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PHANTOM PARTIES OF UKRAINE

The paper deals with the problem of quantitative and qualitative functioning of the political parties in modern Ukraine. It studies particular political structures which avoid their active political positioning, have an unsystematic, sporadic character of their political activity or imitate their active participation in the political life. Existence of the “phantom” parties in the Ukrainian political system has negative consequences as it withholds the party system qualitative structuring process.

Key words: election, activity imitation, party, Ukrainian party system, phantom parties, fake.

The development of the modern Ukrainian political system is closely connected with the issue of political parties place and role in the political and party life of a state. Active participation of parties in the social-political processes gives them a possibility to articulate key political, ideological and social-economical messages, which depict the level of social consciousness and citizens needs. Once they win elections, parties try to put into life their pre-election promises as well as make sure that their staff gets a sufficient number of official positions in the authority offices. This way citizens participation in the party life makes it possible to fulfil their both social and personal (corporate) interests. The essence and importance of the political parties activity base themselves on an important constructive character, but Ukrainian reality demonstrates an essential difference between the theoretical and practical sides of the modern party system functioning. In this case it is all about multiple political structures, which are listed among the 270 political parties that are officially registered in the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the majority of them (except, perhaps, for their names) are next to unknown to both common people and lots of political experts and scientists.

Modern Ukrainian scientists and professionals, among whom we can find such outstanding names as O.Golobutskyj, M.Prymush, A.Romaniuk, Yu.Shveda, Yu.Yakymenko, V.Yakushyk and others, continue to study and scrutinize problems of formation and development of modern political parties, their influence on the political system functioning, their place in the ongoing political processes in Ukraine. At the same time scientists pay their attention mainly to activity of the leading political structures, which participate actively or have been participating recently in political life, their activity should be defined as a systematic and linear one, the latter being characteristic for their inner work as well. On the other hand, scientists seldom pay attention to those parties, which are not active, which remain on the outskirts of political life, or which simulate their activity.

Those party structures, which exist in the shadows of political heavyweights, are still to be studied. That is why this learned paper deals with the above-mentioned segment of political party surroundings, which is represented by various organizations known under various names, such as false parties, fake parties, phantom parties, invisible parties etc. Still, there are some well-known and respected scientists who deal with similar political groupings to some extent, among them one can name a famous Ukrainian researcher M.Karmazina [3; 4]. Certain aspects of the problem under study have been highlighted earlier by me as well [5; 6].

The main objective and tasks of this paper are to single out and name major reasons for appearance and existence of political grouping of the above-mentioned nature, to reveal typical forms of their activity and to find ways and methods of making them active participants of general political processes.

Ukrainian multi-party system goes back to the beginning of the year 1990 when there have been created half a dozen of new political parties as a result of the process of the Soviet Union Communist Party political monopoly termination, as well as weakening of the Communist Party of Ukraine as the latter's republican branch. In 1990 among the first parties there was registered the Ukrainian Republican party, an utterly anti-communist structure which spoke for the republic leaving the Soviet Union and which received a vast electoral support. Its ten representatives became national deputies of the newly-elected Verkhovana Rada of the USSR (the Supreme Council of the USSR, the parliament), and over a hundred of its members got their deputy mandates in the executive official offices of different local councils. In 1991, in time Ukraine actually got its independence there were officially registered nine more political forces. It has to be taken into account that KPRS-KPU (Soviet Union Communist Party – Ukrainian Communist Party) activity was banned on the territory of Ukraine in August, 1991 [1]. Today there are five political structures in the Ukrainian official register of the political parties which root back to the Soviet times (1990-1991): Ukrainian Farmers Democratic Party, Green Party of Ukraine, Democratic Party of Ukraine, Socialist Party of Ukraine, Political Party Ukrainian Platform "Sobor" (as a legal heir of the Ukrainian Republican Party "Sobor").

