. Ternopil	92.2	4.8	2. Kyiv-oblast	58.5	34.3
3. Lviv	91.6	5.2	3. Khmelnytskyi	50.95	42.
4. Transcarpathia	84.5	9.7	4. Odesa	52.8	40.6
5. Volyn	75.4	19.2	5. Dnipropetrovsk	56.4	38.1
6. Chernivtsi	73.2	21.4	6. Donetsk	52.9	41.2
7. Rivne	76.5	17.2	7. Sevastopol	50.2	43.7

II. Either communists won, or no candidate gained over 50% of votes

A. 9 oblasts where communists won			B. 5 regions where nobody took 50% of votes*		
	Kuchma %	Symonenko %		Kuchma %	Symonenko %

1. Vinnitsa	33.9	<u>59.2</u>	1. Zhytomyr	48.1	45.9
2. Chernihiv	37.5	56.3	2. Sumy	48.5	43.4
3. Poltava	35.2	57.7	3. Kharkiv	46.6	46.5
4. Cherkasy	40.0	52.3	4. Zaporizhzhia	44.8	49.7
5. Kirovograd	40.9	52.6	5. Mykolaiv	45.9	49.2
6. Kherson	41.9	52.9			
7. Luhansk	40.7	53.9			
8. AR Crimea	44.0	51.2			

*Only in 2 of them communists gathered more votes than Kuchma.

Supporters of regional conception urge that Kuchma won because the voters in western Ukraine were too much committed to the slogan “State and independence first, economic success and well-being of people – second”. Their decisiveness to impede the communists’ attempts to turn country back to the empire played a crucial role in election outcome. The characteristic of western population’s aspirations is rather precise in this case but the picture is a little bit more complicated. First of all, western region represents minority (about 20%) of the whole population and its position could not be decisive in at previous elections for the country in the whole. Second, there were a lot of other oblasts where Kuchma gained convincing majority of votes. Third, regionalism is a highly important factor of civil and political life in Ukraine but it is not true that last election was highly indicative as to the feelings and aspirations in different regions of Ukraine, especially if one speaks about east and west without going deeper into detail.

The depth and nature of differences in political stand and behavior in the regions with different political tradition and the influence on the political scene have been studied in Ukraine during some four last years on the basis of numerous surveys of public opinion. They have shown that there are some features that divide population of Eastern and Western part of Ukraine but there are also those that are similar or identical in both parts of the country^{xii}, and this was proved by presidential election 1999.

Let us have a look at the impact of present and past regional discrepancies on the outcomes of presidential campaigns. Five years ago Kuchma won presidential election due to the support of southern and eastern parts of the country, as Kravchuk did two years before. Both times western electors failed: in 1991 in their effort to elect the leader of national-democratic party – Pukh, and in 1994 in the attempt to retain the power in the hands of the incumbent President Kravchuk, who turned to be pro-independent enough after being elected in 1991. But again, after Kuchma has been elected nothing dangerous happened on the political scene of Ukraine (except economic stagnation, of course, which was ascribed to a complex set of different causes), and westerners gave him their support. There is a joke in Ukraine, that easterners elect Presidents for the country, and westerners love them. At least, in 1999 the westerners’ contribution to the election of President may be regarded as significant.

During the first term of Kuchma’s Presidency there was much of complain that he did too little in order to implement Law on languages which defines Ukrainian as a state language and prescribes it’s broader application into the systems of education and government. Neither did he enough in promoting market reforms or developing pro-European foreign policy. Nevertheless, in spite of this bitter criticism of the incumbent President policy, much of Lviv's and west Ukraine's population voted for Kuchma fearing that if the Communists return to power they will cause a lot of disturbance, trying to turn things back. In other words, choosing from two evils, people in the western region have actually chosen the least one (at least according to their vision).

Communists are regarded as socially and nationally alien, occupation force. The suggestion that it was they that united Western and Eastern Ukraine doesn’t work here because westerners paid too big price for that

unification, being dispossessed of their property and suffering from severe repression. Contrary to other parts of the country those people who remember that suffering are still alive here and this makes anticommunist aspirations firm and definite. Thus, there is no surprise, that communist candidate has taken from 4 to 5% of votes in Halychyna (the most nationally conscious part of Western region) and no more than 20% in other 4 western oblasts. Anticommunist attitude was the most powerful motivation for supporting Kuchma against Symonenko and the major stimulus that provided Kuchma with 92% of votes in Halychyna and more than 75% of votes in four other western oblasts.

