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The Political Elite of Ukraine: Historical and Sociological Analysis

Abstract

The paper discusses the main problems of the national political elite and specific features of their functioning. Special attention is paid to the process of coming into being of Ukraine's political elite, which is described in the context of formation of the Ukrainian statehood.

Keywords: *elite, politics, state, government, political parties, political activity, analysis*

Originally in French, the word "elite" meant just a choice. But later this word was used to designate exceptional (top quality) products and also military or secular elite that had been established in a society. Their positions were so strong and meaningful that seemed unlikely to evoke any doubt.

The pioneers of modern elite studies Italian social scientists Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto noted that in the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe class confrontations were replaced by steady remoteness of ruling circles, or meritocracy associated with them (persons and families possessing a high social status due to origin, fortune, administrative or economic power and influence, intelligence, talents, spiritual authority, etc.) from the rest of the population. The population becomes poorly differentiated mass, which only can

flock after the elite, support it or "unseat", but in any case it will have to encounter a new rule of the minority.

Ideologically, the concept of elite has always been ultra-conservative and anti-radical, which seems hardly to be compatible with democratic ideals. Yet the existence of an elite stratum selected in a particular moment in a relatively stable social environment is an indisputable sociological fact. Researchers of the elite phenomenon in modern countries — both critics and apologists — are concerned not so much about the existence of the "select" (who control everyone owing to their position) as about trends in their renewal, whether they closed or open to new competencies, talents, merits or capital, which in their turn should be ensured by democratic mechanisms.

For example, the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset was worried about possibility of "the revolt of the masses" and destruction of the very foundations of the elite's existence in the 1930s, while the radical American sociologist Charles Wright Mills highlighted the growing rigidity and closure of the US "governing elite" in the 1950s.

V. Pareto noticed the difference between governing and non-governing elite. The first one seems to easily change itself under democratic conditions. Inertia of the second one is higher; besides, it is formed in other ways. Money and political machinations are only some of the mechanisms that support the elite's dominance.

The merits are determined by educational background, professional achievements, loyalty to public duty and vocation, talents and spiritual power, public opinion and recognition. Attitudes towards the elite also vary from culture to culture. The problem of formation and transformation of the national political elite of Ukraine in the 21st century is considered to be one of the most "European" and pressing problems of the present-day sociology and political science, which has also been confirmed by both recent social practices and events unfolded in Ukraine's political spectrum.

The process of formation of the national political elite, which started in 1988–1989, has not finished yet. Therefore, the political elite have been undergoing constant changes in recent decades. These changes are rather gradual than dramatic. They occur through the process of mutation within some groups or their mixing with other ones, as well as through changes in political slogans and leadership. Basically, the process of formation of Ukraine's political (ruling) elite can be divided into the following stages [Shul'ha, 2011].

The **first** major stage lasted from 1989 to 1994. It was characterised by simultaneous existence of both "old" soviet elite and "new" national one, which had just begun forming. At that time, the old elite's political and administrative capital was being converted into economic one. Furthermore, financial capital was being accumulated in the hands of crime bosses. Private media, which were getting established in that period, served as a basis for legitimating big private property. Trying to justify the unjust redistribution of property, Ukrainian intellectuals (mainly socio-humanistic) highlighted the fact that there were no alternatives to reforms and Ukraine as an independent state needed reconstruction; although their speeches were nothing but rhetoric.

During the **second** stage (1994–2000), the three main groups of Ukraine's political elite (the old ruling, the new ruling and the criminal) continued to accu-

mulate capital in their hands. The shadow economy rapidly developed, mafia bosses joined the power elite, and the major oligarchic clans (from Dnipropetrovs'k[1], Donets'k and Kyiv) came into being. The representatives of political elite began both to confront each other and fight over control of the central power.

During the **third** stage (2000–2004), the above-mentioned groups (the old, the new and the criminal) were merged into one named pro-Kuchma group. The latter served as a basis for powerful oligarchic clans, where power and property fuse with each other. The ruling elite are criminalised while the criminal elite are respectalised.

The **fourth** stage (late 2004) meant that a part of the oligarchic elite and big business owners became mature enough to get rid of the patronage of senior government officials and thus of illegal redistribution of income (between them and government officials) through the mechanism of corruption. During the 2004 presidential election a cleavage between the two competing groups of power elite deepened even further and eventually grew into confrontation.

The period from 2005 to 2010 (known as the reign of Viktor Yushchenko) can actually be regarded as the **fifth** stage of development of the national ruling elite. The most important event of that period was the "Orange Revolution", which managed to inspire hope in Ukrainians. Unfortunately, their expectations ended up in disappointment.

Finally, the **sixth** stage (since 2010) began with the reign of Viktor Yanukovych, who was the chief representative of the "Donets'k clan". It is a well-known fact that Yanukovych's rule was interrupted by the "Revolution of Dignity" and ended up with his escape to Russia where he was taken under the wing of Vladimir Putin.

A more detailed analysis of formation of the national political elite has revealed their continuity as the most essential feature. In 1996, for example, 75% of the old communist nomenklatura[2] worked in the new power structures. Therefore, continuity of Ukraine's political elite is mostly ensured by their "nomenklatura" origin.

The process of elite circulation took place on the basis of "Kyiv-centrism" and dominance of "Dnipropetrovians" in all of the power structures during the Brezhniev — Shcherbyts'kyi era. Elite recruitment under the rule of Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi was not open to the public; instead, it was a semi-closed process. A future leader had to go through all career stages. But in the early 1980s opportunities for promotion were restricted owing to "gerontocracy" of soviet power elite and absence of changes within them. Top positions in the nomenklatura were given for a lifetime. Moreover, the party elite were "afraid" of competition and therefore they used to recruit those who would be just "performers". At the

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1 Since 19 May 2016 Dnipropetrovs'k has officially been named Dnipro.

2 The word "nomenklatura" is derived from the term "nomenclature" (which in turn means a system for giving names to things within a particular profession or field) and used to designate a population stratum in the states of former socialist camp, which occupied various key administrative positions in the Communist Party, central and local authorities, as well as in the spheres of industry, agriculture, education and health care.

beginning of "perestroika", several attempts were made to rejuvenate the elite: about 25% were replaced by new cadres while the "old" staff was "transferred" to other positions. Kinship and family ties, belonging to the same region and loyalty to chief served as a basis for the elite's rotation at that time.

