UKRAINIAN VOTERS ON POLITICS, ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATES

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1999



Commissioned by: UCCA under a grant from USAID

December 1999: QEV Analytics was commissioned by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America to conduct focus group discussions in Ukraine on the attitudes of voters towards the presidential elections and their informational needs. This report presents our analysis of the eight focus group discussions held in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa, September and October, 1999.

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INTRODUCTION

In September and October, 1999, a total of eight focus groups were conducted in three Ukrainian cities, Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa. The purpose was to explore attitudes towards the presidential election and to examine the informational needs of voters. The discussions focused on how voters view Ukraine's political system and how they define their role in the evolving political culture.

In reporting the findings, we have tried to replicate the substance and the tone of the group discussions. The quotations cited in the text are actual comments of participants, edited for coherence and grammar, and translated as closely as possible into colloquial English. The findings are thematically organized and follow the order in the moderator's guide (for a copy of the Moderator's Guide, see Appendix, page 20). The questions listed below represent the issues explored by participants in the focus group discussions.¹

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

- 1. What are Ukraine's main problems?
- 2. Who could solve Ukraine's problems?

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

- 3. Will the 1999 presidential election be fair and honest?
- 4. Will voters participate in the election?

¹ Not included in this report are findings on the testing of communications products; these findings were used to fine-tune the products and, therefore, are not included in this report.

5. What attributes should have the president of Ukraine?

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

- 6. What do voters know about the candidates?
- 7. Are political parties useful to identify candidates?
- 8. Is the left-to-right spectrum meaningful for differentiating candidates?
- 9. What information do voters need about a candidate?

The findings from the focus groups are indicative of the views and attitudes of the urban voters, not only of the cities, but of the regions where the discussions took place. In terms of demographics, focus group participants matched the profile of urban voters in the presidential election, except that focus group participants were better educated. The educational difference, however, does not affect the findings as indicative of urban opinion, since analyses of survey data have shown that education is not a definitive factor in attitudes.

The Washington firm QEV Analytics designed and analyzed the group discussions; the research issues were finalized in consultation with the UCCA New York and Kyiv offices. The Ukrainian firm KIIS conducted all aspects of the fieldwork, screening and inviting participants, as well as organizing and managing the group discussions.

Funding for the research was provided by UCCA under a grant from USAID.

DATA BASE

This report is based on an analysis of eight focus group discussions: four in Kyiv (September 14, October 22 and 28), two in Odessa (September 15), and two in Kharkiv (September 16). A total of 79 individuals participated, with 9-10 in each group. All were eligible voters who had at least some secondary education and were employed at least part time or were full time students. Four groups consisted of young adults (aged 18-35) and four of adults between the ages of 40 and 55.

An experienced moderator led the group discussions, using a guide specifically designed for this project. Participants identified and rank ordered Ukraine's main problems, described their attitudes towards the election and their views of presidential candidates. The second part of each session was devoted to test products prepared for the "Making of the President" project, six radio and three television announcements encouraging voter turnout and a brochure about candidates and the election.

	Total	Kyiv	Kharkiy	Odessa
Total	79(100%)	40	19	20
Gender of Participants				
Male	33 (42%)	19	7	7
Female	46 (58%)	21	13	12
Age of Participants				
18 25	19 (24%)	7	4	8
26 - 35	21 (26%)	13	6	2
40 - 45	14 (18%)	10	1	3
46 55	25 (32%)	10	9	6
Education of Participants				
Secondary	11 (14%)	9	0 .	0
Technical	21 (27%)	12	7	4
	46 (58%)	19	13	15

SUMMARY

Below are the most significant findings that emerge from our analysis of focus group discussions conducted in three cities of Ukraine, Kyiv, Odesa and Kharkiv, in September and October 1999.

Economic crisis dominated as the country's main problem, but also frequently mentioned were the political, social and cultural crises. Generally, these crises were seen as interdependent, with the political structure considered as being at the root of the economic and the social problems. A few expressed concern about Ukraine's status in the international community.

The political crisis was defined as the failure of politicians to address the needs of the people and a lack of a vision of the future. National political figures and leading parties were not seen as being focused on solving Ukraine's problems or as offering distinct solutions. Although ' frustrated with the political structure, almost no one placed responsibility on a single person or an institution. Expectations for the future are quite negative, with most convinced that there is no one who could solve the country's problems. This perception may be at the core of Ukraine's failure to move forward, a lethargy that accepts historical inevitability.

Notwithstanding the palpable disgust with politics and the universal expectation that the elections will not be fair or honest, there was keen interest in the presidential election. What was even more surprising, in view of the very negative attitudes

towards politics and elections, was the widespread commitment to vote: almost every participant intended to vote on October 31 and in the second round. From the perspective of participants opinions were not inconsistent: voting was a right of citizenship and they were proud of this right, although they did not have a sense of empowerment from voting. But more importantly, participants believed that the best way to thwart election fraud is by voting, meaning that each voter who cast a ballot prevented others from using his or her vote.

presidential regarding the **Opinions** candidates were quite soft. Typically, less than half of the presidential candidates could be named spontaneously, most frequently Kuchma, Symonenko, Moroz, Marchuk, Vitrenko, and Udovenko; others usually came up only with prompting. None of the candidates were seen as having a distinct policy identity, meaning that the participants could not distinguish how candidates proposed to approach Ukraine's problems. There was also little ideological coherence to a candidate's image. Only the two leading candidates had a distinct ideological identity, Kuchma on the right and Symonenko on the left. candidates were as likely to be seen ideologically on the left as on the right.

