

**The Party of Regions of Ukraine and Donets'k Politics:
A Peculiar Way to Authoritarianism**

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In 2010-11, Yanukovich's administration of Ukraine surprised the world by its determined authoritarian steps. On October 1, 2010, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine annulled the constitutional amendments made during the Orange Revolution of 2004 and Ukraine restored the 1996 Constitution prescribing a president-parliamentary regime.¹ Jurists in and outside Ukraine were surprised not with the abolition of the amendments of 2004 per se, which in fact violated the amendment procedure required by the 1996 Constitution, but with the fact that the Constitutional Court usurped the prerogative of legislature and annulled the 2004 amendments on its own authority. On August 5, 2011, ex-prime minister of Ukraine, Yuliya Tymoshenko, was arrested for having signed a contract on gas trade with Russia in 2009, with the conditions being allegedly unprofitable for Ukraine. A year later, in October 2011, a district court in Kiev sentenced her to five years' penal servitude and an additional three years' public office prohibition. In 2012, the Supreme Court of Ukraine rejected Tymoshenko's appeal. Thus, Ukrainian justice eliminated the most formidable rival to the incumbent Yanukovich in the 2015 presidential election and the verdict moreover prohibited Tymoshenko from running for the presidential election in 2020, too.²

Having watched these events, observers anticipated extremely dirty Supreme Rada (parliamentary) elections in Ukraine in October 2012, similar to Russia's 1999 parliamentary elections which paved the way to Putin's authoritarian regime (for example, see Kudelia 2011). Yet Ukraine's parliamentary elections in 2012 proved to be relatively clean and "natural" (see Table 1).

¹ A subcategory of semi-presidentialism, in which the president appoints the prime minister, but asks parliament to confirm the candidacy. Its opposite category is premier-presidential regimes in which the parliamentary majority nominates the prime minister.

² In 2013, the General Procurator's Office of Ukraine started investigating Tymoshenko's possible committing of the murder of Evhen Shcherban', businessman and MP from Donets'k, in 1996, which took place in the midst of the harsh struggle between the Dnipropetrovs'k and Donets'k clans (see below).

Table 1. Parliamentary Elections of Ukraine on October 28, 2012 (The Five Winning Parties)

* Seats (proportional representation)

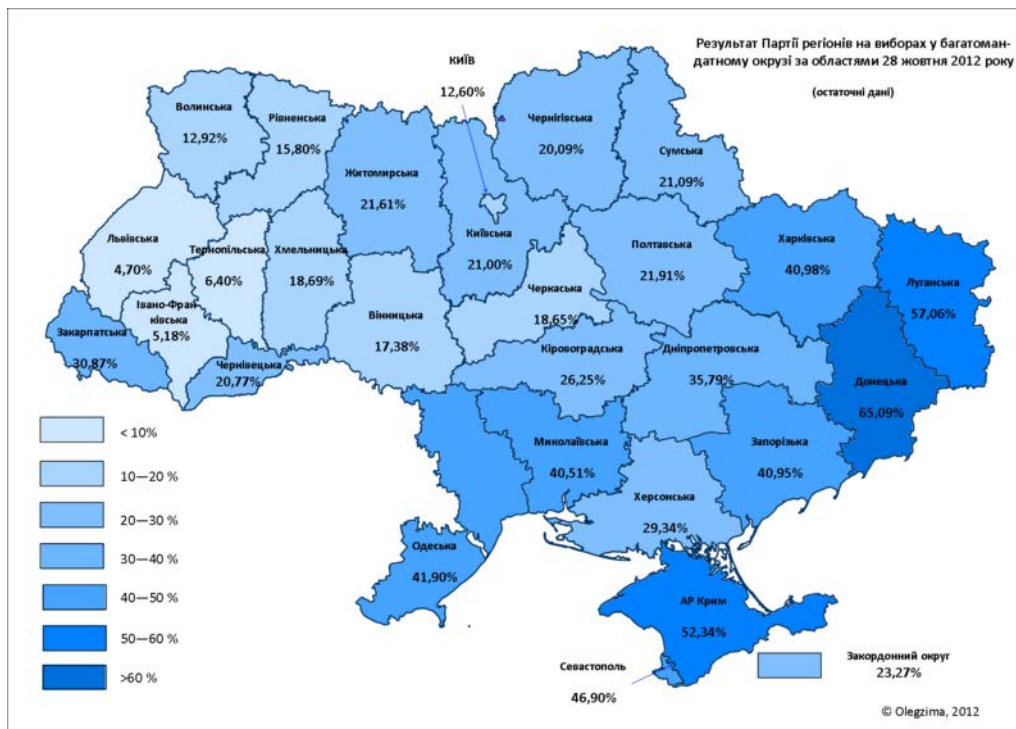
** Seats (majoritarian districts)

Parties	List votes	%	Swing %	*	**	Seats (total)	Change (2007)
Party of Regions	6,116,815	30.00	▼4.37	72	113	185	▲10
“Fatherland” (Tymoshenko’s party)	5,208,390	25.55	▼5.16	62	39	101	▼55
Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform	2,847,878	13.97	N/A	34	6	40	▲40
Communist Party of Ukraine	2,687,246	13.18	▲7.79	32	—	32	▲5
“Freedom” (nationalist opposition)	2,129,246	10.45	▲9.69	25	12	37	▲37

Source: Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_parliamentary_election,_2012), checked by the author via “Tsentral’na vyborochna komisiya: Vybory narodnykh deputativ Ukrainy 2012” (<http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2012/wp001#>).

