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Opinion on the withdrawal of the publication by Yevhen Kutsenko

On the basis of an investigation of received complaint, the editorial board of the *Slovak Journal of Political Science* found that Yevhen Kutsenko, false author of the article "*Practices of Manipulation Techniques in 2012 Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine*" (published in issue 1/2018), has violated the ethical and publication standards (available online at: http://sjps.fsvucm.sk/index.php/sjps/navigationMenu/view/publication_ethics_and_publication_malpractice_statement). The violation consisted in plagiarising the paper of prof. Maksym Kovalov titled "*Electoral Manipulations and Fraud in Parliamentary Elections: The Case of Ukraine*", published in *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 28/4 2014. Since it is a non-original paper of Yevhen Kutsenko and at the same time, it has the signs of plagiarism according to a generally accepted definition, its full version is withdrawn from webpage <http://sjps.fsvucm.sk> and is no longer available to its users.

Trnava, Jun 19, 2018

Editorial board
of *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences*

PRACTICES OF MANIPULATION TECHNIQUES IN 2012 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

This study examines the mechanisms through which the Party of regions (the dominant ruling party) won a plurality of votes using a combination of legal changes and manipulative practices during the 2012 parliamentary election in Ukraine. Legal changes in electoral rules — the replacement of proportional representation by a mixed system — helped the Party of regions weaken the opposition parties. These changes enabled the ruling party to engage in manipulation and fraud during campaigning and on election day by suppressing competition, crowding out the races with “technical” parties and “clone” candidates, and manipulating the composition of electoral commissions. The change of electoral system also enabled outright fraud on the election day. A combination of these techniques disrupted both the contestation and participation dimensions of democracy, effectively pushing Ukraine into a state of competitive authoritarianism.

KEY WORDS: electoral manipulations; electoral techniques; election company.

INTRODUCTION

On 11 November 2012, the Ukrainian Central Election Commission announced that the candidate from the ruling Party of Regions won the race in the 92nd single-member district in Kyiv Oblast. Among the candidates in this race there were three pairs of candidates with the exact same last names. Two of these candidate doubles, or “clones,” withdrew from the race but the third one stayed on the ballot and diverted 1,98 votes from the candidate of an opposition party, Batkivshchyna, who finished second. In the same race, the electoral commission invalidated 2,820 ballots and there were 8,140 absentee ballots cast (The Central Election Committee of Ukraine, 2012). Out of thirty-nine candidates who initially registered to run, fifteen candidates were disqualified by the Central Election Commission. The number of remaining candidates (twenty-four) was twice the national average, as was the number of absentee votes. If not for the “clone” candidate, invalidated ballots, and the overwhelmingly large

¹ This article is a part of my Ph.D. research in the Department of Russian and East European Studies of the Charles University in Prague “Practices of usage of electoral techniques in parliament elections in Ukraine (2004-2014)”.

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number of candidates and absentee ballots, the outcome could have been different because the margin of victory between the Party of Regions' candidate and the Batkivshchyna's candidate was only 2,726 votes. This race is a microcosm of the systemic manipulations and fraud that occurred in most single-member district races during the 2012 parliamentary election in Ukraine.

Besides that, the legal changes of electoral rules from a pure proportional system to a mixed single-member district-proportional representation (SMD-PR) system helped weaken the opposition parties. Evidence of manipulations primarily surfaced in the SMD races, suggesting that the electoral system change and the reintroduction of the SMD tier also facilitated fraud during and after the election day. The illegal techniques, such as manipulation with the media, ballots, election reports, and electoral commissions, disproportionately benefited the pro-presidential candidates. The two most striking types of manipulation occurred through the formation of District Election Commissions, and the tabulation of election results in the SMD races. Pro-government candidates received preferential treatment in media coverage, preferential representation in election commissions, and the ability to use agencies in order to establish control over election results. The terms "pro-government candidates" and "pro-presidential candidate" are used in the study interchangeably to refer to the candidates (1) nominated by the Party of Regions, (2) independent candidates who joined the Party of Regions faction, or (3) independent candidates who consistently voted together with the Party of Regions in the Rada. In instances where the legality of results was questioned, the pro-government candidates benefited from the leniency of the judiciary and security forces controlled by the ruling party, which further cemented their preferential treatment.

These conditions gave an administrative edge to the ruling party, creating an uneven playing field. Using a counterfactual analysis, I estimate that the legal and illegal manipulations altered the election outcome by giving the Party of Regions up to three seats. This net gain included forty-two seats obtained due to the changes of the electoral system, sixteen seats resulting from ballot invalidation, one seat from the presence of a clone candidate, and four seats from invalidated races and subsequent repeat elections. The 2012 parliamentary election was a failure of democratic standards, as President Yanukovich's win hinged on vote irregularities, unequal access to media, the use of state security apparatus, the judiciary, and the parliament for partisan purposes (Levitsky and Way, 2010).

