

Electoral Performance of New Political Parties in Ukraine

The Context of Electoral Volatility at the Parliamentary Level (1998–2019)

ANATOLIY ROMANYUK, VITALIY LYTVYN*

Abstract

This article is devoted to study and comparative analysis of the features and levels of support for new political parties during parliamentary elections in Ukraine, in particular the period 1998–2019. With this in mind, mainly based on the calculations of the indices of overall electoral volatility, intra-system electoral volatility and extra-system electoral volatility, we analyze the parameters of changes in electoral support (by voters) for political parties, in particular new ones, during the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine. In addition, we correlate overall, intra-system and extra-system electoral volatility, and present the correlation of overall electoral volatility in the sample of all political parties as the subjects of electoral processes in Ukraine and political parties elected to the national parliament (the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine). As a result, the study outlines two clusters of extra-system electoral volatility, which show the highest level of similarity, and calculates the dependence of the level of electoral volatility and stability of the party system in Ukraine. With this background, we conclude that electoral volatility in Ukraine is largely determined by the effect of party affiliation or desire to belong to the government or opposition, and is regulated by the special context of identity politics in this country.

Keywords: political parties; new political parties; parliamentary elections; electoral volatility; Ukraine

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1. Introduction

The influence (within party and political systems) of new political parties on the electoral process largely correlates with the phenomenon of electoral volatility and is an interesting

* Anatoliy Romanyuk: Professor at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Political Science, Universytetska 1 str., 79000, Lviv. E-mail: anatoliy.romanyuk@lnu.edu.ua. Vitaliy Lytvyn: Professor at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Political Science, Universytetska 1 str., 79000, Lviv. E-mail: vitaliy.lytvyn@lnu.edu.ua. ORCID: 0000-0002-9395-3761.

problem of Political Science, which has theoretical, methodological and practical consequences in every country in the world where competitive elections take place. The reason is that the formation and entry of new political parties into the political arena is evidence of the realization of civil rights and the freedom to form and associate political organizations, as well as to provide and satisfy political, economic, social, cultural, personal and other interests, which are traditionally guaranteed constitutionally. Ukraine, where this is regulated by the constitution, is no exception. However, in practice, the formation of new political parties and/or alliances is not always determined by the agency and representation of the interests of certain social groups. This is complemented by the fact that the level of articulation of group interests, which is reflected in party programmes, is also extremely different. In contrast, the level of support for political parties, which is determined electorally, is a type of indicator of how well any hypothetical new political party and/or alliance articulates such interests or how effectively it conducts its electoral campaign. Accordingly, the emergence of new political parties (in party and political systems) can be a process of creating a kind of institutional or political tool for the struggle for power.

These two approaches to the formation of new political parties and/or alliances reflect the divergent paradigms for understanding politics. Thus, we perceive politics as a public space for the expression and protection of group interests in the first case, and understand politics as a space for the struggle between political actors for power in the second case. Moreover, both models and paradigms can be mutually exclusive or can overlap to some extent. In general, it is theoretically clear in the case of the first model or paradigm that the formation of new parties and/or alliances cannot be en masse, but rather should be limited and should provide for participation in elections and obtaining a certain number of votes. Instead, it is hypothetically expected in the case of the second model or paradigm that the formation of new parties is weakly related to the articulation of group interests, since new parties and/or alliances must be treated as instrumental projects of the struggle of political actors for power.

In view of this, the aim of this article is a comparative analysis of the levels of support for new political parties (as a group concept that unites both parties and alliances), i.e. those political organizations that did not participate in the previous parliamentary election, but took part in the subsequent parliamentary election, mainly during the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Accordingly, the so-called ‘new’ parties in this context includes those parties and/or alliances which were formed between the consecutive parliamentary elections, as well as political organizations that are combinations of the latter and those parties and/or alliances which formed and registered before the previous parliamentary election, provided that they did not participate directly in the election. This means that our general research objectives are, on one hand, to compare the levels of electoral volatility during parliamentary elections in Ukraine within the main electoral cycles and to determine the factors influencing the change in levels of voter support for new parties. On the other hand, the research is devoted to outlining new theoretical, methodological, practical and empirical conclusions and correlations concerning the understanding of the phenomenon and nature of electoral volatility, mainly against the background of taking into account the role of and electoral support for new political parties. To fulfil

this set of tasks, the article is divided into parts devoted to the analysis of publications and available scientific works on the issues and problems of electoral volatility within the theory of Political Science, consideration and development of the relevant and appropriate methods and tools for studying electoral volatility, as well as to practical and empirical presentation of the material on the issue of support for new political parties during parliamentary elections in Ukraine, in particular on the basis of comparative analysis in the context of assessing levels of electoral volatility.

