

# МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ ТА МЕТОДИ СОЦІОЛОГІЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

UDC 316.342.7:[316.334.3:324(477)]"2019"

Boyko, D., Zaporozhchenko, R., Lytovchenko, A., Nekhaienko, O., Yashkina, D. (2021). Group Nominations as an Instrument of Electoral Struggle: Ukrainian Discourse of 2019 Parliamentary Elections. *Sociological Studies*, 19 (2), 41–52. <https://doi.org/10.29038/2306-3971-2021-02-41-52>

## Group Nominations as an Instrument of Electoral Struggle: Ukrainian Discourse of 2019 Parliamentary Elections

### **Dmytro Boyko** –

*PhD in Sociology, Senior Lecturer,  
Department of Political Sociology,  
V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University,  
Kharkiv, Ukraine*

E-mail: [dmitry.n.boyko@gmail.com](mailto:dmitry.n.boyko@gmail.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3425-8555>

### **Ruslan Zaporozhchenko** –

*PhD student in Political Science, Lecturer,  
Department of Political Sociology,  
V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University,  
Kharkiv, Ukraine*

E-mail: [zaporozhchenko@karazin.ua](mailto:zaporozhchenko@karazin.ua)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7353-4933>

### **Artem Lytovchenko** –

*PhD in Sociology, Associate Professor,  
Department of Political Sociology,  
V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University,  
Kharkiv, Ukraine*

E-mail: [a.d.litovchenko@karazin.ua](mailto:a.d.litovchenko@karazin.ua)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1439-5213>

### **Oksana Nekhaienko** –

*PhD student in Sociology, Senior Lecturer,  
Department of Political Sociology,  
V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University,  
Kharkiv, Ukraine*

E-mail: [O.V.Nekhaenko@karazin.ua](mailto:O.V.Nekhaenko@karazin.ua)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5201-8200>

### **Daria Yashkina** –

*PhD student in Sociology, V. N. Karazin  
Kharkiv National University, Kharkiv,  
Ukraine*

E-mail: [yashkinadarya96@gmail.com](mailto:yashkinadarya96@gmail.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4454-4555>

The authors work within the framework of political sociology using interdisciplinary methodology. The article presents the results of a sociological analysis of the functions of group nominations in the electoral struggle in divided societies. The empirical basis of the article is the author's study of the electoral discourse based on the material of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine in 2019, carried out within the framework of the ARDU international research project, as well as a mass poll conducted within the framework of the same project. The authors investigate the electoral struggle as a factor and a reflection of macrosocial processes, relying on a combined theoretical and methodological foundation: the sociology of cleavages, social constructivism, and critical discourse analysis. The results of the analysis of the pre-election discourse and a mass survey of the adult population of Ukraine show the relationship between discursive group nominations and objective social cleavages. The division of society into conflict groups is used as a discursive tool for segmentation of the electoral audience, as well as for the consolidation and deepening of existing social divisions. Authors conclude that there is the interrelation between discursive group nominations and objective social cleavages. Group nominations (re) produce a macrosocial split of a complex, regional and ideological nature, which receives a technological dimension in the electoral discourse.

DOI: 10.29038/2306-3971-2021-02-41-52

Received: September, 2021

1<sup>st</sup> Revision: October, 2021

Accepted: November, 2021

**Key words:** electoral process, group nominations, social cleavages, discourse analysis.

**Бойко Дмитро, Запорожченко Руслан, Литовченко Артем, Нехаєнко Оксана, Яшкіна Дар'я. Групові номінації як інструмент електоральної боротьби: український дискурс парламентських виборів 2019.** У статті розглянуто проблему впливу електорального дискурсу на соціальну дійсність, яку він відображає, зокрема на соціальні конфлікти, розколи та розмежування. Представлено результати соціологічного аналізу функцій групових номінацій у виборчій боротьбі в поділених суспільствах. Емпіричною базою є авторське дослідження електорального дискурсу парламентських виборів в Україні 2019 р., проведене в рамках міжнародного дослідницького проєкту ARDU, а також масове опитування, проведене в межах того ж проєкту. Аналіз результатів досліджень демонструє взаємозв'язок між номінаціями дискурсивних груп й об'єктивними соціальними розколами (кліважами). Групові номінації в електоральному дискурсі відтворюють регіональний та ідеологічний макросоціальний поділ, надаючи йому технологічного виміру. Розподіл суспільства на конфліктні групи використовується як дискурсивний інструмент для сегментації виборчої аудиторії, а також для консолідації та поглиблення наявних соціальних поділів.

**Ключові слова:** електоральні процеси, групові номінації, соціальні розколи, кліваж, дискурс-аналіз.

## INTRODUCTION

The parliamentary elections in Ukraine, held on October 25, 2019, largely experienced the inertia of the presidential election, which Volodymyr Zelensky won. The election of a new president entailed the dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the appointment of early parliamentary elections. On the one hand, the election campaign was quite typical: both parties familiar to the Ukrainian political field (VO Batkivshchyna, Evropeiska Solidarnist`, Oleg Lyashko's Radical Party, Svoboda) took part in it, as well as political forces created especially for the elections (Sluha Narodu, Oppoziciyna Platforma – Za Zhittia, Golos, Shariy's Party, Mikhail Saakashvili's Ruh Novyh Syl). On the other hand, this election campaign was characterized by an increase in the shift in the vectors of the electoral struggle towards the use of new media using social media platforms, e.g. Facebook, Telegram, Instagram and YouTube.

