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# Growing Localization and Fragmentation of Party Politics: Ukrainian Local Elections since 2010\*

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## Abstract

Although the city governments and mayors have held unique positions in the Ukrainian unitary state system, the roles played by them have been scarcely investigated in the previous literature. In contrast with governors and county mayors, who are main competitors in the regions, city mayors have retained privileges of being popularly elected and relative autonomy against the higher echelons. Furthermore, the decentralization reform initiated after the Euromaidan increased revenues of city governments and, in turn, autonomy of the city governments. How did those institutional advantages and reform in favor of the city governments empower the city governments in the Ukrainian state structure? Through the examination of interactions of the multi-level elites including the city elites and of the results of the 2010, 2015, and 2020 local elections, this study provides a sketch of the changes of the mayors activities and influence in this decade. Findings can be summarized threefold: First, the recent decentralization reforms as well as the recruitment patterns of governors changed the balance of power among regional elites in favor of city mayors.

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Second, national level parties, particularly, the parties of power have gradually diminished their influence at the local level elections. Third, instead of national level parties, several local parties closely connected with mayors came to flourish at the local level. As a consequence of the precarious political situation after the 2014 upheaval and the decentralization reform, city mayors came to play a pivotal role in the regional level politics and have potentials to affect the national level politics.

**Keywords :** Mayors, Ukraine, election, political parties, fractionalization of party system, decentralization

The center-periphery relationship in Ukraine has been on the way of transformation since Euromaidan. The Ukrainian constitution, promulgated in 1996, established an unitary state structure, in which lower administrative units are heavily dependent upon the higher echelons in terms of political, financial, and administrative powers (D'Anieri, Kravchuk, and Kuzio 1999, pp. 126-131). Political reforms initiated in response to the political upheaval in 2014 include the decentralization reform which was intended to change this dependence. The decentralization reform, which has empowered local self-governments with financial capabilities, has gradually changed the balance of influences between local actors and the central governments and resulted in emergence of several powerful local elites.

In particular, the city governments have rapidly grown its influence in the political processes. Nevertheless, the whole picture of the city governments influence in the Ukrainian center-periphery relationship has not been sufficiently portrayed compared to a eastern counterpart, Russia. The literature of the Russian federalism has long shed lights on mayors who are ones of the most competitive political actors in regions (Slider 2004; Ross 2008). The process of strengthening subordination of mayors to regional and federal elites after 2000 has drawn academic interests as well (Gel'man and Lankina 2008; Gel'man and Ryzhenkov 2011; Reuter et al. 2016). Even though the local governments in Russia more heavily subordinate to the higher echelons, the informal power structures established around mayors continue to exist and exert influence on the political processes (Ledyayev and Chirikova 2020; Shkel 2019).

Although Ukrainian mayors have played a pivotal role in regional politics too, the limited number of specialists have discussed this topic. Although several seminal works focusing on specific regions have highlighted the salience of the city governments in the re-

gional political processes (Matsuzato 2002, 2018; Ogushi 2020; Šabić 2004; Zimmer 2005), the entire picture of the role of the city governments in the regional political processes has not been provided yet. City mayors have enjoyed the institutional privileges in comparison with governors and county mayors.<sup>1</sup> Whereas both governors and county mayors are installed and dismissed by the discretion by the higher echelons, city mayors are popularly elected and responsible only for constituencies. The recent decentralization reform, moreover, produces the additional leverage of the city governments over local political processes. A report concludes that the regional governments lost most and the city of the regional significance benefited most in the recent decentralization reform in terms of flows of revenues (Levitas and Djikic 2017, p. 3). Thus, it is worth closely examining the roles played by the city governments and mayors in this decade to understand Ukrainian politics after Euromaidan more profoundly.

This study is a first attempt to delineate the uniqueness of the local powers in Ukraine with a particular focus on city mayors. Several important findings can be listed. First, as governors influence and popularity decline in the regions, mayors have come to appear as one of the most competitive actors in the regional political processes. Since the Presidents ceased to recruit regional bosses as governors, they can no longer earn trusts of both local elites and populations. With the electoral legitimacy and institutional security of their tenure, deficiency of which is a serious problem for governors, mayors have succeeded to yield their unique power and fill the power vacuum produced by the 2014 upheaval. Second, the national parties gradually diminish their influence at the regional and local levels. In 2010, a majority of mayors were incorporated in a ruling party, Party of Regions (PoR), due to a new electoral law requiring mayors to be nominated by political parties in mayoral elections. However, this trend was overturned by the political upheaval in 2014, which caused a significant renovation of party politics in Ukraine. A lot of mayors ran as non-affiliates and only a little candidates of the new parties of power, Bloc of Petro Poroshenko (BPP) and Servant of the People (SoP), secured the mayoral posts and the seats of the local legislatures. Finally, the localization of Ukrainian party politics is witnessed in the regional and local level. Particularly, powerful and independent mayors, a majority of which continue to serve more than one consecutive terms, have begun to form their own

1. The position of city mayors differs much from that of county mayors in a variety of ways. This study uses a simple term “mayor” to describe city mayors. If I intend to mention county mayors, they are always described as “county mayors.”

parties stressing the connections with mayors. The growing power as a consequence of the decentralization reform and changing power balance between governors and mayors result in the increase of centrifugal forces generated by powerful mayors.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The next section explains the institutional basis of the mayoral authority. The second section delineates the interactions between the city governments and the higher administrative units in this decade. In the third section, the results of the mayoral elections and city legislative elections are investigated. The quantitative data demonstrates the tendency of the party fractionalization and localization of the party system. The fourth section focuses on the capital cities to show that this tendency was accelerated by the mayors with growing authority thanks to the decentralization reforms. In a concluding remark, the main findings are summarized and the next agenda is discussed briefly.

## 1 Institutional basis of mayors in Ukraine

After the collapse of USSR, Ukraine consistently sought to develop the unitary state from the outset. Since Ukrainian regionalism, demarcated by diverse historical backgrounds, threatened the integrity of newly created Ukrainian state, there remained no alternatives, but unitary state. The first President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, designed the institution of the representatives of the President (*predstavnytsi Prezydenta*) in regions (*oblasti*) and counties (*rayony*) to tighten the vertical control over regional politics in 1992. As Kravchuk suffered from declining popularity due to his mismanagement of economics and politics, he had to compromise over the President's clout over local politics and promised that governors and county mayors were popularly elected in 1994. In fact, the popular elections of governors and county mayors were held in June 1994. As of April 2021, those elections were the first and last popular elections of governors and county mayors.

The second President, Leonid Kuchma, persisted in strong vertical powers and strict personnel controls over regional executive branches. He quickly reinstated the appointment system of governors and county mayors. According to the law on local self-government, the administrations in regions and counties are categorized as the local state administrations. Governors in Ukraine are installed by the President through the propositions of the Cabinet of Ministers. Governors propose candidates of county mayors to the

Cabinet of Ministers and the President appoints based on those propositions. To appoint and dismiss deputy governors, governors have to receive the agreements of the Cabinet of Ministers. Also, county mayors need to obtain agreements of governors in appointments and dismissals of their deputy county mayors.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, city mayors in Ukraine continue to be popularly elected since 1994. The law in 1992 vested the right to form executive committees only to villages and cities. Chairpersons of city legislatures, elected in popular elections, also lead executive committees assembled in the city legislatures.<sup>3</sup> Although the center-right factions in the legislature and President Kuchma preferred the unitary model of the state to forestall disintegration of the state, they recognized the local self-government at the level of villages and cities, responsible for supplies of infrastructures and various services, as a requirement (Wolczuk 2001, pp. 159-160). In the new law of local self-government, this system was preserved.<sup>4</sup> Mayors in cities are elected through popular elections.<sup>5</sup> This unique position has rendered mayors electoral credentials. They can organize their teams in the city administration. For instance, they can nominate secretaries, which are the second person in the city administration who acts on behalf of the mayor in his/her absence, with the agreement of more than half of the deputies in the city council.<sup>6</sup>

The electoral system of mayors and deputies in the city legislatures is of importance as well. The electoral law of the mayoral elections came into effect in February 1994. In this law, the right of nomination of candidates for the mayoral elections were vested to parties, civic organizations, labor collectives, and conferences of voters.<sup>7</sup> The new electoral law adopted in January 1998 added the category of “self-nomination.” The immature party system in Ukraine made it natural that mayors ran as non-affiliates of any parties. Concurrently with the revision of the electoral law of the national legislative election in