In general, the conceptual and empirical importance of the study lies primarily in the fact that the case of Ukraine at the present stage of development of the issues of electoral volatility in Political Science is not considered at all or is considered without detailed explanations and mainly against the background or in comparison with other European countries, even though electoral volatility in Ukraine is traditionally extremely high. This is indicated in the fairly common statements of researchers about the lack of development and institutionalization, weak structure and high levels of atomization of the party system and frequent changes in the electoral and even institutional systems in Ukraine. On one hand, the fact is that social scientists quite often pay attention to the phenomenon of 'new political parties', which, like 'meteors', quickly enter the political space and, even in Ukraine, unexpectedly get relatively high electoral results, but very rarely maintain a sufficient level of voter support to run for parliament in the next election. That is why there are few simple explanations for the high level of electoral volatility in Ukraine and there is an urgent need to develop an adequate method of comparative analysis of these issues that would allow us to verify and compare different research assessments and conclusions. On the other hand, the case of Ukraine, in particular the very high electoral volatility in this country compared to other European countries, is interesting for the scientific community empirically and statistically. This is even despite the fact that the share of voters who change their party support between elections increased from 11 to 36 percent between 1960 and 2014 and the practice of increasing electoral volatility has become a trend, as evidenced by the results of a comparative study of indicators and parameters of electoral volatility in European countries during this period (Geers & Strömbäck, 2019). Consequently, the relevance of our study of the example of Ukraine is determined by the facts that: (1) the extreme indicators of electoral volatility in this country, which are consistently confirmed from election to election, always require special attention and explanation; and (2) the situation of electoral volatility in Ukraine differs significantly from the situation and indicators not only in Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, but also in Eastern Europe (especially in Armenia, Georgia, Russia etc.), where instead it is possible to trace stability of the ruling political parties from election to election. This means that the application and modification of the methodology of electoral volatility analysis for the case of Ukraine allows us both to verify the validity of the methodology itself, as well as to gain a new knowledge about the phenomenon of electoral volatility in the context of transitional countries trying to adapt and develop their political and electoral practices in the direction of democratic countries. Therefore, taking into account the case of Ukraine can adjust both theoretical as well as empirical parameters of the analysis of electoral volatility.

2. State of arts on the issues of electoral volatility

Since the publication of Pedersen's (1979) study on 'The dynamics of European party systems: changing patterns of electoral volatility' of the problems of electoral volatility, scientists from around the world (Pedersen, 1983; Pedersen, Katz, & Rattinger, 1997; Lane & Ersson, 2007; Powell & Tucker, 2009; Emanuele, 2015; Mainwaring, Gervasoni, & España-Najera, 2016; Casal Bértoa, Deegan-Krause, & Houghton, 2017; Sikk & Köker, 2017; Geers & Strömbäck, 2019) have actively used the methods and tools proposed by the former to calculate the changes in electoral support for political parties and alliances in a wide range of cases, i.e. from one particular country to large arrays of states and regions characterized by regular elections. At the same time, the gradual division of Political Science research on a regional basis became noticeable. As a result, the issues of changing electoral support in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, has been for a long time quite intensively studied and verified among all the diversity of scientific achievements and researches. This is clearly reflected in a number of important scientific publications on these issues (Sikk, 2005; Lane & Ersson, 2007; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007; Epperly, 2011; Powell & Tucker, 2014; Gherghina, 2015; Crabtree & Golder, 2016; Emanuele, Chiaramonte, & Soare, 2020). Ukrainian Political Science is no exception in this context, since the issues of electoral volatility have gradually become the subject of analysis and comprehensive researches (Bodnarash, 2011; Romanyuk & Lytvyn, 2016, pp. 344–348; Romanyuk, 2019; Romanyuk & Lytvyn, 2020). However, the existing literature does not fully explain the issue of support for new political parties during parliamentary elections in Ukraine, in particular on the basis of assessing the levels of electoral volatility in the country.

Despite the existence of a fairly large number of scientific works on this matter, the definition of the phenomenon of electoral volatility, which was proposed in 1979 by Pedersen, remains almost unchanged. Pedersen proposed to define electoral volatility as 'the net change within the electoral party system resulting from individual vote transfers' (Pedersen, 1979; Pedersen, Katz, & Rattinger, 1997, p. 96) (this definition was borrowed from such researchers as Ascher and Tarrow [1975]), which indicates the extent to which the power of a party is redistributed from one election to another between the parties that lost and won the elections (i.e. the extent to which 'party strength is being reallocated from one election to the next between losing and winning parties' [(Pedersen, 1979, p. 3; Pedersen, Katz, & Rattinger, 1997, p. 96)]. In this context, Pedersen proposed the first and still the most common formula for calculating electoral volatility or the so-called electoral volatility index (within the specific analytical issues of Political Science), according to which (although in harmonized form):

$$V = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |p_{i(t)} - p_{i(t+1)}|}{2},$$

where: V stands for Pedersen's electoral volatility index; n stands for the total number of parties competing in the two elections; p_i stands for the percentage of the vote obtained by party i at elections t and $t+1$; Σ^n stands for the sum of the results of the parties at

elections t and $t + 1$; $i = 1$ stands for identification of all parties with seats in parliament or all parties that participated in elections t and $t + 1$ (that is, depending on the requirements of the analysis, parties that received parliamentary representation or only participated in the elections) (Pedersen, 1979; Pedersen, 1983).

This means that the electoral volatility index is calculated on the basis of the results of two consecutive elections t and $t + 1$. In this case, depending on the needs of comparative analysis, it is necessary to take into account all the results for all political parties or the results of all political parties with parliamentary mandates ($i = 1$) obtained during two consecutive elections t and $t + 1$. This results in the fact that the smaller is the index obtained by counting according to the Pedersen's formula, the lower is the electoral volatility and the higher is the party system stability. For example, in the case when party A participated in two consecutive elections, the researcher must calculate the difference between the obtained electoral results of this party. In other words, if party A during the previous parliamentary election t received the result $p_{A(t)}$ and during the next parliamentary election $t + 1$ received the result $p_{A(t+1)}$, then the difference between the two results must be taken into account. Instead, if party B participated in only one parliamentary election (for example, t or $t + 1$), then, regardless of whether the election was the previous or the subsequent one, the result of such a party must also be considered as the change in its electoral volatility. Accordingly, the electoral volatility index is calculated in a range from '0' (no change) to '100' (complete change) percent.