This combination of «old» and «new» in the electoral struggle, which was waged against an exceptional internal political background of armed conflict in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, actualizes not only the need for a purely applied analysis of the social foundation of electoral technologies. It also highlights a special theoretical and methodological perspective of the study of electoral processes in divided societies.

**The relevance of** our work is revealed in several aspects. 1. The parliamentary elections of 2019 were the first competitive change of power after the crisis of 2014, since in 2014 the elections were actually only the registration of a new political order. Their uniqueness is complemented by the exceptional significance of public political struggle for a society characterized by deep gaps. This struggle not only reflects the polarization caused by the splits, but also can both weaken and intensify it. In such conditions, the need for sociological analysis in assessing the tools of the electoral struggle in the conditions of a divided society becomes actual one. 2. At the same time, Ukrainian electoral sociology does not touch upon the problem of the social foundation and macrosocial effects of the electoral struggle toolkit, focusing either on a descriptive study of the technologies used, or on the analysis of electoral motivation, its connection with public opinion. 3. The relevance of the study of specifically symbolic instruments of the electoral struggle is due to the division of Ukrainian society: for divided societies, discursive processes are of increased importance. The articulation of the characteristics of groups and their discursive positioning can have a decisive influence on the dynamics of macrosocial polarization.

Thus, the study of the discursive (symbolic) level of electoral tools in the conceptual framework of theories of social divisions and a divided society turns out to be relevant.

**The purpose** of our study is to determine the functions of group nominations in the electoral struggle using the example of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine in 2019. **The hypothesis** of our research is that

group nominations are central elements of the mechanisms for using contradictions in the Ukrainian electoral discourse, ensuring the achievement of specific electoral goals. Used in the discourse of electoral struggle, group nominations specifically (re)produce and reinforce (or deconstruct) structures of inequalities and divisions.

### **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CLEAVAGES AND DIVIDED SOCIETY**

There are a number of fundamental social divisions in Ukrainian society, which, after the events of 2014, became so acute that they created grounds for considering Ukraine as a divided society (Lytovchenko, Muradyan, 2015). Based on this, it seems appropriate to turn to theories of social divisions and divided societies as a theoretical foundation. Each electoral cycle in Ukraine, whether regular or extraordinary, is characterized by the reproduction of splits, usually along linguistic, regional or (geo) political grounds. After the events of 2014–2015, mechanisms for identifying residents of different regions of the country with specific categories, for example, a community or a region, language of communication, religion, patriotism and conformism, etc. became especially important. It is not surprising that any political party or political leader, as agents of conflict and instruments of integration at the same time (according to S. Rokkan and S. Lipset), fill their election campaigns with regular messages aimed at constructing certain social groups predisposed to their official "ideology" (which, as a rule, is not present in any party).

It is in the context of the election campaign that group nominations are not only recreated, but also fixed in the minds of the electorate as an appeal to the voters' normative value system. Stein Rokkan and Seymour Lipset (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), referring to the exceptional role of political parties in creating and maintaining social cleavages, suggest the following functions:

- (1) crystallization of latent contradictions between social group;
- (2) articulation and reproduction of such contradictions in (not) official political discourse;
- (3) accumulation of social pressure and its transformation into political actions;
- (4) broadcasting and maintaining contradictions at both the discursive and electoral levels.

That is, a cleavage is not just a contradiction, but also a specific instrument on whose functionality the electoral strength of a party depends. Therefore, the use and reproduction of cleavages is a mechanism for the "vitality" of parties, as well as their potential passage in the next elections to the Ukrainian parliament.

We should immediately indicate that in the study of divided societies, we combine the approaches of A. Gelke, E. Nordlinger with the classical version of social cleavages (cleavages) by S. Lipset, S. Rokkan (for more details, see: (Dublikash et al., 2015)). Accordingly, we interpret the cleavage as contradictions between large groups over macrosocial (national) problems, so deep that the majority in society is forced to split along two opposite positions. We see the perpetuation of divisions in socio-political practices, structures and discourse as the main source of division. Cleavages are more stable than conflicts; they arise not in connection with the problem as such, but because of the negative experience of its solution. Accordingly, unlike conflicts, cleavages by themselves do not stimulate overcoming the problem, but, on the contrary, can produce or (irreversibly) consolidate the division of society at the macro level.

Combining the antagonistic categories proposed by Rokkan and Lipset (center / periphery, state / church, village / city, workers / owners) with the Ukrainian electoral process, we assume the existence of such structural conflicts in the context of the ways of individual self-identification and the reproduction of structures of inequality. First, the dual nature of the cleavages shows several possible options for their functioning: (1) communities themselves produce and articulate cleavages through the ideological construction of social reality, (2) parties constitute discursive fields of cleavages to consolidate a potential electorate around their political power. Secondly, the blurring of the boundaries between social classes in society, as well as the ambiguous polarization of the population by geographic (city / village) or geopolitical (European integration / Eurasianism) categories leads to mixing (or overlapping) of already existing divisions. Thirdly, the positions of cleavages are strong when the self-identification of a particular community depends not only and not so much on its living / living environment, that is, on the local level, but also on those political or cultural processes that occur at the macrolevel.