Doing so, voters of seven western oblasts of Ukraine probably overlooked Karl Popper's suggestion that one of the most important advantages of democracy is a possibility to change bad governments and to correct their mistakes. But, after all, Popper's approach does not address the situation when people should change bad democratic government for "good or bad", but evidently undemocratic. Of course, there were some other variants in the last election (except to choose between the incumbent President and communist "dissenter"), but they existed mainly in theory. In fact, people in the west and throughout the country did not see real alternative. And they were quite correct, showing in this case intuitive soundness of perception. Voters turned to be rather good purchasers: they have chosen the best commodity present on the political market. It was not their fault if there was nothing better. That was the fault of different branches of Ukrainian political elite, especially of the rightist and left-centrist politicians. Their ineptitude to combine forces and encourage the same candidate for presidency with elaborated program was so obvious that it was natural that electors do not rely on them at all.

No doubt, voting differences between Ukrainian regions are important but the pattern of 1999 voting looks quite different from the pattern of 1994 presidential election. Regional cleavage does not split the country into two halves, as it was in 1994: eastern (Left-bank) and western (Right-bank) part, separated from each other by Dniper-river, history, and culture (especially, political). The elections-99 **did not** polarize the electorate between west and east, but showed instead that the most vivid supporters of CPU live in agrarian regions. So, there is little ground to make east-west oppositions now, except in the situation of considering Halychyna as the only true west and regarding all other territories as the east.

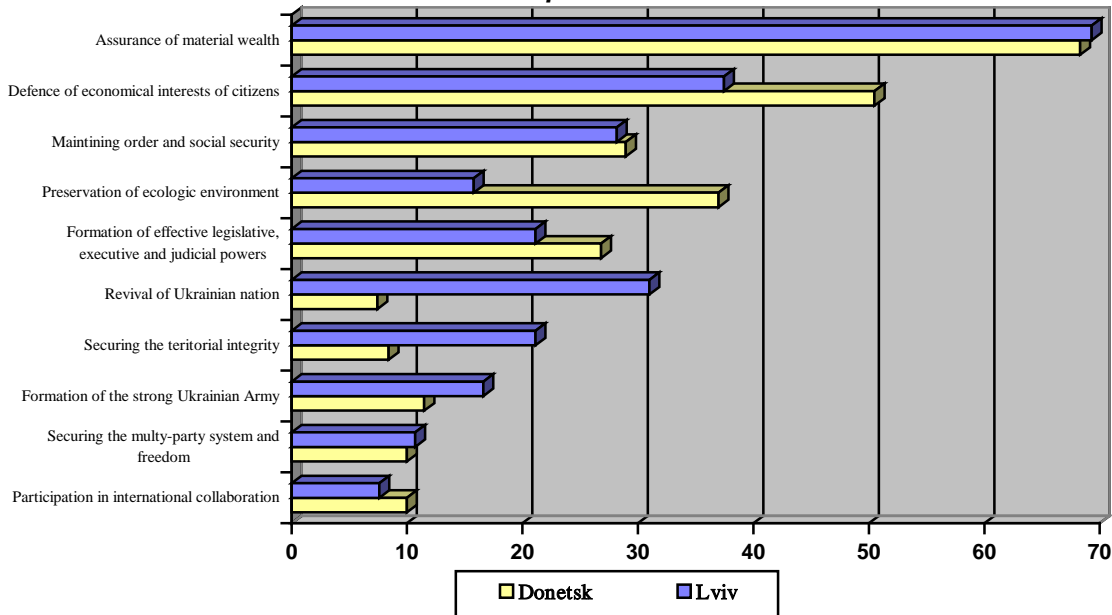
Oblasts with anti-Kuchma's majority are situated this time on both sides of Dniper, reflecting not so much cultural but social discrepancies, first of all – desperate situation in Ukrainian village communities. And there is nothing unexpected in that. If in cities people have not been paid salary for months, in some villages they haven't seen any money at their workplaces for years. These people don't trust anymore anything. And they probably say: "We don't care if communists come to power. We lived somehow under communists. And perhaps would live under the rule of this guy Symonenko. We just want to be paid our salaries. He promised to do that. Why not to try? It simply cannot be worse than it is now."