In 1989, another source of elite recruitment — election — was introduced within the soviet political system. But that source was not always better than selection within the nomenklatura. Careerists, bribe takers and criminals came to power quite often. It should be noted that the year 1989 was marked by the emergence of a political "counter-elite", which aspired to power because of its commitment to a market economy. Acquisition of public capital, emergence of poorly controlled business and disintegration of the CPSU monolith under pressure from a new generation of politicians also started in 1989. Besides, Ukraine's "counter-elite" began actively forming just at that time (at first, they gathered around the Ukrainian Culturological Club). The renowned Ukrainian poet Ivan Drach, who a short time later became a national democrat, noted that the club "should be treated" as an association of former political prisoners [Lytvyn, 1994]. Indeed, most members of the club were formerly dissidents; therefore, they had no chance of entering the elite of "perestroika". In 1988, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union (UHU) restarted its activity. UHU was an overtly anti-communist organisation whose leaders had been in prison camps or exile for many years.

At the party meeting held in November 1988, Kyiv writers formed a group to favour "perestroika". Ivan Drach and Dmytro Pavlychko, who were formerly antagonists of dissidence, joined the group. It was called "People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction"[1] ("Narodnyi Rukh Ukrainy za perebudovu"). The group consisted only of the Communist Party members (among them were such famous figures as Oleh Yemets', Volodymyr Yavorivs'kyi, Borys Oliinyk, Pavlo Movchan, Yurii Mushketyk), who from then on became fighters for "Gorbachev's path".

When Mikhail Gorbachev visited Kyiv in February 1989, he met with Rukh's founders, which was a significant political support since "Kyiv authorities" had already adopted a resolution declaring the establishment of that group "illegitimate". The fact that the Ukrainian intelligentsia enjoyed Gorbachev's support indicated the end of the rule of Shcherbyts'kyi's group in the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) and the beginning of "chaos" in the elite. The writers, who were known as representatives of cultural elite, became the major ideologists competing with Kyiv nomenklatura's elite, where misunderstanding was also happening.

In the spring of 1989, Ukrainian "counter-elites" united. Writers and academic circles, which demanded "deepening of perestroika" and followed the example of Moscow, allied themselves with a UHU's "dissident" elite and cultural organisation "Tovarystvo Leva" ("The Lion Society")[2]. In 1991, Viacheslav Chornovil noted that these two movements "are sticking together at the moment, which allows a relatively small number of people to direct the national democratic movement in Ukraine".

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1 Also known as "Popular Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction".

2 The organisation was established in L'viv, which is also often called the City of Lion(s).

The elite of NRU ("People's Movement of Ukraine") have gone a long way from struggle against presidential structures to support for the president as a guarantor of nationhood and implementation of reforms. Among all of the political parties and associations established during that period, the People's Movement was the only one political force that was able to conduct its own policy. In April 1991, the Great Council of the Movement stated that a person cannot be both a member of the NRU and a Communist Party member. The 2nd Meeting of the People's Movement showed that the organisation began being radicalised as it had repudiated a promise to cooperate with the Communist Party and stopped talking about socialism. "Writers" as old leaders of the Movement were gradually replaced by "dissidents": most participants expressed their will to elect Mykhailo Horyn' as the NRU leader instead of Ivan Drach. Besides, Myroslav Popovich, who was one of the NRU founders, had left the organisation, which influenced the process of its radicalisation even more. The Movement began to rely on anti-Soviet-minded Galician people (from West Ukraine) rather than on the "Kyiv intelligentsia".

The year 1991 began with the so-called "presentiment of dictatorship". Dramatic events in the Baltic republics, which were happening at that time, urged the Communist Party to begin preparations for a counter-offensive. In August 1991, a group of eight high-ranking government officials (called the State Committee on the State of Emergency, or GKChP) made a coup d'etat attempt, which is known as the Kremlin "putsch". The People's Council[1] and the People's Movement of Ukraine called the nation to withstand "communist imperialism's" attempts to rewrite history and bring Ukrainians to their knees. The resistance bases were created in Western Ukraine and in the city of Kyiv. The National Democrats got a real chance to seize the power (by taking it away from the Communist Party of Ukraine) and start a resistance movement against putschists.

The proclamation of Ukraine's independence in August 1991 was possible because of confusion in the government, inactivity of the Communist Party and intense pressure from national democratic forces. In order to retain power in Ukraine, the ruling elite made an instant decision to declare independence, thus securing themselves against heated criticism of their opponents.

The autumn of 1991 became a crucial moment in Ukraine's history as Ukrainians had to decide the fate of their state and "elect" the elite. Being dazzled by "sudden" victory of the August 1991, new national democratic leaders, as well as leaders of other parties and movements were unable to properly evaluate the current political situation and ratio of the "Eastern" worldview to "Western" one in Ukrainian public opinion. Immediately after "August victory", when the former "counter-elite" suddenly (and for a short time) got an opportunity to be a part of the political elite of independent Ukraine, they demonstrated their inability to act within "big politics". There was no longer unity between their members, which used to be their main advantage.

Because of their "political naivety" the National Democrats were forced out of the national bourgeoisie, which had just started forming. Belonging to the era of "political romanticism" (1989–1991), they neither allowed themselves to es-

[1] At that time, the People's Council ("Narodna Rada") was a parliamentary opposition.

tablish any contacts with criminal business nor beat a path to "red directors'[1] door", who could actually sponsor the election campaign. The national democratic elite only relied on enthusiasm and devotion of the masses, as well as Ukrainian diaspora's information support and sponsorship, which would be enough, for example, for Lviv region, but not for the whole of Ukraine. Ukraine's democratic movement eventually split into three directions: radical (Levko Luk'yanenko), democratic, which was the closest to the People's Movement (Viacheslav Chornovil) and moderate liberal (Ihor Yukhnovs'kyi). It should be noted that some economists and directors thought that Ihor Yukhnovs'kyi would be a "lesser evil" if the society was becoming radicalised. In general, that part of the politico-economic elite was not confident in its strength and ability to influence the masses; they did not propose anyone who could be an advocate of reforms and privatisation.