Undoubtedly, the literal mechanical transfer of the cleavages highlighted by Rokkan and Lipset to the Ukrainian reality is inappropriate. For us, the very foundation of understanding the cleavages by these authors is important, as well as the ability of the listed cleavages to transform into ideological ones, which

they substantiated. There is certain reason to believe that, in one form or another, specific cleavages that coincide with the delimitations identified by Lipset and Rokkan exist and operate in Ukrainian society, but the ability of these or other (for example, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) cleavages to determine social and political development of the country is much more important.

At the same time, we assume a constructivist view of (self) identification in the spirit of R. Brubaker (2012): an individual correlates himself / herself not so much with a real, objective social group, but with a certain *social category* that describes it. We, following the aforementioned cleavage theorists, recognize the social ontology of groups, but we do not regard the process of (self) identification as simple, linear and unambiguous, seeing in it a continuous discursive struggle for the right to nomination. This perspective much better explains both the volatility of the electoral field in Ukraine in the «party-group» link, and the stability of the factorization of cleavages during the elections.

## 2. METHODOLOGY: CRITICAL DISCOURSE-ANALYSIS

In the study of discourse, we draw on Fairclough's proposed toolkit for critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003). According to critical discourse analysis, discourse not only affects or is reflected in social practice, but can functionally: (1) be a meaningful part of social practice, (2) facilitate the processes of individual / collective representation and reflection, (3) be either a part of identity or by an identification mechanism (Fairclough, 2001). The methodology of critical discourse analysis makes it possible not only to record key messages addressed to voters, but also to identify specific group nominations, within the boundaries of which structures of inequality, divisions or divisions are reproduced. Exceptional attention to group nominations is due to the conceptual framework of cleavages and divisions justified above. As a reminder, we view cleavages as deep contradictions between large groups. It is the groups that act (voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or not) as the main actors of cleavages and divisions. Accordingly, group nominations are the main means of discursive reinforcement and (re) production of cleavages. We cannot argue that group nominations should be viewed as the only source of division, at least because the division of society is by no means limited to the discursive level. Nevertheless, the special significance of group nominations for the analysis of political discourse in a divided society seems, in view of the above, obvious. At the same time, the above-mentioned consolidation and reproduction of the cleavages, as well as the accompanying translation of macro-contradictions, are not necessarily (and even unlikely) to be carried out in political discourse openly and straightforwardly. That is why the goal set by us in this study is not so much of a constitutive and descriptive character as it is aimed at revealing the unobvious properties of Ukrainian politics. Since it is not just political discourse that is analyzed, but the electoral genre (the most saturated with silences, disguises and manipulative technologies), critical discourse analysis is the best fit for research tasks, namely, the discovery of hidden characteristics and relationships, deconstruction of masks and manipulations.

Considering discourse as a unity of linguistic ways to describe and reproduce social reality, linguistic action and its social context (including, in addition to the characteristics of the situation, the properties of the discursive community and audience) (Lytovchenko, 2004) coincides with N. Fairclough's laconic version of the definition of discourse. He identifies it as «language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., political discourse)» (Fairclough, 2013). At the same time, we consider it important to consider discourse in an inextricable connection with non-discursive practices, although we do not use the full three-dimensional analysis scheme of N. Fairclough: we do not set ourselves the goal of comprehensively characterizing the electoral discourse as such; we need to determine exactly how group nominations are used in it. Accordingly, at the instrumental level, we accept Fairclough's thesis «discourse is only a linguistic, or semiotic, element» (Fairclough, 2013, p. 183), and focus on analyzing the textual level of electoral discourse. In order to present the mechanisms of using group nominations in this discourse, such an analysis is sufficient. However, in order to capture non-obvious relationships and characterize the functions of group nominations not supposedly, but as actually carried out. In order not only to fix the saturation of the electoral discourse with nominations, but also to reveal aspects of social struggle in discursive practices, it is necessary to go beyond the textual level and discursive practices and turn to social practices, to the social context. Based on this need, we supplement the discourse analysis with the analysis of mass survey data (telephone interviews among the adult population of Ukraine), thus providing information about the

characteristics of the target audience of the discourse as an element of the social context. Therefore, discourse analysis is necessary for us in order to characterize the textual level and discursive practices, and we «get» to social practices (corresponding to cleavages and cleavages) and social context (characteristics of the audience of electoral discourse - all adult population of Ukraine) by means of a mass survey.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The Empirical Base

The empirical base of our research includes:

1) discourse analysis, which was carried out from June 23 to July 28, 2019 within the framework of the ARDU (*Accommodation of Regional Diversity in Ukraine, 2019–2021*) project, implemented by the Oslo Metropolitan University (Oslo, Norway) in cooperation with V. N. Karazin University by the authors of this article. The following sources were selected for the analysis: the official press – the newspapers «Voice of Ukraine» and «Government Courier»; official pages / accounts of candidates, party and state representatives in the social network Facebook; daily and final news releases on the three top-rated TV channels (representing, respectively, national-patriotic discourse, opposition discourse and conventionally neutral discourse). As a result of continuous monitoring of materials from all sources for the specified period, a thematic selection was carried out (the total number of materials was 1317, of which 242 were TV plots, 137 newspaper articles, 938 online publications), and only the selected materials were further analyzed (more about the principles of selection and analysis – below). Within the framework of this project, the research group faced tasks that are more ambitious, therefore the analysis included many parameters; continuous fixation of group nominations in the analyzed materials was only one of them;

2) a two-stage survey of the population of Ukraine using the telephone interview method, conducted by the «Operative Sociology» company in December 2020 within the framework of the same project. The first stage is a survey of the population of Kharkiv (n = 606) and Chernivtsi (n = 600) regions. The second stage is All-Ukrainian (n = 2106). In both cases, a probabilistic sample was used; the error did not exceed 4 %. Since there is no less distance between the party discourse and the electorate of parties with their obvious interconnection than between advertising and the consumer, the survey toolkit did not include group nominations found in electoral discourse, but qualitatively comparable indicators – the practice of political (self) identification of citizens.