About six weeks before the election, many participants voiced concern that the candidates did not present real choices and did not offer coherent statements on what they intend to do when elected. Most participants had not made up their mind whom to vote for and almost no one

expressed intensively pro or anti opinions regarding any of the candidates. About one-third expressed preference for a candidate, but most wanted more information to make a decision. These findings suggest that the electorate tended to be middle of the road and was not ideologically polarized (and voters proved this on November 14).

The Kaniv agreement contributed to a cynicism about the political process and was seen as a vestige of the Soviet system, a behind the scenes brokering of deals that completely ignored the public. To some, the Kaniv group also illustrated each candidate's lack of discernible left, right, or centrist position and reinforced the prevailing opinion that the candidates were in the election only for personal gains, driven by ambition for personal power.

Yet, taking a step back from the October 31 election, the focus group discussions provide evidence of positive developments in Ukraine's political culture and indicate the absence of an organized system that could give expression to and advance the interests of voters.

On the positive side, there appears to be a convergence of political outlook between ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians. The political orientations expressed through these groups varied little among the three cities, even though the ethnic composition of the groups did differ. Additionally, ethnic Russian participants expressed no annoyance that the promotional materials they reviewed used only the Ukrainian language. These findings indicate that ethnic Russians in Ukraine are embracing their citizenship. The urban society that is emerging in Ukraine is multi-ethnic,

accepting of Ukrainian as the official language, and aware of and sensitive to the rights of individuals.

Attitudes towards government officials appear devoid of the liberal democratic concept that elected officials serve voters. There was no expectation that elected officials should and could be held accountable for their actions or inactions. Nor is there a sense that voting is a form of empowerment. Frustrations with the political structure have a passive tone, an acceptance that the government system is immobilized or is unwilling to introduce the much-needed political, economic, and social changes. This passivity of the voters may reflect a belief in historical inevitability. The passivity and the sense of inevitability, however, did not lead to defeatism, and, on the whole, most participants were optimistic, convinced that eventually conditions will improve.

The discussions on who could bring about change in Ukraine confirmed the belief that individuals are seen as powerless and unable to implement reforms in society. The view that individuals have no personal power, in some measure, probably determines how individuals relate to the political process and underpins their attitudes towards elected officials. Even on the most fundamental rights of citizens - the right to vote - participants did not see that they personally could do anything to improve the process. Most were frustrated with the paucity of information about candidates and wanted to make an informed decision about their vote, but felt they had no means and no right to demand information from candidates.

The evolving political culture in Ukraine does have the basic elements needed for a democratic society: an electorate wanting to make informed decisions and participating in an election. Turnout in the second round was 75% of all eligible voters. However, there is no appreciation of civic activism as a requisite of a democratic political system, no understanding that voters have not only the right, but also the responsibility, to insist on receiving needed information and to hold elected officials accountable.

Also worrisome is the view of political parties, which are seen mainly as satisfying personal egos and not as organizations of like-minded individuals, an essential feature of a functioning democracy. In today's world, a liberal democracy depends on the organizations that give expression to public interests: political parties, trade and professional associations, interest groups, and community associations. These organizations, to date, have not become an integral part of Ukraine's political structure.

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POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

1. What are Ukraine's main problems?

In each focus group discussion, participants were asked to identify and rank order the most important problems in Ukraine. As would be expected, economic issues dominated, but also frequently mentioned were political, social, and cultural crises.

Economic problems covered a wide range of subjects: instability in the domestic economy, low productivity, unemployment, and stagnation in many economic sectors. In Kharkiv and Odessa, specific economic problems were cited, while in Kyiv discussions were general, broad statements on the dire economic conditions.

Political problems centered on the lack of leadership and the failure of the political system to bring about the changes that would benefit the public. Many were frustrated that the political system has not curbed corruption, prosecuted malfeasance and the misuse of public funds, or countered fraudulent activities that allow individuals to exploit the economy for personal gains. Although no political leader or institution was seen as responsible for the problems in the country, the political system was seen as being too tolerant of illegal activities. For example, President Kuchma was seen as having tolerated Lazarenko's way to riches and his escape from the country.

FIGURE 1. MAIN PROBLEMS IN UKRAINE Focus Groups September and October 1999

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ISSUES
Economic crisis, instability
Unemployment
Decline in productivity
Reliance on foreign goods
Excessive tax system
Arrears in wages, pensions
Lack of implementing reforms
ISSUES
Maintaining peace
Political instability, indecision
Corruption
National identity
International status
JES
Lack of good education
Cultural degradation
Lack of social safety nets
Inadequate health services
Crime, lawlessness
Environmental protection

Education and cultural degradation were seen as the main social problems. Participants were concerned about the quality of primary and secondary education and the unavailability and high cost of textbooks. One participant noted that education was a low priority for politicians and illustrated his comment by comparing the quality of schoolbooks with publications produced for the 1998 parliamentary campaign. The former were badly bound on poor paper, whereas campaign literature was colorful, on top quality paper.