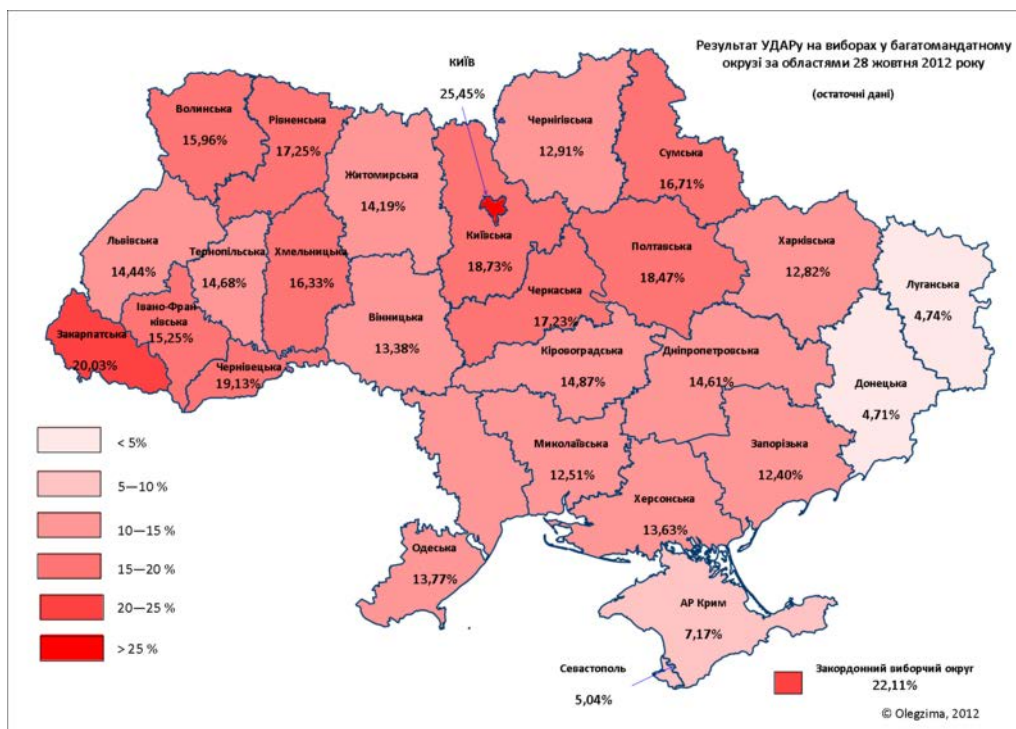
The Party of Regions (PR), the incumbent president’s party, lost 4.37 percent in proportional representation, which could be expected as a result of Ukraine’s dismal economic performance after Yanukovich’s coming to power in 2010, but is quite unnatural for post-Soviet electoral authoritarianism. Being in opposition in 2007, the PR had gained more than it did being the incumbent president’s party. Fatherland, Tymoshenko’s party, *lost only 5.16 percent* in proportional representation, despite its leader’s dramatic decline. The tangible decrease in Fatherland’s parliamentary seats was caused by the PR’s overwhelming victory in majoritarian districts. A spectacular result of the 2012 parliamentary elections was the sudden emergence of a solid member corps of the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) in parliament. Ukrainian political scientists remark that the UDAR was Yanukovich’s own project for absorbing the “anti-nationalist, but at the same time, anti-Donet’sk” vote. This group of voters constantly account for about 15 percent of the total voters of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovs’k, and other eastern regions of Ukraine (Fisun, 12 Jan 2013; see Map 1 and 2). The UDAR also attracted intellectuals/voters of Donets’k City, who hate to vote for the PR (Todorov, 10 Jan 2013). This means that Yanukovich preferred a political maneuver (namely, the creation of the pseudo-oppositional UDAR) to overt pressure on the regional and local administrations of East Ukraine to mobilize votes for the PR.

Map 1. Votes for the PR in the Parliamentary Elections in 2012



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e2/Ukr_elections_2012_multimandate_oblasts_pr.png?uselang=ru.

Map 2. Votes for the UDAR in the Parliamentary Elections in 2012



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/40/Ukr_elections_2012_multimandate_oblasts_udar.png?uselang=ru.

Having underscored Yanukovych's flexibility in his authoritarian backlash, I do not intend to justify him at all. I bear in mind that the theory of competitive authoritarianism, which has a ten-year historiography in political science, should proceed from the stage of definition and categorization to the stage of typology. Indeed, Kuchma's regime can be understood by analogy to Yeltsin's regime, but we should not interpret Yanukovych by analogy to Putin or Lukashenka.

Both Donets'k and Tambov Oblasts used to be the reddest regions of Ukraine and Russia until 1999. In the 2000s, both Donets'k and Tambov Oblasts had built a single-pyramid structure of power, having become a bastion of the Party of Regions and United Russia, respectively.³ Yet Tambov governor Oleg Betin, being Putin's devoted subordinate, realized this, while the Donets'k elites built their single-pyramid structure of power when Yanukovych was an uneasy ally of President Kuchma (2002-2004), in cohabitation relations with President Yushchenko (2006-2007), or in total opposition to Kiev (until 2002, 2005-2006, and 2007-2010). Governor Betin could transform Tambov Oblast into an UR bastion mainly because the regional administration was and continues to be the largest economic actor and, accordingly, the main distributor of wealth and welfare in the region. In Donets'k Oblast, money comes not from Kiev, but from local enterprises.

This essay describes the specifics of Ukraine's reemerging competitive authoritarianism by focusing on the history of the Party of Regions, the birthplace of which is Donets'k Oblast. For this purpose, first, we should place Ukraine's reemerging authoritarianism in the broader perspective of post-Soviet politics. Second, we should pay more attention to struggles and deals between the eastern regions of Ukraine, while previous studies overestimated the significance of the alleged confrontation between East and West Ukraine.

Twenty Years of Post-Soviet Competitive Authoritarianisms

Studies on post-Soviet political regimes have reached two main research consensuses. First, there are steady patron-clientele relations on the basis of elite configuration in post-Soviet countries. Second, there are two types of these elite configurations: a single pyramid and competing oligarchs. They diverge from each other by the following factors: (1) whether socialist state properties were privatized carefully under state control or privatized quickly and uncontrollably (Sharafutdinova 2010); (2) whether regional and local administrative chiefs came to be appointed or elected (Matsuzato 2001a); and (3) whether its semi-presidential regime belonged to the subcategory of president-parliamentary or premier-presidential regime (Hale 2011; see fn. 1). *Competitive Authoritarianism* (2010) by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way asks the question of whether patron-clientelism is a sufficient condition for stable competitive authoritarianism. Their study underscores the importance of cohesion of the elite community, bolstered by homogeneous ideology (for example, Serbia) or ethnicity (for example, Armenia) or by the shared memory of their early struggle. If the ruling group (party) only relies upon patronage, this group is vulnerable when

³ Today (2013), the PR has about three hundred thousand members in Donets'k Oblast alone, and twenty-four of twenty-seven city mayors and county chiefs of the region belong to the PR, which won in all of the twenty-one majoritarian electoral districts of the region in the 2012 parliamentary elections (Nikolaenko 8 January 2013).

it faces a changing political climate, as was demonstrated by Yeltsin's and Kuchma's entourages in 1999 and 2004 respectively. Moreover, in times of trouble, coercive agencies' obedience to the leader often plays a decisive role. Police troops should shoot protesting demonstrators when they are ordered to do so. In the context of post-communist studies, *Competitive Authoritarianism* by Levitsky and Way is an antithesis to Henry Hale's concept of patronal presidentialism (Hale 2006), focusing on patronage in post-communist regime dynamics.