#### 3.2. Discourse Analysis

In the course of analyzing the discourse of political parties, we did not seek to understand the logic and structure of their interaction with voters. It was important for us to single out those structural units (discursive group nominations) that construct and / or reproduce social cleavages, consolidating the existing political differentiation in society. Therefore, we selected materials on the most pressing topics for Ukrainian society: the reform of decentralization, geopolitical orientations (state in general and regions in particular), language problems and ethnopolitics, war in the East of Ukraine.

In turn, among the political parties that participated in the electoral campaign, the most popular were selected according to pre-election sociological polls. Such parties taken for analysis include Sluha Narodu, Evropeiska Solidarnist', VO Batkivshchyna, Opozyciyna Platforma – Za Zhittia, Golos in the logical connection with their leaders Volodymyr Zelensky, Petro Poroshenko, Yulia Tymoshenko, Vadim Rabinovich, Evgeny Muraev and Svyatoslav Vakarchuk. This discourse analysis are described in details in (Lytovchenko et al., 2021).

We include the social context of the language use in the discourse definition. The social context is: the official normative field of use (in the case of our study, these are the main limiting frameworks of the electoral field of Ukrainian politics), characteristics of the target audience of the discourse (in our case, the socio-political positions and identification of the adult population of Ukraine), and characteristics of the discursive community. In our study, political parties act precisely in the role of a discursive community.

The distribution of group nominations in the discourse of parties is shown in Table 1.

An analysis of the discourse of five political parties showed that their communication with voters focused on the inversion of «friend / foe» by assigning specific labels to specific social groups and individuals. The generalizing character of "foes" was filled with the content of enemies not only and not so much of the country as a whole, but of specific social groups, as a rule, included in the electoral field of a political party. Strategically, all group nominations that are used in the discourse of parties are aimed at

specific local / regional zones. In this context, locality should be understood as the territorial fixation of the voter (a specific region or region, borderline state, ethno-linguistic aspect). In addition, political parties supported and reproduced the already existing social cleavages by groups (in the context of the matrix proposed by Lipset and Rokkan) «state / church» (ES and OPZZ), center / periphery (Batkivshchyna, OPZZ, Sluha Narodu), village / city (Batkivshchyna, ES, OPZZ), workers / owners (OPZZ, Golos, Sluha Narodu).

Table 1

**Types of Nominations in the Discourse of Political Parties**

| Political Party                    | Group Nominations*   | Types of Nominations             |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Sluha Narodu                       | «Ukrainians / citizens», «individuals / people», «old government / technocrats»          | civil, conflict-internal         |
| Evropeiska Solidarnist`            | Ukrainians / Ukrainian people, European partners, pro-Russian forces / aggressor country | ethnic, conflict-external, local |
| «Batkivshchyna»                    | individuals / people, team / professionals, old government / new government              | civil, conflict-internal         |
| Oppoziciyna Platforma – Za Zhittia | voters / citizens / residents, nationalists / fascists, poroshenko-bots                  | conflict-internal, civil, local  |
| Golos                              | Ukrainian / European, heroes / traitors, European allies / partners                      | ethnic, conflict-internal        |

\*Shows the group nominations most often used in the materials of each party («top-3»); comparison of specific numerical indicators does not make sense, since the amount of selected materials for each batch is different; moreover, for critical discourse analysis, formal quantitative indicators have no independent analytical value.

Source: author's data.

The distribution of the types of nominations identified by us shows that the discourse of a particular political party is not concentrated around one specific type of nominations. Rather, there is a combination of different types depending on the pursued goals of the party, as well as on the ratio of the party's positions with those of competitors. It is easy to see that the nomination «old government» with the oppositions «new government» or «technocrats» is encountered in the discourse of the Batkivshchyna and Sluha Narodu parties. This is the embodiment of a purely political and technological opposition based on the simple fact that both parties do not formally belong to the ruling political forces (Sluha Narodu was not included in the previous parliamentary convocation, Batkivshchyna was not included in the ruling coalition of the Petro Poroshenko Block and the Narodnyi Front). But the coincidence of «Evropeiska Solidarnist`» and «Voice» in the use of group nominations «Ukrainians», «Ukrainian people» and «Europeans», «European partners» has more substantive grounds. These are components of a special kind of «Euro-patriotic» discourse, which in our case is opposed to the discourse of the OPZZ party. Here the nominations generalizing the audience («voters / citizens / residents») are devoid of ethnic or national attachment, but negative group nominations have ideological («nationalists / fascists») or a specific political («poroshenko-bots») link. In the second case, the nomination is directly addressed to «Evropeiska Solidarnist`» («poroshenko-bot» in Ukrainian political language is called the irrationally convinced fans of the fifth president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, the leader of the «Evropeiska Solidarnist`»). This set of nominations not only reflects the simple opposition of «Evropeiska Solidarnist`» and «OPZZ» as ideological (at least at the level of declaration) opponents, but also reproduces the ideological split between «nationalists / fascists» and «anti-nationalists / anti-fascists». This split includes many branches and versions, including the most relevant today «anti-Russian positions» – «pro-Russian sympathies», but these details are not as important for our tasks as the general fixation of the reproduction of this split in the group nominations of the electoral discourse. Let us also note that the articulation of this split in the discourse of the OPZZ antagonistically binds this party to its opponents (ES and “Golos”), turning it into an element of a unified system. Finally, we