Hereby, this article is an interpretative case study, which examines the strategies of electoral competition – both legal and illegal – used by the incumbent party to win the plurality of votes in the 2012 parliamentary election. Its research question is: 1) what manipulative techniques did political parties use in

parliamentary election campaign 2012?; 2) what effect on election result did it have. To my opinion, it is important to find answers to these questions because: 1) it helps better understand the electoral processes in Ukraine and analyze them with political science methods; 2) studying of manipulative techniques' mechanisms in electoral process gives us an opportunity to create counteract schemes and in that way helps protect and strengthen democratic institutes in the region.

For data processing and interpretation the author uses methods of correlation, descriptive, institutional, content and event analysis as well as methods of congruence and process tracing. The article proceeds as follows: the next section briefly discusses the evolution of electoral manipulations used by the incumbents since 2004. The 2004 presidential election constitutes a useful starting point because Ukraine has gone through the full cycle of electoral fraud—from crude manipulations employed in 2004 to largely free and fair elections in 2006 and 2007, only to return to a variety of manipulative and fraudulent techniques in 2012. The third section examines the electoral system change and its impact on weakening the opposition parties. The fourth section looks at various techniques of electoral manipulations used by the authorities – unequal access to media, the presence of candidate “clones” and “technical” parties, the role of the electoral commissions, delays in reporting results, invalidated ballots.

Even though manipulative practices were used by candidates of various political affiliations, the fourth section shows that pro-government candidates benefited disproportionately from these manipulations. The fifth section estimates the net gain from electoral manipulations that helped the pro-presidential party win the plurality of the votes. The sixth section concludes with implications of electoral manipulations for Ukraine's political development and for consolidation of democracy.

EVOLUTION OF ELECTORAL MANIPULATIONS

Ukrainian authorities have used manipulative techniques during elections in the past, but reports of outright fraud were uncommon prior to 2004. Paul D'Anieri shows that the tactics of electoral dominance in pre-2004 Ukraine were the result of power politics and the supremacy of the executive branch (D'Anieri, 2007). The executive was able to use indirect means to influence voters through patronage and control of government jobs. The presence of the mixed SMD-PR electoral system also seems to have had an effect on his ability to manipulate the results. It was easier to affect the election outcome in the SMD races because the results were skewed by marginal dominance in individual precincts.

The magnitude of fraud during the 2004 presidential election was staggering. Existing studies have documented a range of tactics used on the election day. Among them are ballot stuffing, falsification of official protocols, changing voters, interception and manipulation of the data through the Central Election Commission servers, and transportation of voters from one precinct to another for illegal voting multiple times. These and other fraudulent tactics were widespread (Wilson, 2005). Myagkov et al. uncover irregularities between voter turnout and candidate vote share using the official returns from the 2004 election (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin, 2009). Comparing data from the election's second and third rounds, they find evidence that Yanukovych's votes were fraudulently cast in the second round while the fraud was mitigated in the third round because of close international and domestic scrutiny.

The 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections took place under a different electoral formula and both international and domestic observers found the election to be largely free and fair (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin, 2009). A possible explanation for "disappearance of fraud" is a higher level of competitiveness, which was the result of an institutional reform introduced during the 2004 election (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Shakin, 2009).

Many of the fraudulent tactics employed in the 2004 presidential election were not used during the 2012 election. Authorities avoided using cruder types of fraud – "electoral tourism," massive absentee voting, and "carousels" – described in detail by Andrew Wilson (Wilson, 2005). High degree of international scrutiny and lessons learned in 2004 by the Yanukovych's campaign, helped avoid outright fraud on the election day.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) positively assessed the voting process on the election day but criticized "the lack of a level playing field caused by abuse of administrative resources, the lack of transparency of campaign and party financing, and the lack of balanced media coverage" (OSCE, 2013). It appears that armed with knowledge of possible repercussions, the authorities undertook actions to skew the playing field prior to the election and after the polls were closed.

The next section considers two mechanisms that helped the ruling party preserve control over the legislature: electoral system change and political prosecutions.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM CHANGE

For Yanukovych's victorious presidential campaign in 2010 put him in a position to move the limits on the executive and revoke the 2004 institutional

reforms, thus shifting the balance of power from the parliament back to the executive. He established control over the legislature and created stability in the court system. In 2010, the Constitutional Court controlled by the president invalidated the electoral reform of 2004 and returned power to the presidency, as defined by the 1996 constitution (Stack, 2010). The control over the parliament's majority and the judicial system allowed Yanukovych to introduce changes in the electoral system and reverse the compromise reached by the parties during the 2004 reform passed in the wake of the Orange Revolution. The most important change was a return to the mixed electoral system where half of the members of parliament (MPs) are elected in single-member districts (SMDs) and the other half by party lists – through proportional representation (PR). The electoral threshold for political parties was increased from 3 to 5 percent. These changes were supposed to create additional troubles to electoral success for two non-parliamentary parties, opposed to Party of Regions: "Svoboda" ("Freedom") and "UDAR" of V. Klichko.