2. Law of Ukraine, No.586-XIV, April 9, 1999. “*Pro mistsevi derzhavni administratsiyi*,” article.10. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/586-14>

3. Amendment to the Law of Ukrainian SSR from March 26, 1992. N 2234-XII. *Pro vnesennya zmin do Zakonu Ukrayins'koyi RSR “Pro mistsevi Rady narodnykh deputativ Ukrayins'koyi RSR ta mistseve samovryaduvannya,”* article. 23, 31. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2234-12/ed19920326>

4. Law of Ukraine, No.280/97-VR, May 21, 1997. “*Pro mistseve samovryaduvannya v Ukrayini*,” article 4. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/280/97-%D0%B2%D1%80>

5. Law of Ukraine, No.280/97-VR, May 21, 1997. “*Pro mistseve samovryaduvannya v Ukrayini*,” article 12.2. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/280/97-%D0%B2%D1%80>

6. Law of Ukraine, No.280/97-VR, May 21, 1997. “*Pro mistseve samovryaduvannya v Ukrayini*,” article 50. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/280/97-%D0%B2%D1%80>

7. Law of Ukraine, N 3996-XII, February 24, 1994. “*Pro vybory deputativ i holiv sil's'kykh, selyshchnykh, raionnykh, mis'kykh, raionnykh u mistakh, oblasnykh Rad*,” article. 26. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3996-12/ed19940224>

March 2004, the law of local elections was also revised. The electoral system for the city legislatures, as for the regional and county legislatures, changed to the full proportional representation (PR) system.<sup>8</sup> However, candidates for mayoral elections were not forced to be nominated by parties.

In 2010, Supreme Council introduced the new electoral law that required all candidates for the mayoral elections as well as the regional, city, and county legislatures to be nominated by parties.<sup>9</sup> The purpose behind this revision was attributed to the desire of Viktor Yanukovich's government to incorporate local elites into his party, PoR. Indeed, a significant number of elected mayors were affiliated with PoR (in detail, see the following sections). Moreover, the electoral system of the regional, city, and county legislatures changed again from the full PR system to the mixed system. In addition, even candidates in the single member district (SMD) system had to be nominated by parties.<sup>10</sup> This system benefited PoR since the SMD races are more susceptible to manipulations through administrative resources (Kovalov 2014). As a result, a majority of the mayoral posts and seats of the city legislatures were occupied by nominees by PoR.

After Euromaidan, the electoral system changed again. In 2015, the new law of local elections came into power. According to this law, candidates for mayoral elections participate in the elections either through nomination of parties, or self-nomination. In contrast, candidates for local legislatures at the regional, city, and county levels have to be nominated by parties.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the party system plays an important role in the elections of local legislatures.

Unlike for the President of Ukraine, no term limits are prescribed for mayors. Therefore, unless they fail to win the mayoral elections, they can serve as mayors as much as they hope. In comparison with governors who are appointed and dismissed in the President's discretion, mayors can cultivate their own bases in cities for a relatively long time.

8. Law of Ukraine, N 1667-IV, April 6, 2004. "Pro vybory deputativ Verkhovnoyi Rady Abtonomnoyi Respubliki Krym, mistsevykh rad ta sil's'kykh, selyshchnykh, mis'kykh holiv. article 2.3-5. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1667-15/ed20040406>

9. Law of Ukraine, N 2487-VI, July 10, 2010. "Pro vybory deputativ Verkhovnoyi Rady Abtonomnoyi Respubliki Krym, mistsevykh rad ta sil's'kykh, selyshchnykh, mis'kykh holiv. article 35.2. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2487-17/ed20100710>

10. Law of Ukraine, N 2487-VI, July 10, 2010. "Pro vybory deputativ Verkhovnoyi Rady Abtonomnoyi Respubliki Krym, mistsevykh rad ta sil's'kykh, selyshchnykh, mis'kykh holiv. article 2.3. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2487-17/ed20100710>

11. Law of Ukraine № 595-VIII from July 14, 2015. "Pro mistsevi vybory," chap. 4, article 35.2. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/595-19/ed20150714>

The cases of mayors serving more than ten years are rife, such as Andrii Sadovyi (mayor of L'viv since 2006 to present) and Ivan Kulichenko (mayor of Dnipropetrovs'k since 1999 to 2014). This system heightens the possibility of elite captures of local assets (Bader 2020).

The political upheaval in 2014 opened a window of opportunity for the decentralization reforms, which were left untouched despite the urgent need for the reform. The central government started to amalgamate several municipalities to create larger municipalities which have sufficient size for effective provision of social services and devolve the financial and administrative jurisdictions. In particular, the financial aspect of the decentralization reforms entailed much more autonomy to the city government. Since 2014, the local budgets have expanded rapidly. The local budgets increases from 231.7 billion hryvnya in 2014 to 562.4 billion hryvnya in 2018, 2.5 times (Asotsiatsiya Mist Ukrayiny 2018, pp. 11-12). In the sequential theory developed by Falletti (2010), the political and fiscal decentralization plays a major role in the actual autonomy of the local governments. Since the mayors continue to be popularly elected since 1994, the political decentralization was achieved in the early phase. Moreover, the fiscal decentralization, which started in 2014, have gradually empowered the financial base of the city governments. Thus, the city governments in Ukraine are now in a better position relative to other administrative units. The following sections examine the actual political processes surrounding the mayors and the city governments in the favorable institutional situations.

## 2 Mayors, governors, and local electoral politics

Although the formal institutions favor mayors, given the informal nature of the Post-Soviet politics, it is necessary to examine the actual interactions between mayors and other actors to correctly understand a role played by mayors. Whereas scholars have devoted much attention to the conflicts between governors and mayors in Russia, those in Ukraine has been only sporadically mentioned. The Russian electoral system of governors and mayors underwent several institutional changes. In 1990s, most of the governors and mayors were popularly elected. The popular elections heat up the rivalry between governors and mayors as demonstrated in the fact that incumbent governors and mayors in the capital cities often competed in the gubernatorial elections (Slider 2004). At the expense of the abolishment of the popular gubernatorial elections in 2004, the governors tightened their control over the

city governments and forced them to accept the cancellation of popular mayoral elections (Gel'man and Lankina 2008; Reuter et al. 2016; Torikai 2021).

As mentioned above, however, the electoral system of governors and mayors in Ukraine has been static. The appointment system of governors and the popular elections of mayors remain unchanged since 1995. Thus, it is harder for scholars to capture the dynamics of the governor-mayor relationship in Ukraine. Nevertheless, given the nature of informal politics in Ukraine, it is still worth delving into the close investigation of the governor-mayor relationship for deeper understanding of the Ukrainian regional politics.

Although the appointment system of governors have allowed the Presidents to exert influences over governor selections, the principle from the Soviet period that governors were picked up from local elites was preserved. Governors usually retained the uncontested authority in their regions, which were useful in organizing effective political machines. President Leonid Kuchma exploited the appointment system to maximize his vote share in the presidential election and rewarded governors electoral performance with their tenures (Matsuzato 2001). In 1990s, several mayors stood against governors as major competitors in the regions as exemplified by conflicts between Serhii Ratushnyak (mayor of Uzhhorod from 1994 to 1998) and Serhii Ustych (governor of Zakarpattia region from 1994 to 1999), and between Yeduard Hurvits (mayor of Odesa from 1994 to 1998) and Ruslan Bodelan (governor of Odesa region from 1991 to 1998). Several mayors, such as Ivan Kulichenko (mayor in Dnipropetrovs'k, 1999-2014) and Volodymyr Sa'do (mayor of Kherson, 2002-2014), refrained from getting involved with the direct conflicts with the regional administrations and concentrated on city governance pragmatically even though they enjoyed high popularity among the city and regional population (Torikai 2018). Since the Presidents can replace governors in their own discretion in any time, a few governors tried to slide to the mayoral posts, seeking the guarantees of the tenures.<sup>12</sup>

As the tension between the western and eastern regions grew, the governor position has started to be assigned to affiliates of the parties of power closely intertwined with the executives in the central government. They are no longer regional barons, who retain uncontested authority over regional political processes and supposed to deliver votes for the

12. Bodelan was elected as the mayor of Odesa in 1998. A governor of Zaporizhzhya region, Yevhen Kartashov from 2001 to 2003, obtained the mayoral post of Zaporizhzhya city in 2003. Although independent mayors elected through popular elections in Russia have been often exposed to judicial inquiries, probably arranged by the regional administrations in many cases, and forced to leave the posts (Torikai 2021), such cases have been rarely observed in Ukraine.