see a certain connection between the group nominations «pro-Russian forces» and «aggressor country», which are often used in the «ES» discourse, on the one hand, and the nomination «traitors» presented in the «Voices» discourse, on the other. These nominations place bipartisan discourses in one segment of the split around the Donbas conflict; in the opposite segment, «OPZZ» is placed, but this position of the party has no discursive expression (the group nomination «nationalists / fascists» in its discourse is addressed to the internal Ukrainian context, out of direct connection with the Donbas processes). «Batkivshchyna» and «Sluha Narodu» do not occupy a definite place in this space.

Thus, the analysis of the pre-election discourse showed that the articulated group nominations reproduce the split that divides the parties into clearly defined positions: national-patriotic with a clear European integration and anti-Russian component (ES, Golos), oppositional anti-nationalist (OPZZ) and renovationist (Batkivshchyna, Sluha Narodu). At the same time, the third position is a position outside the split, and the first two are asymmetrically opposite: the national-patriotic position is articulated radically and unambiguously, while the oppositional one has a dependent, secondary character and is concentrated on articulators of the initial (national-patriotic position), and not on the transmission of a self-sufficient semantic content. This means that the symbolic system in which the ES and the Voice interact, on the one hand, and OPZZ, on the other, is not balanced and stable.

### 3.3. Multivariate Analysis

The electoral process is a symbolic struggle, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, during which social agents with a certain capital operate in the social space (Bourdieu, 2005). The goal of such a struggle is to obtain more capital, which means even more power. Therefore, the symbolization of one's own actions, as well as stigmatization (labeling and reproduction of social contradictions and political conflicts) of the adversary make it possible to (re) distribute political resources and autonomize one's own electoral field («one's voters»). However, a direct transfer of the party discourse to the electorate of parties would be incorrect to the same extent as it is incorrect to transfer a conditional advertising agenda to the consumer: of course, they are interconnected, but this connection is not a simple reflection of the former in the consciousness of the latter. Therefore, it is appropriate to single out qualitatively comparable indicators that describe units that are similar in functionality and ontology – the practice of (self) identification. Taking into account the precariousness and frivolity of party identifications of the Ukrainian electoral field (and the almost complete absence of stable party structures), they should be neglected in favor of more stable civic (self) identifications, that is, the correlation not with parties, but with abstract social constructs: “state – country”, “ethnos”, “region”, “city”, “European”. Civil (self) identifications lend themselves well to quantitative measurement (in the section of the adult population of Ukraine) by means of a modified Likert scale with an unspoken mean option (from complete disagreement to complete agreement):

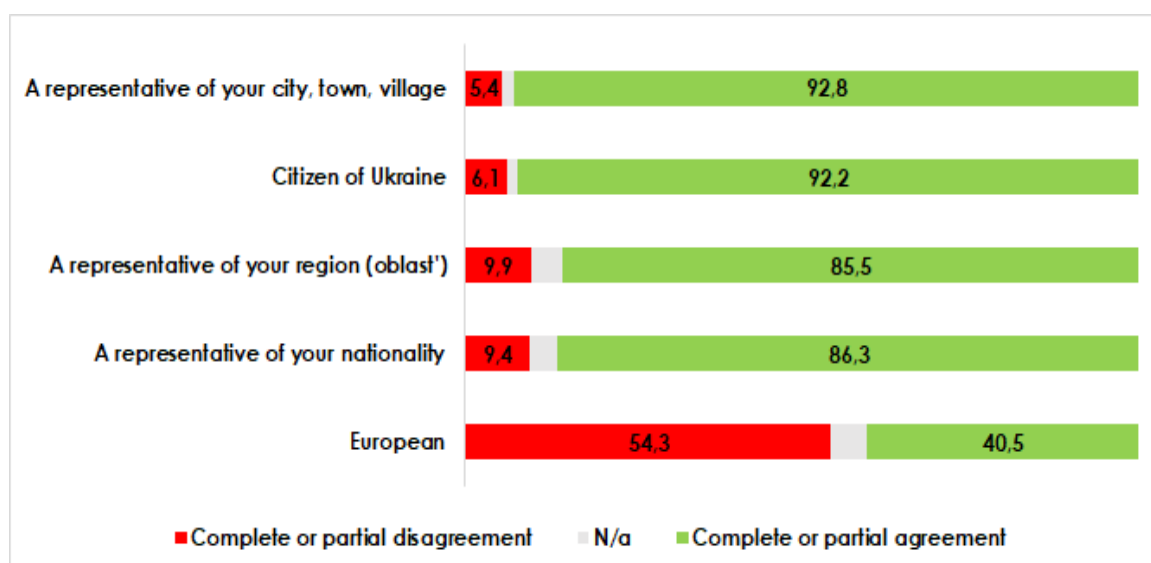


Fig. 1. Civil (self) Identification of the Adult Population of Ukraine (%)

