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Parties and Presidents in Ukraine and Crimea, 1994

ANDREW WILSON

Several sets of elections in Ukraine in 1994 may have had the effect of turning that year into a watershed in the development of democracy in independent Ukraine. In the spring parliamentary elections the results were not markedly different from what they had been in the last elections to the Supreme Soviet. In the presidential elections, held in June and July, the incumbent was voted out on the basis of a poll marked by polarization along regional lines. In the election to the Crimean presidency, in January, the ethno-linguistic divisions of Ukrainian society were even more acutely in evidence. While observance of procedures and acceptance of the results represents an important stage in consolidating democracy, the pattern of voting reveals sharp divisions that will require serious effort to overcome.

Calls for pre-term elections to the Ukrainian parliament began to be heard almost as soon as the Supreme Soviet was elected in March 1990. While the Soviet Union still existed the demand was mainly confined to nationalist groups, but the growing economic crisis following independence in 1991 led to revivalist left-wing groups also adding their voices to the clamour. Moreover, by the winter of 1992–93 President Leonid Kravchuk's popularity was beginning to crumble and protesters began to call for his head as well. A massive wave of strikes in the Donbas in June 1993 was brought to an end only by the promise to hold twin confidence referendums for the two institutions – parliament and presidency – in the following September. However, with the eruption of political crisis in Russia after Boris Yeltsin's decision to dissolve the Russian parliament, and the consequent threat of civil conflict spreading to Ukraine, early elections were conceded instead. The parliamentary vote was fixed for March and April 1994 and presidential elections for the following June and July. However, agreement on the electoral system to be used proved more difficult to obtain.

Election Rules

The national-democratic opposition wanted to adopt some version of the mixed constituency and party list system used in the Russian elections of

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December 1993. They felt that this would strengthen the embryonic party system against the non-party 'party of power' that they considered still dominated the outgoing parliament and most other political institutions. (In the 1990 elections the opposition won 122 out of 450 seats, or 27 per cent of the total. The communist majority came to be known as 'the group of 239', which gave it 53 per cent of the seats; the remaining 88 deputies – 19.6 per cent of the total – were independents.)¹ Moreover, before the registration (or re-registration) of the Communist Party of Ukraine in October 1993 and the emergence of a powerful east and southern Ukrainian regional lobby in December (the Inter-regional Bloc for Reforms), most of the stronger political groups were on the right. Not surprisingly, however, the conservative majority in parliament preferred to look after its own interests. In November 1993 they forced through their own election law by 245 votes to eight, with the national-democrats boycotting the vote.

At least four features of the new law were controversial. First, all 450 seats were to be elected in geographical constituencies according to the majoritarian second ballot principle. This was widely expected to discriminate against the political parties and in favour of nominally 'non-party' independents. Second, the Soviet-era practice of nominating candidates from workplace collectives was retained, and was if anything easier than the process by which political parties had to nominate candidates. Third, in order for elections to be valid in any given constituency, 50 per cent plus one of the electorate had to vote *and* the leading candidate had to receive 50 per cent plus one of their votes. This was widely expected to make election unnecessarily difficult. Many commentators feared that the new parliament might not even reach its quorum of 300 deputies. Fourth, rules of equal access to the mass media meant that the proliferation of non-party candidates swamped the newspapers and television and made it extremely difficult for the parties to get their message across.

The Parliamentary Elections

Analysis of the results is therefore made difficult by the fact that the vast majority (nearly 90 per cent) of the 5,835 candidates for the 450 constituencies were not formally connected to any political party or organization.² Moreover, the two '50 per cent' clauses meant that only 338 seats were filled at the first attempt in March and April. Ironically, this was not originally due to low turnout. In many constituencies a large number of negative votes (three to five per cent) meant that in the second round a close race between two candidates made it difficult for either to obtain the necessary 50 per cent, whatever the turnout. (In Ukrainian elections the Soviet practice of 'negative' or 'inertia' voting is retained: instead of placing a cross

by their favoured candidate, electors are required to cross out the ones they do not support; they are therefore perfectly entitled to delete all names.) However, it became increasingly difficult to persuade voters to turn out at three rounds of subsequent by-elections in June, August and November. Elections now tended to fail because of the 50 per cent turnout requirement. Forty-five seats were still unfilled (with three votes still under investigation) when a moratorium on further by-elections was finally decided on 7 December 1994.