It is important to note that the highly informative nature of the proposed methodology, method, formula and the electoral volatility index itself led to their active use in Political Science and political practice. However, the approbation of the index in the practice of electoral process in some countries and even regions has led researchers to argue that the results of this index and hence the parameters of political parties' support in parliamentary elections are determined not only by the peculiarities of the development of certain countries and regions, but also by the problems of the traditional (according to the Pedersen's formula) approach to estimating and comparing electoral volatility. The fact is that this approach does not fully or completely take into account many procedural features of the electoral process in certain countries and even regions. For example, this approach does not answer the questions of how to code and indicate a political party that splits into several or many parts, or how to consider multi-component parties, which form electoral alliances and coalitions. Accordingly, numerous scholars have proposed improvements of the traditional index of electoral volatility (Pedersen's formula) which are the result of ongoing scientific research in this direction.

In particular, Powell and Tucker, in their study 'New approaches to electoral volatility: evidence from post-communist countries' (2009), propose to treat Pedersen's electoral volatility index as an overall or total measurement, and at the same time insist on the separation of the two types of electoral volatility, i.e. types A and B , which are used to characterize different party and electoral systems in terms of their stability. Thus, the scientists propose to understand the electoral volatility of 'type A ' as the changes in electoral support for those political parties and/or alliances which did not participate in the next parliamentary election, and the changes associated with the emergence of new political parties and/or alliances which did not participate in the previous parliamentary election. Instead,

the electoral volatility of ‘*type B*’ includes the changes in levels of voter support exclusively for the steady (stable) political parties and/or alliances which participated in two consecutive parliamentary elections t and $t + 1$ (Powell & Tucker, 2009, p. 2). However, in their next study, ‘Revisiting electoral volatility in post-communist countries: new data, new results and new approaches’, Powell and Tucker (2014) no longer use the notations ‘*A*’ and ‘*B*’ as the types of electoral volatility, but instead distinguish between the so-called replacement electoral volatility, which is ‘caused by new party entry and old party exit’, and electoral volatility which is ‘caused by vote switching across existing parties’ (Powell & Tucker, 2014, pp. 123–126), i.e. associated with the transfer of votes across existing parties/alliances or those parties/alliances that participated in two consecutive elections (Crabtree & Golder, 2016, pp. 229–230). Finally, Mainwaring, Gervasoni and España-Najera, who base their research ‘Extra- and within-system electoral volatility’ (2016) on the results and findings of Powell and Tucker (2014), propose a slightly different system of notation of the two outlined types of electoral volatility. In particular, they identify intra-system (within-system) and the extra-system (inter-system) electoral volatilities (Casal Bértoa, Deegan-Krause, & Haughton, 2017; Sikk & Köker, 2017; Geers & Strömbäck, 2019). The first type, i.e. intra-system electoral volatility, is conceived as the change in electoral support across existing political parties and/or alliances that participated in two consecutive elections. The second type, i.e. extra-system electoral volatility, concerns the change and transfer of electoral support across those political parties/alliances which participated only in the previous election (i.e. did not participate in the following election), and those political parties/alliances which participated only in the next election (i.e. new parties/alliances) (Mainwaring, Gervasoni, & España-Najera, 2016, p. 624). Given this, in our study we will turn mainly to the parameters and measures of overall or total electoral volatility, as well as intra-system and extra-system electoral volatility.

3. Framework and method for studying electoral volatility in Ukraine

As mentioned above, our basic aim is to study the evolution and provide a comparative analysis of electoral volatility in Ukraine, in particular in the context of assessing levels of support for new political parties in the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections. By new political parties we mean political parties that did not participate in the previous parliamentary election, but did so in the more recent or current election. At the same time, given the peculiarities of Ukraine’s electoral systems at the parliamentary level in 1998–2019 (which were either proportional, or mixed with elements of proportionality), we also mean the party lists of new parties within multi-member national or regional constituencies. Accordingly, the category of new parties includes primarily those that were registered between the two consecutive elections, as well as parties that were officially registered earlier but for various reasons did not participate in elections. However, we consider two special situations or conditions that took place in Ukraine in 1998–2019. The first situation is related to the change of party names. For example, from 27 August 2014 until 24 May 2015,

the Petro Poroshenko Bloc 'Solidarity' operated in Ukraine under the leadership of Petro Poroshenko, but this party changed its name to 'European Solidarity' on 24 May 2019. In this and all similar situations, we consider such parties unchanged and do not include them in the list of new parties.

The second situation or condition concerns party blocs and electoral coalitions. The fact is that the political history of independent Ukraine shows that we quite often deal with circumstances where parties initially functioned independently, then became part of an inter-party association/bloc, but then again acted completely independently. A clear example of this is the case of the political organization 'The People's Movement of Ukraine', which was proclaimed and established in September 1989 (at that time this organization was called 'The People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction'). Since its inception, the organization has been a political movement, uniting citizens of different ideological orientations, which were grouped around the common goal of gaining Ukraine's independence from the USSR. After achieving this goal and declaring Ukraine's independence, the movement was soon, in particular in 1992, registered by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine as a political party that managed to gain parliamentary representation in the 1994 election (20 deputies out of 450) and the 1998 election (46 deputies out of 450). However, in 2001, the XII Congress of 'The People's Movement of Ukraine' adopted a resolution on the formation of Viktor Yushchenko's electoral bloc 'Our Ukraine', which included the party. It is interesting that 'The People's Movement of Ukraine' in 2006 participated in the parliamentary election as part of Viktor Yushchenko's 'Our Ukraine' bloc, but in the early parliamentary election in 2007 it participated within the renewed 'Our Ukraine – People's Self-Defense' bloc. This is despite the fact that 'The People's Movement of Ukraine' tried to run on its own in the next national and regional elections. Consequently, we consider this and similar cases of parties joining and/or withdrawing from electoral blocs as the termination of parties under specific names and the emergence of new parties or new electoral entities.