Besides that, cancellation of proportional electoral system led to serious changes in distribution of parliament seats. It was almost exceptionally to Party of Regions. For example, in 2012, 186 Party of Regions' members became Parliament deputies (114 or 61% of them got their mandate in SMD). At the same time, its Parliament fraction included 22 of them officially were not Party of regions' members, but "independent" politicians with informal government support, who became a deputy in SMD. But in accordance with previous law, this party with 30% of votes could receive just 150 seats (The Central Electoral Committee of Ukraine, 2007; 2012).

Yulia Tymoshenko's Party in 2012 got 25.54 % votes, which transformed just into 101 seats. But pursuant to electoral law, which regulated elections in 2007, this party could get 124 seats. The same is true for other parliamentary parties, including partners of Party of Regions – Communist Party of Ukraine: "UDAR" of V. Klichko in 2012 received 40 seats instead of 67 (13.96 % of votes); "Svoboda" ("Freedom") received 36 seats instead of 50 (10.44% of votes); CPU received 32 seats instead of 64 (13.18 %) (The Central Electoral Committee of Ukraine, 2007; 2012).

Hereby, because of electoral system changes the ruling Party of Regions received on 67 parliamentary seats more. But at the same time all other parties received together on 98 seats less. Furthermore, in case of proportional electoral system, three opposite parties – "Bat'kivshyna", "UDAR" and "Svoboda" ("Freedom") could receive together 241 seats and form a coalition.

MANIPULATIONS AND FRAUD IN THE 2012 ELECTION

This section examines illegal techniques employed by the incumbent party during the 2012 election. Among the most prominent techniques were denying the opposition candidates access to the media, “cloning” candidates, using “technical” or “proxy” parties to split the vote of the opposition and to crowd out the electoral commissions, and stealing, damaging, and invalidating ballots to guarantee success in closely contested races. Some of these manipulations, such as changes of the rules for selecting electoral commission membership, the creation of “technical” or “spoiler” parties, took place before the election. Other techniques, such as the delayed reporting of the results and damaging and invalidating the ballots, were deployed on or after the election day. The latter resembled more blatant and crude cases of vote manipulations and outright fraud. The combination of these methods effectively skewed the playing field, weakened the opposition, and gave a disproportionate advantage to the incumbent party, keeping it in power.

ACCESS TO MEDIA

One of the central areas of contestation in hybrid regimes is the media system. The ruling party brought much of the media space under its tight control prior to the election. The distribution of the weekly magazine *Ukrainskiy Tyzhden* was blocked just several days before the election after the magazine reported on manipulations of the media by the ruling regime (The Economist, 2012). TVi, one of the few independent channels, came under significant pressure when the state denied its digital licensing and the tax administration launched an investigation against the channel's director, accusing him of tax evasion (Ukrainska Pravda, 2012).

These attempts to suppress the independent media were combined with more subtle mechanisms of co-opting media owners and forcing them to practice self-imposed censorship. The owners of media outlets were heavily dependent on political decisions, and therefore they forced their media to impose self-censorship as a sign of support of the ruling regime (Ryabinska, 2011).

The loyalty to the ruling party displayed by most media created an unfair advantage for pro-government candidates. For instance, the ruling Party of Regions received disproportionately higher shares of coverage during the election campaign.

According to the study conducted by the Institute of Sociology, the government received 60 percent of media coverage in October 2012, whereas the opposition

received only 30 percent of coverage (Kotenko and Ivanov, 2013). The state-controlled TV channel Pershiy Natsionalnyi (First National) offered the most imbalanced coverage of the government, by giving 74 percent of the airtime to representatives of the governing coalition. Only 16 percent of airtime was given to opposition candidates, whereas the share for the pro-government candidates was an astounding 69 percent. The largest imbalance in coverage was recorded on channels 1+1 and Ukraina, as pro-government candidates received 84 and 82 percent of the airtime, respectively. Even an independent TVi channel showed a disadvantage for the opposition in media access. Only 13 percent of airtime was given to the opposition whereas the government candidates received 84 percent of airtime (Nesteriak, 2013).

One week before the election only three channels – Inter, TVi, and Channel 5 – offered more or less balanced airtime to the politicians of the government and the opposition but, overall, the media coverage imbalance was overwhelming during the campaign.

CLONING CANDIDATES

The parties used several “gray” techniques (according to A. Wilson) to promote their candidates. In highly competitive races, especially in the City of Kyiv and in Kyivska Oblast, large numbers of “technical” candidates were used. Technical are candidates who do not have a chance of winning and whose primary purpose is to weaken positions and split the vote of the frontrunners, or to sell their representation in the election commissions to the authorities. Frequently, technical candidates reside in the district where they did not reside and to which they had no ties whatsoever. The strategy of using “technical” candidates proved efficient and it was deployed during the repeat election held on 15 December 2013 in five SMD races (Khomenko, 2013).