Another counter-argument to Hale comes from Sean P. Roberts, who settles the account of the decade of United Russia for having been unable to become a dominant party, in contrast to the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan and the Institutional Revolutionary Party of Mexico. Despite its electoral monopoly, United Russia has little control over the real center of power, does not have a voice in the distribution of state budget resources (in contrast, for example, to the LDP of Japan which determines the construction of railways, roads, airports, and dams), and is not authorized to nominate candidacies for president, ministers, and regional governors (Roberts 2012). This might be unsurprising for United Russia, because the incentive for its birth in 1999 was purely patronal (Yeltsin's group did not want to pass power to Luzhkov/Shaimiev's group) and this party could never overgrow this limit. Yet, against Levitsky/Way's prognosis, the situation has been the same with the New Azerbaijan Party and the Party of Regions of Ukraine, though these parties were created for ideological reasons when their creators were in opposition to the authorities and party leaders share the memories of their early painful struggle. The New Azerbaijan Party was founded in 1993 to make Heydar Aliev the president of Azerbaijan and save Azerbaijan's statehood from the devastating Karabakh War. The Party of Regions (named the Party of Regions' Revival when it was founded in 1997) aimed to remedy the injustice that the Donets'k region, accounting for 15 percent of the whole of Ukraine's GDP, had little voice in the decision making of the country. After defeat by Dnipropetrovs'k clan in 1996, the Donets'k elite remained in a very difficult situation until 2002, when Kuchma appointed Yanukovich as prime minister. This estrangement of the Donets'k elite from nationwide decision making was repeated after the Orange Revolution of 2004 until appointment by Yushchenko of Yanukovich as prime minister in August 2006, and after Yanukovich was removed from this post in December 2007 until he won the presidential election in 2009/2010. Remarkably, the PR was active and consolidated during these difficult periods, but it could not become a real center of power after Yanukovich became the president of Ukraine. On the contrary, the PR has become a subsidiary instrument to support the Yanukovich administration, barely distinguishable from United Russia.

Why can ruling parties in post-Soviet territories not grow into more than an instrument serving the real center of power around the president? Why has the momentum towards what Henry Hale calls patronal presidentialism been so strong, even when the ruling party has derived from a heroic struggle for a cause?

Donets'k Politics and the Nationwide Party System

A party system is a device not only for pluralist competition in politics, but also for the integration of a state and inter-governmental regulations. From this point of view, Ukraine enjoys more favorable conditions for party building than does Russia because of its optimal number of regions. Russia had eighty-nine regions in the 1990s

and has eighty-three regions now, so regional leaders cannot determine national politics even if their parties have established an overwhelming hegemony in their own regions. Luzhkov, Shaimiev, Eduard Rossel, and Konstantin Titov all faced this barely surmountable threshold and were forced to abandon their ambition to rival the nationwide center of power. In contrast, Ukraine has only twenty-seven regions and those who have established hegemony in a region are able to become nationwide politicians. This arithmetic is not limited to powerful regions, such as Dnipropetrovs'k and Donets'k, which produced Pavlo Lazarenko and Viktor Yanukovych; even the hegemony over the peripheral and poor Transcarpatia by the United Social Democrats (Medvedchuk/Surkis's clan) in the late 1990s guaranteed their hegemony over national politics (Matsuzato 2002). Besides, Ukraine was a newborn state. In contrast to Russia which inherited bureaucrats and specialists from the Soviet Union, Ukraine's central government constantly needed to supplement its officers with those recruited from industrial regions (Leonov 8 January 2013).

Donets'k was founded as late as 1869-70 by an English entrepreneur John Hughes as a site for a cast iron factory. To memorize the founder, this industrial settlement was called Yuzovka (town of Hughes), which did not even have the status of *uezd* (county) seat, located in a southern periphery of Bakhmut County of Ekaterinoslav Province. Donets'k grew thanks to Soviet industrialization. Currently, Donets'k has numerous higher education institutes, but most of them are dedicated to engineering and the hard sciences. Its humanity and social science intellectuals have obviously been weaker than those of Kharkiv (one of the rare university cities in the Russian Empire) and Dnipropetrovs'k (the provincial capital since 1776). West-oriented national democrats find potential supporters in Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovs'k Oblasts to be used to penetrate their electoral markets, but this is not the case with Donets'k Oblast.

Until 2002, when Kuchma appointed Yanukovych as prime minister of Ukraine, the Donets'k elites constantly felt that they were estranged from the natural flow of cadres from the regions to Kiev. Remarkably, ten years after gaining access to nationwide politics in 2002, the Donets'k elites continue to feel that they are not rewarded properly though they "feed" Ukraine. This is a master discourse in Donets'k Oblast, shared by PR leaders and national democrats. This continuous sense of deprivation seems to sustain the PR's dominant position in Donets'k Oblast. Moreover, Donets'k Oblast has a vertically integrated industrial structure (coal mining, metallurgy, and machine industry), which obliges directors of industrial enterprises (the number of which amount to about four thousand) to cooperate with each other (Zahoruiko 5 January 2013), in contrast to a horizontally diversified regional economy, such as that of Sverdlovsk Oblast of Russia, promoting a competitive oligarchy (Gel'man 2000). As a late-colonized territory of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union cursed by harsh climatic conditions, the Donets'k people found no alternative but to live in solidarity. I may call it a coal miner democracy, conducive to electoral campaigns with full corporate support. In Donets'k Oblast, if a corporation leader or even a hospital director becomes a member of a party, his/her subordinates follow this action. The masses do not abandon their leaders "until the end" (*isti do kontsa vmeste* in Russian), even if they are well aware that their leaders are highly problematic. "Be them bad and poor (*khudo-bedno*), they are still ours" (Nikolaenko 8 January 2013). This natural born conformism of Donets'k Oblast, described above, gave it a unique superiority over Kharkiv and

Dnipropetrovs'k Oblasts, which are polycentric by nature, in the early 2000s (Tkachenko 8 January 2013). Kuchma desperately needed a powerful electoral machine to secure his successor's victory in the coming presidential election in 2004, which could only be provided by Donets'k Oblast (Zahoruiko 5 January 2013; Nikolaenko 8 January 2013).