As a result, all this gives us sufficient grounds to argue that electoral volatility in Ukraine in 1998–2019 was mainly driven by the creation of new political parties. Therefore, we proceed from the hypothetical assumption and prognostic remark that the rise of new political parties is or may be a separate factor (with varying significance) not only of electoral volatility, but also of the structuring of the entire party and political system and inter-institutional relations in general (not just in Ukraine, but in general). The main reason for this theoretical and methodological assumption is that the creation and operation of new parties in Ukraine, especially if they participate in elections and even receive mandates, should be understood not only as a response to the needs and demands of voters, but also (often primarily) as a political and manipulative tool not just in the struggle for power, but of gaining power. All this means that theoretically and methodologically our study is constructed around the argumentation and explanation of electoral volatility and the parties' or party system's instability in Ukraine as a direct consequence of the latter's lack of attachment to the interests of specific social groups that are not regulated by different socio-political cleavages, as is typical for the countries of Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, this is due to the fact that the identification of parties in Ukraine is more about structuring geopolitical definitions and interests of politicians and citizens, as well as taking into account the successes or failures of previous

politicians, in particular regarding the positioning of parties in the inter-election period, before and during elections and while struggling for power. That is why we analyze the electoral volatility and instability of parties in Ukraine not through the prism of classic European identity politics in the format of socio-political cleavages (which do not work or work differently and insufficiently in Ukraine), but instead through the current perceptions of positions in power mainly of party leaders and the parties themselves, rather than party ideologies. All this theoretically and methodologically means that electoral volatility in Ukraine is determined by the effect of belonging, or desire to belong, to the government or opposition and is regulated by the special context of identity politics in Ukraine.

To reflect on and test this assumption for the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine, we decided to use the traditional (Pedersen, 1979) index of electoral volatility, as well as the indices of intra-system and extra-system electoral volatility developed by various researchers, including, on one hand, Powell and Tucker (2009; 2014) and, on the other hand, Mainwaring, Gervasoni and España-Najera (2016). At the same time, we decided to intentionally ignore the results of the first parliamentary election in Ukraine in 1994, because this election took place in 450 single-member constituencies, but the existing Ukrainian political parties were just at the stage of their initiation, design and formation in the early 1990s. Therefore, we are convinced that the use of tools to measure levels of party support and electoral volatility in relation to the 1994 parliamentary election in Ukraine is possible but not advisable, especially compared to all the later data.

It is also methodically and instrumentally extremely important that we plan to calculate and compare the selected types of electoral volatility mainly with the help of the indices developed or modified by Powell and Tucker (2009). In particular, we propose to estimate the intra-system electoral volatility (as the electoral volatility of ‘type B’) according to the following formula:

$$B.V = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |p_{i(t)} - p_{i(t+1)}|}{2},$$

where: *B.V* stands for the intra-system electoral volatility (as the electoral volatility of ‘type B’); *n* stands for the total number of parties which are stable in their representation in parliament across two consecutive parliamentary elections; *p_i* stands for the percentage of the vote obtained by party *i* in elections *t* and *t + 1*; \sum^n stands for the sum of the results of parties in elections *t* and *t + 1*; and *i = 1* stands for identification of all stable parties with seats in parliament (i.e. parties that received parliamentary representation as a result of elections *t* and *t + 1*) (Powell & Tucker, 2009, p. 6).

With respect to extra-system electoral volatility (‘type A’ electoral volatility), we propose a calculation according to the following formula:

$$A.V = \frac{|\sum_{o=1}^n p_{o(t)} + \sum_{w=1}^n p_{w(t+1)}|}{2},$$

where: *A.V* stands for the extra-system electoral volatility (as the electoral volatility of ‘type A’); *o* stands for the identification of all parties and/or alliances that ‘exited’ and participated only in the election in period *t*; *w* stands for the identification of all parties and/or alliances that ‘entered’ and participated only in the election in period *t + 1*; *n* stands

for the total number of parties being counted; p_o and p_w stand for the percentage of the votes obtained by parties o and w , respectively, in elections t and $t + 1$; Σ^n stands for the sum of the results of parties o and w in elections t and $t + 1$; and $o = 1$ and $w = 1$ stand for the identification of all parties with seats in parliament in electoral periods t and $t + 1$, respectively (Powell & Tucker, 2009, p. 5). Consequently, the overall or total electoral volatility index (V) is constructed as the sum of both intra-system ($B.V$) and extra-system ($A.V$) electoral volatilities (Powell & Tucker, 2009, p. 7).

At the same time, we propose that all the results of electoral volatility obtained in this way in Ukraine during the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections be tested for correlation between the studied values (x and y), in particular on the basis of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Spearman, 1904; Daniel, 1990). This correlation coefficient is used to determine a nonparametric measure of statistical dependence between two variables using the following monotonic function:

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^n (s_i - r_i)^2}{n^3 - n}$$

where: ρ denotes the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient; s_i and r_i stand for the ranks of the values x_i and y_i (to count the difference between the two ranks of each observation); and n stands for the sample of size of the correlation and denotes the number of observations.

Additionally, we use the value of a T-distribution (T) with the Student's distribution with the $n - 2$ degrees of freedom (Press & Teukolsky, 1992, p. 640). This value T stands for any member of a family of continuous probability distributions that arises when estimating the mean of a normally distributed population in situations where the sample size is small and the population standard deviation is unknown. The value of the T-distribution (T) is calculated by the following formula:

$$T = \rho \frac{\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-\rho^2}}$$

where: ρ denotes the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, and n stands for the sample of size of the correlation and denotes the number of observations. Accordingly, an alternative hypothesis (about the presence of a relationship/correlation between the values) is accepted if the ρ -level of the relevant statistic T is less than 0.05.