The "red belt" with the majority of avid (enthusiastic) supporters of the communist leader Petro Symonenko extends from Belorussian border near Chernobyl' in the north to Mykolayiv and Kherson on the Black Sea coast in the south. It goes through the whole territory of Ukraine and may be regarded as a kind of warning about the potential Ukrainian "kolkhoz Vandea". Ukrainian peasantry is as conservative as in any other country. The difference, however, lies in the fact that native, naturally originated conservatism (not borrowed from the West through ideology) in all post-communist countries, including Ukraine, means pro-Communist disposition.

In industrial regions, where workers constitute majority of voters, their considerations were also predominantly economic (rather than nationalistic or political). Nevertheless, workers seem to be more politically sophisticated than peasants and many of them were aware that if Communists return to power they might stop progress altogether (though it was very small under Kuchma's rule) producing in that way further increase of poverty and misfortune. More vivid interest in continuing reform efforts and disillusionment with regard to the left perspective (especially in Symonenko team's accomplishment) makes East and West dispositions closer, showing that there are not only differences but also similarities between more industrially developed Ukraine's regions. This observation coincides with the results of a number of sociological surveys (see *Figure 1^{xiii}*) and with voting previous electoral campaigns (1991, 1998). Though public opinion in Lviv and Donetsk regions differs concerning the priority of some positions (revival of Ukrainian nation, language, problems of ecology), it happens to be almost identical on economic matters.

It goes beyond the subject of this paper to go into the depth discussing regional differences and commonalities. But it is important that the very presence of the latter makes national and state consolidation in Ukraine feasible.

Figure 1. Views of Lviv and Donetsk respondents on priorities for development of Ukraine



A clear split between east and west, between Russian-speaking and Ukrainian speaking population five years ago was predetermined by the peculiarity of that election and of its main competitors. Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, who contested the presidential post on the run-offs in 1994, represented two branches of the same stratum of post-communist nomenclature that adapted to new circumstances. Kravchuk seemed to be less interested and more conservative in economic questions, while Kuchma was more committed to previous cultural and political foreign policy orientations. The main difference between them consisted (at least in the views of the majority of Ukrainian electors) in the different level of their commitment to Ukrainian national idea and their attitude to Russia and Russian language. The question of the dissolution of USSR and of its culprits was still very fresh. As a result, those who hated Kravchuk (mostly from pro-Russian and Russian speaking population) unanimously voted for Kuchma. Those who feared that Kuchma's pro-Russian attitudes might lead to the loss of independence, on the contrary, voted unanimously against him.

Precisely because the only principal difference between the two candidates lied within the framework of cultural-lingual-foreign-policy orientations a major rift between Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking parts of the country appeared in 1994, and cultural cleavage looked like the most important on the political scene of Ukraine. At that time many Kuchma's adherents also hoped (more or less sincerely) that he would be more committed to reforms (due to his younger age and technocrat professional origin). They were disappointed soon, however, while those who originally do not trust him discovered that Kuchma did almost nothing hazardous. Time and position (of a president of a weak but politically independent state) made of him statehood oriented politician.

Reforms, however, did not go far enough and during 5-year period of his presidency social economic situation has deteriorated greatly. According to International Monetary Fund data economic dynamics during these years had such indicators^{xiv}:

	1995	1996	1997	1998
Real GDP	-12	-10	-3	-2
Employment	+3	-2	-1	...
Inflation	...	39.7	10.1	20.1

Consumer prices	+377	+80	+16	+11
Average real wages	10	-5	-2	-9

The analysts from IMF note, that “Throughout the period, structural reforms continued, although progress was modest in a number of important areas”. Among them large privatization, energy, agriculture was mentioned. “Agriculture continued to be hampered by extensive formal and informal state controls and, as a result, production declined”.^{xv} It was not a surprise that in those circumstances influence of left political forces grew, especially in the village areas. Especially if one takes into account that to some extent Kuchma’s surrounding deliberately enhanced left politicians popularity (that of P. Symonenko and N. Vitrenko). With the help of President’s advisers Symonenko took a chance to capitalize the electoral campaign for the sake of communist party enforcement as much, as possible. But in spite of that, Ukrainians have expressed dislike (disgust) toward Soviet-era past and toward similar means of overcoming the recession.