The process of the active party multiplication sped up after the law “On public associations” was successfully passed in the Ukrainian parliament in 1992. According to the law the principles of party registration and activity were fairly liberal. As a result in a year 2000 the number of the officially registered and recognized on the state level parties reached one hundred and then confidently bit this mark. At the same time there were only a few dozens of the active parties among them, if to take into account their participation in a real political life, the rest of the registered associations remained unknown even to professional experts and analysts.

In April, 2001 the Ukrainian parliament adopted a law “On political parties”, which defined a new procedure of registrations and listed more complicated requirements to the processes of creation, registration and functioning of political organizations [2]. According to the law norm the Ministry of Justice as well as its regional offices checked the activities of the registered parties. The scrutiny resulted in the removal of the 28 parties from the register, as they showed no evidence of political life participation [3].

Nevertheless, it had no influence on the political parties' number reduction, which was predicted by experts. In May, 2012 the Ministry of Justice registered the 200th party, and nowadays the total number of political parties in Ukraine exceeds 270 [1].

Meanwhile, there are only 20-30 party structures which take active part in the real political life of the state or its regions. They might be represented on the parliamentary and governmental levels, as well as be members of the local authorities and self-government. Among these political organizations as leaders of the political process, there is still a part of parties which play a role of dependent satellites, they serve as a so-called political “makeweight” and disappear inside the well-known party mega-structures.

During the election races the number of parties willing to participate always grows up a little bit, though most of them are “dumb performers” who imitate their involvement in the election processes. Consider the example, during the pre-term parliamentary elections in October, 2014 there were 52 parties which became the electoral law subjects, that is every sixth party of the 230 parties registered. There were only 31 political organizations that formed their electoral party lists, 29 of them were allowed to participate. The rest, made up of 21 parties, balloted their candidates through one-mandate majority electoral polls or suggested their representatives as members of the electoral boards which is also considered to be a kind electoral participation [13]. Only 6 parties won the election based on party lists: "Petro Poroshenko's Block", "National Front", "Opposition Block", "Oleh Liashko Radical Party",

Union "Samopomich" ("Self-help") and Ukrainian union "Batkivschyna" ("Motherland"), Ten more parties were represented in the parliament by their one-mandate deputies [13]. The functioning of the rest (and the rest is made up of a great part of registered organizations) has either a sporadic or imitating character, or is absent at full length. They have no partnerships with well-known political brands, they are rare objects of the political experts discussions, they rarely get into the media sight. The only evidence of their existence is the official register data in the Ministry of Justice and its regional departments.

In the Ukrainian scientific literature in these terms attention is usually paid to the parties which lead the political process. As a rule researchers analyze activities of the parliamentary (system) parties and, their influence on the state political life development, their place and role in the processes of forming and transforming of the party system. Existence of the party structures in the "shadows" of the political heavy-weighters is still to be studied. That is why this segment of the Ukrainian party environment calls for our attention. It is mainly represented with organizations with a whole range of name to be applied to them: quasi-parties, fake parties, elfin parties, phantom parties, invisible parties etc. There are different reasons to explain their existence.

Some of them are the leftovers of the former well-known political forces that were unable to stay competitive and found their place near the margins of the political life. Among them there are one powerful right-sided Democratic Party of Ukraine, National Movement of Ukraine, Ukrainian Republican Party, Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, as well as left-sided parties like Farmers Party of Ukraine, Socialist Party of Ukraine, Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine. One more group is made up of so-called "power parties", which greatly influenced the political course of the state: Agricultural Party of Ukraine, National-democratic Party, Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (united), "Nasha Ukraina" ("Our Ukraine"), National Party etc. All of them had their political biography, political recognition and electoral support, they were represented on the parliamentary and governmental levels, on the local authority level. Their attempts to come back to the Ukrainian political top failed, so today they remain loser-parties. Their regional organizations stopped their existence, and their political staff switched to more successful political structures.