4. Support for new parties during the parliamentary elections in Ukraine in the context of assessing the level of electoral volatility

Based on the data of the results of the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine made available on the website of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, and using the mathematical determination of the various options of the formula and index of electoral volatility (discussed above), we calculated the value of the overall or total electoral volatility and separately the intra-system and extra-system electoral volatility (see Table 1).

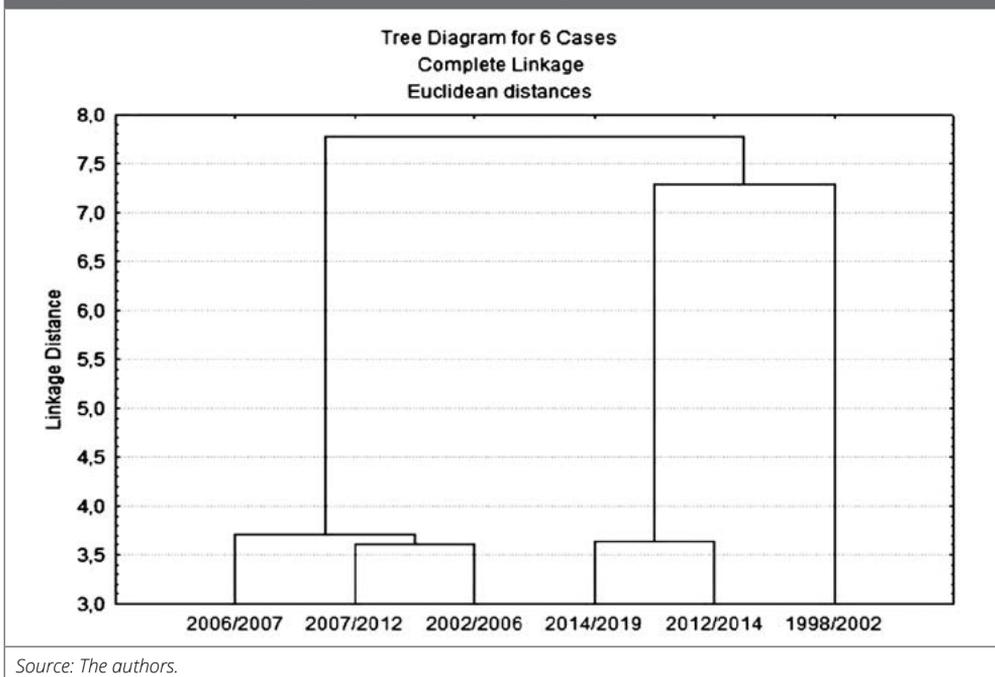
Table 1: The changes in the level of electoral volatility during the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine

Years of parliamentary elections	Overall or total electoral volatility (V)	Intra-system electoral volatility (B.V)	Extra-system electoral volatility (A.V)	
	The value of the index, %	The value of the index, %	The value of the index, %	Share of the overall electoral volatility, %
1998/2002	69.21	6.63	62.58	90.40
2002/2006	56.01	26.99	29.02	51.81
2006/2007	53.86	19.43	34.43	63.92
2007/2012	37.02	14.69	22.33	60.32
2012/2014	84.13	20.87	63.26	75.19
2014/2019	86.04	12.58	73.46	85.37
Average value	64.37	16.87	47.51	71.17

Source: The authors based on the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (2020).

With the exception of the 2007 and 2012 parliamentary elections, the overall or total electoral volatility index during the parliamentary elections in Ukraine exceeded the value of 50%. This means that more than the half of the citizens of Ukraine during the regular or early parliamentary elections historically and traditionally deviate from their previous electoral choice and prefer another political agent/actor, i.e. they changed or usually changed their electoral preferences. At the same time, it is interesting that if the average value of the overall or total electoral volatility during the analyzed period of time (1998–2019) was 64.37%, then the value of the extra-system electoral volatility within the former was 47.51% (i.e. 71.17% as the share of the overall or total electoral volatility). This led to the calculation of the presence or absence of interdependence and correlation between the overall or total electoral volatility and the extra-system electoral volatility, mainly using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. As a result, we found that the value of the correlation is 0.942587, which certainly indicates a direct relationship and interdependence between the analyzed phenomena. That is, the high rates of overall electoral volatility during every parliamentary election in Ukraine were mainly due to the dominant levels of voter support for new political parties. However, we believe that it is necessary to calculate the share of extra-system volatility within the overall or total electoral volatility for each parliamentary election to better understand the significance of this correlation indicator. On one hand, as noted above, the average value of the outlined cases of parliamentary elections in Ukraine in the specified time-frame of 1998–2019 was 71.17%. On the other hand, there was an interesting and controversial tendency because: the three cases out of six, in 2002/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2012, were characterized by the lowest values of both the overall or total electoral volatility and extra-system electoral volatility; in contrast, the other three cases out of six, in 1998/2002, 2012/2014 and 2014/2019, showed the highest values of the above-mentioned types of electoral volatility. This gives us good reason to distinguish two clusters of cases in the data set (see Graph 1).

Graph 1: Clusters of extra-system electoral volatility in Ukraine, 1998–2019



However, if we look at the share of extra-system electoral volatility in the framework of the overall or total electoral volatility, then it is quite obvious that it was higher than 50% in all the cases, and it was even as high as 90.4% in the correlation of the 1998/2002 parliamentary election. Hence, we can state that the predominant support for new political parties in the context of changing electoral support in Ukraine is inherent in all the examples of comparing the results of two consecutive parliamentary elections. This means that the intra-system electoral volatility in Ukraine has traditionally and historically affected a small number of steady (stable) political parties or alliances running in (at least) two consecutive parliamentary elections, while there is a noticeable change in the level of electoral support for each particular political party or alliance.