Presidents and their parties. Rather, the governor posts were distributed to co-partisans in the Yanukovych period (Torikai 2019).

In this situation, the local election in Ukraine became a test for regime durability in Ukraine. Despite the gradual institutionalization of the national level party system, voting patterns in the local elections significantly differ from those in the national elections (Henderson and Romanova 2016). Thus, the parties of power have to seek the way to enhance its influence in the local level even though their deputies dominate in the national legislature. PoR succeeded to incorporate a lot of local elites in 2010 by the combination of formal reforms and informal pressures. The reforms of the formal institutions for the 2010 local elections, such as introduction of the mixed electoral system, prohibition of independent candidates in legislative and mayoral elections, and prohibition of political blocs, induced sizable local elites to belong to PoR. Administrative resources informally played a pivotal role in boosting the PoR shares of the seats of the regional and local legislatures (Haran 2011, pp. 100-102). PoR persistently forced mayors and local rank and file officials to be affiliated with the party. PoR members were coalesced not by the ideology, rather by the accesses to administrative resources.<sup>13</sup> In 2010, under Yanukovych's presidency, PoR incorporated a lot of mayors outside Donbas. For instance, a long-served mayor of Dnipropetrovsk (renamed Dnipro in 2016), Ivan Kulichenko (1999-2014), declared his affiliation to PoR before the mayoral race in 2010.<sup>14</sup> Another important instance is a pragmatic mayor of Mykolayiv, Volodymyr Chaika (2000-2014). Although he submitted an application to be a member of PoR, he lamented his decision to enter PoR. According to him, there was no other way, because the revised law of the local elections prohibits candidates from running in the mayoral elections as independents.<sup>15</sup>

The precarious political situation after Euromaidan accelerated this tendency. At first, President Petro Poroshenko dispatched several influential, but autonomous figures as governors, such as Ihor Kolomois'kyi in Dnipropetrovsk region, Serhii Taruta in Donetsk region, and Mikheil Saakashvili in Odesa region to stop the disintegration of the state. Yet,

13. *Radio svoboda*, December 22, 2010. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/2256234.html> The author of this article points out that PoR's tactics was reminiscent of Social Democratic Party (United) around 2000.

14. *Kommersant*, August 10, 2010. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1485204> According to this article, other sitting mayors in Nikopol', Marhanets', Ordzhonikidze (renamed as Pokrov in 2016) (those three cities are located in Dnipropetrovsk region), Kremenchuk (Poltava region), Illichivsk (Odesa region, renamed as Chornomorsk in 2016) submitted applications to join PoR prior to the local election in 2010.

15. *Segodnya*, August 18, 2010. <https://politics.segodnya.ua/politics/mer-nikolaeva-vctupil-v-partiju-vlacti-210178.html>

after the entrenchment of his position in the 2014 parliamentary election, he replaced them and put priority on his affiliates to replace those figures, as Yanukovich did (Torikai 2019).

Poroshenko also understood the importance of the local elections for stability of his regime. BPP<sup>16</sup> and the parties loyal to his government, such as Our Land (*Nash kraj*), secured the sufficient seats in the regional and local legislatures.<sup>17</sup> BPP did not hesitate to cooperate with former members of PoR to entrench their influence in the regional level.<sup>18</sup> However, this triumph was only a facade: only 28.3% of BPP candidates in the regional legislative elections were members of the party.<sup>19</sup> Since BPP just pretended to achieve the landslide victory in the local elections, their organizational base in the grassroots level remained so undeveloped that former candidates of the party got away from the party as Poroshenko's power declined.

Rapid increase of mayors authority filled the vacuum generated by the sudden collapse of Yanukovich's entrenched authoritarian regime. In the opinion poll conducted in 2015, residents felt that governors were more responsible than mayors.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the decentralization reforms have strikingly empowered the city government with the enrichment of local budgets. Aasland and Lyska (2020) presents survey evidence that the city governments came to be more trusted and accountable in the views of city population. A few case studies capture growing mayors influence over the electoral politics in the cities. Matsuzato (2018) demonstrates that the mayors in the front line of the Donbas conflicts are key players for Poroshenko's strategy to reintegrate those areas. Similarly, Ogushi's recent article presents the mayors behaviors as the reason of failure of development of the Opposition Bloc in Dnipro and Kharkiv (Ogushi 2020). A former governor of Kharkiv region from 2016 to 2019, Yuliya Svitlychna, comments that governors do not receive trust and supports from residents enough to implement policies needed to the regions and carry out their responsibility. According to her, mayors fill out niches generated by the deficiency of

16. Originally, the party, Solidarity, was renamed to Bloc of Petro Poroshenko in August 2014. After Poroshenko's defeat in the 2019 presidential election, Poroshenko declared renaming the party to European Solidarity. *Ukrayins'ka pravda*, May 24, 2019. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2019/05/24/7216047/> For simplicity, this study calls its party as BPP whatever official party names the party had.

17. *Radio svoboda*, October 26, 2015. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27325894.html>

18. The example of Kyiv region was cited in *Ukrayins'ka pravda*. [https://vybory.pravda.com.ua/files/graph/partija\\_dlja\\_vlady/](https://vybory.pravda.com.ua/files/graph/partija_dlja_vlady/)

19. For Fatherland and the Opposition Bloc, the values were 70.5% and 47.8%, respectively.

20. *Slovo i dilo*, July 10, 2015. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2015/07/10/infografika/polityka/mer-vs-hubernator-rehionalnyj-rejtynh-vidpovidalnosti-ukrayinskyx-chynovnykiv>

strong leadership in the regions.<sup>21</sup>

The authority of governors has quickly dropped in the recent political transformation under Volodymyr Zelens'kyi's presidency. Zelens'kyi has already appointed 48 governors as of March 22, 2021. Deputies from the Opposition Platform – For Life criticized the frequent rotations of governors for the lack of responsible power vertical.<sup>22</sup> In response to mismanagement of his appointees, Zelens'kyi began to install as governors local elites with rich experiences in local politics, such as Serhii Hrynevets'kyi (governor of Odesa region since November 2020) and Valentyn Reznichenko (governor of Dnipropetrovs'k region).<sup>23</sup> It is said that the incumbent mayor of Odesa, Hennadii Trukhanov, influenced selection of governor because Hrynevets'kyi was closely connected to him.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, the Dnipro mayor, Borys Filatov, exercised his power for the reinstallation of Reznichenko as the governor in exchange for the cooperation with Filatov's party, Proposition, with SoP.<sup>25</sup>

Under the dissemination of COVID-19 in 2020, thanks to growing financial base for the local self-government in the recent decentralization reform, mayors stepped forward in countermeasures against the virus.<sup>26</sup> Tensions between the President and local governments rapidly grew. For instance, the mayor of Cherkasy, Anatolii Bondarenko relaxed a quarantine measure without permission of the central government. The mayor of L'viv, Andrii Sadovyi, endorsed Bondarenko and emphasized their legitimacy as the popularly elected administrative officers. "Citizens elect mayors. And, people visit mayors, not the President, not a minister, or not a governor."<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, the central government had to ease the quarantine measure in a concession to local protests (Åslund 2020, p. 536). Zelens'kyi criticized mayors who did not follow the decisions made in the central government. He stated "they are not against us, but first of all against Ukraine. Yesterday, I had a conversation with Leonid Makarovich Kravchuk [the first President of Ukraine (1991-

21. *LB.ua*, May 18, 2020. [https://lb.ua/news/2020/05/18/457819\\_svetlichnaya\\_tsentralnaya\\_vlast.html](https://lb.ua/news/2020/05/18/457819_svetlichnaya_tsentralnaya_vlast.html)

22. *Zik*, November 21, 2020. [https://zikua.tv/news/politics/kadrova\\_chekharda\\_pokaznyk\\_kryzy\\_vlady\\_i\\_khaosu\\_v\\_upravlinni\\_derzhavoiu\\_zaiava\\_opzzh\\_987881](https://zikua.tv/news/politics/kadrova_chekharda_pokaznyk_kryzy_vlady_i_khaosu_v_upravlinni_derzhavoiu_zaiava_opzzh_987881)

23. Hrynevets'kyi worked as governor of Odesa region from 1998 to 2005 under President Leonid Kuchma. Likewise, Reznichenko served as governor of Dnipropetrovs'k region from 2015 to 2019 under President Poroshenko.