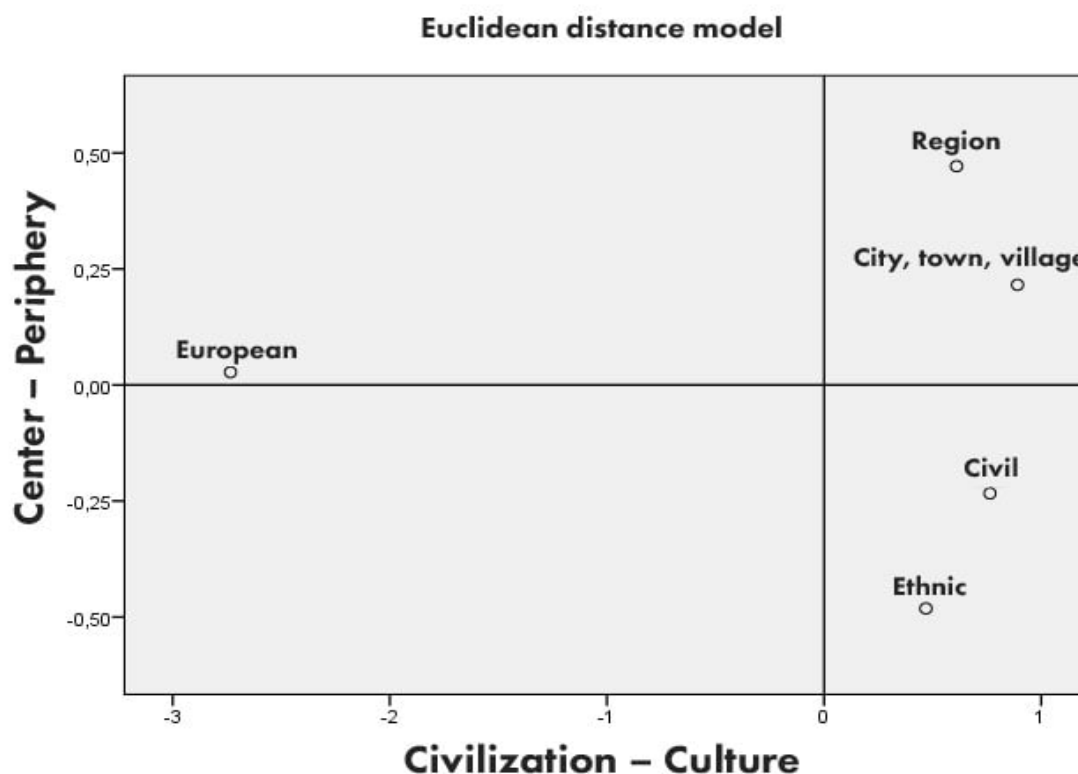
Source: author's research.

The one-dimensional distribution shows the traditional for Ukraine primacy of local self-identification (with a city, town or village), which is on the same level of self-identification with a country-state: more than 90 % of respondents in one way or another relate themselves to these categories. The second echelon of identifications is made up of regional and ethnic ones, for which this figure exceeds 85 %. The underdog on this list is the «European» category – the only one that has collected more dissenting than consonants.

An important caveat should be made here right away. Mass polls (especially those conducted remotely) in socially unstable territories tend to distort the picture in an apologetic way: the sample does not include «outsiders» and «escapists» whose practices and beliefs are fundamentally different from the imposed «official course» of the state. Therefore, it is obvious that the data presented above are clearly overestimated (for example, the response rate in different regions of Ukraine ranged from 9 to 59 percent), that is, it is meaningless to consider them as a snapshot of the current situation. Nevertheless, these data will allow looking at the structural links of the processes of (self) identification with social divisions. To do this, we propose to apply a series of multivariate analysis methods.

### 3.3.1. Multidimensional Scaling

1. Multidimensional scaling (ALSCAL, measure – Euclidean distance) by indicators of civil (self) identification gives the following results:



**Fig. 2.** Modeling the Distribution of Civil (Self) Identifications of the Adult Population of Ukraine  
Source: author's research

The horizontal axis unambiguously separates the identification by the category of «European» from the rest: this can be given a conditional interpretation in the categories of the split «Civilization – Culture» (in the traditions of O. Spengler and his followers), however, within the framework of our study, this branch looks unpromising. A much more curious division is provided by the vertical axis, which we propose to interpret through the «Center – Periphery» split: it is very indicative that the diametrical counterbalance to regional identification is not civil, but ethnic, that is, even on these data, the radical ethnic model of citizenship in Ukraine imposed by the Center is exposed.



According to the results of the analysis of the pre-election discourse, the nominations related to Europe and the European Union («Europeans», «European partners») were embedded in the national-patriotic position. This corresponds to the distribution function of the «European» category that the distribution depicted in Figure 2 reveals. The split displayed by the opposition of ethnic and regional self-identifications also correlates with the split between the national-patriotic position revealed in the pre-election discourse (which formally combines geopolitical pro-European orientations with anti-Russian ones, but rests on the ethno-national foundation of «Ukrainianness»). Since at the time of the parliamentary election campaign the inertia of the ruling role of the parties «Evropeiska Solidarnist`» and «Golos» was still preserved, it is appropriate to recall the noticeable «anti-separatist» intentions of the power discourse in Ukraine. These intentions are also revealed in the results of the discourse analysis of the official Ukrainian press (the newspapers «Voice of Ukraine» and «Uryadoviy Kur'ur»), which we carried out within the framework of the same ARDU project, in which the nomination «separatists» turned out to be one of the most used (with strictly negative connotation). The regional addressing of this nomination is quite obvious even at the semantic level; Thus, the opposition of identities along the line «regional» – «ethnic» demonstrated by the data presented in Figure 2 is also confirmed by the results of discourse analysis.