Cultural degradation was a phrase describing the erosion of values in society. Specifically: no respect for elders; no sense of honor; no appreciation of the intellect; no rewards for accomplishments by ensuring employment to those who completed training or to those who have seniority; and insufficient financial support to cultural activities and cultural community leaders.

The ranking of problems generally broadened into a discussion about the ' failure of politicians and the political system to handle the problems of Ukraine. The political crisis was seen as preceding the economic one and some viewed the failing economy as reflecting a lack of political Generally, problems were leadership. collapsed into three broad issues, with economic problems in first place, political in second and social in third place. This collapsing and ranking was typical of the older adults (40-55) in the three cities (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa).

The young urbanites, those between 18 and 35 years of age, on the whole agreed that economic problems were the most

pervasive and that the lack of political action was a reason for the continued economic crisis. However, they generally were reticent to rank order problems and reluctant to group economic and social issues. Opinions of the young also differed from city to city:

- In Kyiv, young adults focused on peace and stability, defining this as the need "to deal with issues that threaten our peace and to ensure that there is no war and that we have no terrorist acts, such as is happening in Moscow."
- In Kharkiv, the young refused to rank order problems, agreeing that "a ranking of issues is impossible since there is a dependency of economic and political issues; these are interconnected and cannot be treated separately."
- In Odessa, the young considered the decline in production as the foremost problem, followed by political and than social issues. In fourth place was national identity, defined in terms of Ukraine's international status. The group agreed with the proposition that the international community has not fully accepted Ukraine as a separate and independent state.

The reluctance to rank order problems may indicate a level of sophistication in analyzing problems, a sensitivity to and an awareness of the interdependence of issues. However, the non-ranking may also be a legacy of the communist ideology, a totalitarian system that interprets history in terms of economic tensions, accepts the preeminence of politics, and assigns all decision-making in a society to the

Communist Party. The totalitarian mindset may inhibit analyzing problems as discrete segments, of subdividing issues into separate and distinct areas in order to understand a process and identify solutions. Participants may be used to this rigid and structured system for analyzing social, political and economic problems.

Who could solve Ukraine's problems?

Respondents were asked who they consider could effectively deal with the country's problems. With one or two exceptions, most agreed that at the present time there is no such person or institution. Reasons given for this pessimistic outlook fall into four broad areas: the view of government officials; the understanding of the political system; perceptions about a vision of the future; and historical inevitability.

There is widespread distrust of government officials, a lack of confidence that has been extensively documented in nationwide opinion surveys. In the group discussions, negative attitudes towards political leaders were tempered by a heavy dose of cynicism. Most subscribed to the view that political leaders seek office not for any general good, but to gratify personal needs and for personal gains. A young adult in Odessa thus summarized this view: "many who are in politics today are doing so for their personal interests; the problems of others are at the very bottom of their list." Young urbanites generally viewed an election as a competition among ambitious and selfcentered individuals.

Participants believed that political leaders serve only their close friends, specifically family members, personal friends, business colleagues, and clan members. The clan was a candidate's inner circle, individuals who came from the leader's hometown. A young Odessa urbanite opined that "the government cannot solve problems since those in power are dependent on corporate and other interests. Government officials do not represent the interests of the public, but are mainly concerned with the economic sector that put the leader in power."

Nor did participants expect that a candidate's campaign promises should translate into policies. Platforms of candidates were seen as serving only one purpose - to win an election. For example, while acknowledging that Kuchma did very little to improve conditions during his presidency, no one faulted him for touring the country and making new promises for the 1999 election. It was accepted that he did this to solicit votes. Even participants critical of Kuchma did not suggest that he be grilled on not delivering on past promises. It should be noted, however, that these views were not an expression of naivete or lack of critical thinking. Take for example participants who said they probably would vote for Kuchma. Their decision was not simply a process of elimination, that Kuchma was the most appealing of the candidates, but a preference for a middle of the road candidate rather than a communist or a former KGB leader.

A few participants viewed power through the prism of the socialist-communist ideology. An older adult in Kyiv stated that "the mercantile interests dictate an election. In Ukraine at this time, these mercantile interests are the driving force of individuals who want to assume power."

Almost all participants were frustrated with the political structure and most agreed that a president alone cannot solve the country's problems and needs support from the legislature. However, such cooperation was not seen as happening and most agreed that "at this time, there is a struggle between the executive and the legislative branches. The President and the government cannot find any compromise with the Verkhovna Rada." The conflict between the president and the Rada was extensively discussed by young urbanites in Kharkiv and Kiev. In Kharkiv, a participant offered the following solution: "Since the Rada has too many opponents to reform, the president could dismiss the Rada and assume all power for a short time, a few months or half a year, and bring about the needed changes."