24. *BBC*, November 27, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-54901962>

25. *dsnews.ua*, December 10, 2020. <https://www.dsnews.ua/ukr/politics/vozvrashchenie-reznichenko-smozhet-li-filatov-otobrat-dnepropetrovshchinu-u-kolomoyskogo-10122020-408944>

26. *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*, June 1, 2020. [https://zn.ua/ukr/internal/partiya-meriv-otvetka-centru-346412\\_.html](https://zn.ua/ukr/internal/partiya-meriv-otvetka-centru-346412_.html)

27. *Babel'*, May 8, 2020. <https://babel.ua/texts/43118-kabmin-i-ofis-prezidenta-divlyatsya-na-meriv-yak-na-male-pivo-m>

1994)]. Mayors cannot be against the President as well as against the power vertical. This is against the state. This is pure separatism covered with decentralization.”<sup>28</sup>

A case of Kharkiv offers an illustrative example. After the Euromaidan, a mayor of Kharkiv since 2010, Hennadii Kernes, became a figure with uncontested control over Kharkiv city and region (Ogushi 2020, pp. 1648-1650). In the opinion poll, conducted from July 4 to July 12, 2020, Kernes was evaluated as the best politician in Kharkiv region. Only 6 % of residents in the region positively evaluated a governor in this time, Oleksii Kucher. Although 99% residents knew Kernes, even 54% did not know Kucher!<sup>29</sup> Kernes himself overtly expressed his negative feeling for the appointment of Kucher by describing Kharkiv as the “separate state (*otdel'noe gosudarstvo*).”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, three mayors of the regional capital cities (Ivano-Frankivs'k, Khmel'nyts'kyi, and Ternopil') from Freedom party apparently look down on Zelens'kyi's appointees.<sup>31</sup> Whereas governors no longer master local elites, mayors accumulated their powers not only in their cities, but also beyond the cities.

Zelens'kyi and his allies organized a new party of power, SoP. SoP stressed that fresh politicians unknown to the public were prioritized in its nomination strategy than old politicians.<sup>32</sup> In the 2020 local election, SoP was again indifferent to co-optation of existing elites in the local level. According to Zelens'kyi, a lot of incumbent mayors confessed their desire to run as the candidates of SoP. Although Zelens'kyi himself admitted the high popularity of sitting mayors in their cities, he underscored that the old mayors could not change their way for management. That is why SoP did not nominate active mayors as their candidates.<sup>33</sup>

For preparation of the regional and local elections scheduled in 2020, several mayors unveiled their intention to create a new party. Six mayors of the regional capitals participated in the founding ceremony of the party, Proposition, headed by Borys Filatov (mayor

28. *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*, June 9, 2020. [https://zn.ua/ukr/POLITICS/zelenskiy-vvazhaye-scho-meri-buntari-prikrivayut-chistiy-separatizm-decentralizaciyeyu-350379\\_.html](https://zn.ua/ukr/POLITICS/zelenskiy-vvazhaye-scho-meri-buntari-prikrivayut-chistiy-separatizm-decentralizaciyeyu-350379_.html)

29. “*Suspil'no-politichni nastroyi meshkantsiv Kharkivs'koyi oblasti*,” Rating Group Ukraine, published in July 16, 2020. [http://ratinggroup.ua/research/regions/obschestvenno-politicheskie\\_nastroeniya\\_zhiteley\\_harkovskoy\\_oblasti.html](http://ratinggroup.ua/research/regions/obschestvenno-politicheskie_nastroeniya_zhiteley_harkovskoy_oblasti.html) Kucher is a young lawyer and won in the 2019 parliamentary election in the single member district in Kharkiv region. He was appointed as the governor in November 2019.

30. *IA Regnum*, November 7, 2019. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2771149.html>

31. “Krayina po polychkakh. Khmel'nyts'kyi,” *Dzerkalo tyzhnya*. <https://zn.ua/project/miscevivybory2020/khmelnitskiy>

32. *BBC*, July 21, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-49067002>

33. *BBC*, September 15, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-54167801>

of Dnipro).<sup>34</sup> This party advocates the cause of the “professionalism.” According to Filatov, the purpose of the party is not only achieving the successful results in the regional and local elections, but also representing interests of local population.<sup>35</sup> Filatov underlines that the party supports medium-sized business and does not have any ties with oligarchs.<sup>36</sup>

In the 2020 local elections, SoP performed fairly well in the regional level. The number of deputies from SoP was ranked until third in the 16 regional legislatures.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, SoP’s performance in the 2020 local elections hardly reminded us of its popularity in the national legislative election in 2019, while Proposition achieved satisfying results.<sup>38</sup> Several specialists concludes that constituencies expressed their trusts to the local self-government more than to the central government.<sup>39</sup> Even though it is true that Zelens’kyi’s popularity declined due to the stagnation of political and economic reforms,<sup>40</sup> the development of self-images of mayors in the crisis of COVID-19 would in part account for the SoP’s incapability of mobilization.

The next sections probe the local election results in 2010, 2015, and 2020, with particular focus on the regional capitals, in order to document the surge of the popularity of the mayors in those cities and the trend of de-nationalization of the party politics in the local level.

34. Other mayors in the ceremony were Oleksandr Senkevich (mayor of Mykolayiv), Oleksii Kaspruk (mayor of Chernivtsi ), Serhii Sukhomlyn (mayor of Zhytomyr), Andrii Raikovich (mayor of Kropivnyts’kyi (capital of Kirovohrad region)), and Andrii Dyachenko (mayor of Kakhovka (Kherson region)).

35. *Ukrayins’ka pravda*, June 19, 2020. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/06/19/7256335/>

36. *Radio svoboda*, June 20 2020. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30681172.html>

37. *Ukrayins’ka pravda*, November 23, 2020. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/11/23/7274516/>

38. *Zik*, November 19, 2020. [https://zikua.tv/news/politics/partiia\\_propozytsiia\\_stala\\_naitsikavishym\\_pretsedentom\\_iz\\_top\\_10\\_peremozhtsiv\\_mistsevykh\\_vyboriv\\_eksperty\\_987716](https://zikua.tv/news/politics/partiia_propozytsiia_stala_naitsikavishym_pretsedentom_iz_top_10_peremozhtsiv_mistsevykh_vyboriv_eksperty_987716)

39. *Zik*, November 19, 2020. [https://zik.ua/news/politics/partiia\\_propozytsiia\\_stala\\_naitsikavishym\\_pretsedentom\\_iz\\_top\\_10\\_peremozhtsiv\\_mistsevykh\\_vyboriv\\_eksperty\\_987716](https://zik.ua/news/politics/partiia_propozytsiia_stala_naitsikavishym_pretsedentom_iz_top_10_peremozhtsiv_mistsevykh_vyboriv_eksperty_987716)

40. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in January 2021, 20.7% of respondents who decided to which parties they cast votes answered that they voted to the Opposition Platform – For Life while only 8.5% replied to SoP. “*Suspil’no-politychni nastroyi naseleण्याy Ukrainy: Sichen’ 2021 roku*,” <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1000&page=1>

Table 1: Parties nominating the largest number of elected mayors in the 2010, 2015, and 2020 mayoral elections

Rank	Party	Elected	Party	Elected	Party	Elected
1.	PoR	105	BPP	30	SoP	21
2.	Strong Ukraine	11	Opposition Bloc	11	For the Future	16
3.	Fatherland	10	Fatherland	9	Proposition	9
4.	People's Party	6	Our Land	8	Opposition Platform	8
5.	Front for Change	6	Self-Reliance	5	Our Land	7
			Freedom	5	Freedom	7
			Revival	5		
	Other parties	37		20		48
	Independents	0		50		32
	Total	175		143		140
	Total No. of parties obtained posts	27	23		31	

### 3 Analysis of local elections results in 2010, 2015, and 2020

Table 1 shows the parties in the order of numbers of nomination of elected mayors.<sup>41</sup> An overwhelming majority of elected mayors (60% of total mayors) in 2010 were nominees of PoR.<sup>42</sup> Even though Yuliya Tymoshenko garnered more votes than Yanukovych in the central and western regions of Ukraine in the 2010 presidential election, her party, Fatherland, performed much worse than PoR in the mayoral elections.