The First Round of Donets'k's Self-Assertion (1994-1996)

Though bubble parties were a universal phenomenon in the former Soviet countries during the first half of the 1990s, Donets'k had favorable conditions for this. There were many rich entrepreneurs (one quarter of Ukrainian Forbes billionaires originate from Donets'k Oblast) who looked for political advocates of their interests. Corporation leaders hired university professors to write programs and statutes of the party they intended to create and collected the signatures necessary to register it (Mozhovyι 8 January 2013). In this way, the Liberal Party of Ukraine (LPU) was established on September 12, 1991 in Donets'k. The LPU tried to make itself a nationwide party by holding its founding convention in Kiev on May 20-21, 1992 and proposed to develop local self-government and federalism. The LPU was blessed with a certain success in the parliamentary elections in 1994, but after that, lost its identity by sacrificing its programmatic requests for the federalization of Ukraine and making Russian the second state language and by moving from left-centrist to right-centrist on the spectrum of ideology. In January 1996, Donets'k governor Volodymyr Shcherban' became the leader of this party which had thus far been marginalized (*Politychni partii*, 1996, pp. 76-79).

The Party of Labor of Ukraine (PLU) was established on December 21, 1992 in Donets'k. Its first leader was Valentyn Landik, director of Corporation Nord, one of the first corporations transformed from a Soviet state enterprise in the early 1990s. The PLU was a reaction of enterprise directors to the devastation of the Ukrainian economy caused by the destruction of inter-republic economic connections between the former Soviet countries. The PLU requested the reestablishment of these economic ties, among others, with Russia. The PLU was more left than the LPU and identified itself as a social democratic party (*Politychni partii*, 1996, pp. 59-63). The PLU began to publish its newspaper, *Donetskii kryazh*, which continues to be issued today as an independent newspaper in Donets'k.

To overcome the total political crisis at all levels of government, presidential, parliamentary, gubernatorial, regional legislative, and local elections were held in March and June 1994. Volodymyr Shcherban' (b. 1953) won the gubernatorial election of Donets'k Oblast, which marked the electorate's preference for businessman-type leaders at that time. Shcherban' did not have a prestigious education, was involved in commerce, and occupied a modest rank of the nomenklatura during the Soviet era. He was a Donets'k patriot, but could not cope with the catastrophic situation of the Ukrainian economy in the mid-1990s. Coal miners went on strike to protest against endless wage arrears in February 1996. As mentioned above, in January 1996, Shcherban' became the leader of the LPU.

Kuchma appointed Pavlo Lazarenko as prime minister of Ukraine in May 1996. The Constitutional Accord signed

by Kuchma and the Supreme Rada (parliament) on June 8, 1995 allowed Kuchma to appoint prime ministers without parliament's confirmation, and he did so in regard to Lazarenko.⁴ The Supreme Rada adopted the Ukrainian Constitution on June 28, 1996, based on which the Supreme Rada confirmed Lazarenko's prime ministership on July 10, 1996. Parliament's confirmation strengthened Lazarenko's position vis-à-vis Kuchma. Lazarenko immediately persuaded Kuchma to fire the chief of state security (SBU) and regional procurator of Donets'k Oblast (Shcherban' Vladimir Petrovich: "Politicheskaya elita ukrainskikh regionov"). On July 16, Lazarenko encountered a bomb attack at Borispol' Airport of Kiev on his way to Donets'k. On July 18, President Kuchma signed to remove Donets'k governor V. Shcherban', unable to soothe the coal miners' strike.⁵

The scenario around the Donets'k governorship would be repeated eight years later, in 2005. To replace a governor of regional patriotism (Shcherban' in 1996 and Anatoly Bliznyuk in 2005), Kiev appointed a technocrat from the resource-mining industry (Serhii Polyakov, minister of coal industry, in 1996 and Vadym Chuprun, vice president of Nafthaz [Oil and Gas] Company of Ukraine, in 2005), expecting that the Donets'k people would feel affinity with such mining technocrats. Yet these appointees proved to be powerless before the consolidated Donets'k elite community and were removed only after about a year (Polyakov in July 1997 and Chuprun in April 2006).

On November 3, 1996, Evhen Shchertban', businessman and parliamentarian from Donets'k (not to be confused with the governor, Volodymyr), was shot to death at Donets'k Airport. The killers were usual gangs, but there has been an interpretation that the Dnipropetrovs'k clan (including Lazarenko and Tymoshenko) backed this murder. As mentioned above, the Ukrainian Procurator's Office reasserted this suspicion in 2013.

Lazarenko was ambitious enough to rival President Kuchma. Perhaps it was especially unacceptable for Kuchma that, in April 1997, Lazarenko activated the Hromada (Community) Party by purchasing its leadership to use it for the 1998 parliamentary elections, which were regarded as a rehearsal for the 1999 presidential election. Kuchma removed Lazarenko from the premier post on July 2, 1997. On September 27, 1997, the Hromada Party held a convention to formulate the leadership of Lazarenko, who had moved to the opposition to Kuchma.

Being a stranger to Donets'k, Governor Polyakov, Lazarenko's ally, often entrusted practical duties to his deputy (first vice governor), Viktor Yanukovych. Aware that Kuchma would remove him from the premier office, Lazarenko persuaded Kuchma to remove Polyakov from the gubernatorial post in April 1997. Kuchma appointed Yanukovych as Polyakov's successor on May 14, 1997. On October 26, 1997, Donets'k mayor Volodymyr Rybak and other Donets'k politicians held a founding convention of the Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine (PRRU) in Donets'k City. Development of regional and local self-government was the main cause of this newborn party, which would soon absorb the LPU and PLU. Thus, Lazarenko's decline allowed the Donets'k elite to have its own governor (Yanukovych) and party in 1997.