Another frustration with the political system was that participants did not see a. future-looking leader in Ukraine. This lack of a visionary generally was part of the discussion on the need for a clearly defined ideology to guide policy. An adult in Odessa was particularly frustrated that Ukraine has "no ideology to define what we are building - socialism, capitalism, or an economic system with a human face?" Generally, communists were seen as having a clarity of vision, but one of returning to the previous order, to a socialist road of development. The need for a visionary was thus articulated by a young urbanite in Odessa: "what Ukraine needs is someone who has a national idea, a vision that will appeal to and attract the general public.

No one can lead a country out of its problems until a national idea can be articulated." Otherwise, many feared that the problems will persist, political leaders will continue to defend corporate interests, and eventually "an oligarchy will come to rule Ukraine."

Discussions on the conditions in Ukraine had one notable undercurrent, acceptance of historical inevitability. The acceptance of conditions included an expectation that somehow, sometime conditions will improve. Some argued that the government and the people were the same and, therefore, either all or no one can be blamed for what is happening. An older participant in Odessa phrased it this way: "We first have to understand that the government and the people are one and the same, that they are in fact two sides of the same coin. As a matter of fact, the government is the people."

The few who believed that someone could resolve the problems in Ukraine took two very different positions:

- In Kyiv, a few agreed that if Marchuk was elected, he could deal with the country's problems.
- In Odessa, young adults believed that a group of individuals "could band together to handle Ukraine's problems." In their view, what was needed "is not only a visionary leader, but a group of people dedicated to change and working together to improve conditions in Ukraine. . . . A single political leader can be easily put aside, whereas a group cannot be as easily removed."

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

3. Will the 1999 presidential election be fair and honest? (and election costs)

Almost all agreed that there would be some presidential fraud the election. Participants mentioned the buying of votes, the stuffing of ballot boxes, and giving orders on how to vote. Opinions differed in how extensive would be such practices, but almost all agreed that these would not affect the outcome of the election. Participants were somewhat amused by the expectation that elections should be fair and honest, maintaining that politics universally a "dirty business" and election fraud is part of the election process. Typical was the comment that "even in the muchpraised United States, there are violations in an election" (Kyiv, older adult).

Comments on vote buying included many references to the 1998 parliamentary According to a Kharkiv young election. adult, the cost of a vote in 1998 was "about 3 hryvna (about 20 US cents). This amount was frequently given to old ladies along with instructions for whom to vote." In Kyiv, however, vote buying took a different form -- giving gifts and promising future privileges. The most cynical viewed vote buying as an inexpensive way to reach voters. One older participant in Kharkiv defined vote buying as a subsidy to the poorest segments of society -- "In 1998, individuals who accepted money for their vote should not be judged; the poor needed hot food much more than making their own

personal decision on who rules the country."

As for undue influence on voters, most cited pressures at the work place. Not only do managers at a meeting instruct workers how to vote, "but they made it widely known that an enterprise will give all of its votes to one particular candidate" (Kharkiv, young adult).

The stuffing of ballot boxes was seen as having the potential to change the outcome of an election, but only if voter turnout was low. Stuffing of ballots was described as a series of decisions and actions. For example, a veteran of elections in Odesa had observed that "city commissioners met to decide what to do about an election; they called in members of the raion and of the city council to discuss the election; they met with various officials and advised on election results. I witnessed when officials deposited a pile of ballots for one deputy, this "deposit" measured about 3-5 centimeters."

These practices were seen as minimally affecting the election outcome. The largest estimate was given in Odessa – 30% of the votes could be falsified. But, the adult giving this estimate noted, "this could not happen in the presidential election, because falsification can only work with a low turnout."

Discussion on the election included a few nostalgic comments for the Soviet period, when elections were a real national holiday, full of festivities and entertainment. In comparison, current elections were drab, overloaded with slogans and posters. These observations were made in passing

and are reported here because they portray a reality of today's Ukraine. In the first round, the mood of gravity was pervasive; in Kyiv, the stillness of the city in sharp contrast to its more relaxed mood on other days or to the excitement when its soccer team is playing. Maybe this "non exciting" mood is typical of an unfolding political culture, which has no traditions to celebrate a winner or console a loser.

There were also many comments on campaign costs - the production of campaign literature and the travel of candidates. What participants found particularly irritating was that candidates had the ability to raise substantial funds, but not one candidate did or would use this energy and talent to help the needy.

With one or two exceptions, participants did not show extensive understanding of the election process. In Kyiv, a few mentioned the mayoral election as an example of problems and noted that courts got involved. Nor were international observers seen as contributing to make the election fair and honest. In Odessa, for example, the prevailing view about international observers was that they contribute to the "intrigues" in an election.

4. Will voters participate in the election?

Virtually every participant intended to vote in the first round (October 31) as well as in the second round. Older adults and participants in Kharkiv and Odesa were more passionate in their commitment to vote than were younger adults and residents of Kyiv. Participants were not committed to any one candidate, but did have

preferences and wanted more information before making a decision.

Given the palpable disgust with politics, and the universal expectation that the elections will not be fair or honest, the finding on voting intention was somewhat surprising. However, participants believed that large voter turnout is the best way to thwart election fraud — by voting you prevent someone else from voting for you. Moreover, voting is a right of citizenship, and, as one voter said "it makes us proud." In sum, voting in Ukraine is an accepted practice, a right that the electorate wants to protect and does exercise. Turnout for the 1999 election first round was 64% and reached a high of 75% in the second round.