This is the reason for our unconditional argument that the electoral volatility index shows, on one hand, changes in the levels of support for political parties and/or alliances between two consecutive elections in general, and, on the other hand, changes in the levels of electoral support for steady (stable) and new political parties and/or alliances. Accordingly, it is extremely important to look at the parameters of the levels of electoral support for steady (stable) and new political parties and/or alliances in order to understand the impact of new political parties and/or alliances on elections and the electoral behavior of citizens. In this regard, as shown in Table 2, we calculated the overall amount or the total percentage of votes received by steady (stable) and new parties, respectively, in particular during the 2002–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

Table 2: Absolute values of the shares of votes for steady (stable) and new political parties during the 2002–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine

Years of parliamentary elections	Index of the overall or total electoral volatility, %	Number of steady (stable) parties	Percentage of votes for steady (stable) parties, %	Percentage of votes for new parties, %
2002	69.21	4	30.77	69.23
2006	56.01	6	62.78	37.22
2007	53.86	9	79.98	20.02
2012	37.02	7	80.50	19.50
2014	84.14	6	22.19	77.81
2019	86.04	8	20.67	79.33
Average value	64.38	6.7	49.48	50.52

Source: The authors based on the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (2020).

As we can see in this analytical context, there is almost no correlation between the index of the overall or total electoral volatility and the percentage of votes cast for new political parties and/or alliances during the parliamentary elections in Ukraine. It can also be stated that out of six electoral cycles during the 2002–2019 elections, the total share of electoral support for steady (stable) political parties and/or alliances was absolutely predominant in one half of the cases, while the total share of electoral support for new political parties and/or alliances was absolutely predominant in the other half of the cases. In order to understand and clarify this configuration, we compared the electoral results of steady (stable) and new political parties with the results of those parties that entered parliament for the first time and those parties that failed to overcome the electoral barrier. At the same time, it should be noted that according to the Ukrainian election legislation, the electoral barrier during the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections was 4%, during the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections it was 3%, and since the 2012 parliamentary elections it has been 5% (see Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation of electoral results of steady (stable) and new political parties with overcoming the electoral barriers during the 2002–2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine

Years of parliamentary elections	Index of the overall or total electoral volatility, %	Number of parliamentary parties	Steady (stable) political parties		New political parties	
			That entered parliament, № (%)	That did not enter parliament, № (%)	That entered parliament, № (%)	That did not enter parliament, № (%)
2002	69.21	7	3 (29.47)	1 (1.30)	4 (49.47)	24 (19.76)
2006	56.01	4	2 (57.34)	4 (5.42)	2 (25.52)	37 (11.72)
2007	53.86	5	4 (74.45)	5 (5.53)	1 (14.16)	10 (5.86)
2012	37.02	5	4 (79.18)	3 (2.39)	1 (13.97)	13 (4.46)
2014	84.14	6	2 (13.12)	4 (9.07)	4 (64.36)	19 (13.45)
2019	86.04	5	1 (8.18)	7 (12.49)	4 (70.13)	10 (5.26)
The average value	64.38	5.33	2.67 (43.62)	4.00 (6.03)	2.67 (39.60)	18.83 (10.08)

Source: The authors based on the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (2020).

Based on the data presented in Table 3, we can draw some interesting conclusions. First, new parties received the largest share of votes during the electoral cycles in 1998/2002, 2012/2014 and 2014/2019, especially when there were the highest values of the index of the overall or total electoral volatility. The lowest shares of votes for new parties correspond to lower values of the overall or total electoral volatility. Second, the vast majority of votes for steady (stable) political parties correspond to lower rates of the overall or total electoral volatility. Third, the increase in the share of the number and votes for steady (stable) parties in the background of all parliamentary parties correlates with lower values of the index of the overall or total electoral volatility. However, the increase in the share of new parties among all parliamentary parties in Ukraine corresponds to a higher share of votes during elections and higher rates of the overall or total electoral volatility index. Fourth, the number of steady (stable) political parties that did not enter parliament is insignificant for all the electoral cycles, as well as the share of votes received by them (it averages 6.03%). Fifth, the share of the number of new political parties that did not enter parliament is highest among all the parties participating in elections.¹

Against this background, we suggest the possibility of a correlation or relationship between the number of new political parties registered in the inter-election period and the rates of support for new political parties in determining the reasons for high voter support for new political parties during the subsequent parliamentary election. At the same time, we are well aware that the understanding of politicians and political actors of the tendency of a high level of support for new political parties during the subsequent parliamentary election can be an additional incentive to create new party projects before the next election (see Table 4).

Table 4: Parameters of participation of political parties and alliances in the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections and winning representation in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Years of parliamentary elections	Registered political parties, №	Parties as the subjects of the electoral process, №	Parties as the subjects of the electoral process, %	Parties elected to parliament, №	Parties elected to parliament, %
1998	43	41	95.0	8	18.3
2002	80	61	76.0	6	7.5
2006	123	76	62.0	5	4.0
2007	127	43	34.0	5	3.9
2012	189	87	46.0	5	2.6
2014	232	52	22.0	6	2.6
2019	352	65	18.4	5	1.4
The average value	163.7	60.71	50.49	5.71	5.76

Source: The authors based on the Central Election Commission of Ukraine (2020).