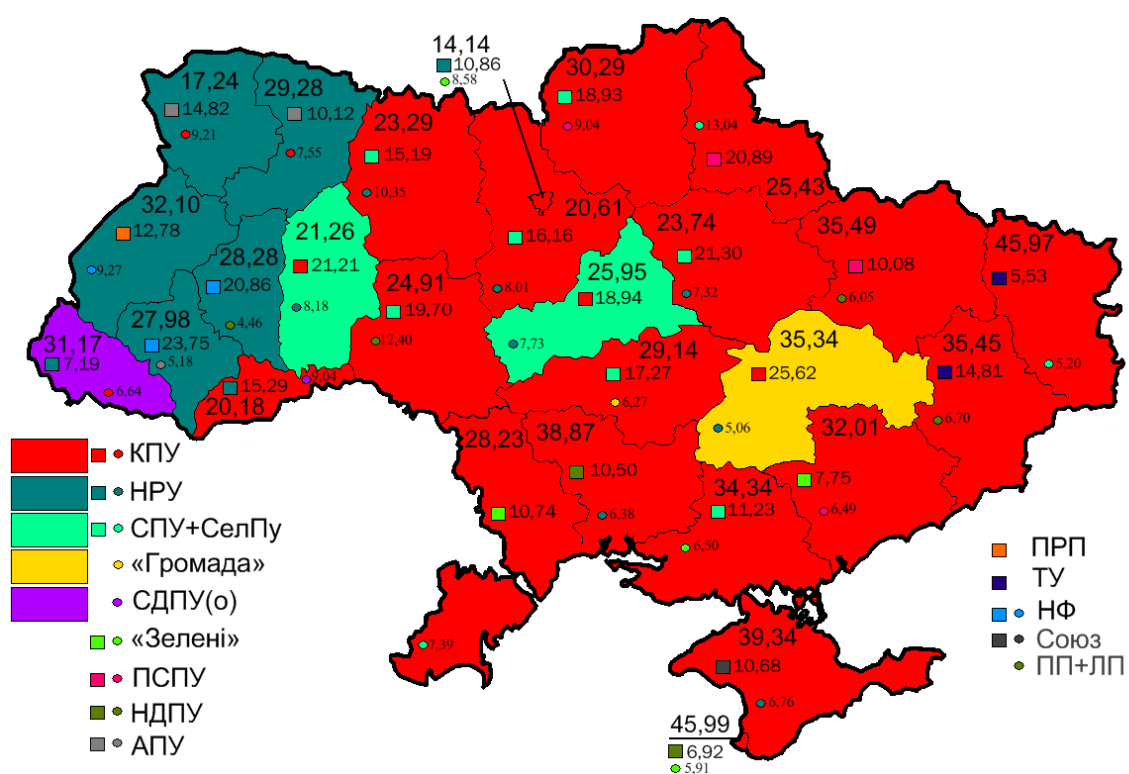
⁴ To overcome the disorder of Ukraine's state administration, the Constitutional Accord introduced an almost full presidential system.

⁵ A background to this conflict between Donets'k and Dnipropetrovs'k was the emerging energy system of Ukraine, as a result of which Dnipropetrovs'k practically colonized Donets'k (Fujimori 2005).

The Second Round of Donets'k's Self-Assertion (1997-2004)

The PRRU was unable to match the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) in Donets'k Oblast in the parliamentary elections of 1998, which the Ukrainian voters understood to be a general rehearsal for the presidential election in 1999. Nationwide, the 1998 elections produced a polarized party system: the CPU and the People's Movement of Ukraine (*Rukh*, nationalists), which are dominant in East/South Ukraine and Galicia/Rivno, respectively. Lazarenko's opposition could only become the leading party in Dnipropetrovs'k.

Map 3. Leading Parties in Regions in the 1998 Parliamentary Elections



(To identify regions' names, see Map 1.)

Table 2. Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine on March 29, 1998

* Seats (proportional representation)

** Seats (majoritarian districts)

Parties and Blocs	Party votes	Votes%	Swing %	*	**	Seats (Total)	Change (2004)
Communist Party of Ukraine	6,550,353	24.65	▲11.05	84	37	121	▲35
People's Movement (<i>Rukh</i>) of Ukraine (nationalists)	2,498,262	9.40	▲3.90	32	14	46	▲26
Bloc of Socialist and Peasant Parties	2,273,788	8.55	▲2.35	29	5	34	▲1

Party of Greens of Ukraine	1,444,264	5.43	▲5.13	19	-	19	▲19
People's Democratic Party of Ukraine (Pro-Kuchma Party)	1,331,460	5.01	N/A	17	11	28	New party
"Hromada" (Lazarenko's Party)	1,242,235	4.67	N/A	16	8	24	New party
Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine	1,075,118	4.04	N/A	14	2	16	New party
Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United) (Medvedchuk's party)	1,066,113	4.01	N/A	14	3	17	New party
Agrarian Party of Ukraine	978,330	3.68	N/A	-	9	9	New party
Reforms and Order Party	832,574	3.13	N/A	-	3	3	New party
PLU-LPU – Together (Shcherban's party)	502,969	1.89	▲0.89	-	1	1	▼3
Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine	241,262	0.90	N/A	-	2	2	New party

Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_parliamentary_election,_1998), checked by the author via "Vybory narodnykh deputativ" (<http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vd2002/webproc0v?kodvib=1&rejim=0>).

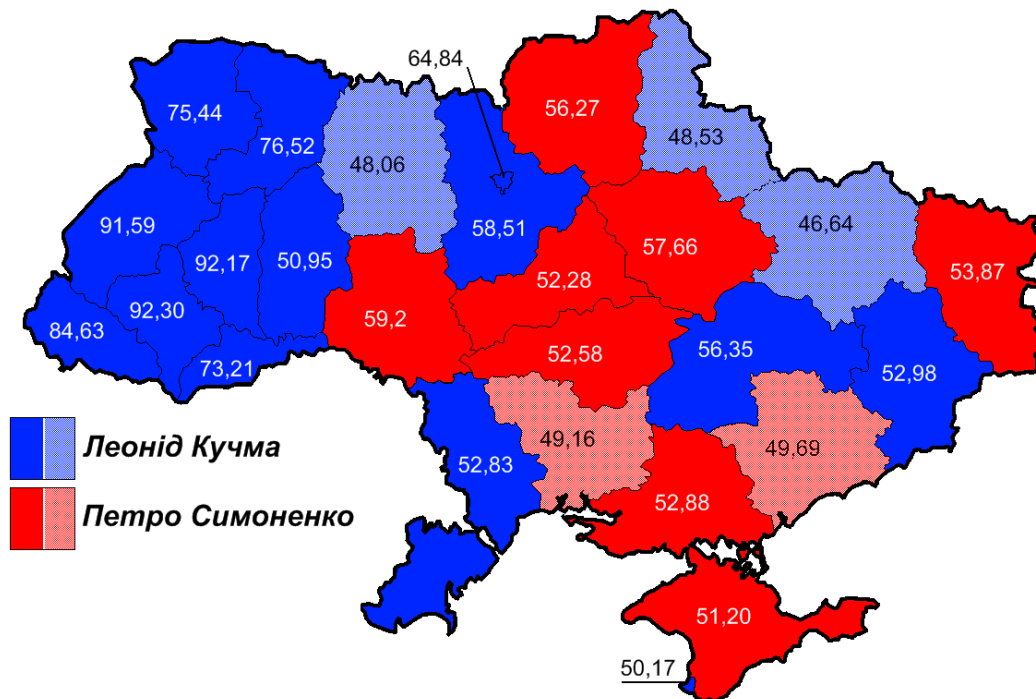
This result was devastating for the ruling elites of Ukraine. The leftist oppositions (CPU, SPU, and PSPU) together gained as much as 37.24 percent of the vote. The nationalist opposition, *Rukh*, gained 9.40 percent. The incumbent president's party, the PDPU, gained only 5.01 percent. Other oligarch parties (Hromada, SDPU (United), PLU-LPU, and PRRU) together gained only 11.47 percent. This meant that even if Kuchma succeeded in allying with oligarchs and nationalists, their total votes would be far behind the protesting leftist votes in the coming 1999 presidential election.