Another group of political outsiders is made up of parasite-parties, adjusters, which have a necessary minimum regional net and a few known-enough politicians to imitate their activity. Ukrainian experts call them "sofa"-parties, as far as they essentially are unions of close circles of people or business structures, those aim is to lobby certain business interests or just to earn money. Having no real public support, not to mention real activists, these "public unions" maintain their activity only formally, when they sit on sofas and write their press-releases [12].

This type of political structures is represented by so-called "pocket" parties, structures which have been created by certain politicians in order to help them in deputy mandate obtaining, and which serve as evidence of their ambitions or a self-PR means. There are more than two dozens of similar political projects present in current political process, and their existence is due to the political leaders' ambitions and plans to stay on the same political level. Their "star time" was in the post-orange period (2005-2010), and they had their representatives both in the "orange" and "white-and-blue" political camps. The main objective of their activity was to imitate active work, to form a "fighter for truth" personal image, to present their political organization as a potential alternative to the current electoral leaders. In fact, they played in the hands of political mega-structures, aiming at their personal or corporate interest satisfaction and being far-away from the declared goals.

A great part of elfin political parties shows no political work signs. On a formal side they have the whole set of attributes necessary for a registered structure: a name, statute, party programme, bank account, commercial domicile, and what is the most important a party seal.

In the real political life they are not easily spotted for their activity might be next to nonexistent, though their ideological platform, activity programme and probable regional network make up sufficient basis for their functioning. The absolute majority of the Ukrainian political parties programmes have no practical side, they are made up from a standard declarations and wishes set, which has nothing to do with real life. It is true both with phantom parties, and leaders of the electoral races [10; 11]. A competent Ukrainian scientist M. Karamzina called such political structures *fake-structures (fake-parties)*. Their main task is to distract voters, to rob real candidates of their chances to get deputy mandates, to provide electoral boards with "controlled" representatives [4, p.40-41].

A typical phantom party, besides having all the registration documents, is also represented by a formal leader, by hired technical and communication specialists and by a minimal number of registered regional organizations. As practice shows, the main aim of such political objects is to use their names and theoretical resources during electoral campaigns once or several times. Virtual existence of phantom parties allows their leaders and owners to go into different political manipulations and party bidding, this way they show their nominal support of certain political structures and electoral subjects.

This behaviour type was especially popular with elfin parties at the beginning of the XXI century, when major political actors were staging creations of the vast political unions (blocks, coalitions) for their voters in order to support certain candidates, e.g. candidates for a position of a president, a city major, or a regional deputy. Creating their own popular political image major parties' leaders were not ashamed to use for their benefit the announced support from smaller and less-known parties, as well as newly-created political structures. Heads of the latter ones were eager to sign the corresponding joint declarations, resolutions, announcements etc. This is how the process of elfin parties legalization was carried out, and they were recognized as party subjects. Heads of elfin parties or their regional branches leaders also received an additional publicity benefit, as they appeared in different informational-propaganda materials.

One more reason for phantom parties to exist is commercial interest, a possibility to sell a registered structure with profit. It became especially popular after the proportional electoral system came into force, together with the corresponding law package, according to which it is obligatory for a party to remain active at least for one year after registration and to have a regional organization net (even if it exists only formally). A demand on the already existing (conserved) structure caused the appearance of the whole range of legal campaigns, which were eager to sell "ready-made" parties to their clients. Party prices depended on the time of their registration, on the quantity of their regional organizations, on their names, history, reputation and other criteria. New owners of the old registered party could change its name, invite popular political personalities and create an attractive party project which would be used in order to reach certain goals [9]. An old "ugly duckling" could become a successful party project, and it would serve as an inspiration for other political adventure seekers.

The existing party list includes lots of names of the well-known party organizations clones and twins, they were created through ideological or names similarities. These one-day parties are created for a short-time usage, usually only once. They lead a thoroughly destructive activity, they aim at voters disorienting and "original" parties ill-faming, but their main objective is to confuse the public, and carry no responsibility for it.