Participants considered voting a passive political act. Many felt that voters have no real choice, in part because little is known about a candidate's platform and his/her team. The attitude of many participants was cynicism, about elections and politics in general, tempered by hope that one day voters will matter. The Kaniv agreement this cynical contributed to participants saw candidates brokering deals and ignoring the electoral process. Typical of this attitude was the comment that "voting is not for the people, but for the candidates." An election was seen as a competitive game, with voters the judges, and the candidates, the players.

5. What attributes should the president of Ukraine have?

Participants described the "ideal" president as firm, honest, truthful, educated, morally and physically fit, and personally wealthy. They wanted the president to be a family man, future oriented, and sufficiently old to be wise, but sufficiently young to be dynamic. Additionally they wanted the president "to love Ukraine" (a phrase used in all groups). A president had to be a guarantor of the Constitution and, therefore, had to respect the rule of law and embrace the emergence of a civic society.

Equally important were managerial skills and experience in running an enterprise. A few wanted a president who owned a private, successful business. This view was well argued by a young urbanite in Kharkiv: "Owners of business are trained in economic matters and can clearly define their purposes and responsibilities."

Most agreed that a president cannot rule alone and needs to bring a good team to the government ("kommanda") and be able to work with the legislative branch. In discussing executive-legislative relations, a few noted that the Rada (Ukraine's parliament) has a strong anti-reform bloc and suggested that the new President dissolve the Rada and be given authority to rule for 6 months.

Participants did not agree in three areas: whether the president must be from the new guard or the old guard, how important is membership in a political party, and if international experience is important. For example:

- Young urbanites divided sharply between those who wanted to see new faces and those who favored the old guard since they had a proven track record.
- In Odesa, some of the young favored a president not affiliated with a party, but others saw parties as essential and pointed to the success of such democracies as the U.S., England and Germany.
- In Kharkiv, young adults were quite irritated that political leaders kept going overseas, whereas in Odesa, the same age group believed it was important that a president had international standing.

In these discussions on the "ideal" president there was little appreciation that the president sets the direction for the government and is the only government official elected by all people. Not surprisingly, discussions on the ideal president did not address accountability, that a president has a special relationship with the electorate and, as their elected official, is responsive and accountable to the people.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

6. What do voters know about the candidates?

Opinions regarding the presidential candidates were quite soft. The candidates most frequently named spontaneously were Kuchma, Moroz, Marchuk, Vitrenko, and Udovenko; a few mentioned Kravchuk, the former president, and were immediately corrected that he is not a candidate. Other names came up with some prompting

Participants have only very superficial knowledge of the presidential candidates. None of the candidates had a distinct image in terms of policies or overall political and economic values. As a matter of fact, not one candidate was seen to have a distinct policy identity. Participants generally knew only basic biographic data about the candidates - what positions they had and their party affiliation. This paucity of information is not surprising since television news was the main information source and the stations covered the candidates in their official positions -- the president, the deputies, the speakers of the Rada. As a result, participants knew what candidates did in their official capacity and not their policies as presidential candidates.

Most could report on President Kuchma's travels around the country and his meetings with national and international leaders. Symonenko was primarily known as the leader of the Communist Party and most urbanites saw him as a leader of the rural

population. An older participant in Kyiv opined that villagers would vote for Symonenko because most peasants wanted to return to holkhozes. This assumption was erroneous, since the village vote went in greater proportions to Kuchma than to Marchuk was known as a Symonenko. former member of the KGB and that he had helped some dissidents in the Soviet period. Moroz was liked and disliked because of his actions as a speaker of the Rada. Udovenko and Kostenko were known as members of the embattled Rukh party. Vitrenko appealed because she was a woman and some felt that it would be refreshing to have a woman at the helm. She was not seen as an attractive candidate, mainly because, as one Kharkiv young adult noted, "her relationships are not the best and she is far removed from the standards that we would like to see in a person running for president."

What was obvious in these discussions is the paucity of real information about the candidates and a frustration among the more informed that the candidates did not offer real options. A number of participants, especially the young and particularly in Odesa, wanted to vote against all candidates, but realized that by doing so they would not bring about the needed changes.

7. Are political parties useful to identify candidates?

Discussions on the role of political parties were far ranging and no consensus emerged. In all three cities, there were strong proponents as well as strong opponents to political parties.

Opponents saw no useful role for political parties in a presidential election. Some felt that parties were the reason why reforms were not proceeding, referring mainly to party activity in the Rada. Moreover, opponents to parties hoped that once a presidential candidate was elected, he or she would sever all relationships with a party; Kuchma's "no-party affiliation" was cited as an example of presidential behavior.