Donets'k Oblast shared this nationwide tendency: the CPU enjoyed the leading position in the region not only by gaining 35.45 percent in the party-list voting, but also by winning in seven among twenty-three majoritarian districts of the region, while the PRRU (the future PR) gained only one seat thanks to its leader's, Donets'k mayor Rybak's, victory. Two ex-governors performed poorly: V. Shcherban' (as a candidate from the LPU-PLU "Together") could only secure his own victory and S. Polyakov, Lazarenko's ally, having become leader of the Donets'k regional organization of Hromada after being removed from the gubernatorial post, could not even get one seat for the party in Donets'k Oblast. The shameful results of the 1998 parliamentary elections made the political leaders and oligarchs of Donets'k Oblast, as well as other eastern industrial regions of Ukraine, aware that if they continued their dilettante politics, creating and liquidating parties as they wanted, Communist Petro Symonenko would surely become the president of Ukraine in 1999.

The changing climate of nationwide politics helped Donets'k Oblast to establish a single-pyramid structure of power. On February 9, 1999, the General Procurator's Office of Ukraine requested the Supreme Rada to strip Lazarenko of his deputy immunity. After six days, Lazarenko left Ukraine. Though Yuliya Tymoshenko could keep the Hromada Party by restructuring it into the Fatherland (*Bat'kivshchyna*) Party, its regional branch in Donets'k Oblast had lost influence. In March 1999, Kuchma appointed Shcherban', the leader of the LPU-PLU and ex-Donets'k governor, as Sumy governor. Shcherban' was charged to turn this bastion of the Progressive Socialists

supporting Nataliya Vitrenko, one of Kuchma’s rivals, into a pro-Kuchma region.⁶ Thus, there emerged a space in the centrist spectrum of the Donets’k electoral market where the PRRU could establish its monopoly.

Map 4. Leading Candidates in the Runoff of the Presidential Election of 1999



(To identify regions’ names, see Map 1.)

Since the Communist Symonenko became the main challenger to the incumbent, the right-left axis came to the forefront in the presidential election of 1999. This is not to say that traditionally pro-communist regions voted for Symonenko while traditionally pro-market regions voted for Kuchma. As Map 4 shows, Kuchma succeeded in attracting some of the traditionally pro-communist eastern regions (Donets’k, Dnipropetrovs’k, and Odessa, and to a lesser extent, Sumy and Kharkiv), while a new “red belt” (pro-communist regions) emerged around Kiev (Vinnytsya, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Chernihiv, and Poltava). This new electoral geography demonstrated a mobilizing characteristic of the 1999 elections. If there were powerful regional administrations, they could instruct the population to vote for Kuchma. If not, no one could prevent the population from voting for Symonenko. Neither language preferences (the East-West axis) nor the regional population’s living standards played a significant role.⁷

⁶ Shcherban’ purged several leaders of the Sumy region (including the chairman of the regional legislature) and replaced them with a team that he brought from Donets’k. For the coming presidential election, Shcherban’ used overtly administrative methods; at a meeting of chiefs of county administrations, he said that “previously, ideology was popularized among the population by means of hanging, execution, and collectivization. We don’t have these today. Do not risk yourself today. Do not put your heads [on the block], lest we should chop them off on November 1 [1999, the voting day of the presidential election]. We will chop off not only your heads, we will chop off your man’s dignity” (Shcherban’ Vladimir Petrovich: “Politicheskaya elita ukrainskikh regionov”).

⁷ Matsuzato 2001b. Andrew Konitzer-Smirnov criticized my analysis based on “simple bivariate correlations” and argued that Kuchma considered not only the electoral, but also the economic performance of the governor when he decided to reshuffle governors. Konitzer-Smirnov 2005.

Even if this change in electoral behavior was created from above, the Donets'k leaders reminisce that 1998-1999 was the turning point of the Donets'k people's political mind. In the parliamentary elections of 1998, the CPU gained as much as 35.45 percent of the region's eligible vote. Though in the first round of the 1999 presidential election Kuchma ran behind Symonenko (31.96 versus 39.40 percent), Kuchma won decisively in the runoff (52.9 versus 41.23 percent).⁸ Until 1998, the Donets'k voters supported the CPU exploiting regionalist discourse, but from 1999, they began to support regionalism with left-centrist slogans (Nikolaenko 8 January 2013). Having been defeated in the presidential election, the CPU fell into a long period of stagnation both nationwide and in Donets'k Oblast. This stagnation continued until the parliamentary elections in 2012, when some of the electorate disappointed by the PR returned to the CPU. As happened to Zyuganov after his defeat in the 1996 presidential election of Russia, a harsh blow to the communists was delivered by a spreading rumor that Symonenko himself did not want to win the presidential election though he could only if he wished (Lytvynov 11 January 2013). It is not clear whether this rumor was a spontaneous one or orchestrated by the presidential administration.