Nevertheless, four or five main blocs contested the original elections in the spring, and the popular vote for each (on the first ballot) can be calculated as follows:

Bloc	Vote	Percentage
Non-party	14,963,548	60.9
Left	5,349,711	21.8
Centre	1,056,985	4.3
National-Democrat	2,701,042	10.9
Far right	690,048	2.9

Turnout: 74.8% (66.9% in the second round).

Political parties were best organized at opposite ends of the political spectrum, namely among the nationalist right and the anti-nationalist left. The nationalists campaigned for a strong and independent Ukrainian state, outside of the Commonwealth of Independent States and oriented towards western and central Europe, and stressed the importance of maintaining a unitary state where the official language and culture would increasingly be Ukrainian rather than Russian. Most also supported market reform in order to build a 'Western-type' society, but at the same time tended to oppose '*nomenklatura* privatization', and demanded that the national economy be sheltered from foreign competition. However, whereas the nationalist camp was relatively united in 1990, by 1994 increasing radicalism had led to a split between a 'national-democratic' mainstream and a growing number of openly anti-democratic, ethnicist and even paramilitary parties on the far right fringe. These were mainly confined to the nationalist heartland of Galicia, but also had some support in Kiev. The left-wing parties, on the other hand, opposed the 'restoration of capitalism' and campaigned for the maintenance of strong economic and even political links with Russia, and for a more decentralized Ukrainian state with wider official use of the Russian language.

A key factor complicating Ukrainian politics, however, is the fact that the political centre is also divided, basically between Ukrainophone and Russophone liberals. Both groups agree on the necessity for market reforms, but tend to take an opposing line on national and ethnic issues.

Russophone liberals have tended to side with the left in the campaign to make Russian a second state language in Ukraine and to convert Ukraine into a decentralized federation, proposals that Ukrainophone centrists strongly oppose, as of course do all Ukrainian nationalists. Moreover, disagreement on national and ethnic issues means that the two halves of the Ukrainian centre also have radically different visions of what a Ukrainian market economy might look like: for Ukrainophones it will be an open economy linked to the West, whereas for the Russophones it will be (re)integrated with the economies of reformist Russia and the rest of the CIS.

One last problem is that political parties are especially weak in the political centre. Most Ukrainophone liberals are not party members, and the main Russophone liberal organization (the Inter-regional Bloc for Reforms) is more a loose alliance of local power-brokers in eastern and southern Ukraine than a political party as such. Therefore, the figure shown in the above table for the political 'Centre' is woefully inadequate, capturing only the minor centre parties and failing to distinguish between Ukrainophones and Russophones.

On the other hand, classification of the 338 deputies elected in the spring of 1994 according to party is somewhat easier, as greater numbers of party-oriented candidates were eventually elected. The division of the corpus of deputies according to party affiliation is shown below (as of the end of April 1994, when only 338 deputies had been elected):

Group and party	Deputies	Percentage of total (338)
<i>Left</i>	<u>147</u>	<u>43.5</u>
Communist Party of Ukraine	86	
Socialist Party of Ukraine	26	
Agrarian Party of Ukraine	35	
<i>Centre</i>	<u>34</u>	<u>10.1</u>
Inter-regional Bloc for Reforms	20	
Labour Party of Ukraine	6	
Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine	2	
Civic Congress of Ukraine	2	
Party of Democratic Rebirth of Ukraine	3	
Christian-Democratic Party of Ukraine	1	
<i>National-Democrats</i>	<u>47</u>	<u>13.9</u>
Rukh	27	
Ukrainian Republican Party	9	
Democratic Party of Ukraine	6	
Union of Officers of Ukraine	5	
<i>Radical Nationalists</i>	<u>12</u>	<u>3.6</u>
Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists	7	
Ukrainian National Assembly	3	
Ukrainian Conservative Republicans	2	

The newly elected deputies soon organized themselves into a smaller number of more coherent factions. On the left, the Communist and Socialist factions were joined by an expanded 'Agrarian' faction, which included many nominally non-party collective farm chairmen and heads of agro-industry. In the centre the division between Russophones and Ukrainophones became much clearer, with two almost entirely Russian-speaking factions (the Inter-regional Bloc and the 'Unity' faction) opposing two Ukrainian-speaking groups (the 'Centre' faction was largely made up of former communists who had gone over to the nationalist cause, while the 'Reforms' faction was made up of pro-market nationalists or 'post-nationalist' liberals). The national-democrats joined either the Rukh faction or the more radical 'Statehood' group. Most of the far right were forced to sit as independents, since they lacked the minimum strength (25 deputies) to form a faction of their own.