As we can see from Table 4, there is a clear trend of an increasing number of political parties from one parliamentary election to the next, i.e. a rise in new parties and/or alliances in general. At the same time, this increase in no way affects the number of political parties participating in regular or early parliamentary elections. However, the increase in

registration of new political parties became particularly noticeable after the 2007 early parliamentary election. Only 22.58% of new political parties registered in the inter-election period formed and submitted their own party lists to the Central Election Commission of Ukraine during the 2012 parliamentary election. Instead, only 14 (or 11.66%) of the 120 newly registered political parties ran in the 2019 parliamentary election. This tendency, in our opinion, shows that the formation and registration of new political parties in Ukraine has a wide range of prerequisites and reasons, which mostly have very little to do with the articulation of group socio-political interests. To demonstrate this, we used the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to calculate the presence or absence of a relationship between the variables when: variable 1 stands for the number of registered political parties; variable 2 denotes political parties as the subjects of electoral process; and variable 3 stands for the number of political parties elected to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (see Table 5).

Table 5: Results of calculating the Spearman's rank correlation coefficients based on the dependence between different types of representation and participation of Ukrainian parties in parliamentary elections

Variables of the correlation	ρ	T(n-2)	p-level
Variable 1 & variable 2	+0.174	+0.353	+0.742
Variable 1 & variable 3	-0.058	-0.116	+0.913
Variable 2 & variable 3	+0.257	+0.532	+0.623

Source: The authors.

On this basis, we found that on average there is almost no correlation between any pair of quantities and values in the Ukrainian case. However, the relationship between variables 1 and 3 is the least negative or minimal. On the contrary, we confirmed that new political parties and/or alliances largely determine the electoral volatility and the specifics of the party system.

In our opinion, this trend shows that the formation and registration of new political parties in Ukraine has little to do with the articulation of group social and political interests and with the system of socio-political cleavages, at least those partially specific to Ukraine. The appearance of new political parties, in most cases, should be interpreted as a purposeful and manipulative tool used by politicians and their advisers to achieve purely political results. The form and format of such purposeful and manipulative measures, in our opinion, are determined by several factors. First, there is a group of steady (stable) political parties, in particular 'European Solidarity', 'The All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland''²² and 'The Opposition Platform – For Life'.³ These parties, despite slight gradual changes to their names, are characterized by stable leadership and affiliation with sponsors. In addition, these parties typically have their own well-defined constituencies, structured mainly around different geopolitical positions and visions of Ukraine's future. However, the level of their electoral support is determined not only by the above-mentioned factors, but also by the results of their being in power (government) or opposition, as well as by the quantity and quality of political advertising on their part. At the same time, it is obvious that the list of such steady (stable) political parties may be periodically modified.

Secondly, a dilemma arose following the 2019 parliamentary election in Ukraine – when the new party ‘Servant of the People’ independently won the absolute majority of seats in the national legislature (which was a bright and powerful exception to the rule that the majority was traditionally exclusively held by a coalition) – over the prospect of ambitious politicians entering the parliament. The fact is that ‘getting into deputies’ through ‘promoted and well-known’ steady (stable) political parties, which have their own electoral rating, is complicated by the fact that these parties have their own membership base and party activists who also seek political careers. All this presupposes the possibility of attracting a relatively small number of new politicians to relatively ‘well-known’ parties and the high hypothetical ‘cost’ of this process. Instead, the formation of a new political party involves only the ‘costs’ of registration or re-registration of a previously created (and inactive) political party and the costs of advertising. Therefore, from the point of view of ‘political business’, which is quite common in Ukraine, the second option is economically relatively attractive. The ground for such an assumption and conclusion is mainly the widespread frustration of the majority of citizens with the political parties elected to parliament, and thus the unwillingness of voters to support them again.

To demonstrate this, we surveyed a group of respondents who changed their party preferences by refusing to support the political parties they voted for in the 2019 parliamentary election. This was demonstrated within a sociological survey of residents of the Lviv region, which was conducted on 4–15 August 2020. This reference group was composed of respondents who declared their willingness to support another political party or unwillingness to participate in the upcoming local election (in October 2020), as well as those respondents who did not plan to repeat their vote from the 2019 parliamentary election and had not yet decided which party to vote for in the local election. It was this category of respondents that we asked about the reason for the change in their political preferences and priorities (see Table 6). It is interesting that out of a total of 1200 respondents, 373 indicated that they had changed the political party they were willing to support in the next (local) election, which was 31.1% of the total. On one hand, we are aware that some respondents may have forgotten whom they voted for or did not want to acknowledge the change in their preferences. On the other hand, there is an interesting

Table 6: Respondents’ answer to the question ‘What is the reason for your change of the party, for which you are ready to vote or will not vote?’

Option to answer the question and the reason for motivation	Share of respondents, %
Dissatisfaction with the results of the party or non-fulfilment of its electoral promises	61.7
Traditional support of various parties in local and parliamentary elections	9.9
Positive information about another party	8.0
Negative information about the party which was supported earlier	7.5
Influence of acquaintances on the choice of the party to vote for	2.8
Any other reason	6.4
Lack of, or difficulty to, answer	13.6

Source: The Ukrainian Centre for the Study of Public Opinion ‘Sotsioinform’ (2020).

trend that we have already recorded before. It is manifested in the fact of concealment of one's own electoral choice in the last election, if it does not conform to the dominant polling trends or current sentiments of the majority of citizens and respondents. Accordingly, we captured the psychological feature of the average voter to identify himself or herself with the leader of the group or community and to 'forget' the previous option of his or her electoral choice, which appears suboptimal in hindsight. Especially since none of the other voters would be able to verify their responses.