In contrast, advocates of political parties considered party identification indicative of a candidate's overall orientation and of the inner circle of a candidate, the team of people that will work for and with a president. To prove the relevance of parties in a presidential campaign, participants noted that candidates from a communist party are pro Russian and pro CIS, whereas candidates from centrist and center-right parties have a west European orientation. A young participant in Kharkiv would not vote for Symonenko because of his party affiliation, a party that "would take two steps back and return to communism." Comments of an older participant in Kyiv were typical of the overall pro-party discussions: "In the U.S., a political party selects and supports a candidate and, in a way, is responsible for the candidate, who becomes the party's leader. Thus, a party U.S. offers a system accountability. And in Ukraine - to whom is a candidate accountable? Take Kuchma - who does he represent and who can demand accountability from him? I have nothing against Kuchma, only use him as an example. What Ukraine needs are responsible parties; not individuals, single persons. . . Political parties serve a very useful purpose - they can be in a position of responsibility and demand accountability."

A dominant undercurrent in many comments about political parties was a general disgust with all of them. reason for this negative attitude may be the seventy years of domination by the Communist party. As one participant in Odesa said, "Seventy years of rule by a single party is definitely more than enough for Ukraine." However, the more probable reason is that parties competing currently in Ukraine have not delivered. An urbanite in Odesa, put it this way: "Ukraine has many political parties, but they are unconcerned about the problems of the people and are only interested in their own personal gains." This may be one of Ukraine's greatest weakness as an emerging democracy -- political parties are seen as serving personal egos and are not a group of individuals who come together for a common good.

8. Is the left-to right political spectrum meaningful for differentiating candidates?

To get an overview of how voters saw the overall philosophical orientation of candidates, each participant was asked to place candidates on a left-to-right political spectrum. No questions were raised about a left-to-right designation, indicating that participants understood the ideological configuration.

The table below affirms the view of many participants that candidates did not have a clearly defined ideological position (the table excludes the first two sessions in Kyiv, since its participants did not record their placement of candidates on a spectrum). About one-fourth of the participants could not identify the ideological orientation of candidates. Among those who did, the

but the two leading candidates, Kuchma and Symonenko. Kuchma was seen as politically right of center or center, and only a few placed Kuchma on the left. Similarly, Symonenko, the leading communist candidate, was seen as ideologically on the left (except for a few who placed him on the right). None of the other candidates had a clear ideological image. Marchuk straddled both the left and

the right, (as many placing him on one as on the other side). The two other communist candidates, Moroz and Vitrenko, although mainly on the left, were seen by a number of participants as ideologically on the right. As unclear were the images of Udovenko and especially of Kostenko -- slightly more participants placed these two candidates on the right than did on the left.

FIGURE 2. PLACEMENT OF CANDIDATES ON POLITICAL SPECTRUM
Focus Groups, September and October, 1999

	Left	Center	Right
Bazyliuk			
Haber	the	2	
Karmazyn	rhę i	medu	1
Kononov		2	2
Kostenko	7	2	8
Kuchma	5	7	24
Marchuk	13	3	13
Moroz	15	met who	9
Oliynyk	huk 1	1	
Onopenko	3	Palmin	1
Rzavskiy	2	2	telev
Symonenko	28	detelan	4
Tkachenko	11	1	7
Udovenko	9	Smith	16
Vitrenko	18	1	13

In the two discussions held a few days before the election, participants did not have any clearer view of the candidates' ideological position. For example, Udovenko, the candidate from Ukraine's leading centrist party Rukh, was placed on the left, along with Moroz and Symonenko.

These findings are presented not to document voters' misconceptions or errors, for the responsibility of a candidate's ideological image is with the candidate. Claim's that voters may have misunderstood the ideological leaning of candidates, is further documentation on the failing of candidates to send out coherent messages.

9. What information do voters need about a candidate?

Participants considered biographic data and policy statements as the information most needed to make an informed decision. They wanted to know the following about each candidate: level of education; professional experience and accomplishments; if married how many children and what the children are doing; if family members live abroad and what they are doing. On policy issues, participants wanted a clear statement on objectives and specifics on how a candidate proposed to carry out the objectives.

Many participants wanted to know who were a candidate's close associates, the individuals who would become part of the government if a candidate were elected. Many could speculate on this, but wanted confirmation. An older participant in Odesa put this very succinctly: "the team a president has can give an indication in what direction a president will lead. Marchuk will be surrounded by former members of the KGB, Kuchma by people from Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv, and Udovenko by residents from Lviv."

In each group, the moderator asked what question would participants pose if he or she met a candidate. Three issues dominated – economic and anti-corruption policies and attitude towards personal wealth. Specifically:

• How does a candidate propose to deal with the economic problems and to solve social inequities, especially the needs of pensioners and children?

- What steps would a candidate take to curb corruption in the government and to ensure that his administration was free of illegal activities?
- If the president's salary was that of a laborer, would a candidate still want to be an elected official and how much does a candidate own, including any overseas accounts?

Participants felt that the only way to become informed about candidates was to meet them face to face. In their view, the ideal would be to have information in mass media, especially newspapers and television, become acquainted with the material, and than ask questions of a candidate. It was an ideal, according to participants, since mass media too frequently lack substantive information. The quality of political coverage was well summed up by a young female in Kharkiv who said that media report "who said what to whom" and "who met when with whom."

Participants in the focus groups regularly watched television news and followed developments in the press. The most popular television channels were Inter, Studio 1+1, UT1 and UT2. Among newspapers, over half of the participants read Fakty, a pro-Kuchma national daily published since 1997. About one-fourth read Sehodnya, a national daily that also started in 1997.