In contrast, the new electoral law that allows candidates to run without party nomination increased the number of independent candidates in 2015. Out of 1357 total candidates, 655 candidates (48.3%) were non-affiliates. The new party of power, BPP, won the largest number of mayoral posts. Nevertheless, the proportion of the mayoral posts won by BPP candidates was much lower than that of PoR's. Instead, 34% of mayors were not affiliated with any parties. The revision of the electoral law and instability caused by Yanukovych's ouster dissuaded strong candidates from having connections with any parties.

41. This analysis includes only cities of regional significance in the scope. Cities of county significance are not considered. In addition, the mayoral elections in 2015 and 2020 were not held in all of the cities in Crimea and a part of the cities in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Thus, the total numbers of the elected mayors slightly differ in each year. Furthermore, nine cities of county significance were reclassified to cities of regional significance from 2013 to 2016. This analysis includes those cities since 2010.

42. Note that the data of 2010 mayoral elections stored in the website of the Central Electoral Commission is incomplete. I complement the dataset with information available online. Information about two mayors were not found on the Internet, so those mayors were dropped. The number of total mayors is 175.

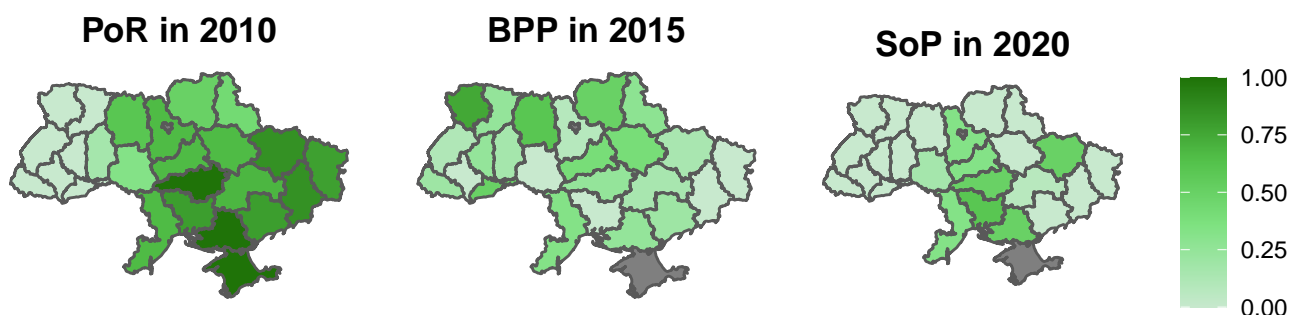


Figure 1: Proportion mayors affiliated with the parties of power in 2010, 2015, and 2020: No mayors in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was elected in 2015 and 2020.

The 2020 election shows a different tendency.<sup>43</sup> Although the number of independent candidates declined to 1087 out of 2848 (38.2%), the parties cleared a threshold for the PR race in the 2019 election of the national parliament could not perform well. Candidates from SoP secured the mayoral posts only in 20 cities (14.3%). One more interesting point is the proliferation of political parties. Whereas the number of independents in 2020 decreased to three fifth of that in 2015, the number of parties which nominated at least one candidate proliferated from 78 in 2015 to 109 in 2020.

Figure 1 presents the proportion of elected mayors nominated by the parties of power in each election. As in the left panel shows, PoR entrenched its position in the whole Ukraine, except for the western regions, where the hatred to PoR was extremely high. In contrast, BPP nominees obtained the mayoral posts in the western regions in 2015. However, the proportion was much lower than that achieved by PoR in 2010. Similarly, although several nominees won in the central and southern regions in 2020, SoP's performance in the mayoral elections appeared much poorer than PoR and BPP. It is possible to see the declining influence of the parties of power in this decade.

Instead, the number of local parties remarkably increased. Here, the local parties

43. In 8 territorial communities in Luhans'k region and 10 in Donets'k region, local elections were not held in a decision by the Central Electoral Commission. In Syevyerodonets'k, where the Luhans'k regional administration was temporarily located, people organized a protest movement against the cancellation of the mayoral elections. *Radio Svoboda*, August 11, 2020. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30777714.html>

Table 2: Parties nominating the largest number of elected mayors in the 2010, 2015, and 2020 mayoral elections

Party	Primary Region	Primary City	No. of nominees	No. of elected
<b>2015</b>				
New Faces	Kyiv	Irpin'	7	3
<i>Yednist'</i>	Mykolayiv	Yuzhnoukrayins'k	1	1
Trust Deeds	Odesa	Odesa	1	1
Concrete Things	Odesa	–	3	1
<i>Poruch</i>	Poltava	Kremenchuk	1	1
Democratic Party of Hungarians in Ukraine	Zakarpattya	Berehove	1	1
United Center	Zakarpattya	Mukachevo	2	1
Vynnytsya European Strategy	Vynnytsya	Vynnytsya	1	1
Total			17	10
<b>2020</b>				
Own Home	Chernihiv	Chernihiv	7	2
Only Alternative	Chernivtsi	Chernivtsi	1	1
Bee	Dnipropetrovs'k	Kamyans'ke	1	1
Bloc Vilkul "Ukrainian Perspective"	Dnipropetrovs'k	Krivyi Rih	10	2
Bloc of Vadym Boichenko	Donets'k	Mariupol'	1	1
Order	Donets'k	–	3	3
Party of Ihor Kolykhayev "We Live Here!"	Kherson	Kherson	2	1
Will	Khmel'nyts'kyi	–	4	1
Berezan Community	Kyiv	Berezan	1	1
Ihor Sapozhko's Team " <i>Yednist'</i> "	Kyiv	Brovary	1	1
National Egoism Party	Kyiv	Fastiv	1	1
New Faces	Kyiv	Irpin'	2	1
Trust Deeds	Odesa	Odesa	4	2
Trust	Poltava	–	6	3
Hroisman's Ukrainian Strategy	Vynnytsya	Vynnytsya	9	3
Andrii Baloha's Team	Zakarpattya	Mukachevo	4	2
Volodymyr Burak's Party " <i>Yednannya</i> "	Zaporizhzhya	Zaporizhzhya	2	1
Serhii Min'ka's Team	Zaporizhzhya	Melitopol'	1	1
Total			60	28

are defined as the parties which nominated no less than 50% of candidates in a specific region. Table 2 lists the names of the local parties that secured at least one mayoral post in 2015 and 2020.<sup>44</sup> While the number of such local parties in 2015 was 8, the number in 2020 exceeded the twice of that number (18). In terms of nominations and elections, whereas the local parties nominated 17 candidates and secured 10 mayoral posts in 2015 in total, the corresponding numbers in 2020 are nearly triple (60 and 28, respectively). Moreover, several local parties succeeded to obtain the mayoral posts in the relatively populous cities.

Furthermore, incumbent mayors enjoyed greater advantages in 2020 than in 2015.

44. Since the 2010 election data lacks the candidates data, it is difficult to determine which parties are local parties.



In 2015, 88 incumbents out of 186 (47.3%) joined the mayoral elections in the same cities. Among those incumbents, 51 incumbents (58.0%) secured the mayoral posts. In contrast, the number of incumbents participating in the 2020 elections was 106 out of 144 (73.6%) 75 incumbents out of them (70.8%) achieved the victory in the mayoral elections in 2020. Although the renomination rates cannot be directly compared due to cancellation of several mayoral elections in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhans'k region, the reelection rate shows the strength of the incumbents in 2020 compared to 2015. Electoral margins between the incumbents and competitors garnering the highest vote shares among other candidates in the first rounds offer additional evidence. While the average margin in 2015 is 9.99%, this value sharply increases to 19.85% in 2020. This 10% rise of the mean margin also illuminates the better positions of the sitting mayors compared to 2015. Although it is true that a lot of incumbent mayors, particularly affiliated with PoR, were hit by the blow of an infamous reputation connected to Yanukovych's regime in 2015, the entrenchment of the mayors influence, probably, accounts for the much larger advantages for incumbents in 2020. This tendency coincides with the improvements of evaluations of local population for the city governments (Aasland and Lyska 2020).