The elite that had been formed by the autumn of 1991 were guided by the idea of statehood (taken over from the People's Movement) and concept of market transformations adopted from the Democrats and some bourgeois ideologists. Being left without original oppositional ideology, the National Democrats failed to create a new one and so had to cooperate with the central power for the sake of building Ukraine as an independent state. Their dreams of managing that process remained unattainable. Most of the parties emerged in Ukraine were closer to the so-called "pressure groups", to protoparties which were organisationally weak, had no clear programs, tended to be populist and enjoyed support from a relatively small group of people.

The former "counter-elite" became democratised in late 1991 because the state nomenklatura (which followed Leonid Kravchuk) had intercepted their slogans (for independence, democracy and market economy). A certain part of the opposition believed (or was forced to believe) that the nomenklatura had really rethought its priorities and so communist functionaries had suddenly become the national elite. But that step meant defeat of national forces since they refused to fight for the leadership in the independent Ukraine and over the membership in the state elite. After the Communist Party's collapse and ban, there emerged a "party in power" as the main focus of the political elite. That party acted not publicly but "behind the scenes", therefore it was difficult to identify. In 1991, the "party of power" clustered around Leonid Kravchuk and sometimes tried to unite "heteropolar forces" which shared a common origin (as they came from the nomenklatura). There were the so-called "national communists", the Democrats (moreover, some of them did not have a certain political orientation while others still had Communist Party cards), members of the Party of Democratic Revival of Ukraine (PDVU), which had been just created, some directors of large industrial enterprises and those who held key positions in the Agro-Industrial Complex — pragmatically minded political forces, who liked calling themselves "reformers" (although some of them were really interested in reforms).

[1] Persons who held a position of a head or deputy head of a state-owned enterprise in the Soviet Union.

The period from the autumn of 1991 to the spring of 1992 can be described as a conflict-free period in the life of Ukraine's political elite. At that time, provincial elite, which consisted mainly of Communists, were gradually transformed into the state elite. For many political forces, it was a period of confusion and expectations, unresolved fates and missed opportunities. Zbigniew Brzezinski once characterised the processes that occurred then in Ukraine's political life and were linked to a multi-party system as "chaos" in the elite (the first phase of post-communist transformation), assuring that it would not last longer than five years [Brzezinski, 1994: p. 7].

Thus, from 1989 to1994 the Soviet society underwent fundamental changes that led to the fall of the USSR, proclamation of Ukraine's independence, emergence of a multi-party system and dissolution of the CPSU — CPU. The next stage was formation of "capitalist relations". Global transformations were directed by a new elite that had "sprouted" from the old one but completely renounced its ideology, having adopted the ideology of counter-elite instead. It was an unprecedented political process in the history of Ukraine, which happened because of some disadvantages of the counter-elite. The latter, being disunited, organisationally weak and non-aggressive by nature, could not find strength to fight, nor did they ever plan to do it.

In 1994, Ukrainians had to make a choice again. The old power with the first president Leonid Kravchuk at their head had lost a vote of confidence. "Kravchuk's team" could neither fix Ukraine's economic crisis nor prevent fragmentation in the political environment. Therefore, it was decided to hold an early presidential election in June 1994.

The "leftists" — the old political elite — nominated Oleksandr Moroz as a presidential candidate. Volodymyr Lanovyi, the President of the Centre for Market Reforms, was the "right wing" nominee. At that time, the "rightists" rounded up politicians who shared nationalist views, patriotic reformers and entrepreneurs. "New" bureaucratic elite, i. e. the "party in power", proposed two candidates — the President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk and the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) Ivan Pliushch. But Kravchuk's main rival in that presidential race was Leonid Kuchma, who had begun to prepare for victory 18 months earlier, as the then Prime Minister. Kuchma was backed by powerful groups of industrialists, businessmen and "pragmatic" reformist forces that competed with the central elite (the nomenklatura). In fact, regions of Ukraine opposed the Centre. Both ordinary Ukrainians and most of the elite voted for Kuchma. Having become the second President of Ukraine, he continued what that Kravchuk began — struggling for power and against a heterogeneous parliamentary elite that, despite some ideological differences, wanted to limit the President's powers.

Leonid Kravchuk was only targeted by parliamentarians who belonged to the state (Kyiv) nomenklatura led by Ivan Pliushch, while Kuchma had to confront the "left-wing" opposition, which brought together numerous opponents of "bourgeois reforms". The "leftist" parliamentary elite simultaneously were "counter-elite" outside the Verkhovna Rada. Kuchma climbed "Kyiv Olympus" without having any supporters (including army). The "leftists" disapproved his program for reforms while the "rightists" (the National Democrats) boycotted his candidacy at the election in 1994, calling him an "adherent of Moscow".

It is also worth mentioning that Leonid Kuchma "personally" contributed to winning the presidency in 1994. Making an evaluation of Kuchma's rule in general (including his being the Prime Minister of Ukraine), we can say that he proved himself a bad strategist but a brilliant tactician [Vrublevs'kyi, 2005]. As the Presidential Press Secretary Aliona Hromnyts'ka once aptly noted, Kuchma "perfectly" simulated situations. In the beginning of his presidency, Kuchma mainly familiarised himself with the current situation, which was extremely difficult — adverse economic conditions had led to the impoverishment of most Ukrainians and to overwhelming social apathy. At the same time, his team (there were, for example, a renowned economist Anatolii Hal'chyns'kyi, the "father" of Ukrainian hryvnia Vadym Hetman and other experienced functionaries) was actively working on the project "Independent Ukraine". Each of them was ploughing his field. Besides, there was quite a strong "sociological" support during the presidential campaign.

The elite of Ukrainian parliament were strictly against granting additional powers to the President and signing the Constitutional Agreement as a "small constitution of Ukraine". For example, the "leftist" elite thought that those steps would lead to the Parliament's distancing from participation in solving major economic and political problems and thus transform it into a merely representative body like the State Duma in the Russian Federation.