The strength of the factions in July 1994 is shown below, followed in brackets by the situation in October 1994, after two rounds of by-elections and some limited political realignment:³

Group and Faction	Deputies	
	July	(October)
<i>Left</i>		
Communists	84	(90)
Socialists	25	(30)
Agrarians	36	(52)
<i>Russophone Centre</i>		
Inter-regional Bloc	25	(33)
Unity	25	(34)
<i>Ukrainophone Centre</i>		
Centre	38	(37)
Reforms	27	(35)
<i>National-Democrat</i>		
Rukh	27	(27)
Statehood	25	(28)
Independents	23	(36)
Total	335*	(395**)

* One deputy died; two others were under investigation for campaign irregularities.

** Seven deputies apparently belonged to more than one faction, in contravention of parliamentary regulations.

It is tempting to conclude from the elections that Ukraine had followed the pattern set in preceding elections in neighbouring states such as Poland and Hungary and swung sharply to the left. However, the results in essence followed the pattern set in earlier elections in 1990 and 1991. On both

occasions the nationalists dominated the vote in western Ukraine, particularly in Galicia, the historical heartland of Ukrainian nationalism, and to a lesser extent in Volhynia and Chernivtsi. In 1994 the only real context in Galicia was between national-democrats and ultra-radicals. In central Ukraine the pattern was also similar to that of 1990–91, with the national-democrats polling reasonably well in some large towns, but with the countryside dominated by conservatives. One key difference, however, was in Kiev. In 1990 and 1991 support for the national-democrats in the capital had been second only to that in Galicia; this time only five out of 23 seats in Kiev were filled at the first time of asking.

On the other hand, as in 1990, the Communist Party polled most strongly in Crimea (where turnout was reduced by local leaders' call for a boycott), the Donbas and other large eastern industrial cities. In the Donbas over 80 per cent of those who had voted also supported local proposals to make Ukraine a federal state, to introduce Russian as a second state language at the national level and as the language of 'education, science and administration' at the local level, and for Ukraine to join an economic union with the rest of the CIS. The Socialist and Agrarian parties dominated voting throughout the Ukrainian countryside (Galicia excepted). Support for Russophone liberals, on the other hand, was concentrated in the transitional region of eastern and central cities such as Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovs'k, while Odesa followed its own idiosyncratic pattern, electing a large number of independents.

Furthermore, the final results in 1990 and 1994 were not dissimilar. In 1990, 27 per cent of deputies joined the national opposition (the *Narodna rada*); in 1994 the number of nationalist deputies, including independents, was again exactly 27 per cent. The hard-line communist 'group of 239' represented a slight majority of all deputies in 1990–91; in 1994 the left was only just on the other side of a majority (43.5 per cent of all deputies). The total number of centrists and independents was somewhat higher in 1994 (rising from 19.6 to 28.7 per cent), but not massively so. Continuity rather than change was therefore the most striking feature of the 1994 parliamentary elections.

The same could also be said of the later elections for the presidency. The incumbent Leonid Kravchuk lost, but basically because he moved to the right and allowed his opponent Leonid Kuchma to re-create the left-leaning majority, centred upon eastern and central Ukraine, that had won Kravchuk an easy victory back in December 1991, when he won 61.6 per cent in the first round.

The Presidential Election

The presidential election of June and July 1994 was held according to the French fifth republic system of second ballot majority vote, as was also used

in the single previous presidential election in December 1991.⁴ Any number of candidates were allowed to stand in the first ballot, although each had first to collect the signatures of 100,000 electors. If no single candidate obtained 50 per cent plus one of the votes in the first ballot, a second round would be held two weeks later, with only the two leading candidates participating (victory would still require 50 per cent plus one valid votes).