Another type of gray technology used to weaken the most prominent candidates was the use of “clones” – candidates with similar last names. The technique of “cloning” candidates was actively used by the authorities during the 2002 parliamentary election in Ukraine in order to confuse voters and to draw votes away from popular politicians (Diuk and Gongadze, 2002). There were no cases of “party cloning,” similar to those that diluted the votes for Viktor Yanukovich’s Our Ukraine coalition in 2002 (Wilson, 2005). However, an independent candidate, Oleksandr Buhanevych, registered a nongovernmental organization “Unity for Batkivshchyna,” and used the well-recognized brand of Batkivshchyna (Fatherland Party) to promote himself in district 189 (Khmelnytskyi Oblast). He finished third with 16,488 votes in a very tight race

where the first two candidates won 18,509 votes and 17,766 votes respectively (Pikhovshek, 2012). The evidence from the 2012 election suggests that clone candidates were ubiquitously used by the authorities to benefit the candidates of various political parties.

Candidate clones were present in races against all political forces – the incumbent party, the opposition parties, and independent candidates – and no political party can be singled out as the most frequent abuser of this technique (The Civic Network Opora, 2013). Candidates from the opposition parties faced clone candidates more frequently (eight races) than candidates from the ruling Party of Regions and People's Party (seven races each).

Independent candidates faced clones most frequently (seven races). For example, Anatoliy Grytsyuk, Batkivshchyna candidate in district 23, faced an independent Andriy Grytsyuk (The Civic Network Opora, 2013). The latter candidate – the clone – registered ten days after the former, and won more than 4,500 votes (The Civic Network Opora, 2013). In district 191, an independent Victor Bondar won the race by a margin of 1,000 votes. In addition to competing with his main opponent from the Party of Regions, Bondar was facing another Victor Bondar who diverted more than 2,000 votes from him. In a different race, another pair of candidates with the exact same name – Vasyl Shpak – won more than 12,500 votes together, with the clone winning more than 3,000 votes from the real candidate (The Central Election Committee, 2012). In both instances, the share of votes diverted by clones was not sufficient to affect the outcome of each race.

Overall, clones were present in 32 of 225 single-member district (SMD) races (Hale, 2010). In twelve of the two races where clones were present, they withdrew from the race before the election day. It does not appear, however, that the withdrawal of clones proportionally benefited the opposition or the incumbents. Had clone candidates stayed on the ballot, they would have split the vote of real candidates and benefited candidates from the Party of Regions in four races, opposition candidates in three races, and independent candidates in four races. In these twelve races, the clone candidates were used to dilute the vote of all parties. Overall, the clones took away close to 45,000 votes. Their level of support varied from under 1 to 17 percent. Even though the use of this technology altered the outcome of only one race (SMD 92), the distribution of votes in other races was severely skewed. The head of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine suggested that the real magnitude of candidate “doubles” was insignificant, even though the technique was widely criticized in the media. On average, clone candidates won 2,248 votes. There were twenty-one races where the margin of victory were less than this amount, yet clones were not present

(The Central Election Committee, 2012). Had clone candidates been present in these races, they could have dramatically altered the outcome and prevented the real candidate the victory. At first glance, it seems that no political party benefited more than others from using clones. But on closer examination, the primary beneficiaries from the presence of clone candidates were the candidates affiliated with the ruling party rather than the opposition or the independent candidates. Overall, twelve of twenty SMD races were won by the candidates nominated by the ruling party or independents who were co-opted by the ruling party.

In seven races where clones diluted the vote, real candidates finished second but the margins of victory between these candidates and the winners were quite significant. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the clones had a detrimental impact on the real candidates' electoral fortunes. When real candidates finished second, the presence of clone candidates had the strongest potential for changing the race outcome in district 92 (Kyivska Oblast). In this race, Batkivshchyna's candidate, Victor Svitovenko, finished second losing 2,736 votes to the Party of Regions candidate.

Another Svitovenko – Maksym – was running in the district as an independent and received 1,998 votes. The combined vote shares of both Svitovenko candidates – 33,320 votes – would have still been short of the 34,048 votes received by the Party of Regions candidate who won the race. However, the conjunction of gray techniques seems to have worked in favor of the ruling party candidate. In addition to the votes lost due to the presence of the clone, 2,820 ballots were invalidated. If we assume that ballots were deliberately damaged and invalidated, the combination of clone candidates, ballot invalidation, and higher than average number of registered candidates (twenty-four) that helped fragment the vote, could have cost the runner-up (Ukrainska Pravda, 2012).

In six races, the presence of clone candidates alone was not sufficient to deprive the real candidate of victory. However, on three occasions, the margins of victory were smaller than the combined share of votes distorted by clones, the number of invalidated ballots, and the share of absentee votes. Though these measures would have had the potential to work against the winners to alter the outcomes of the race, the mechanism of cloning candidates was an effective strategy to divert the votes from real candidates.

A detailed analysis of these races indicates that even though the impact of clones was marginal, the presence of clones significantly affected the distribution of votes. Overall, margins of victory in single-member races are not as important as in proportional representation tier because even a victory by a small margin guarantees the candidate a parliamentary seat. While the distribution of votes is equally important in the SMD races, the fairness and transparency

of races are essential elements of democratic systems, and the systems were compromised through the use of clones. Detecting and preventing such abuses should, therefore, be among the central concerns for international observers and policy makers.

TECHNICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS

Whereas the use of clone candidates was widespread in many SMD races, the PR campaigns were marked by the presence of “technical” or “proxy” parties. These parties were artificial organizations covertly recruited and financed by one of the main parties in order to take the votes away from the opponents and damage their chances of winning voter support. Henry Hale has suggested that candidates of different political hues used this technique during the 2010 presidential election (Hale, 2010). In 2012, the evidence indicates that Natalia Korolevska’s party, Ukraine Forward (Ukraina Vpered), was perhaps the most prominent technical party used by the ruling elites to confuse voters and to draw votes away from the opposition parties. The party was built on the personality of Korolevska, who was seen by many Ukrainians as a replacement of the jailed Yulia Tymoshenko and as a fit opposition figure to Victor Yanukovich’s semi-authoritarian regime. Yet, the evidence suggests that Ukraine Forward was a project of the incumbent party designed to attract voters seeking new personalities in politics and split the vote of the opposition parties (Yakel, 2012). An ultimate indication of Korolevska’s coordination with the ruling party was her appointment as Minister of Social Policy in the new cabinet. As for Ukraine Forward, it did poorly at the polls, having received less than 2 percent of the vote and drawing was held a once for all 225 DEC, contrary to the rules used in electoral campaigns from 1998 to 2007. During that time, the random drawing was done for each DEC to ensure equal opportunities for all political parties and candidates. Before random drawing, the CEC changed the process of formation of DEC by having one single drawing for all 225 DEC. Political parties could either win representation in all 225 DEC or none at all. As a result, only two out of eighty-seven political parties received representation in DEC. This ad hoc change of the rules and the “all or nothing” approach helped the authorities exclude two prominent opposition parties from representation in the DEC and denied the opposition the ability to monitor the vote counting process and demand the results (Boyko, 2012).

The procedure of creating the Precinct Election Commissions was very similar to the way how DEC were formed. On 17 May 2012, the Central Election Commission confirmed that the PECs would be created based on a

random drawing at the level of precincts. Only five days before the drawing, the CEC changed its decision mandating that the random drawing be held at each of the 225 districts rather than at each of the 33,646 precincts. In other words, after having established control over DEC, the authorities sought to extend their control over all the PECs.

The large number of PECs required an overwhelming number of members willing to serve on commissions. The authorities used the names of sick, disabled, and dead citizens who were not aware that their names were used and hence not willing or able to work in the PECs under the fraudulent schemes. An anecdotal piece of evidence was a case in the town of Homyly, where a citizen who died in 2010 was nevertheless included in the lists of members on behalf of six political parties (Glavkom, 2012).

The artificial nature of technical parties became more evident after a series of rotations in the membership of DEC. Just two weeks after the DEC were formed, political parties replaced 1,972 out of 4,050 DEC representatives (49 percent) (OSP, 2012). By the time of the election, parties replaced 2,349 (58 percent) of their members. Most frequent rotations occurred among the leadership of the commissions. According to the official reports, political parties replaced 81 percent of the DEC heads, 50 percent of deputy heads, 71 percent of the secretaries, and 56 percent of regular members of the commissions (The Central Election Committee of Ukraine, 2012). Five parliamentary parties changed only 4 percent of their representatives. Meanwhile, six technical parties – United Rus, Fraternity, Russian People, Russian Unity, Union of Anarchists of Ukraine, and United Family – replaced their representatives in DEC at least once and sometimes multiple times (Bloomberg, Political manipulations, 2012). While the number of rotations is a partial for transparency of the election process, it shows that parties engaged in frequent rotations were superficial organizations created to crowd out the electoral commissions.

DELAYED RESULTS

An important component of manipulating the election results was a delay in publishing the count, which allowed time to alter the reports, initiate vote recounts, and ultimately to invalidate ballots. Given other violations committed against opposition candidates, it is plausible that votes were invalidated in favor of pro-government candidates. However, we cannot accept that conclusion without evidence. After all, as the results of races with the presence of candidate clones suggest, either pro-government or opposition candidates could have benefited from the clone presence.

It is therefore important to look at other abnormalities in cases where the number of invalidated ballots exceeded the margins of victory. The delays in reporting the vote count suggest that it was a purposeful technique used to alter undesirable outcomes in strongholds of the opposition. Whereas the results from Eastern and Southern regions were reported according to schedule, the results from Western, Northern, and Central regions arrived with significant delays.

By the evening time on 29 October, one day after the election, with 78.77 percent of the ballots processed in Ukraine, the averages of processed ballots for Eastern and Southern regions were 93.7 and 87.4 percent, respectively, whereas the share of processed ballots in Western, Central, and Northern regions constituted 77.7, 60.2, and 68.5 percent, respectively (Kotlyarsky, 2012).