Confrontation between the President and parliament continued to grow. In May 1995, still being trusted by most Ukrainians, Kuchma offered to conduct a nationwide survey to define the public's level of trust in the President and in the Verkhovna Rada. In fact, had the survey been conducted the Parliament might have been dissolved[1]. On 8 June, 1995, the President and the Parliament[2] signed the Constitutional Agreement, which became a "small constitution" — the law in force. According to the Agreement, the executive branches of government (both central and local authorities) were fully accountable to the President. Besides, he was entitled to appoint a prime minister without the Parliament's consent. Thus, the Agreement limited the powers of the head of government, who from then on could not act independently.

The fight for the Constitution united the National Democrats with centrists and presidential team. As Leonid Kuchma rightly pointed, "... today making Ukraine a parliamentary republic will turn into a catastrophe" [Kudriachenko, 1996]. The present-day events clearly demonstrate that he was not wrong.

After resignation of the Cabinet of Ministers headed by Vitalii Masol and appointment of Yevhen Marchuk as a prime minister, the influence of "left conservators" from the former nomenklatura weakened while Kuchma's "centrists" gained full control over the executive branch of government. Marchuk's Cabinet performed its functions for less than a year — from June 1995 to May 1996. During that time, Kuchma managed to strengthen the positions of his "Dnip-

[1] According to the results of sociological surveys conducted at that time, Ukrainians were not satisfied with the performance of Verkhovna Rada and did not trust parliamentarians so much.

[2] The Speaker of Verkhovna Rada Oleksandr Moroz was acting on behalf of the Parliament.

ropetrovian" team[1]: ministers and deputy ministers were appointed by presidential decrees. Marchuk was practically "removed" from power, so he could not lead "his own team" into the Cabinet of Ministers. Being just a "fictitious" prime minister, Yevhen Marchuk started seeking support from the parliamentary elite. But a new group led by the Head of Ukraine's Presidential Administration Dmytro Tabachnyk was intervening in the process of redistribution of the "spheres of influence". The conflict between Marchuk and Tabachnyk had not been resolved in favour of the then prime minister.

In the 1990s, Kuchma succeeded in solving the "Crimean issue" by pushing aside "pro-Russian" elite, which had been formed in the Crimean Peninsula during 1992–1994, and abolishing in March 1995 with the help of Crimea's Parliament the Crimean presidency (Yurii Meshkov, who had been holding the office of President since February 1994, was the first and only President of the Republic of Crimea). In the summer of 1997, Crimea's parliament (named the Supreme Council of Crimea) was stripped of powers and transformed from a legislative into a representative body.

The early months of 1995 were marked by a serious conflict between parliamentarians and the Head of the Presidential Administration Dmytro Tabachnyk, who was not favoured by many of them because of being too young and seeming to have quite a strong influence on the President. But Tabachnyk enjoyed support from Kyiv's "new" business elite. It should also be mentioned that Tabachnyk (together with an experienced politician Ivan Kuras, notable analyst Oleksandr Razumkov and "director" Oleksandr Volkov) had played a significant role in the 1994 presidential campaign. That was a very cohesive team. Besides, being affiliated with Kyiv "Democratic Bloc", Dmytro Tabachnyk was elected to Kyiv City Council in 1994. He became a member of the Communist faction in the Council and advocated the preservation of the USSR.

As noted before, confrontation between the state elite and Dmytro Tabachnyk ended in favour of the latter. Tabachnyk was unlikely to be unseated. The President's Assistants for National Security and Military Affairs Yurii Havrylov and Vadym Hrechaninov were removed from posts. A short time later, the President's First Assistant Oleksandr Razumkov faced the same fate. The President's councillors Dmytro Vydrin and Anatolii Hal'chyns'kyi resigned in protest against Tabachnyk's "dictatorship". The order to disperse the Patriarch of Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate Volodymyr Romaniuk's funeral procession on 18 July, 1995, might also have been given by Tabachnyk.

In the summer of 1996, Kyiv hills were "captured" by "Dnipropetrovians" (Lazarenko, Pustovoitenko, Tihipko, and Horbulin). Dmytro Tabachnyk was the only one "stranger" to remain in Kuchma's inner circle. He was both the founder of Kyiv team and its "hostage". Pavlo Lazarenko became Ukraine's new prime minister. He actively promoted his clan by transferring them from provincial towns to key positions in the Cabinet of Ministers. But in October 1996 (by the time when Lazarenko had thoroughly "entrenched" himself in Kyiv), the fight for power between the President and Prime Minister broke out again. The

[1] It is well known that Leonid Kuchma spent most of his career at "Yuzhmash", the Soviet Union's largest missile factory located in Dnipropetrovs'k.

fight got even more intense after a group of the President's "close supporters" was formed and he began to exert pressure on the regional elite. There were established positions of state administration deputy heads for political and legal affairs — the so-called presidential "commissioners", who were supposed to control the local elite. "Donets'k clan" as Kuchma's supporters came into conflict with Lazarenko's group. Donets'k Oblast governor Volodymyr Shcherban' was accused of inspiring coal miners' strikes and removed from office. "The Social Market Choice" faction (Kyiv clan) headed by Marchuk was in opposition to Lazarenko.

At that time, Ukraine's oil refineries were being redistributed between Kuchma, Lazarenko and Shcherban'. People close to Lazarenko tried to capture Donbas by pushing aside Donets'k "liberals". Lazarenko had been heading the Cabinet of Ministers for four months when (in October 1996) he came into conflict with the President, which resulted in his resignation in July 1997. Moreover, Pavlo Lazarenko was removed from the office of Prime Minister because he seemed to be a pretender to absolute power in Ukraine, as the leader of the party "Hromada" ("The Community"). Being an authoritative leader and favouring those who belonged to the same region as him, Lazarenko antagonised most of new government officials and parliamentarians. During 1996–1997 the President increased his own influence on the regional elite, which caused conflicts with the Mayor of Kyiv and the Governor of Kherson Oblast. There was established a position of deputy governor for political affairs (in fact, a presidential "commissioner") in each region. Parliamentary factions became the mechanism for involvement of political parties in "big politics" and formation of power structures. The role of Verkhovna Rada in relationships between branches of government, as well as its authority in public opinion was gradually weakening. Another reason for that situation was uncertainty of strategic course for development of parliamentarism in Ukraine.