In 2000-2001, the PRRU incorporated five minor parties, including the PLU. Although the LPU continued to exist, many LPU leaders and members shifted to the PR. On March 3, 2001, a convention of the PRRU was held in Donets'k with the participation of three hundred and four delegates from the whole of Ukraine. The convention elected Mykola Azarov, the future prime minister of Ukraine, as the party leader, replacing V. Rybak, the founder of the PRRU and Donets'k mayor. The convention decided to rename itself the Party of Regions. The Donets'k leaders, who were leading the LPU and PLU in the 1990s, such as V. Rybak, V. Landyk, and E. Zvyahil's'kyi, composed the leadership of the expanded PR (*Donetskii kryazh*, March 8-14, 2001, p.1). Thus, the process of making a single-pyramid structure of Donets'k politics was completed in 2001. Yet the new PR could not test its own potential in the parliamentary elections of 2002 because it ran for these elections not independently, but only as a member party of the pro-presidential bloc "For United Ukraine" (from its Russian abbreviation, this bloc was called "Za Edu," meaning "for food" in Russian). Za Edu was Kuchma's project targeted at the presidential election in 2004. Kuchma tried to secure a victory for his successor by imitating the United Russia Party and, at the same time, by avoiding Russia's 1999, when two elite groups, Yeltsin/Putin and Shaimiev/Luzhkov/Primakov, competed harshly.

Table 3. Shares of the Vote Gained by the Main Parties under Proportional Representation in Regions (percent)

Oblast	Our Ukraine (Yushchenko's party)	CPU	Za Edu	Tymoshenko Bloc	SPU	SDPU (United) (Medvedchuk's party)
Donets'k	2.59	29.78	36.83	1.4	1.82	4.66
Dnipropetrovs'k	6.35	31.86	11.43	4.32	4.42	9.38
Kharkiv	5.92	30.69	15.38	1.85	4.58	10.36
Crimea	9.77	33.91	5.92	1.44	0.75	12.47
Nationwide	23.57	19.98	11.77	7.26	6.87	6.27

⁸ Vybyry Prezydenta-99 (<http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp1999/WEBPROC0>)

Source: <http://www.electoralgeography.com/ru/countries/u/ukraine/2002-legislative-elections-ukraine.html>.

Nationwide, Za Edu saw a miserable result, running not only behind Yushchenko's oligarchic opposition party, "Our Ukraine," but also the CPU. Composing Za Edu, the PR inevitably shared Kuchma's extremely negative image since the cassette scandal in 2000-2001. Another oligarchic pro-Kuchma party, Medvedchuk's Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United), performed much better by running for the elections independently.⁹ Yet the Donets'k elites demonstrated merits which their colleagues in other eastern regions lacked. Za Edu could be the leading party only in Donets'k Oblast among twenty-seven Ukrainian regions.¹⁰ Although its performance under proportional representation does not look spectacular, Za Edu candidates won twenty-two among the twenty-three majoritarian districts of Donets'k Oblast, while the last seat was obtained by the CPU. As a result of the regional elections held on the same day as the national parliamentary elections, Za Edu gained a hundred and seventy-two of the hundred and eighty seats of the regional assembly. As Table 3 shows, Yushchenko and Tymoshenko could penetrate Dnipropetrovs'k and Kharkiv Oblasts to some extent, perhaps because of the significant social stratum of independent businessmen and humanities intellectuals existing there. In contrast, the Donets'k elites were able to control their electoral market nearly completely, because of the region's natural born conformism explained above.

Having seen the impressive electoral performance that the Donets'k elites demonstrated, Kuchma corrected his policy by balancing regions and decided to recruit more leaders from Donets'k to Kiev. As a result, Yanukovich, Donets'k governor, was appointed as prime minister of Ukraine in November 2002. Moreover, Kuchma abandoned his Za Edu project and allowed the PR to expand into the whole of East Ukraine (Kipen' 5 January 2013). In other words, Kuchma admitted that not Za Edu but the PR would become the vehicle of his successor in the presidential election of 2004.

After the Orange Revolution

After defeat in the repeated presidential election on December 26, 2004, Yanukovich and other leaders of Donets'k Oblast evacuated to outside of Ukraine for several months. Exploiting this power vacuum, on February 4, 2005, President Yushchenko appointed Vadym Chuprun (b. 1943), ex-ambassador of Turkmenistan, to the post of Donets'k governor. Yet the governorship of the stranger Chuprun only consolidated the regional elites. In the parliamentary elections on March 26, 2006, which were held in a pure proportional system for the first time in independent Ukraine, the PR gained as much as 73.63 percent of the eligible vote of Donets'k Oblast. In other words, opposing the national authorities, the PR of Donets'k Oblast doubled its supporters, who had voted for Za Edu in 2002 (36.83 percent). Nationwide, the PR became the largest party in the parliament. Moreover, the PR co-opted the SPU, which had until then belonged to the Orange Bloc. As a result, Yushchenko could not but appoint his rival, Yanukovich, as prime minister of Ukraine on August 4, 2006.

⁹ On this party see Matsuzato 2002.

¹⁰ See "Ukraine. Parlamentskie vybory, 2002"

(<http://www.electoralgeography.com/ru/countries/u/ukraine/2002-legislative-elections-ukraine.html>)

Table 4. Parliamentary Elections on March 26, 2006

Parties and Blocs	Votes	%	Swing %	Seats	▲▼2002 Seats
PR	8,148,745	32.14	▲20.35	186	▲85
Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko	5,652,876	22.29	▲15.03	129	▲107
Our Ukraine	3,539,140	13.95	▼9.63	81	▼30
SPU	1,444,224	5.69	▼1.18	33	▲11
CPU	929,591	3.66	▼16.32	21	▼45

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_parliamentary_election,_2006.

Blaming the poor electoral performance in Donets'k Oblast, Yushchenko removed Chuprun from the gubernatorial post on April 15, 2006, and instead appointed Volodymyr Logvinenko (b. 1944), who had been vice governor under Governor Yanukovych, in Chuprun's place. Further, Yushchenko did not try to challenge Donets'k's political autonomy again. In the parliamentary elections in 2007, the PR even increased its support up to 76 percent in Donets'k Oblast, while the second most influential party, the CPU, could only gain 6.8 percent.

After winning the presidential election in 2010, President Yanukovich appointed Anatolii Bliznyuk as Donets'k governor. After Bliznyuk was promoted to Kiev as the minister of regional development, Yanukovych appointed Andrii Shyshats'kyi as Bliznyuk's successor. Born in 1965, Shyshats'kyi belongs to the post-perestroika generation of political leaders. He graduated from the Faculty of Economics of Donets'k University in 1990 and from the International Institute of Management in Kiev in 2007. His first duty was to conduct the parliamentary elections in October 2012 in a civilized manner, lest they should provoke scornful criticism from the international community. For this purpose, Shyshats'kyi recruited Viktor Nikolaenko, the former analyst serving in the Donets'k regional administration and who worked at an information-analytical services company in Kiev during 2005-2012. Nikolaenko says that serious competition was anticipated in five or six of the twenty-one electoral districts of Donets'k Oblast in the 2012 parliamentary elections,¹¹ but the opposition decided not to spend resources in Donets'k Oblast; as a result, the PR won in all the twenty-one districts. Nikolaenko tried hard to prevent the "excesses" of local leaders, such as harassment of the opposition's agitators in their localities (Nikolaenko, January 8, 2013).