UKRAINE'S POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Although the group discussions focused on elections and the presidential candidates, many of the conversations reflected how defined the role and participants responsibilities of individuals in Ukraine's political system. Voters were seen as observers of political developments, as an audience watching a show, and not active participants of the political process. A young Kyivan thus described how individuals experienced the last decade: "During perestroika there was a tremendous amount of information and we were all very political. We would run home and watch the screen to hear statements from the Supreme Soviet, from All Union conferences and various meetings. ... We listened and studied all the details, closely following all of the changes taking place. Over many years we were heavily politicized, but interest in political issues severely declined and, understandably, many have become apolitical." This lack of interest in politics was attributed mainly to the fact that very little is currently changing in Ukraine.

The focus group discussions suggest that voters in Ukraine probably would reject the proposition that in a democratic society individuals can bring about change, not individually but by voting and through civic activism. Although in Ukraine voting is exercised with pride, it is a passive act and does not give individuals a sense of empowerment. The behavior of voters in Ukraine suggests that they may be aware of

their actual power, and probably intuitively understand this, and therefore vote.

Nor did the group discussions show any appreciation for the role and potential influence of groups, including organizations as well as coalitions, that come together to achieve common objectives. The negative attitudes towards political parties may be justifiable by the 70 year single party rule and the poor performance of parties since independence. Moreover, the comments of participants that a political party exists to satisfy the ego of its leader may be an accurate reflection of some (if not many) parties. However, a democratic system of government rests on political parties, which are an essential feature of a functioning Therefore, the political democracy. parties in Ukraine may well need to review their past and present performance and find means not only to reach the electorate, but to persuade voters that they are an effective means to achieve common goals.

Notwithstanding the emergence independent mass media and the many newspapers in Ukraine, there remains a paucity of information. The problem is dual - availability and attitudinal. former is primarily an economic issue, such as the cost of newspapers or the support for expanding the coverage of a television signal. The latter, attitudinal, is about what voters view as their rights in terms of information. In Ukraine voters do not have a sense that they are entitled to information and can demand such. This perception is very significant, since democracy works only when voters can make rational choices based on a forthright presentation of information.

APPENDIX

Note on Methodology

The project was designed to explore attitudes towards the presidential election and to examine the informational needs of the public. The research issues were operationalized in a moderator's guide as a series of questions that a moderator used to direct the discussions. Each group was led by an experienced moderator, who probed and sought detailed specifics for explanations. To gauge reactions to communications products, participants filled out a set of short questions on each product.

QEV Analytics designed the research elements of the project – defined the demographic profile of participants, prepared the moderator's guides, the fill-in questionnaires (on the demographics of participants and their reactions to the communications products). QEV Analytics analysts were present at all discussions and briefed each moderator on the purpose of the session.

The Ukrainian firm the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (Kyiv) conducted all aspects of fieldwork: screened and invited the participants, arranged for all group discussions, and prepared transcripts and processed the quantified data. A total of 79 participants participated in the discussions in the three cities – Kyiv, Odessa and Kharkiv. All participants were eligible voters, employed at least part-time or in school or training full-time, had at least 10 years of education, and were not members of a political party (for details on

demographic profile of participants, see Tables on pages 3 and 25. MODERATOR'S GUIDE I FOCUS GROUPS IN KYTV, ODESSA, KHARKIV SEPTEMBER 14-16,1999

1. INTRODUCTION (7 minutes)

Greet participants . . .

We will spend together about two hours discussing the political situation in Ukraine. Our purpose is to gain a better understanding of how voters view the political process in Ukraine, especially their opinions and attitudes towards the upcoming election.

We are soliciting your own personal views and opinions. In this discussion, there are no right or wrong answers or comments; different people will have different responses to a question. Your main task is to feel free in expressing your opinion. Please feel free to speak in Ukrainian or Russian.

Our discussion will be recorded on video; this is done only for analytical purposes, to make it easier to recall what was said.

Before we begin the discussion, let us take a few minutes and introduce ourselves — please state your name and briefly tell us something about yourselves.

- SITUATION IN UKRAINE
 (15 minutes)
- 1. First let us briefly review the current situation in Ukraine. What do you consider to be the main problems that our country currently faces?

LIST PROBLEMS CITED ON AN EASEL

Which of these do you consider to be the most serious (rank order listed problems).

2. [FOR TOP LISTED PROBLEMS] Is it possible for the government or the

President to solve this problem? Probe: why/why not? [Develop views on efficacy of government].

[FOR NEGATIVE PARTICIPANTS]
Could another leader — someone not now in position — bring about the needed changes?

- III. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (30 minutes)
- 3. Other than solving these problems, what do you want a President of Ukraine to do or be?
- 4. As you are well aware, the presidential election is scheduled for this October. Do you expect these elections will be fair and honest? Why/why not?

Are you going to vote in the election? PROBE the degree to which voters are committed to vote. ASK THOSE NOT DEFINITE ABOUT VOTING — Why?

5. Next, let's discuss the presidential candidates. Who are the candidates registered for the presidential election? How well do you know each of the candidates? What do you know about each of the candidates?