The years 1997–1998 were also marked by "political partisanship" of Ukraine's political elite. A party list electoral system prompted the elite to switch from "non-publicness" to affiliation with a certain political party. Such a spontaneous "centralism" served as a way of self-preservation in situation of vagueness in politics and in the system of ethical values. Senior political circles became aware of the fact that the available system of values was undergoing a crisis and civil society had not been formed yet, which was demonstrated by the election results in 1998.

Defeat of the National Democratic Party (NDP) in the 1998 parliamentary election led to major personnel changes within the regional elite, which had not been able to ensure good performance of the party. In May 1998, Leonid Kuchma announced that regional authorities (first of all, leading cadres) would be almost completely renovated. These changes were necessary for the President to increase his influence on the regional elite shortly before the upcoming presidential election in Ukraine.

Personnel changes in the regional elite took place simultaneously with staff reshuffle at the Centre: Volodymyr Radchenko (Marchuk's team), who had been heading up the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), was replaced by Leonid Derkach. Therefore, SBU's top management began to be replaced by new cadres. Derkach had known Kuchma for about 25 years; they had worked together at

"Yuzhmash" for a long time. In the late 1990s, a "new" Ukraine obviously felt the effect of so-called "generation factor". Clans, parties and parliamentary groups formed in the years 1991–1998 had a definite "generational code". From then on, the further Ukraine's "new elite" evolved, the more noticeable "generation factor" became, which was clearly demonstrated by parties like the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, "Reforms and Order", "Hromada", "Ukraine — Forward!", UNA — UNSO ("Ukrainian National Assembly — Ukrainian People's Self-Defence"), etc.

The "post-perestroika" nomenklatura is a "product" of the last decade of the 20th century. The phenomenon of political generation (a community consisting of people of the same age) is characteristic of the 20th century's elite. The Sixtiers cohort (they were born in the mid-1930s to 1940s and started their careers in 1960s) came to Ukrainian politics from the two completely different spheres: 1) the Communist Party apparatus, 2) dissident, liberal or educational movements. They were too politicised but did not focus much on economic problems. The next group is "post-Sixtiers", whose managerial careers began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They constitute the second tier of Ukrainian politicians. The third generation of Ukraine's political elite came into being during the era of Brezhnevian stagnation. They are former Komsomol (Young Communist League) functionaries, who started their careers in the early 1980s and got ample opportunities for career growth due to "perestroika". The last cohort is represented by those who were born in the 1960s — early 1970s and began their careers at the end of "perestroika". Their world view, values and goals are completely different from the other three groups. They were mainly businessmen. However, in this group there are some representatives of the "political elite" — young pragmatists who neither have ties to the old nomenklatura nor to the National Democrats, and they are "searching" a place in politics.

For Ukraine, the period between 1991 and 1998 was marked by intense elite circulation and, in particular, frequent changes of prime ministers. For example, Pavlo Lazarenko remained in office for about 12 months. His predecessors were short-term prime ministers too: Yevhen Marchuk headed the government for 11 months, Vitalii Masol — for 9, Yukhym Zviahil's'kyi — for 10, Leonid Kuchma — for 12 months; Vitol'd Fokin was the only prime minister to govern the country for nearly two years (from October 1990 to October 1992). Constant government reshuffles led to permanent fight in political circles and irresponsibility of politicians. By 1998, the average turnover rate among high-ranking government officials had reached 46%. Vitol'd Fokin replaced 66.7% of the old cadres in the government with new ones, Leonid Kuchma — about 44%, Yukhym Zviahil's'kyi — 19.4%, Vitalii Masol — 53.9%, Yevhen Marchuk — 43.9%, Pavlo Lazarenko — 59%, Valerii Pustovoitenko (Lazarenko's successor) — 30.9%. Lazarenko's government underwent a fundamental personnel change: among those represented the "old" team, there were only two "tertiary" ministers (the Minister of Timber Industry and the Minister of Emergencies, who worked for the government during 1987–1992), and Minister for the Cabinet of Ministers Valerii Pustovoitenko, who had occupied that position in 1993. Marchuk's government was the last to employ the "old" officials [Shul'ha, Boiko, 1998: p. 101].

That period (mid to the late 1990s) was also marked by formation of the so-called "clientele" around influential politicians in Russia (Aleksandr Rutskoi,

Anatolii Chubais) and Ukraine (Pavlo Lazarenko, Anatolii Kinakh, etc.). The "clientele" were represented by conglomerates of enterprises, companies and groups from various areas of the economy, which derived political and economic support from their "patron". Another phenomenon started taking place in Ukraine's political life at that time was described as lobby groups vying for their interests. Those structures were related to ministries, management boards, financial-industrial groups, stock exchanges and banks. Some groups of businessmen as early as 1992–1994 began to realise their political interests (both basic and variable). The so-called "corporate thinking" started to increasingly prevail in Ukraine from 1994 onwards. "Corporations", which brought together political and business leaders, were the core of an organisation; moreover, they could be transformed into political structures.

The "patron — client" system worked in those "corporations", which meant that a member of the corporation in exchange for loyalty and service commitment gets new political and economic opportunities from a group of patrons. Thus, the "clients" became interested in raising their prestige and succeeding in political and economic aspects, which promoted the "corporation's" development. On the other hand, "corporate thinking" contributed to isolation or relative separation of some branches of the economy and to fierce competition between political/business groups.

It was "corporate conscience" that favoured regionalisation of business and politics, as well as formation of clans both at the Centre and in regions. Heads of central/regional authorities and persons close to them created administrative and business clans across Ukraine, under the auspices of the government and structures related to the Centre, in order to protect political and economic interests of high-ranking officials.

1995–1996 were the years when both central and regional groups finished forming and then divided between themselves the major sources of raw materials, product markets and key positions in the government and local authorities, as well as monopolised the main branches of Ukraine's industry.

Those groups somewhat weakened the influence of sectoral administrative-economic groups, which protected interests of the "directorate" in some branches of industry. However, the major industry clusters remained stable and served the interests of the "big league": military-industrial complex, metallurgy, chemical industry and agriculture.

Business structures involving foreign investment made some attempts to create their own clans, focusing on the capital of Russia or other countries. But Russian big business did not seem to have satisfied its appetites and so was unable to start economic expansion. Privatisation of Ukrainian industry was controlled in both the Centre and regions, while Russian business used the tactics of "influence" on Ukraine through the big-league politics.