At the same time, it cannot be said that local and civic identifications demonstrate a radical split (as, for example, recorded between regional and ethnic): the ethnoideological component of the split is, rather, a shell rather than a structural one.

### 3.3.2. Factor Analysis

2. Factor analysis of identification categories (principal component analysis, rotation – varimax with Kaiser normalization (3 iterations), explained variance Var = 63,9 %; KMO measure = 0,66; Bartlett's sphericity criterion  $p < 0,01$ ) made it possible to distinguish two latent variables

Table 2

**Factor Loading Matrix and Assessment of the Contribution of Factors**

|  | Component*           |                       |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Discursive Periphery | Discursive Mainstream |
| A resident of his city, town, village  | 0,85                 | —                     |
| A representative of your region (oblast')  | 0,82                 | —                     |
| Citizen of Ukraine   | —                    | 0,66                  |
| A representative of your nationality   | —                    | 0,72                  |
| European   | —                    | 0,72                  |
| * The coefficient can vary from -1 to 1; positive values - feed forward, negative values – feedback; values of the coefficients $<  0.4 $ ignored. |                      |                       |
| Contribution of factors to total variance  | 34,0 %               | 29,9 %                |
| Contribution of factors to explained variance  | 53,1 %               | 46,9 %                |

\*The coefficient can vary from -1 to 1; positive values are feedforward, negative values are feedback.

Source: author's data.

The identifications with the categories «state-country», «ethnos» and «European» logically united into the factor of the discursive mainstream imposed by the Center, while the remaining two (with the categories «city» and «region») formed the factor of the discursive roadside, which is embodied in Peripherals. The «mainstream» and «periphery» factors reflect not only the opposition of the Euro-oriented national-patriotic discourse, revealed by the discourse analysis, and the anti-nationalist discourse aimed at improving relations with Russia (based on regional rejection, an alternative to the capital's political and power pressure). These

factors reproduce a specific version of the split between the center and the periphery, where the latter is determined not so much by objective indicators of remoteness or backwardness, as by the results of the directed exclusion of carriers of identities other than the «national-European» from the approved segment of the political field.

### 3.3.3. Correlation Analysis

3. Correlation analysis of identification factors and other indicators (statuses, practices, assessments, etc.) makes it possible to conduct an exploratory cut of structural conditions in the process of struggle for group nominations. To do this, we propose to consider the correlation matrix:

Table 3

**Correlation Matrix of Factors and Other Indicators\***

|  | <b>Discursive Periphery</b> | <b>Discursive Mainstream</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>A) Ethnic</b>   |                             |                              |
| Ukrainian – What nationality do you belong to?   | —                           | 0,26                         |
| Russian – What nationality do you belong to?   | —                           | -0,19                        |
| <b>B) Civil Disposition</b>  |                             |                              |
| Assessment of relations between different nationalities in Ukraine as a whole                      | —                           | 0,2                          |
| Assessment of relations between different nationalities in your city                               | 0,14                        | —                            |
| The rights of national minorities in Ukraine are well protected                                    | —                           | 0,3                          |
| The Ukrainian language should be the only language of instruction in all public schools in Ukraine | —                           | 0,3                          |
| The current state policy may lead to an exacerbation of interethnic tensions                       | —                           | -0,15                        |
| <b>C) Attitude towards Institutions</b>  |                             |                              |
| President of Ukraine   | —                           | 0,14                         |
| Verkhovna Rada   | —                           | 0,18                         |
| Local authorities  | 0,14                        | —                            |
| Public organizations   | —                           | 0,12                         |
| Mass Media   | —                           | 0,11                         |
| Neighbors  | 0,1                         | —                            |
| <b>D) Class – Status</b>   |                             |                              |
| Financial position of families   | —                           | 0,16                         |
| Education level  | —                           | 0,15                         |

\*The coefficient can vary from -1 to 1; positive values indicate direct relationship, negative values indicate feedback.

Source: author's data

Based on the table 3, a number of these can be put forward that reveal the specifics of how the discursive articulation of civic (self) identifications relates to objective social practices and social divisions.

A) The ethnic question is articulated in the mainstream, and with clearly defined antagonisms: the nomination «Ukrainian» is actually opposed to the nomination «Russian»; it is significant that in the discursive periphery the question of ethnicity is not at all articulated.

C) The discursive mainstream is revealed in the following civic dispositions: an increased assessment of interethnic relations in Ukraine, an increased assessment of the protection of the rights of national minorities and a more active denial of potential interethnic tensions. At the same time, we see a more active defense of the Ukrainian language as the only language of instruction in schools. The same dispositions do not have a specific manifestation in the discursive periphery, where a separate – an increased assessment of local interethnic relations – is actualized.

C) A more favorable attitude towards various government institutions (the president, parliament, public organizations and the media) also characterizes the discursive mainstream, tied to the categories «Ukraine», «Ukrainian» and «European», while the discursive periphery (embodied in identification with the «city» and «region») is characterized by a better attitude towards local authorities, as well as neighbors.