Technical usage of virtual parties in order to fill the regional and local electoral boards with "their" representatives is a rather effective way for a whole range of powerful party brands, who are subjects of the electoral process. It is a means to get an additional resource in the electoral boards formed from the "independent" party representatives, besides having their own board party members. The party surname membership of these recommended "experts" changes during this or that electoral campaign, but the formal side of their applications is in

order (polling, quota, party members election priority order) and candidates meet all the criteria to the board members. This approach has faults on the moral and legal sides, i.e. differences between the declared weight and influence of parties and the real state of things with the former, the latter finds its realization mainly through the usage of administrative resources, which is understood as usage of the financial and authoritative possibilities by certain political powers in order to influence public opinions and political choices of voters. It also nullifies the openness and competitiveness of politics to a great extent.

The political parties register shows that a certain part of the less-known structures has its official quarters legal addresses where their leaders live, sometimes not even in the regional centres, but in small towns and villages. It is a rhetorical question to ask about the possible influence of such structures, Though, in recent years experts do not ignore the perspectives of development of the regionally-oriented projects [8].

There are well-known cases in Ukraine when political projects of the local level grew out to become successful national parties. Some local politicians might be inspired by the example of the Party of Regions, a power party until recently, which started out its way to the political Olympus as a regional political lobbyist group. Another bright example is a successful project of the Lviv city major: registered in 2012 the party "Samopomich" ("Self-help") entered the parliament in only two years. So, nowadays, in many regions, e.g. Kharkiv, Cherkasy, Odessa regions, they work on creation of the similar political projects, and their first target is to win local elections in autumn 2015 [7]. At the same time there were registered 66 new parties over the period of one year and a half: 39 of them in 2014, and 27 – in 2015. The Voters Committee stresses an characteristic peculiarity: most of the newly created parties does not lead informational work on the local level, they are not mentioned in mass media and they still do not start their activities [12].

The mentioned above peculiarities of the phantom parties do not make a complete list. Although we tried to show a part of the Ukrainian political life behind the curtains, as it stands in the way of modernization of the Ukrainian political system.

Invisible parties still outnumber active parties who maintain their political work. Despite their purely negative influence, elfin parties will stay on the political stage even if the recent prognosis about two-party system (hegemonic parties domination) or block system (power and opposition blocks) comes true. The attempt to get rid of them by administrative means of second registration, practical activity revision and similar acts, which took place in 2001, proved to be ineffective. Besides, leaders of the party-political process are still eager to use such structures and their level of demand is high.

Preservation of the current state of affairs brings harm to the very basis of party life, as it betrays the voters' faith in political party institutions, in their possibility to influence state authority activities through active participation in political structures, in their chances to support the development of the civil society elements. As long as narrow party, ideology or corporations interests of the main political powers dominate the nominal principle of the open party competitiveness, as long as they use dirty technological tricks of "phantom" parties, the Ukrainian political system will stay far from the general European political standards.

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Розглядається питання кількісного та якісного функціонування політичних партій в сучасній Україні. Увага звернена особливі політичні структури, котрі уникають активного політичного позиціонування, відзначаються несистемним характером партійної діяльності, імітують участь в політичному житті. Наявність фантомних партій деструктивно впливає на розвиток всієї української партійної системи, уповільнює необхідні якісні зміни політичного процесу.

Ключові слова: вибори, імітація активності, партія, політична система, фантомні партії, фейк.

Рассматривается вопрос количественного и качественного функционирования политических партий в современной Украине. Обращено внимание на особые политические структуры, которые избегают активной политической позиции, отличаются не системным характером партийной деятельности, имитируют участие в политической жизни. Наличие фантомных партий деструктивно влияет на развитие украинской политической системы, замедляет необходимые качественные изменения политического процесса.

Ключевые слова: выборы, имитация активности, партия, политическая система, фантомные партии, фейк.