So, at that time the major trend in Ukrainian politics and business was characterised by consolidation of capital, party apparatus and politicians in groups (that actually meant clans). As a result, they were fighting, though "quietly", to gain total power in the state. Both high-ranking civil servants and politicians benefitted not only from legitimate business but also from "shadow" sector, where "black money" circulated and profits from illegal businesses were concentrated and then redistributed.

Being aimed at strengthening control over the regional elite, the central groups of political-economic elite actively intervened in government institutions and big business. They freely interpreted laws and regulations, managing at the same time the processes of redistribution of power and privatisation. Competing groups were focused on different political figures, which often led to conflicts between branches of government and fights between factions or parties. Privatisation of state-owned enterprises became a means for exerting political and economic pressure, or "protectionism machinery", where all rules were for sale.

The representatives of regional elite contended for informal immunity. In fact, they were some kind of "fiefdom" or "seigniory", where full power over regions was granted in exchange for political loyalty and electoral support of their "patron". Thus, the regional elite often became a source of conflicts.

Regional groups or, rather, clans became the major element of political and economic relations in Ukraine. These "clans" were usually headed by persons who worked in municipal authorities, central or local governments [Ohorodnyk, 1996: p. 86]. In Ukraine, unlike the West, capital does not create power; on the contrary, power creates capital. Therefore, if the capital shows disloyalty to the government or regional "clans", it can be legally alienated.

Conversion of power competencies for privatisation into tangible outcomes is one of the reasons why power is regularly (usually once a year) re-divided. It (conversion) also contributes to the fact that the class of power holders is closed to the public and power is monopolised by clans. Thus, a "new aristocracy" is coming into being. Regionalisation of Ukraine's political elite occurs not only due to political peculiarities or differences in ethnic structure and mentality, but also to uneven economic development and unequal capabilities of the local elite.

There are no political conflicts in Ukraine, unlike Russia, when the "centre" and regions fight against each other. There is no "Belarusian" problem either, when the "provinces" fully capture the centre. The political elite of Ukraine have "appropriated" their regions and manage business in each of them. Now they are trying to compete for politically neutral regions. Actually, there are two major regions in Ukraine: "poor" East and "rich" South, and the politically seasoned West acting as a "neutral centre" between them.

The election to Ukraine's parliament in 1998 contributed to further regionalisation of the society and political circles. At that time, the Eastern region had three main centres with their own political and economic interests: Dnipropetrovs'k, Donets'k, Kharkiv and several minor (but not dependent on the neighbours) ones — Odesa, Zaporizhia, Luhans'k. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea acted as a separate unit and its interests were far from those of industrial East. The three above-mentioned centres recruited the bulk of Ukraine's political elite, thus sharing the "burden" of power with Kyiv.

During the 1994 presidential election, the phenomenon of "red zone" was observed (areas voting for the Communists and the Socialists). That zone mainly comprised eastern and south-eastern regions of Ukraine. The 1998 parliamentary election demonstrated growing influence of the "leftists" in the above-mentioned regions and a "leftward swing" of voters in Ukraine as a whole. Even in Chernivtsi Oblast situated in the west of Ukraine 20.2% of the population voted for the Communists. It should be noted that the "leftists" (especially the Socialist Party of Ukraine) were involved in the formation of Ukraine's parliamentary

elite and committees of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU), but ideologically belonged to a "counter-elite".

The principles of nepotism and tribalism had taken root among Ukraine's political elite by then. The ruling elite were recruited on the basis of kinship or belonging to the same region. The president promoted his relatives to the top positions in political hierarchy, and other officials were trying to do the same thing. Nepotism was a consequence of the weakening of presidential powers, when membership in political parties and movements was replaced by family ties. The latter eventually led to isolation of the elite. This is the most noticeable trend among the elite in Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Russia.

Political scientists usually include in the "family" not only relatives but also close friends and "courtiers". For example, the Yel'tsin family's influence on political and social life in Russia exceeded all reasonable limits. The elite were practically reduced to "The Family"or "Family Corporation". In Ukraine, the Kuchma family was associated with brilliant careers of the Franchuks and Oleksandr Kuz'muk, who, being a corps commander became the Defence Minister in one year.

It is worth mentioning that high-ranking officials coming from the same region began to form their own groups as early as the Khrushchev era. Those groups competed with each other for power. The Brezhniev era (which lasted almost 20 years) can be described as a reign of his own "clan" uniting officials from Dnipropetrovs'k and Dniprodzerzhyns'k. Dnipropetrovs'k Oblast actually became a "breeding ground" for political elite of the USSR and Soviet Ukraine. "Dnipropetrovians" enjoyed support from Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Leonid Kravchuk strove to neutralise the influence of "old Dnipropetrovians" belonging to Shcherbyts'kyi's team. But as soon as Leonid Kuchma became prime minister, a new generation of "Dnipropetrovians" arrived in Kyiv to finally reach the top of the power hierarchy in 1994.

As a team, "Dnipropetrovians" strengthened their positions in the years 1990–1993 (the Fokin Government) and in 1996–1998 (governments headed by Lazarenko and Pustovoitenko). "Odesians" were influential under Zviahil's'kyi's and Lazarenko's premiership while "Donets'k team" was associated with governments headed by Kuchma, Zviahil's'kyi and Yanukovych. The Zviahil's'kyi Government is often mentioned as the government of "Donets'k team". On the other hand, there was "Lviv team" represented by Viktor Pynzenyk. Lviv "intellectuals" also had their own areas of influence. For example, "Lvivians" were the second winner in the number of seats in the Kuchma Government, as well as under Masol's and Lazarenko's premierships. But they were the least influential in the Pustovoitenko Government. However, "Lvivians" were the only team from the west of Ukraine to focus both on pro-Ukrainian national policy and "pro-Western" economic reforms.

Another phenomenon worth considering is social origin of Ukraine's leaders. Most of them (40–45%) came from peasants, rural intelligentsia and state officials. Presidents Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma, as well as prime ministers Pavlo Lazarenko, Yevhen Marchuk and Valerii Pustovoitenko can be included in this group. About 30% of Ukraine's elite identify their parents as urban intelligentsia or white-collar workers. So, these people have grown up in families of a

good income and decent social status. A significant part of them are descendants of the Soviet nomenklatura, where power had been inherited from parents and grandparents for over 70 years [Pylypenko, Pryvalov, Nikolaievs'kyi, 2008: p. 76–77].