The main protagonists in the election were the incumbent Leonid Kravchuk and his former prime minister, Leonid Kuchma. Kravchuk attempted, largely successfully, to turn the vote into a second referendum on Ukrainian independence by characterizing his opponent as excessively pro-Russian. This succeeded in uniting the nationalist right behind Kravchuk, but allowed him to neglect basic economic issues. Kuchma, on the other hand, stressed the importance of maintaining links with Russia, arguing that Ukraine was a natural part of a common 'Eurasian' space with its larger neighbour. This won him the support of the anti-nationalist left, even though he campaigned in favour of the belated introduction of market reforms.

The other main candidates were Oleksandr Moroz, leader of the anti-market Socialist Party and since April 1994 chairman of parliament; Volodymyr Lanovyi, a former minister for economics, who campaigned strongly in favour of market reforms, albeit presented in a rather populist fashion; Ivan Pliushch, the former chairman of parliament who was expected to mount a strong challenge, but whose campaign was derailed once nationalists began to unite around Kravchuk as the only man capable of beating Kuchma; Valerii Babych, a Russophone businessman from eastern Ukraine; and Petro Talanchuk, then minister of education, whose programme was indistinguishable from that of Pliushch.

In the first round on 26 June votes were cast as follows:

Presidential Election: First Round

Candidate	Vote	Percentage
Leonid Kravchuk	9,944,474	37.7
Leonid Kuchma	8,244,844	31.3
Oleksandr Moroz	3,437,816	13.1
Volodymyr Lanovyi	2,455,830	9.4
Valerii Babych	630,392	2.4
Ivan Pliushch	341,172	1.3
Petro Talanchuk	142,296	0.5

Turnout: 69.9 per cent.

Kuchma had run Kravchuk close. Moreover, Moroz and Lanovyi polled surprisingly well (as arguably did Babych, given low expectations regarding his performance). On the other hand, Kravchuk's nationalist would-be allies, Pliushch and Talanchuk, performed exceedingly badly. This provides

the first reason for Kravchuk's defeat in the second round two weeks later on 10 July. The majority of Moroz's and Babych's voters plumped for Kuchma, while Lanovyi's supporters divided approximately equally and Pliushch and Talanchuk had few votes to redistribute. Second, Kravchuk's electorate was almost fully mobilized. Turnout in the first round in western Ukraine had already reached almost 90 per cent, whereas Kuchma now picked up extra votes in the east and in Crimea (on the peninsula turnout jumped by nine percentage points between rounds); turnout in Kiev was again low. Third, as well as sweeping the east and south, Kuchma also led Kravchuk in parts of central Ukraine (the left bank of the river Dnieper that has closer historical ties to Russia) and polled strongly throughout rural regions. As a result, Kuchma attracted an extra 5.8 million votes, whereas Kravchuk could muster only an additional 2.2 million (turnout rose slightly from 69.9 to 71.6 per cent).

Presidential Election: Second Round

Candidate	Vote	Percentage
Leonid Kuchma	14,016,850	52.1
Leonid Kravchuk	12,111,513	45.1
Turnout: 71.6 per cent		

The key to Kravchuk's defeat, however, once again lies in the regional breakdown of the vote. The 1994 elections confirmed that for historical reasons support for Ukrainian nationalism is confined to western Ukraine as a whole and to the intelligentsia in central Ukraine. The central Ukrainian countryside, traditionally the main target area for nationalists' support, remains in thrall to the collective farm system. Eastern and southern Ukraine have much weaker historical connections with the central Ukrainian heartlands and are home to a large Russophone population. Unfortunately, from the nationalist perspective, 40 per cent of the population lives in the east and south. The natural centre of gravity in Ukrainian politics, therefore (for the moment, at least), lies to the east and to the left. The following table shows that Kravchuk's massive lead in the west was not enough to overcome Kuchma's broader base of support:

Average of Presidential Vote by Region, Second Round (per cent)

Region	Kuchma	Kravchuk
West	10.4	87.4
Centre-Right Bank	42.4	54.1
Kiev City	35.6	59.7
Centre-Left Bank	65.9	31.0
East	75.6	21.9
South	72.5	21.9
<u>Overall</u>	<u>52.1</u>	<u>45.1</u>