Early reporting in the East and the South was not surprising given that those were the strongholds of the incumbent party. The combination of extensive use of administrative resources and complete control established over the election commissions (and thereby over the vote counting process) made it easier to eliminate the opposition candidates from the electoral field prior to the election day. As a result, the races in the East had fewer candidates and larger margins of victory between winners and runner-ups compared to other parts of Ukraine. Overall, the races in the East were less competitive and the victories of pro-government candidates could have been easily anticipated. The races in the Western and Central regions, on the other hand, were more competitive and showed higher electoral turnouts and larger support for the opposition candidates, which seemed to compel the District Election Commissions to deliberately delay reporting of the results.

BALLOT INVALIDATION

One of the reported cases of voter fraud was deliberate damage of ballots by PEC members before handing out the ballots to the voters. Blogs and web live journals were abundant sources of reporting on this type of fraud (Urasov's Blog, 2012). However, the main mechanism of falsifying results at the DEC level was invalidation of damaged ballots. For example, the outcome in election district 14 (Vinnytska Oblast) seems to be the result of post-election manipulations. An independent factor Zherebnyuk was announced the winner by an eighty-three-vote margin against the opposition candidate Ivan Melnychuk (Batkivshchyna). The recount of the ballots requested by Zherebnyuk's representatives uncovered damaged ballots predominantly in boxes containing Melnychuk's ballots. The DEC invalidated 3,128 ballots, most of which were cast for Melnychuk, and in turn declared the opposition candidate the victory.

The official data indicate that 3,128 ballots were invalidated in district 14, while the margin of victory was only eighty-three votes. This example of vote invalidation occurred in the race in Central Ukraine but the largest share of invalid ballots were found in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, and the smallest shares of invalid ballots were in Western and Central Ukraine. Overall, 499,068 ballots were found invalid in proportional representation races and 753,308 ballots were invalidated in 225 SMD races (The Central Election Committee of Ukraine, 2012).

Electoral districts in Western and Central Ukraine were least prone to invalidating the ballots, despite a concerted effort by the authorities to delay the results in the strongholds of the opposition and potentially to invalidate the votes (Tregubov, 2012). Similarly, districts with the lowest shares of invalid ballots were won by the opposition candidates (Batkivshchyna and Svoboda won six and two races, respectively) and independent candidates (two victories). On the other hand, districts in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, which have been dominated by the Party of Regions, were targeted in voter fraud more frequently and at higher rates than their counterparts in Western and Central Ukraine. Party of Regions' candidates won eight of ten districts in these parts of Ukraine with largest shares of invalid ballots, and the shares of invalid ballots in these regions ranged from 3,430 to 9,864.

Even though not every district with a large share of invalid ballots was competitive enough to alter the results of the race, in twenty-seven SMD races the number of invalid ballots was larger than the margins of victory. In ten more races, the margins of victory were only insignificantly larger than the number of invalidated ballots (less than one hundred votes). In other words, the results in these thirty-seven races could have been different if ballots were not damaged and invalidated.

Three of five races whose results were later invalidated were among these races. Even though pro-government, opposition, and independent candidates enjoyed victories in these races, candidates affiliated with the Party of Regions benefited disproportionately in districts reporting high shares of invalidated votes; they won sixteen districts versus eleven and seven won by the opposition and independents, respectively (Nikolaenko, 2012).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELECTORAL TURNOUT AND VOTE SHARE

There were other abnormalities in the thirty-seven races mentioned above, which could indicate the presence of fraud. One way to assess the beneficiaries of

invalidated ballots is to analyze the relationship between vote share and turnout. If ballots were damaged and invalidated deliberately, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to establish which candidates' names were originally printed on invalidated ballots. But we can look at vote distribution in electoral districts and try to identify whether some candidates particularly benefited from or were disadvantaged because of vote distribution.

Studies of electoral irregularities have noted that the relationship between turnout and a candidate's vote share should be logical in that as turnout increases a candidate should receive a proportional share in that increase (Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin, 2007). At the same time, if a candidate's vote share is positively or negatively correlated with turnout, we can suspect that ballots were either stuffed in the candidate's favor or stolen from the candidate.

Of course, strong positive correlation between a candidate's vote share and turnout can be due to alternative reasons. Not every spike in turnout combined with increased support for a particular candidate is a result of fraudulent activities and, therefore, Maygkov et al. warn that we need to look at other indicators that support evidence of fraud (2007).

In order to substantiate the suspicion of irregularities, I identified electoral districts that reported larger numbers of invalidated ballots than margins of victory or where that difference was marginal (less than one thousand votes). In other words, large shares of invalidated ballots served as a useful starting point for further scrutiny. Next, I used bivariate correlations to examine the relationships between turnout and vote share of candidates in each of the thirty-seven SMD races.