In fact, officials of rural origin established a tradition of promoting those who belonged to the same region (city, town, oblast, etc.), thus forming "clans" within the government. As previously mentioned, nearly half of Ukraine's political elite were of rural origin. That might be the main reason why the principles of tribalism and nepotism became so easily ingrained in them. As early as the beginning of "perestroika", some officials became entrepreneurs and then started to capture markets and derive considerable profits. Using their official positions, they could do the things that were forbidden to others.

Voucher privatisation changed the nature of political elite as the "authors" of privatisation. The elite began to split into several groups of interests: departmental bureaucracy, regional nomenklatura, directorate, private entrepreneurs, municipal councils in big cities, etc. They competed with each other to take control over privatisation. Some of them (for example, directors of large industrial enterprises) were interested in slowing down the privatisation process.

Ukraine's elite began to undergo major changes as early as 1994, when business elite and "new Ukrainians" expressed interest in politics. During Kravchuk's presidency they managed to form "lobby groups", "clientele" and "pressure groups", trying to make politics serve their business interests. In fact, all the processes that occurred in Ukraine's political life were a reflection of what was taking place in Russia at that time, where in 1993 business rushed into politics, started investing in parties and parliamentary leaders and took an active part in parliamentary elections. Both in Russia and in Ukraine, the "party of capital" was financially strong enough to get their hands on power. But in Ukraine, it was not the only one. There were different regional business clans (Donbas, Crimea, Dnipropetrovs'k, Odesa, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Halychyna), sectoral associations (military-industrial complex, "agrarians", "oil workers", etc.) and several groups politically oriented towards Moscow, Kyiv, Europe or certain political parties.

Passive participation of big capital in politics was gradually replaced by active. At first, newborn entrepreneurs were busy selling and reselling state-owned assets or converting them into private property. Then they started to consolidate their "achievements" and legalise property.

The 1998 parliamentary election led to the destruction of the previous political and financial system, which consisted of primitive clans. Financial and political groups took the first step towards being civilised: they started being called parties [Mostovaia, 1998]. But many of them were not able to comprehend the difference between parties and firms and therefore, instead of creating a single bloc to accomplish the goals at a regional level, the "firm" tried to support "their" party.

Actually, the period of rapid development of Ukraine's elite (at least, its powerful start) fell on Kuchma's reign. As it is well known, he was nominated for a second presidential term. But he started preparing for the election ahead of time by shuffling the staff and building a containment and countermeasure system. The main task that Kuchma identified was to retain power at any cost.

Undoubtedly, it was quite a challenging task: the gap between the rich and the poor kept widening and thus provoked anti-Kuchma moods. At the same time, "leftist" parties were gaining strength, especially the Socialist Party led by Oleksandr Moroz. But Kuchma's tactical talent came into play again; and there was a turning point in that presidential campaign. He managed to split the "left-wing" electorate due to an "eternal oppositionist" Petro Symonenko, who, using the resolution of the CPU Congress as a cover (however, he realised that people would rather have gone to hell than vote for the "red"), ran in the election (some people still believe that a fact of bribery took place there). But the chance had been lost. If all the "left-wing" forces had clustered around Moroz, they would probably have won the presidential election and put an end to Kuchma's authoritarian regime.

The next presidential election, which took place in 2004, had a strong impact on Ukraine's political elite. During the election campaign, the "guarantor" (Leonid Kuchma) performed multi-move combination in the electoral field to provoke a clash between the two rival candidates Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych, which could have led to chaos and could have posed a real threat to Ukraine's sovereignty. Balancing on a "razor's edge", Kuchma might have thought that he would wait until there was no other option but to call him as the "rescuer of the nation". So, he might have planned to run for a third term [Vrublevs'kyi, 2005: p. 32–33].

On the one hand, Kuchma was bluffing when chose his "successor" (voluntarily or under pressure of "Donets'k clan") since he knew in advance that this figure would not pass. On the other hand, he demonstrated his favourable disposition towards Viktor Yushchenko in order to earn dividends (as a "democrat") in the West.

Political scientists and sociologists have continuously analysed those force majeure events of late 2004 — early 2005, and all of them arrived at the conclusion that the "Orange Revolution" had largely determined a new configuration of power elite.

Owing to Yuschenko's victory in the presidential election of 2005, the "Orange Team" enjoyed an unprecedently high degree of trust from Ukrainians. But they failed to capitalise on this opportunity in a proper way. The period immediately after the elections was marked by continuous battles inside the "Orange Team", including the fight over the office of prime minister. The President Viktor Yushchenko regarded Petro Poroshenko as the most acceptable candidate. But having bowed to pressure of "revolutionary" masses, he had to appoint YuliiaTymoshenko to this position (who was, in her turn, the most "talented" apprentice of Pavlo Lazarenko). Therefore, as soon as the "Orange Team" came to power, the public witnessed numerous conflicts between the President Viktor Yushchenko and the Prime Minister Yuliia Tymoshenko. Once Yushchenko managed to win an interim victory and gave the Prime Minister's position to Viktor Yanukovych. However, a bit later Tymoshenko became the Prime Minister again. A new round of the battle between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko reached its peak in the winter of 2009–2010, when the "gas issue" came onto the agenda.

Being unable to work constructively and cohesively, the "Orange Team" largely predetermined Yanukovych's victory at the 2010 presidential election.

Tymoshenko made unprecedented efforts to win the presidency but her chances were obviously slender.

Having risen to power, Yanukovych started seeking to strengthen presidential powers. All of the key positions in central, regional and local authorities were occupied by "Donets'k" clan. A striking example of this policy was the career of the President's eldest son Oleksandr (also known as "Dentist Sasha"), who even had the authority to control the Ministry of Home Affairs. Applicants for police chief in each region had to be personally approved by him. It was immensely arrogant and financially aggressive policy of "Donets'k clan" headed by Yanukovych that eventually led to the "Revolution of Dignity" in the winter of 2013–2014. Being unable to settle protests in a peaceful way (which resulted in Maidan Massacre), Yanukovych was ousted from power and then escaped to Russia where he was taken under the wing of his "big brother" Vladimir Putin. Russia's annexation of Crimea and further dramatic events in Donbas were the outcomes of the anti-Ukrainian policy that Yanukovych pursued as a Kremlin puppet.