Kuchma won the run-offs not thanks to Symonenko’s ineptitude, and not because Marchuk, presumably “totally popular in the West”, has sloped into Kuchma’s camp. Kuchma, in spite of all criticism on his address, always was much popular in Western oblasts than Marchuk who had some influence on perplexed remainders of right conservative parties and on certain circles of not very tried in politics intelligentsia which appreciated his abilities in languages and music. He won, because almost everyone in Halychyna, even those “fiercely critical of Kuchma” in previous times, firmly settled not to allow Communists to celebrate a victory. He won also because the majority of Ukrainians, in spite of catastrophic situation in economy and all hardships of the ordinary people, made a choice in favor of the future, not of the past.

4. After election.

There are two visions of the future perspective in the light of election: moderate optimistic and totally pessimistic.

Optimists anticipate possible consolidation of power in President’s hands with a consequent attempt to restart reforms and to try to diminish the influence of oligarchs and criminals (which often are the same people). The questions that arise here (in connection with these suggestions) are: does everything now depend exclusively on the President’s will and if so what are the possible incentives and motives that might induce him to behave according to that optimistic scheme? One answer is - just honor, desire to leave a good imprint in Ukrainian history. But this argument seems to be insufficient. In order to show such a will President should have enough strength to resist the pressures of oligarchs and to be able to count on the support of organized political force(s). Unfortunately, there are no such organized forces that are influential enough to uphold the vigorous, independent and possibly anti-oligarch policies of Kuchma-II.

Optimistic vision actually presupposes regrouping of the right-wing forces that were defeated completely on the last election, on one side, and rightward shift of President position, on the other. I am afraid, however, that both presumptions are illusive. There is no political force able to construct a political and social background for new President’s policy and hardly it will appear in the nearest future. And even if it were parliamentary left fractions have enough strength to counterbalance and neutralize it. More realistic seems other suggestion about possible change of re-elected President’s outlook. Kuchma and his advisers could have realized after election that playing electoral game with the communists is rather risky, especially now, when communists increased their influence with the help of ruling circles. In order to curb this trend, President and his surrounding must launch vigorous efficient economic policy and to improve the living condition of ordinary people. But first of all they have to build new political block standing as a safeguard for the market reform and democracy.

Pessimistic expectations consist in envision of further deterioration of economic and social condition, of toughing the regime and retreat from the first steps (some of which were rather qualified and worthy) in democratic direction. Oligarchs who stand behind the re-elected President are not interested in democracy at present though they may be not interested also in establishing sheer dictatorship. So, during certain time regime may move by the road of hardening the behind the scene (or, as they say in our country, under-carpet) rule of economically powerful people and clans and exterminating any cumbersome opposition pretending for power. At its extreme, this scenario foresees even the whole seizure of power by Mafia with possible removal Kuchma from his post ahead of time (by means of impeachment or otherwise). The pessimist estimation stresses the heaviest losses for political scene in Ukraine: destruction of the right wing of political spectrum and full

degradation of political morals. They see no signs that reduced to ruin right-wing parties will regain their strength in the nearest future or that moderate politicians of western-type will appear within left half of political spectrum.

In my view, optimists underestimate and pessimists overestimate the strength and political activity of latent pressure groups. Actually, oligarchs are not so powerful in Ukraine at present that no political force can curb their appetites. All depends on ability of political organization really interested in defending public interests to mobilize the mass support, and, of course, on President's position and will.

Summing up the outcomes of election we may state that the last campaign has mirrored and ascertained next features of the polity and society:

1. Sober-mindedness of Ukrainian people that expressed their disgust toward communist past. Selecting between past and present they have chosen present though most of them are in a desperate economic situation. So, Ukrainians have shown (for good or for bad) their unusual patience and spiritual resources that helped them to make an account of all *pro* and *con* of the incumbent President and his major communist contestant;
2. Decidedness of west-Ukrainian population in achieving state building purposes, in spite of awkward economic situation and rampant (uncontrolled) impoverishment of people.
3. Substantial change in regional dispersion of political commitments: to incumbent president and to "party of power", to right-wing forces and to left-wing forces. There is no more clear-cut division between Left-bank and Right-bank Ukraine as it was at the Presidential and parliamentary elections of 1994. Instead, there is a direct link between an agricultural nature of a region and a portion of votes for communist leader Petro Symonenko.
4. Considerable leftward shift in the aspiration of ordinary people in general (in most of the regions) and of village inhabitants in particular, which reflects intolerability of their social condition and unwillingness to go through such a "course of reforms" as it was in previous five years;
5. Low level of the ruling elite's adherence to democratic principle's and procedures; their intentional and some times non-intentional violations of the rules of political democratic game;
6. Inaptitude and a deep crises of all branches of Ukrainian political elite whose consciousness has been shaped in soviet or immediate after-soviet times. There is a need not only for its alteration through incorporation of younger politicians, but also for full replacement as a drained social stratum without political capital and resources.