The vote share of the Party of Regions candidates was positively correlated with turnout in twenty-two of thirty-seven districts (Nikolaenko, 2007). Meanwhile, the vote shares of opposition candidates positively correlate with the turnout only in three races, but overwhelmingly, the relationship between the opposition candidate vote share and turnout is negative. Positive correlation between candidate vote share and turnout is found only in races in which the opposition candidates were not competitive; in these races, independent candidates who ran against pro-government candidates were the ones who were losing votes proportionally to the turnout increase, as vote shares of these independent candidates indicated a negative correlation with the turnout. These findings suggest that it is very likely that the vote share was artificially increased to benefit pro-government candidates. In the majority of cases, it was the Party of Regions' candidates or independents who benefited from this pattern. It is plausible to suspect the reduction of vote share was produced by vote invalidation.

Looking at invalidated ballots in thirty-seven questionable SMD races, pro-government candidates could have benefited from invalidated votes in sixteen races, whereas the opposition candidates and independents could have benefited from invalidated votes in eleven and seven races, respectively. The correlation coefficients indicate that fourteen of sixteen districts won by pro-government candidates reported high positive and statistically significant correlations between their vote share and turnout. However, only a single district won by the opposition (the City of Kyiv, district 216) showed positive and statistically significant correlation with turnout.

Therefore, if there is suspicion that ballots were invalidated to benefit the opposition candidates, the evidence suggests that the opposition candidates were winning in spite of, rather than because of, invalidated votes. The opposition candidates were not benefiting from higher turnout even in regions where they were the “favorite sons” – in Western and Central Ukraine. However, it seems that candidates affiliated with the governing party received high voter support in high-turnout precincts regardless of their geographic location. Such vote distribution suggests that the mechanisms responsible for voter support of opposition candidates and pro-government candidates were different. In the next section, I argue that this difference in electoral behavior was achieved by more frequently invalidating ballots cast for opposition candidates.

INVALIDATED RESULTS AND REPEAT ELECTIONS

The crudest cases of fraud were the invalidation of election results in five SMD races (Caryl, 2010). The opposition candidates were leading in all five races but the damaged ballots, as a result of fraudulent actions by the local authorities – the police, the riot police, and the army – undermined the integrity of the races, and forced the opposition candidates into repeat elections.

Victor Romanenko (Batkivschyna) was leading in the SMD 94 by a margin of 9,661 votes with 99 percent of ballots counted. His opponent from the Party of Regions filed twenty-eight lawsuits demanding a recount, followed by invalidation of 33,000 ballots, which cost the opposition candidate a victory.

Arkadiy Karnatskiy (Batkivschyna) was announced the winner in the SMD 132 by a 4,187 vote margin only to see the reversal of the outcome because of “corrections” in final vote tallies. “Corrections” were only done in favor of the pro-presidential candidate. Between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. on 30 October, 4,399 votes from three minor candidates “migrated” to the Party of Regions candidate, and the CEC’s website showed that the latter won the race.

Yuriy Levchenko (Svoboda) won the SMD 223 by a 930-vote margin but Svoboda's representatives had to engage in a physical confrontation with a group of thugs-turned-journalists who had journalist IDs but could not answer questions about the media they represented (Nikolaenko, 2012). After perpetual vote recounts and confrontations, the opposition candidate was announced to have lost the race.

In a similar fashion, after confrontations with riot police, Yaroslav Datsenko's 4,672-vote victory margin turned into a loss in the SMD 197. Finally, Mykola Bulatetski's victory margin of 12,000 votes was reversed after the final vote tally was destroyed by the DEC's head in the SMD 198 (INB News, 2012). Both candidates represented the opposition party Batkivshchyna and the observer reports suggest that both victories were stolen.

These five cases of annulment of results clearly benefited candidates affiliated with the Party of Regions. In none of the five races the recounts favored the opposition candidates. Once the vote tallies showed that the pro-presidential candidates were losing their races, the state resources were directed at reversing the outcome: the riot police was engaged to clear the buildings and steal the reports, the thugs were used to damage the ballots, the DEC's delayed reporting the results and fabricated the reports, and the courts invalidated the results.

The repeat election, held on 15 December 2013, reaffirmed that manipulations and fraud had become an integral part of pro-presidential candidates' campaign. Only one opposition candidate won the repeat election (SMD 197). The opposition candidate in SMD 94 was banned from running by the court decision and the opposition candidate in SMD 223 faced two clone candidates who diverted close to two thousand votes. Meanwhile, the Party of Regions replaced four of their five candidates and since the ruling party's affiliation was more a liability than a benefit, all of them ran as independents. The resulting net victory for the Party of Regions was four parliamentary seats.

THE NET GAINS OF THE RULING PARTY

In order to estimate the net gain from the manipulations used by the Party of Regions during the 2012 parliamentary election, I begin with a counterfactual analysis of the electoral system change. The electoral system change was lawfully passed by the Rada and, more importantly, was supported by the opposition, and therefore it would be incorrect to call it fraudulent. However, the electoral system change had the unintended consequence of opening the door to significant manipulations in the SMD races. It is therefore imperative to consider its impact on the election outcome. The counterfactual helps examine what the distribution

of seats would have looked like had the election been held by the old rules, that is, under pure PR formula.