D) Class-status indicators (financial position and level of education) show that involvement in the discursive mainstream increases the likelihood of occupying higher positions in the hierarchy, and vice versa – high positions in the class structure are more successfully involved in the discursive mainstream (based on identification through categories «Ukraine», «Ukrainian» and «European»). At the same time, in the discursive periphery, this group of indicators is not actualized, thereby camouflaging the class-status split between the Center and the Periphery.

This matrix of correlations shows that the discursive mainstream and the periphery do not enter into direct confrontation, in fact, distributing different directions and segments among themselves: the mainstream is tied to the positions and dispositions of the central government, the periphery – to the local, thereby forming an overall consistent and complementary picture. That is, the structural contradictions caused by the Center-Periphery split are smoothed out and divided into different planes at the discursive level, shaded by constructed antagonisms – ethnic (in particular, through the opposition of social categories «Ukrainian» and «Russian»), ideological, religious-confessional, etc. Here we can trace the very «exclusive role of political parties in creating and maintaining social splits», which is embodied not so much in the exploitation of objective splits as in the construction and replication of «split-substitutes», discursive-disguised antagonisms.

The parties defending the discursive mainstream (Sluha Narodu, EU, Golos), being in the electoral struggle against the parties exploiting the discursive periphery (OPZZ, Batkivshchyna), divide different segments of the electorate by a purely marketing principle, preserving the integrity of the electoral market as such. But such a holistic market automatically excludes those social groups that do not correlate themselves either with the mainstream or with the periphery (and representatives of these groups also do not automatically fall into the quantitative research sample), the sociological study of which in this situation is extremely difficult, if not impossible in principle.

### **CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS**

Thus, the analysis of the pre-election discourse made it possible to reveal the use of group nominations for articulating contradictions and consolidating national divisions. Due to this use, the polarization of the electoral discourse around the core contradiction is achieved. At the same time, in the considered case, polarization is not an exhaustive, prevailing characteristic: in addition to the dichotomy «pro-European national-patriotism» – «anti-nationalism», the same group nominations form a separate segment of electoral discourse, positioned outside the described dichotomy. This can be considered an appeal to electoral fatigue from the polarized, dichotomous election model that has been practiced in Ukraine since the 1994 presidential elections. Parliamentary elections did not always follow the same pattern, but in 2019 the parliamentary elections were completely subordinated to inertia, the «echo» of the presidential elections of the same year. This provided the functionality of this model, largely predetermining the functions of group nominations.

As the analysis of the results of additional research (mass poll) has shown, the revealed functions of group nominations in electoral discourse have their own correspondence in the distribution and correlation of macro-political identities in the mass consciousness of Ukrainian citizens. Taken together, the results of both studies demonstrate the reproduction in the electoral field of Ukraine of a specific split into «discursive mainstream» and «discursive periphery», where the former accumulates national-patriotic pro-European positions that assume the exclusive character of «central», «normal» (hence the «mainstream»), while the second is a local, regional alternative, displaced to the periphery. Of course, we are dealing with complex processes of interchange of discourses and mass consciousness, which do not allow us to assert that the function of group nominations in electoral discourse is precisely the production of dichotomous opposition; therefore, the formulation «(re) produce» applied by us in the hypothesis remains the most justified as before. The hypothesis in this part is confirmed that before the consolidation or deconstruction of the cleavages because of the articulation of group nominations in the electoral discourse, this direction of research seems promising for further work.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is made as a part of the Ukrainian-Norwegian research project «Accommodation of Regional Diversity in Ukraine (ARDU)» funded by the Research Council of Norway (the NORRUSS Plus programme, project no. 287620).

### REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P. (2005). *Sociology of social space*. Transl. from French by N. A. Shmatko. Moscow: Aletya. 288 p.
- Brubaker, R. (2012). *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Transl. from English by I. B. Borisova. Moscow: Publisher's House HSE. 418 p.
- Dublikash, T., Litovchenko, A., Muradyan, E., Nikulin, V. (2015). Radicalism in ideologies and practices of support of integrative and disintegrative projects in divided societies. *Methodology, theory and practice of sociological analysis of contemporary society*, 21, 38–45.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies. *Critical policy studies*. Vancouver, 7, No 2, 177–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2013.798239>
- Fairclough, N. (2001). The dialectics of discourse. *Textus*, XIV(2), 231–242.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge. 264 p.
- Lipset, S. & Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives*. New York: Free Press. 554 p.
- Lytovchenko, A. (2004). The “discourse” category in sociological using. *Methodology, theory and practice of sociological analysis of contemporary society*, 137–139. Retrieved September 10, 2021 from <http://school.sociology.kharkov.ua/images/docs/chtenia/2004.pdf>
- Lytovchenko, A., Boiko, D., Yashkina, D and Jørn Holm-Hansen (2021). The Discourse of Moderation and Cohesion as an Effective Electoral Tool: Sluha Narodu in Ukraine's 2019 Parliamentary Campaign in Aasland, Aadne, Kropp, Sabine, eds. *The Accommodation of Regional and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Ukraine*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. P. 111–142. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80971-3>
- Lytovchenko, A., Muradyan, O. (2015). Social and Political Preconditions for Regional Divisions in Ukraine. *Sociological studies of contemporary society: methodology, theory, methods*. P. 90–100. Retrieved September 10, 2021 from <http://periodicals.karazin.ua/ssms/article/download/4476/4047>