The Crimean Elections

Crucial elections were also held in Crimea in 1994.⁵ Although the Crimean case is *sui generis*, it is also indicative of the extent of regional polarization in Ukrainian voting behaviour. Kiev allowed Crimea's first ever presidential elections to go ahead in January 1994 on the assumption that Mykola Bagrov, a relative moderate who had been chairman of the Crimean soviet and *de facto* Crimean leader since 1990, would be victorious. The results were a rude shock, as he was trounced by Yuri Meshkov, the candidate of the openly separatist Russia Bloc. Of the other candidates, Sergei Shuvainikov was the leader of the even more extreme Russian Party of Crimea, backed by Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia; Leonid Grach was leader of the powerful Communist Party of Crimea, which supported the restoration of the Soviet Union: the supporters of both of those candidates voted *en masse* for Meshkov in the second round; the final candidate, Ivan Yermakov, the Ukrainian presidential representative in Sevastopol, polled badly:

Crimean Presidential Election: First Round, 16 January 1994

Candidate	Vote	Percentage
Yurii Meshkov (Russia Bloc)	557,226	38.5
Mykola Bagrov	245,042	16.9
Sergei Shuvainikov (Russian Party)	196,342	13.6
Leonid Grach (Communist)	176,330	12.2
Ivan Yermakov	90,347	6.2
Volodymyr Verkoshanskii	14,205	0.1

Turnout: 78.7 per cent.

Crimean Presidential Election: Second Round, 30 January 1994

Candidate	Vote	Percentage
Yurii Meshkov	1,040,888	72.9
Mykola Bagrov	333,243	23.4

Turnout: 77.7 per cent.

The Russia Bloc also dominated elections held for the Crimean soviet in March and April, benefiting from Meshkov's 'coat-tails' effect. Centre parties more prone to some kind of accommodation with Kiev, such as the Party of Economic Revival of Crimea, performed extremely badly. On the other hand, the Crimean Tatar Kurultai (a would-be rival parliament) elected 14 of its supporters to the special list set aside for the Crimean Tatars:

Elections to the Crimean Soviet (94 out of 98 candidates elected)

Group	Candidates elected	Group	Candidates elected
Russia Bloc and allies	57	Party of Economic Revival	
Russian Party of Crimea	1	of Crimea and allies	6
Communist Party of		Kurultai	14
Crimea	2	Independents (includes 3 minority)	13

Turnout: 61 per cent.

The Russia Bloc has subsequently divided into several factions and conflict between Meshkov and the soviet led in October 1994 to the downfall of the Crimean government, the diminution of Meshkov's powers and the hope of better relations between Kiev and Crimea in the future. Nevertheless, the results indicated that Kiev would find it difficult to keep Crimea in the fold over the longer term.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian elections of 1994 may well represent a watershed in post-independence politics. The presidential elections resulted in a transfer of power from a relatively nationalist-oriented regime to one determined to build bridges with Russia. On the other hand, the new president, Leonid Kuchma, has surprised many of his former supporters on the left by pushing ahead with a serious programme of market reforms. Conflict between president and parliament is therefore possible or even likely. Most importantly, however, the elections demonstrated that the deep structural divisions in Ukrainian society have still to be healed.

NOTES

1. On the 1990 elections, see Dominique Arel, 'The Parliamentary Blocs in the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet: Who and What Do They Represent?', *Journal of Soviet Nationalities*, Vol.1, No.4 (Winter 1990-91), pp.108-54.
2. For more detail on the parliamentary elections, see Dominique Arel and Andrew Wilson, 'The Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol.3, No.26 (1 July 1994). All data used here are from that or the following sources: *Post-postup*, 1994, Nos.9 and 11; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, *Ukraine's New Parliament* (Kiev, April 1994); information provided by Slavonic Centre, Kiev; and various press reports.
3. Sources: *Holos Ukrainy*, 12 July 1994; *Vseukrainskie vedomosti*, 22 Oct. 1994.
4. Dominique Arel and Andrew Wilson, 'Ukraine Under Kuchma: Back to "Eurasia"?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol.3, No.32 (19 Aug. 1994); and Andrew Wilson, 'Ukraine: Two Presidents but No Settled Powers', in Ray Taras (ed.), *Presidential Systems in Postcommunist States: A Comparative Analysis* (forthcoming, 1996).
5. Roman Solchanyk, 'Crimea's Presidential Election', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol.3, No.11 (11 Feb. 1994); and Andrew Wilson, 'The Elections in Crimea', *ibid.*, No.25 (24 June 1994).