Five parliamentary parties received 93.12 percent of the vote, with 1.7 percent going to smaller parties, which essentially became the “lost votes.” Under the old electoral rules used in 2006 and 2007, the Party of Regions would have been the only political party disadvantaged by the pure PR electoral formula. The Communists would have been the largest beneficiaries of the PR system, as they would have doubled their seat share from thirty-two to sixty-four seats. By losing forty-two seats, the politicians from Party of Regions would have also lost the prospects for legislative majority, even in coalition with the Communists. Three opposition parties dominated the PR part of the 2012 election and they would have won a combined share of 241 seats (54 percent of the vote), if the election were held by the pure PR formula. This would have given the opposition enough seats to form a legislative majority. In sum, the electoral system change may have had crucial ramifications not only for vote distribution in the Rada and for the structure of parliamentary majority, but also for manipulations and fraud that mostly occurred in the SMD races.

Of course, the central assumption of this exercise is *ceteris paribus*. The campaign could have been different had the election been held under the PR formula, and the authorities would have possibly engaged in alternative forms of manipulations to compensate for the lost seats. However, given that most violations and manipulations occurred in the SMD races, it is plausible to assume that the scale of manipulations would have been much smaller under pure PR formula. Clearly, the Party of Regions disproportionately benefited from the mixed SMD-PR system, as its candidates relied heavily on the SMD races and on the support from independent candidates who were later co-opted by the Party of Regions faction in the parliament.

Examining the conjunction of gray techniques helps establish the full impact of manipulation on the outcome of one race was altered because of the votes distorted by a cloned candidate and due to the invalidation of votes. Additionally, through a combination of tainted votes, absentee votes, and invalidated ballots, the results were skewed in favor of pro-presidential candidates in sixteen of thirty-seven SMD races. In races won by the opposition and independent candidates, the correlation coefficients between vote share and the turnout indicate that these two categories of candidates were not benefiting from higher turnout even in the opposition strongholds. In other words, they were winning in spite of, rather than because of, invalidated votes.

In sum, the net gain from manipulations for the ruling party constitutes sixty-four parliamentary seats. This estimation is conditional upon the changes

in the electoral system, which brought additional forty-two seats to the Party of Regions, the invalidated ballots (sixteen seats), the presence of a clone candidate (one seat), and invalidated races and subsequent repeat election (four seats). In hindsight, it seems that the electoral system change facilitated fraud during and after the election day, because manipulations and crude fraud were present predominantly in the SMD races. While it is challenging to disentangle several types of manipulations occurring in the same race, it is important to emphasize that the ruling party benefited from the conjunction of gray technologies. These calculations may be an underestimate, as they do not include the impact of manipulations with the media and electoral commissions. It is extremely difficult to estimate the net impact of these manipulations.

CONCLUSION

The government authorities engaged in significant manipulations during the 2012 parliamentary election and undermined the opposition's ability to compete. A combination of legal manipulation and illegal techniques helped the authorities skew the outcome. This article explores a series of manipulations and outright fraudulent techniques used by pro-presidential candidates. The analysis shows that the electoral system change had a profound effect on the composition of the Rada. Had the election taken place based on the proportional rules, the Party of Regions would have lost up to forty-two parliamentary seats and would not have been able to create the coalition government with the Communists. Moreover, the return to the mixed SMD-PR formula had unintended consequences. The reduction of the SMD tier opened the door to electoral manipulation. The most significant violations occurred in the SMD races. Even though the changes were done legally through the parliamentary vote and supported by the opposition parties, they disproportionately benefited the ruling party.

What do manipulations and fraud uncovered during the election 2012 tell us about Ukraine's political development? Ukraine has gone through the full cycle of election fraud. The magnitude of fraud culminated in 2004 during the presidential election, declined during the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections, and was revived in 2012 election. The 2012 election constitutes a major departure from parliamentary elections of 2006 and 2007 that were largely free of voter fraud. The story of electoral manipulations shows that political institutions are crucial for strength and quality of democracy. The challenge of political institutions – curbing the power of the presidency and increasing parliamentary control over the appointment of the cabinet and prime

minister – constitute a legacy of the Orange Revolution and may be the primary explanation of the strengthening of Ukrainian democracy in 2004 – 2010.

Similarly, the reversal of this balance since 2010 contributed to the weakening of democratic institutions. At the same time, the institutional explanation is incomplete without accounting for the role of autocratic leaders who may tilt the balance of power and endanger democracy. If we attribute the disappearance of fraud” (Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin, 2007) to changes in the balance of power between the executive and the legislative branches, the return of electoral manipulations is the outcome of Yanukovich’s decision to return the lost power of the presidency.

Contrary to popular expectations that Yanukovich’s presidency would mean reforms, strengthening of democracy, political stability, and closer ties to Europe, the opposite happened. Yanukovich seized power, captured the institutions of the state, and subjugated the legislative and judiciary branches to the executive’s control. A series of laws restricting political rights and civil liberties passed in early 2014 with procedural violation in mind. What the 2012 election fraud was not an incident but a carefully designed tool to preserve the power of the executive at all costs.

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