A snap presidential election was held in the spring of 2014, after Russia began its military aggression against Ukraine. Petro Poroshenko won the victory in the first round.

We deliberately did not make an analysis of political life in Ukraine after the 2014 presidential election. First, it is too early to draw any substantial (final) ***conclusions*** about changes that have occurred there. There is a saying that goes, "The big is better seen from a distance". Second, this period should be studied separately in order to make a more substantial and thorough analysis.

Giving an overall evaluation of behaviour of the ruling political elite during the years of Ukraine's independence, the authors would like to draw attention to the fact that the politicians have neither acted adequately enough to meet the challenges of a new historical epoch nor behaved responsibly enough to ensure the future of Ukraine and Ukrainians. Depopulation, export of capital, lack of financial and economic associations whose members willingly bind their personal plans and the future of their families to Ukraine, short-sighted decision-making in the sphere of geopolitics (without taking their long-term consequences into account), etc. clearly indicate that there is no responsible ruling elite in Ukraine so far. All they can do is care about the things happening "here" and "now", and only when they pose a threat to politicians themselves rather than to the society on the whole or some of its sectors [Shul'ha, 2011: p. 171].

Despite the fact that Ukraine's political elite exist, they are usually not open to the public. They do not declare their future plans or intentions openly. They do not inform Ukrainians about social projects that are going to be implemented. They content themselves with making generous promises as soon as each election campaign begins.

One of the main internal problems of Ukraine related to the formation of responsible political elite coincides with the global problem of elite's "offensive" against social rights of citizens. So, the national political elite, not being sure of the safety of their assets in Ukraine, transfer them offshore. However, the elite of developed countries are also threatening to move their assets abroad if the governments introduce high taxes and high social insurance contributions.

Some researchers explain both of these cases as the fact that the national elite are moving to the globalist position, changing their status from national to global and refusing to protect national interests.

At present, one of the key issues on the agenda is the political elite's consolidation. Despite the fact that this issue has been relevant ever since Ukraine gained its independence, the split in the national elite has never been as serious as now. All attempts to unite the elite on the principles of common vision of history, language policy, unmasking of the totalitarian past, etc. have ended with little success so far. This problem can be solve only if we go beyond the old paradigm and find a new platform for consolidation of the national elite. Perhaps it will be possible on the basis of overcoming current problems and solving challenges for the future.

In this regard, effective interaction between politics and business, ability of Ukrainian businessmen to act effectively within the current political conjuncture assume great importance.

Politicisation of business in Ukraine occurs in the context of the society's politicisation. But entrepreneurs organise their social and economic interests faster than other social strata. Trying to influence politics, big business not only uses conventional forms of political action but also resorts to lobbying politicians. In fact, business circles possess considerable potential for political activity, which can be used in critical situations.

The main task of business is to create an independent economic space. Entrepreneurs will be able to become adequate social actors only if the civil society is built, where economy and politics exist as autonomous spheres of life and there is a mechanism ensuring representation of different social interests at political level.

In today's Ukraine, newborn entrepreneurs seem to feel solid ground and accumulate resources, turning into a real social and political force. Entrepreneurship as a phenomenon emerges in a specific political, economic and social environment. On the other hand, social, political and economic conjuncture though does not directly influence various social movements can stimulate or inhibit them.

At present, the old state is practically destroyed and a new one needs to be built. Values vacuum is existing in parallel with power vacuum. Political instability, uncertain legislation inherited from the previous totalitarian regime, relentless conflict between the legislative and executive branches (along with weak and corrupt judicial system) are factors contributing to unfavourable political environment for development of national business in Ukraine.

Ukrainians' distrust in government is so strong that any government policy or initiative is met with increasing scepticism. The economy is still laden with state monopolies. Corruption, mafia, unfair tax system and high inflation rates make even the most successful entrepreneurs feel pessimistic. They have to struggle to survive instead of being focused on their own development. Therefore, Ukrainian businessmen are significantly involved in politics.

There is no point in trying to find common political interests among Ukrainian entrepreneurs. On the contrary, they are being divided into a number of groups having different political orientations, different degrees of interaction with political organisations and institutions, different forms and methods of political pressure.

The 2004 presidential election led to significant changes in the configuration of business groups, status of different oligarchic groups in the society and degree to which the property was secured by state. Thus, Ukraine's economic elite had to intensify their political activities. Almost all of the economic elite's members took part in funding the parliamentary election campaign in 2006, providing financial support to certain political parties. Because of proportional representation, big business owners could not stand as candidates in the election directly. There were political parties between capital and voters. The oligarchs (powerful businessmen) who had not taken care to create their own parties before the campaign had to collaborate with other parties in the parliament [Shul'ha, 2006: p. 29–30].

Studying political activities that Ukrainian entrepreneurs are involved in, a researcher should pay special attention to the two following conflicts which can be resolved through political means. The first one is a conflict between the executive branch and entrepreneurs and it is related to the implementation of economic reforms in public sector (privatisation, corporatisation), as well as tough anti-inflationary and anti-crisis measures. It is difficult to assess how seriously and deeply this conflict affected the interests of entrepreneurs and predict what actions they will take in the future. The second conflict is related to growing contradictions both within the stratum of entrepreneurs and between the national and foreign capital. Some entrepreneurs seek to equalise while the others want to choose initial conditions that exist at the beginning of real economic reforms. Therefore, it is important to investigate into causes of the conflict, try to assess how serious this conflict is and whether it is possible to reach consensus within the corps of Ukrainian entrepreneurs by political methods.

Finally, it is essential to make short-term forecasts concerning political activities preferred by different groups of entrepreneurs and develop recommendations aimed at raising the efficiency of reverse impact of government authorities on business. The feedback is necessary for consolidation of social basis and search of politically reasonable compromise that will facilitate progress in implementing economic reforms and thus ensure the process of modernisation.

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