In addition, as Table 6 shows, respondents considered dissatisfaction with the results of a party's work or its failure to fulfil its electoral promises as the dominant motive for changing their political or electoral representative. It should be noted that such a statement is quite convenient, since it is universal and allows for the transfer of responsibility from the voter to the political actor who was previously supported by the former. The reason for this conclusion is that the vast majority of participants in the focus group did not know the content of electoral programmes and promises made by political parties and individual party candidates in single-member constituencies, and therefore such a statement is somewhat questionable or confusing. We must also keep in mind that such an assessment is quite subjective and reflects the emotional side of the voter's own expectations, which in fact determined his or her choice in previous election. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the programmes of the vast majority of Ukrainian parties and individual candidates in single-member constituencies present themselves generally and vaguely and are built on a single or similar stencil 'for all the good, against all the bad'. Consequently, political parties and individual candidates have little focus on the distinct interests of specific social groups in Ukraine, although they quite effectively take into account regional political preferences. That is why this position is manifested in the widespread disappointment in the previous 'electoral hope' and the search by respondents/citizens for a new political agent who should 'do well and as the voter wants'.

It is such electoral expectations, in our opinion, that forms a group of voters who, after the previous election and on the eve of the next election, are looking for another 'new' political party that promises to 'do its best and good' for the electorate. As we can see from the example and results of the 1998–2019 parliamentary elections, the group of voters hungry for the 'new' or 'novelty' in the party and electoral process is very large. Therefore, the presence of such a group determines a kind of social and political demand for the production and formation of new parties on the eve of each election. In view of this, Ukraine is to some extent characterized by a public and even political demand for populism, and the perception of populism by political parties is as an effective tool for attracting support. In turn, the success of new parties in a series of parliamentary elections is an additional factor in voters' interest in new parties. Hence, the fact that after their entry into parliament new parties (such as the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko in 2012, 'People's Front' in 2014, the Union 'Self-Reliance' in 2014, and other parties) can no longer overcome the electoral barrier in the next election is no warning to most politicians. The main reason is that they can form and promote an even 'newer' party in the inter-election period and before the next election.

This conclusion is particularly interesting and relevant against the background of clarifying the relationship between the level of electoral volatility and the changes in the elec-

toral system in the context of the elections 1998–2019. The fact is that this is another very critical feature of the Ukrainian political system, which comes down to the fact that politicians traditionally modify the electoral law and electoral system on the eve of each parliamentary election. In particular, the 1994 parliamentary election was held under a two-round majority system, the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections under a parallel mixed system (which combined a one-round plurality system and a proportional system with closed lists), the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections under a proportional system with closed lists, and the 2012, 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections under a parallel mixed system (as previously). Only in December 2019 did the Ukrainian legislature adopt the Electoral Code, which provides for the next parliamentary election according to a proportional system with open lists. In this regard, it is theoretically possible to assume (and there are sufficient scientific statements on the conditions in other countries) that changes and modifications to the electoral system affect election results and thus electoral volatility. However, the data in Table 1 do not indicate the presence of any crucial qualitative fluctuations in the electoral volatility index as a result of the changes in the electoral system in Ukraine.

5. Conclusion

Summing up the comparative analysis, we can state that there is a very high level of overall or total electoral volatility in parliamentary elections in Ukraine. As a result, the average Ukrainian voter changes his or her political representative in almost every subsequent parliamentary election more than 50% of the time, i.e. transfers his or her electoral support to another political party or alliance. At the same time, the main share of votes within the shifts in electoral support goes to new political parties and/or alliances. It is also interesting that the high level of extra-system electoral volatility is inherent in all electoral cycles. Thus, the values and indicators specify a low level of party stability, with an intense process of withdrawal of some political parties from the party system and the political arena in general and the entry of new party projects. At the same time, this conclusion about the parameters of the party system development is almost independent of the rules of the electoral system used to form the Ukrainian parliament, since there are no crucial qualitative fluctuations in the electoral volatility index as a result of the changes in the electoral system.

However, the high levels of overall and extra-system electoral volatility, which are accompanied by a large-scale and rapid process of formation and registration of new political parties, are not always interrelated. This gives grounds to consider the phenomenon of a rapid growth in the number of political parties, especially between the parliamentary elections, mainly from an instrumental point of view and as a tool used by politicians in the struggle for power. Ukrainian politics continues to be characterized by a concentration of attention and efforts by different political actors in the struggle for power, rather than on the representation of socio-political interests. This trend shows that new political parties in Ukraine have little to do with the articulation of group social and political

interests and socio-political cleavages. The appearance of new political parties should be interpreted as a purposeful and manipulative tool used by politicians to achieve purely political results. All this means that electoral volatility in Ukraine is determined by the status of parties as belonging to the government or the opposition and is regulated by the special context of Ukrainian identity politics.

As for the theoretical and methodological generalizations, our research confirms previous scientific conclusions that electoral volatility should be considered as a heterogeneous and complex phenomenon. Thus, electoral volatility depends both on the instrumental aspects of its understanding and operationalization, as well as on the political features of the party and electoral processes in a particular country, or even regionally, as is especially evident in the case of Ukraine.

Endnotes:

1. It is important that the election legislation of Ukraine classifies political parties that nominate party lists and nominate candidates in single-member constituencies within a mixed version of the electoral system and whose representatives participate in elections as the members of election commissions etc., as the subjects of electoral process. Therefore, the number of the subjects of electoral processes recorded by the Central Election Commission of Ukraine and the number of parties that receive votes do not match.
2. In 1999, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine registered a party called 'The All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland"'. In 2002, 'The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc' was formed on the basis of this party, but in 2012 it was reformatted into the 'United Opposition "Fatherland"' bloc. In 2014, the party regained its original name, although throughout this period it was invariably headed by Yulia Tymoshenko.
3. During 2016–2018, the party 'The Opposition Platform – For Life' acted under the name 'For Life'. Its leaders are Y. Boyko, V. Rabinovych, V. Medvedchuk and S. Lyovochkin.

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