## 4 Growing mayors authority and localization of party system

To clarify the point, let us narrow the scope of the analysis from all of the cities to the capital cities. Table 3 displays the winners of the mayoral elections in the regional capitals held in 2010, 2015, and 2020. At first, Euromaidan changed the landscape from the perspective of the mayors in the regional capitals. Although four incumbents out of seven in the western regions won the subsequent mayoral elections in 2015, only two out of 14 in the rest of the country, except for Donetsk and Luhans'k, secured the posts. In stark contrast, a majority of the winners (17) in the 2015 elections continued to be in office after the 2020 elections. Although three out of seven mayors of the capital cities were newcomers in the western regions, all of the other regional capitals, except for Kherson, allowed the incumbents to serve in the second or third consecutive terms. In Chernivtsi, the incumbent, Oleksii Kaspruk (nominee of *ProPozitsiya*), failed to advance to the run-off vote. However, the incumbents did not participate in the elections in the other cases in which newcom-

ers won the electoral races. This outcome reflected the preference of local population to politicians with experiences. About regional level parties, 63% of respondents of an opinion poll conducted just before the elections preferred politicians with experiences to “new faces”. In addition, 67% of them regarded existence of strong local leaders more important than existence of famous national leaders.<sup>45</sup> The local level politics was separated from the national level politics more and more.

In terms of party affiliations, several observable implications can be extracted. First, SoP failed to permeate into the local level politics compared to previous two parties of power, PoR and BPP. As mentioned above, PoR compelled mayors to be member of the party to entrench its strength in the local level. In the eastern and southern regions, almost all of the regional capitals, except for Zaporizhzhya,<sup>46</sup> were under the reign of the PoR mayors. Also, PoR predominated the capital city legislatures in the eastern and southern regions (see Table 4). At the same time, the regional level politics was also under control of Yanukovich’s regime. About 75% of governors installed by Yanukovich were affiliated with PoR (Torikai 2019). All of the regional legislatures outside the western regions were predominated by PoR. This domination of executive and representative organs in the regional level enabled Yanukovich to accomplish the unprecedented cohesion of the state (Kudelia 2014, p. 22).

Though the level of the dominance of BPP did not reach the level of PoR, candidates from BPP fairly performed in the 2015 elections. BPP nominated its candidates in all of the regional capitals, other than Vinnytsya. Five out of 20 BPP candidates obtained the mayor posts. Since Poroshenko, as one of the founders of PoR, was accustomed to old *nomenklatura* rules, he prioritized co-optation of the existing strong elites to BPP.<sup>47</sup> Poroshenko understood that his authority and his party did not suffice to win the local executive and

45. “*Monitorynh mistsevykh vyboriv 2020: Ukrayina (25-28 veresnya 2020)*,” Rating Group Ukraine, October 1, 2020. [http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/monitoring\\_mestnyh\\_vyborov\\_2020\\_ukraina\\_25-28\\_sentyabrya\\_2020.html](http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/monitoring_mestnyh_vyborov_2020_ukraina_25-28_sentyabrya_2020.html)

46. Although the elected mayor, Oleksandr Sin, achieved the victory as a candidate of Fatherland, he suffered from tenacious attacks from the city legislature dominated by PoR deputies. Finally, Sin transferred to PoR in 2012. *Ukrayins’ka pravda*, October 26, 2012. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2012/10/26/6975419/> Likewise, the mayor of Poltava, Oleksandr Mamai, switched his affiliation to PoR in August 2012. *Ukrayins’ka pravda*, August 21, 2012. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2012/07/21/6969253/>

47. In Kramators’k (located in Donet’k region under control of the Ukrainian government), Our Land co-opted local elites to prevent the Opposition Bloc from forming a majority in the city legislature (Matsuzato 2018, p. 1019). Moreover, an ex-PoR deputy in the national legislature, Vladyslav Atroshenko, won the mayoral election of Chernihiv as a nominee of BPP. *Slovo i dilo*, September 1, 2020. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2020/09/01/statija/polityka/vybory-mera-chernyhova-osnovni-kandydaty-post-miskoho-holovy>

Table 3: Winners of mayoral elections in the regional capitals: Parties which nominated them were in parentheses. Mayors won mayoralty more than two consecutive terms are written in the bold font.

	Winner in 2010	Winner in 2015	Winner in 2020
<b>East</b>			
Dnipro	<b>Ivan Kulichenko</b> (PoR)	Borys Filatov (UKROP)	<b>Borys Filatov</b> (Proposition)
Kharkiv	Hennadii Kernes (PoR)	<b>Hennadii Kernes</b> (Revival)	<b>Hennadii Kernes</b> (Kernes's Bloc – Successful Kharkiv!)
Zaporizhzhia	Oleksandr Sin (Fatherland)	Volodymyr Buryak (Independent)	<b>Volodymyr Buryak</b> (Volodymyr Buryak's Party <i>Yednannya</i> )
<b>South</b>			
Kherson	<b>Volodymyr Sa'ldo</b> (PoR)	Volodymyr Mykolayenko (Independent)	Ihor Kolykhayev (We Live Here!)
Mykolayiv	<b>Volodymyr Chaika</b> (PoR)	Oleksandr Senkevych (Self-Reliance)	<b>Oleksandr Senkevych</b> (Proposition)
Odesa	Oleksii Kostushev (PoR)	Hennadii Trukhanov (Trust Deeds)	<b>Hennadii Trukhanov</b> (Trust Deeds)
<b>Central</b>			
Chernihiv	<b>Oleksandr Cokolov</b> (PoR)	Vladyslav Atroshenko (BPP)	<b>Vladyslav Atroshenko</b> (Own Home)
Cherkasy	Serhii Odarych (Party of Free Democrats)	Anatolii Bondarenko (Fatherland)	<b>Anatolii Bondarenko</b> (For the Future)
Khmelnytskyi	Serhii Mel'nyk (Fatherland)	Oleksandr Symchyshyn (Freedom)	<b>Oleksandr Symchyshyn</b> (Freedom)
Kropyvnyts'kyi	Oleksandr Sainsus (PoR)	Andrii Raikovych (BPP)	<b>Andrii Raikovych</b> (Proposition)
Poltava	Oleksandr Mamai (Conscience of Ukraine)	<b>Oleksandr Mamai</b> (Conscience of Ukraine)	<b>Oleksandr Mamai</b> (For the Future)
Sumy	Hennadii Minayev (Own City)	Oleksandr Lysenko (Fatherland)	<b>Oleksandr Lysenko</b> (Fatherland)
Vinnitsia	<b>Volodymyr Hroisman</b> (Conscience of Ukraine)	Serhii Morhunov (Vinnitsia European Strategy)	<b>Serhii Morhunov</b> (Hroisman's Ukrainian Strategy)
Zhytomyr	Volodymyr Deboi (PoR)	Serhii Sukhomlyn (BPP)	<b>Serhii Sukhomlyn</b> (Proposition)
<b>West</b>			
Chernivtsi	Mykola Fedoruk (Unity)	Oleksii Kaspruk (Independent)	Roman Klichuk (The Only Alternative)
Ivano-Frankivs'k	Viktor Anushkevychus (People's Party)	Ruslan Martsinkiv (Freedom)	<b>Ruslan Martsinkiv</b> (Freedom)
Luts'k	Mykola Romanyuk (Strong Ukraine)	<b>Mykola Romanyuk</b> (BPP)	Ihor Polishuk (For the Future)
Lviv	<b>Andrii Sadovyi</b> (Republican Christian Party)	<b>Andrii Sadovyi</b> (Self-Reliance)	<b>Andrii Sadovyi</b> (Self-Reliance)
Rivne	Volodymyr Khomko (All-Ukrainian Patriot Union)	<b>Volodymyr Khomko</b> (Independent)	Oleksandr Tretyak (BPP)
Ternopil'	Serhii Nadal (Freedom)	<b>Serhii Nadal</b> (Freedom)	<b>Serhii Nadal</b> (Freedom)
Uzhhorod	Viktor Pohorelov (Eco+25%)	Bohdan Andriyiv (Revival)	<b>Bohdan Andriyiv</b> (Independent)

representative organs. Consequently, BPP achieved victories in the four mayoral elections in the regional capitals (Chernihiv, Kropyvnyts'kyi, Zhytomyr, and Luts'k) and began to lead the city legislatures in the five regional capitals (Kherson, Kropyvnyts'kyi, Poltava, Zhytomyr, and Rivne).