What did the electoral campaign contributed to?

1. I hope it contributed to the disillusionment of many political leaders with regard to their actual popularity and ability of their advisers to do better predictions than political experts did. Most of them were under delusion of their higher popularity than sociological services (supposedly bought by power structures) showed in ratings.
2. Perhaps, the realization by the "party of power", as well as political society on the whole what is the real scale of the "red menace" and therefore of the need to conduct more adequate policy of transition;
3. Unfortunately, it contributing also to degrading of political moral and procedural democracy. Rules of electoral game have been turned down in many instances and those who did that - won and won't be punished;
4. To the growing awareness of an acute necessity to regroup political forces that stood rightward of the President's position and were defeated completely on the last election. But I still have a doubt if that grown awareness will result in organization of a stronger party or block in the nearest future.
5. On the level of personalities Kuchma has got a chance to prove his pro-market and pro-independent statehood orientations. During election, according to many observers, he went step by step Yeltsyn's experience of 1996. We shall see whether he will continue to follow Yeltsyn's way of conduct not only during the race but also after it.

ⁱ For detailed analysis of pre-electoral attitudes of Ukrainian people see: Lvivshchyna— 98: Socialnyi portret u zahalnoukrainskomu konteksti. (From election to election: society and authorities in Ukraine at the stage of transition). By S. Davymuka, A. Kolodii, A. Kuzheliuk, V. Podgornov, N. Chernysh. — Lviv, 1999.

ⁱⁱ Political Portrait of Ukraine. Bulletin of the "Democratic initiatives" Foundation. — 1998. — No. 2. (In Ukrainian)

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v O. Horodetska. Ukrainian president, Communist in runoff. – “National Post”. November 2, 1999.

^{vi} UNIAN news, No. 247-7, November 15, 1999.

^{vii} Anatoliy Lemysh. Results of the election are not to be revised or corrected... -- Den' (The Day, Ukrainian weekly newspaper). November 21, 1999.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} See, for example: UKRAINE. How to lose an election 101. - The NIS Observed: An Analytical Review. Volume IV, Number 18 (15 November 1999).

^x Olexandr Lavrynovych. Interview to “The Day” (“Den’”), Ukrainian weekly newspaper. -- November 21, 1999.

^{xi} See: “Zerkalo nedeli” (Mirror Weekly), November 19, 1999.

^{xii} See, for example: Результати крос-регіонального соціологічного опитування “Стан українського соціуму напередодні виборів 1998-99 рр.” (Порівняння -- Донецьк-Львів) // Ставропігон. Щорічник. Політологічний центр “Гене́за”. -- 1997. -- С. 171-193; Васютинський В. Про особливості електорального самовизначення громадян України // Українські варіанти. -- 1998.-- № 1. — С. 37-41; В. Кіпень. Масові настрої і політичні орієнтації населення Донеччини: причини і наслідки // Ставропігон. Щорічник. Політологічний центр “Гене́за”. -- 1997. -- С. 130-140; В. Горбач Трансформація моделі розвитку українського суспільства очима жителів Чернігова // Чернігів: штрихи до соціально-політичного портрету. -- Чернігів: Українська перспектива. Інформаційно-аналітичний бюлетень. -- № 2. -- С. 6-10.

^{xiii} Based on: В. Кіпень. Масові настрої і політичні орієнтації населення Донеччини: причини і наслідки // Ставропігон.

Щорічник. Політологічний центр “Гене́за”. -- 1997.

^{xiv} See: Ukraine: Recent Economic Developments. IMF Staff Country Report No. 99/42. May, 1999. – Washington, DC:IMF, 1999. -- P. 6, 12.

^{xv} Ibid., p. 10-11.