The Limit of Expansion






As a result of the 2002 parliamentary elections, Kuchma allowed the PR to expand beyond the border of Donets'k Oblast. Why did the elites in other eastern regions not resist the Donets'k elites' expansion, in contrast to the








¹¹ After Yanukovych's victory, the parliamentary elections of Ukraine returned from a pure proportional to a mixed system.

1990s? A possible background is that privatization had been completed by the early 2000s and it was better for the regional elites to negotiate with, not kill, each other. Moreover, it was more urgent for them to defend East Ukraine's interests against national democrats allying with the oligarchic opposition of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko in the presidential election of 2004 than to compete with each other. The Donetsk elites, earlier than their colleagues in other eastern regions, provided an ideology with which the regional elites in East Ukraine could attract pro-communist voters, whereby they could stand against national democrats. Another reason seems to be that East Ukraine needed a charismatic leader who could match the most plausible candidate for president from the national democratic camp, Yushchenko. A specialist in the electoral geography of Ukraine, Kirill Cherkashin, says that if Donetsk had not had Yanukovich and if there had been a good presidential candidate in Dnipropetrovsk, the Donetsk elites would have supported this candidate (Cherkashin 5 January 2013).

Indeed, the Donetsk elites behaved carefully to demonstrate that they are no more than *primus inter pares*, so as not to put their neighbors on guard. The PR leaders tried to show that the PR was East (if not the whole of) Ukraine's common deeds, not Donetsk's expansionist project. Indeed, thanks to the PR's expansion, many regional leaders in East Ukraine enjoyed opportunities to move to Kiev as parliamentarians or high-ranking officials. This elite migration accelerated especially after Yanukovich came to power in 2010. Nikolaenko, the leading analyst of the Donetsk Oblast administration, says that Kiev has tremendous assimilative power and birthplace communities quickly dissolve there (Nikolaenko 8 January 2013). The table below indicates to what extent the PR has become the whole of East Ukraine's common deeds.

Table 5. Leaders of the PR (July 2013)

	Name	Year and Region of Birth	Party Position	State Position, Additional Information
	 Viktor Yanukovich	1950 Donetsk	Honorable leader	President of Ukraine
1	 Mykola Azarov	1947 Donetsk	Chairman/member of the Presidium of the Political Council (MPPC)	Prime Minister of Ukraine Former PLU
2	 Volodymyr Rybak	1946 Donetsk	First Vice Chairman/MPPC	Chairman of the Supreme Rada Founder of the PRRU (1997), Donetsk mayor since 1993-2002
3	 Volodymyr Demydko	1952 Donetsk	Vice Chairman (in charge of ideology) /MPPC	Former LPU
4		1954 Luhansk	Vice Chairman (Parliament)/MPPC	Leader of the Parliamentary Fraction Luhansk governor 1998-2005

	Oleksandr Efremov			
5	 Dmytro Shentsev	1964 Kharkiv	Vice Chairman (Works in regions)/MPPC	Allegedly committed the “accidental death” of Kharkiv governor E. Kushnar’ov in 2007
6	 Leonid Kozhara	1963 (Poltava) Professional diplomat	Vice Chairman (International affairs) /MPPC	Foreign minister of Ukraine
7	 Serhii Tihipko	1960 Dnipropetrovs’k	Vice Chairman/MPPC	Forbes billionaire, the third most supported candidate in the presidential election of 2010. Joined the PR in March 2012
8	 Andrii Klyuev	1964 Donets’k	Other MPPC	Secretary of the Council for National Security and Defence of Ukraine
9	 Borys Kolesnikov	1962 Donets’k		The organizer of FIFA’s EURO-2010
10	 Mykola Biloblots’kyi	1943 Mykolaiv		
11	 Oleksandr Kushnir	1946 Donets’k		Head of the central apparatus of the PR

Source: Official website of the PR (<http://partyofregions.ua/about>).

This table demonstrates how closely the PR has merged with the Ukrainian state. There are eleven members of the presidium of the PR’s *politsovet*. Among them, seven are from Donets’k Oblast, while four seats are distributed among representatives of other industrial regions of East Ukraine. Among them, Shentsiv from Kharkiv Oblast may deserve this presidium seat for his allegedly committing the “accidental death” of Kharkiv governor Evhen Kushnar’ov, Yanukovych’s potential rival in the coming 2010 presidential election, in January 2007 (Vagrant 2010), while Tihipko, the third most popular candidate in the presidential election of 2010, was rewarded for his collaboration.

Conclusions

Inter-regional dynamics play a decisive role in Ukrainian politics and this distinguishes Ukrainian authoritarianism from those in Russia, Belarus, and other post-Soviet countries. Previous studies stereotypically focused on the alleged West-East confrontation and ignored how multi-dimensional and nuanced these dynamics have been. Donets’k Oblast suffered from dual under-representation: under-representation of East Ukraine vis-à-vis West

Ukraine and under-representation of itself among eastern regions. It was not by chance that this region had become the first advocate of regionalist ideology, with the help of which the elites in East Ukraine overturned communist dominance in their electoral markets and stood against national democrats. Moreover, specifics in its history and industrial structure made the Donets'k people natural born conformists, which was a decisive merit in the tense electoral politics of the early 2000s headed towards the fateful year of 2004. The bankruptcy of the Za Edu movement in 2002, Yushchenko's failure to manage Donets'k Oblast via his viceroy in 2005, and Yanukovich's electoral manipulation using the UDAR in 2012 revealed that in Ukraine, nationwide politicians could not dictate regional politics, in contrast to Putin's Russia. Perhaps this is a reason that the PR could not become the real center of power after Yanukovich's victory in 2010. In Donets'k and Luhans'k Oblasts the PR operates as a real party with definite ideology, organization, and discipline, but beyond the borders of these oblasts it becomes an instrument serving the real center of power. Even after 2010, the Donets'k leaders can only behave as *primus inter pares vis-à-vis* their colleagues in other eastern regions, via constant coordination and co-option. Co-option of individual politicians may appear far from real federalism, but this is much better than the liquidation of alternative elite centers.

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