In contrast, Zelens'kyi did not put priority on recruiting sitting mayors into his party, SoP. Although SoP nominated its candidates in all of the elections, no one could obtain the mayoral seats. Candidates of SoP could step to the runoff vote only in Poltava and Uzhholod. Also, SoP held the largest number of the seats only in Cherkasy (equal

Table 4: Largest parties in the city legislatures in the regional capitals: The number of the seats and the share of the seats (in parentheses) are under the names of the parties. The parties are written in bold fonts if the parties correspond with the parties which nominated the elected mayors in the same city.

	Largest party in 2010	Largest party in 2015	Largest party in 2020
<b>East</b>			
Dnipro	<b>PoR</b> 78 (65%)	Opposition Bloc 25 (39.1%)	<b>Proposition</b> 22 (34.4%)
Kharkiv	<b>PoR</b> 69 (69%)	<b>Revival</b> 57 (67.9%)	<b>Kernes's Bloc – Successful Kharkiv!</b> 38 (40.5%)
Zaporizhzhia	PoR 61 (68.5%)	Opposition Bloc 20 (31.3%)	<b>Volodymyr Buryak's Party "Yednannya"</b> 16 (25%)
<b>South</b>			
Kherson	<b>PoR</b> 45 (59.2%)	BPP 11 (20.8%)	<b>Ihor Kolykhayev's Party "We Live Here!"</b> 17 (31.5%)
Mykolayiv	<b>PoR</b> 60 (66.7%)	Opposition Bloc 26 (48.2%)	Opposition Platform – For Life 17 (31.5%)
Odesa	<b>PoR</b> 68 (58.1%)	<b>Trust Deeds</b> 27 (42.2%)	<b>Trust Deeds</b> 20 (31.3%)
<b>Central</b>			
Chernihiv	Fatherland 19 (38%)	Our Land 12 (28.6%)	<b>Own Home</b> 26 (61.9%)
Cherkasy		Party of Free Democrats 8 (19.1%)	<b>For the Future &amp; SoP</b> 8 (19.1%)
Khmelnyskyi	Fatherland 40 (67.8%)	<b>Freedom</b> 10 (23.8%)	Symchyshyn's Team 26 (61.9%)
Kropyvnyts'kyi	<b>PoR</b> 40 (52.6%)	<b>BPP</b> 9 (21.4%)	<b>Proposition</b> 9 (21.4%)
Poltava	<b>Conscience of Ukraine</b> 36 (72%)	BPP 8 (19.1%)	<b>For the Future</b> 10 (23.8%)
Sumy	Fatherland 37 (48.1%)	<b>Fatherland</b> 18 (42.9%)	<b>Fatherland</b> 13 (31.0%)
Vinnysia	<b>Conscience of Ukraine</b> 33 (66%)	<b>Vinnysia European Strategy</b> 20 (37.0%)	<b>Hroisman's Ukrainian Strategy</b> 34 (63.0%)
Zhytomyr	Fatherland 16 (26.7%)	<b>BPP</b> 11 (26.2%)	<b>Proposition</b> 16 (38.1%)
<b>West</b>			
Chernivtsi	Fatherland 17 (28.3%)	Own City 10 (23.8%)	<b>The Only Alternative</b> 10 (23.8%)
Ivano-Frankivs'k	Freedom 34 (57.6%)	<b>Freedom</b> 14 (33.3%)	<b>Freedom</b> 28 (66.7%)
Luts'k	Fatherland 24 (48%)	UKROP 15 (35.7%)	<b>For the Future</b> 13 (31.0%)
Lviv	Freedom 55 (61.1%)	<b>Self-Reliance</b> 24 (37.5%)	BPP 26 (40.7%)
Rivne	Fatherland 23 (42.6%)	<b>BPP</b> 9 (21.4%)	<b>BPP</b> 10 (23.8%)
Ternopil'	<b>Freedom</b> 30 (50.8%)	<b>Freedom</b> 13 (31.0%)	<b>Freedom</b> 18 (42.9%)
Uzhhorod	Unity 18 (30%)	<b>Revival</b> 9 (25%)	Fatherland 8 (21.1%)

number to the seats of For the Future). Zelens'kyi's charisma did not change voting behaviors of constituencies in favor of SoP's candidates. His nomination strategy (avoiding sitting mayors) resulted in the defeat of SoP.

In addition, rapid localization of the parties attracts attention of observers. Although the regional parties are formally prohibited by the 2001 electoral law, a lot of regional parties have prospered in the regions due to weak sanctions and sluggish officials who show no enthusiasms for implementations of this law (Fedorenko, Rybiy, and Um-

land 2016, pp. 615-617). In the regional legislatures, the 45 local parties received 18% of all seats in 2020 whereas the 29 local parties won only 5% of the seats in 2015. In the seven regions,<sup>48</sup> those parties led the new legislatures while only two parties held the greatest shares of the seats in 2015.<sup>49</sup> In the city level as well, parties strongly connected incumbent mayors obtained the greatest number of the seats in a majority of the legislatures in those cities. In the regional capitals and Kyiv, 69 local party projects received 22% of the total seats. In eight cases out of 25, the parties strongly connected to the cities (not regions) started to lead the legislatures.<sup>50</sup>

Such trend has not been observed until 2020. In 2010, the largest parties corresponded with the parties of the mayors in those cities in 9 cities. In 6 cases out of them, PoR retained the greatest number of seats and the mayoral posts. The two strongest national level parties at this time, PoR and Fatherland, received the largest parties in the 14 legislatures. Freedom also received the seats in the national legislature in 2012. In 2015, in turn, the number of correspondence grew to 12. Although the diversity of the parties increased due to the demise of PoR, the parties which have experiences of representation in the national level,<sup>51</sup> obtained the largest shares in the 13 city legislatures. Thus, the voting patterns in the mayoral elections did not always account for the outcomes of the city legislative elections.

In stark contrast, the mayor's authority has much stronger impact on the 2020 local election results. Only in the four regional capitals (Mykolayiv, Khmel'nyts'kyi, Lviv, and Uzhhorod) out of 21, the parties with the most seats differ from the parties that the mayors in those cities nominated.<sup>52</sup> The names of the parties became highly diverse. Although the elected mayors in the regional capitals competed with banners of a variety of parties, Proposition nominated the greatest number of the elected mayors in the regional capital (Dnipro, Mykolayiv, Kropyvnyts'kyi, and Zhytomyr). Proposition became the largest

48. Those are Vinnytsya (Hroisman's Ukrainian Strategy), Zakarpattia (Own Zakarpattia), Poltava (Trust), Kharkiv (Kernes's Bloc "Successful Kharkiv," Khmel'nyts'kyi (Symchyshyn's Team), Cherkasy (*Cherkashchany*), and Chernihiv (Own Home).

49. Those are Zakarpattia (United Center) and Khmel'nyts'kyi (For Concrete Things). For Concrete Things (*Za konkretni spravy*) was a different party from Concrete Things (*Konkretnykh sprav*) in Table 2.

50. "Kudy Ukrayiny zanesla khvilya mistsevykh vyboriv?" OPORA, December 10, 2020. [https://www.oporaua.org/blog/vybory/mistsevi-vybory/mistsevi\\_2020/22731-kudi-ukrayinu-zanesla-khvilia-mistsevikh-vyboriv](https://www.oporaua.org/blog/vybory/mistsevi-vybory/mistsevi_2020/22731-kudi-ukrayinu-zanesla-khvilia-mistsevikh-vyboriv)

51. Those parties are Fatherland, BPP, Freedom, Self-Reliance, and Opposition Bloc.

52. In Khmel'nyts'kyi, although the incumbent mayor, Oleksandr Symchyshyn, was a nominee of Freedom, the majority of the city legislature (more than 60%!) was occupied by nominees of Party "Komanda Symchyshyna (Symchyshyn's Team)." The strong connection between the mayor and the party is obvious.

party in the legislatures of those cities, except for Mykolayiv. Another important feature is the proliferation of the parties with the names of the mayors. In Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, and Khmel'nyts'kyi, the parties stressing the mayor names won the greatest number of the seats in the legislatures. Kernes's Bloc in Kharkiv and Symchyshyn's Team in Khmel'nyts'kyi also succeeded to secure the largest shares of the seats in the regional legislatures. In the case of Vinnytsya, the name of Volodymyr Hroisman (mayor of Vinnytsya from 2006 to 2014, Prime-Minister of Ukraine from 2016 to 2019) was stressed in the name of the leading party.

Regarding other parties without indicating the names of founders as well, several powerful mayors retain obvious clout over the party projects. For instance, it is difficult to separate Filatov's name from Proposition. Moreover, the party, Own Home, started to lead the city legislature of Chernihiv.<sup>53</sup> The incumbent mayor, Vladyslav Atroshenko, initiated this party project. Before the 2019 Presidential election, Atroshenko tried to keep distance from Poroshenko and his party, BPP. A majority of deputies in the city legislature from BPP transferred to Own Home since Atroshenko does not need any parties other than his own party.<sup>54</sup> In Chernivtsi, Only Alternative arose from the same-name social movement in Chernivtsi. The elected mayor from this party, Roman Klichuk, explains the reason for forming this party that the incapacity of the state to improve the situations made him and his allies feel urgent need for creation of their party.<sup>55</sup>

Those phenomena were witnessed in several non-capital cities too. The local parties emphasizing the connection to the mayors flourished. In Kryvyi Rih, the eighth most populous city and the largest non-capital city in Ukraine, the party with the name of the long-served mayor, Vilkul's Bloc "Ukrainian Perspective" marked the highest share of the seats.<sup>56</sup> The mayor of Kam'yans'ke (until 2016 Dniprodzerzhynsk) since 2015, Andrii Bilusov, organized the party, Bee (*Bdzhola*), in May 2019 to protect interests of city population.<sup>57</sup>

53. Own Home obtained the greatest number of the seats in the Chernihiv regional legislature too.

54. *Ukrayins'kyi tyzhden'*, October 23, 2020. <https://tyzhden.ua/Election/249013>

55. *Radio svoboda*, December 3, 2020. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/roman-klichuk-interview/30980332.html>

56. Vilkul withdrew his candidacy in the second round despite his victory in the first round. The next mayor, whom Vilkul declare his support, was from Opposition Platform – For Life. Both of the party created the majority coalition to cooperate with the mayor. *I12.ua*, November 23, 2020. <https://ua.112.ua/polityka/dlia-roboty-z-pavlovym-u-novii-miskradi-kryvoho-rohu-stvoreno-bilshist-do-iakoi-vkhodyt-blok-vilkula-ukrainska-perspektiva.html>

57. The website of *Bdzhola*. <https://bdzhola.org.ua/uk/zvernennya-miskogo-golovy-ta-lidera-vseukrainskoyi-partiyi-bdzhola> (Accessed on February 2, 2021.)

Although this party obtained the seats only in Kam'yans'ke city (21) and Kam'yans'ke county (13) in the whole nation, the party holds the largest number of the seats in both of the municipalities. The party, United Center, changed its name to Andrii Baloha's Team (*Komanda Andriya Baloha*) to stress its connection to Baloha family, who have exerted influences in the Zakarpattya region since 1990s.<sup>58</sup> The mayor of Mukachevo city since 2015, Andrii Baloha, achieved the landslide victory in 2020 as the candidate from Andrii Baloha's Team. Andrii Baloha's Team also sent the greatest number of deputies to both of the Mukachevo city and county legislatures. In Donetsk region, the incumbent mayor of Mariupol', Vadym Boichenko, developed his own party, Bloc of Vadym Boichenko.<sup>59</sup> Boichenko won the mayoral election as the candidate of this party and the party obtained the largest share of the seats in the city legislature.

Finally, why did those mayors organize their own parties and keep distance from the national parties? To generate a common arena for lobbying to the central government is a possible answer. This motivations accounts for the formulation of Proposition to unite several powerful mayors around Borys Filatov. Yet, in the other cases, the mayors do not look eager to horizontally unite with other local elites. Rather, they focus on extending their influence in the localities by incorporating local deputies into their parties. Symchyshyn in Khmel'nyts'kyi decided to create his own party since Freedom's popularity among city population decreased and he no longer needed any support from the party. Most deputies in the city legislatures from Freedom transferred to Symchyshyn's Team and won the seats.<sup>60</sup> One more potential reason is Matsuzato (2002) argues that local elites have incentives to create local parties in order to expand their influence in the higher level legislatures. If local elites do not seek to extend their influence to the higher level, they do not have to elaborate party projects requiring numerous burdensome procedures, such as the party registration, organizing party structures, and recruiting dozens of rank and file party activists and candidates. In this line, mayors would formulate their own parties in pursuit of increase of their influence to the regional level as well as the city level.

However, there is a huge discrepancy between 1990s and today's politics: governors are no longer political rivals to mayors. Whereas Zelens'kyi's governor recruitment strat-

58. *Glavkom*, July 27, 2020. <https://pmg.ua/life/91421-partiyu-yedynny-centr-pereyменовано-viktor-baloga-bilshe-ne-ye>

59. Deputies elected from the Opposition Bloc in 2015 renamed their fraction to Bloc of Vadym Boichenko in August 2020. *Novosti Donbassa*, October 12, 2020. <https://novosti.dn.ua/article/7680-mnogopartyynost-mestnye-ehlyty-v-kramatorske-y-maryupole-vedut-v-sovety-po-neskolko-partyy->

60. *BBC*, November 17, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-54963447>

egy weakens the governor's authority in the regions, the numerous powerful mayors have accumulated their powers thanks to their management potentials. Thus, those mayors have incentives in creating their parties with other goals than competing with governors. It is necessary to confirm what incentives lie behind their decisions to launch their parties through careful case studies.

## 5 Conclusion

The Ukrainian decentralization reform devolved the political and financial power to municipalities. As a result of that, Ukrainian city mayors could take advantage of the expansion of their authority to improve their self-images and even develop their own parties. Concerning to this point, the analysis above provides several important findings.

First, the decentralization reforms and the mayors power increases relative to the governors. Originally, the law of local self-government Ukraine vests the rights of popular elections only to city, town, and village mayors. Popular elections entail democratic legitimacy to those mayors, which governors and county mayors lack. As the fiscal flow dramatically changed in favor of the city administrations, the mayors and city elites In addition, the patron-client relationship between governors and regional elites transformed due to the recruitment strategy of President Zelens'kyi. Accordingly, the mayors strikingly increased their relative power not only in their cities, but also in the regions where their cities are located.

Second, the national level party could not incorporate powerful mayors. In the tradition of the Post-Soviet countries, the party of power extends their web to local notables to strengthen their influence on the ground (Reuter 2016). Yanukovich's reign exemplified this pattern (Kudelia 2014) and, to a lesser degree, Poroshenko's rule too. However, Zelen'skyi and SoP did not seek to absorb those mayors. As a result, the number of elected mayors who were affiliated with the national party significantly decreased.

Third, the local party projects were developed around the powerful mayors. In the Ukrainian history, the elites famous in the national level formed parties that attracted strong support in specific regions and to expand their influence to the national level politics. Hrihorii Surkis and Viktor Medvedchuk's Social Democratic Party (United) prospered in Zakarpattia, *Hromada* in Dnipropetrovs'k, and Progressive Socialist Party in



Sumy arouse with initiatives of Pavlo Lazarenko and Nataliya Vitrenko. In contrast, the mayors parties spawning around the 2020 elections were qualitatively different from those parties. Although several mayors such as Kernes and Filatov were known to the public outside their cities, not so many people, probably, did not know Buryak (mayor of Zaporizhzhya) or Kolykhayev (mayor of Kherson). The local parties flourishing in numerous cities appear as the new phenomena in the Ukrainian political scene. This proliferation resulted from the decentralization reforms and empowerment of the city administrations.

Although this study sketches a general trend over the Ukrainian center-periphery relationship focusing on the city governments and mayors, it is necessary to probe the actual effects and causes of this localization of the party politics and growing influence of mayors. For this purpose, careful case studies in several specific cities are required. Zooming in on the micro-level interactions and out to the whole picture, we can correctly understand the center-periphery relationship in Ukraine, where the strong regionalism demarcated by numerous factors has prevailed in the politics.

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