MENTION NAMES OF CANDIDATES NOT CITED BY PARTICIPANTS — What have you heard about these candidates?

For the candidates you know, please try to place each on a political spectrum from right to left. Is such designation of candidates meaningful?

Do you need more information in order to make an informed decision when you vote?

Which candidates have you seen on TV?

- 6. Suppose I am a candidate for President of Ukraine. What questions would you like to ask me in order to decide whether you would vote for me or not?
- 7. What information is most important for you to know, in order to decide for whom you are going to vote? PROBE on policy issues that are mentioned
- 8. Do you already know for whom you are going to vote, or is your mind not yet made up? [IF MIND MADE UP] Does the party membership of candidate matter for you? [PROBE FOR WHY PARTICULAR CANDIDATES ARE SELECTED]
- IV. TEST RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAM, BROCHURE (60 min.)
- We will now proceed to evaluate some materials that are being prepared to bring out the vote in the presidential election and to ensure that adequate information is accessible to all voters.

Moderator's Guide II: Kyiv, October 27 or 28, 1999

I. INTRODUCTION (7 minutes)

Greet participants . . .

We will spend together about two hours discussing the political situation in Ukraine. Our purpose is to gain a better understanding of how voters view the political process in Ukraine, especially their opinions and attitudes towards the upcoming election and information sources.

We are soliciting your own personal views and opinions. In this discussion, there are no right or wrong answers or comments; different people will have different responses to a question. Your main task is to feel free in expressing your opinion.

Our discussion will be recorded on video; this is done only for analytical purposes, to make it easier to recall what was said.

Before we begin the discussion, let us take a few minutes and introduce ourselves — please state your name and briefly tell us something about yourselves.

- II. SITUATION IN UKRAINE (15 minutes)
- 10. First let us briefly review the current situation in Ukraine. What do you consider to be the main problems that our country currently faces?

LIST PROBLEMS CITED ON EASEL

Which of these do you consider to be the most serious (rank order listed problems).

11. [FOR TOP LISTED PROBLEMS] Is it possible for government to solve this problem? Probe: why/why not? [Develop views on efficacy of government].

III. PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND ELECTIONS (20 minutes)

- 12. How would you describe the presidential campaign did it provide you with information that you need to make an informed decision on the candidates? PROBE what did you learn from the many political discussions of the last two or three weeks?
- 13. As you are well aware, the presidential election is scheduled this Sunday. Do you expect these elections will be fair and honest? Why/why not?
- 14. If there is a problem with the "honesty" of the election, how will it occur? Is it in the counting of the votes? The pressures put on voters? The lack of access to mass media by some candidates?
- 15. Thinking of all the candidates that you know, please try to place each on a political spectrum from right to left. Is such designation of candidates meaningful?
- III. VOTING in TWO-WEEKS
 (15 minutes)
- 16. If no candidate wins a majority, a run-off election will be held in two weeks. How likely is it that you will vote in the run-off election?
 PROBE Why not (especially of those who are indefinite about voting)?
- 17. Suppose I am a candidate for President of Ukraine. In the run-off election. What questions would you like to ask me in order to decide whether you would vote for me or not?
- IV. INFORMATION SOURCES (20 minutes)
- 18. What information is most important for you to know, in order to decide for whom

you are going to vote? PROBE on policy issues that are mentioned.

- 19. Please list all the campaign advertising which you remember seeing concerning the election. [FOR EACH] Did you find this advertisement effective or not? Do you remember seeing any advertising concerning the importance of voting? What was your opinion on that advertising: was it effective in getting people to vote?
- 20. What information sources do you consider most useful to make an informed decision about who to vote for in a national election?
- PROBE for specific media and include personal sources.

Which of these do you consider to be the most informative (rank order listed problems).

- 21. What are some reasons the mass media television, radio, or newspapers did not have the information that you needed about candidates?
- VI. POLITICAL PARTIES (15 minutes)
- 22. Let us now look at political parties. How would you describe the importance of the parties in the political process of selecting a president for Ukraine? PROBE How well did political parties do to support their candidate? What problems did parties encounter?
- 23. Do you feel you are voting for this person because of who they are, or because of the party they represent? [PROBE FOR WHY PARTICULAR CANDIDATES ARE SELECTED]
- 24. And in conclusion, would anyone like to predict on how the candidates will do this

Sunday? Who will be the leading candidates after the vote on Sunday?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOCUS GROUPS IN KYIV, ODESSA AND KHARKIV – SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER 1999

Please fill-in all of the questions, placing an "x" in the appropriate box. The data are only for statistical purposes.	
1 11/1 1	
1. What is your sex? ☐ Male	
□ Female	
2. What is your age?	
□ 18-25	
□ 26-35	
□ 40-45	
□ 46-50	
□ 51-55	
3. What is your highest education level?	
☐ Some primary	
☐ Completed primary	
☐ Some secondary	
□ Completed secondary	
☐ Some or completed technical	
☐ Some or completed university	
☐ Currently a student	
4. What is your employment status?	134
☐ Working full time in one place	
☐ Working part-time in one place	

	☐ Student
5.	Do you plan to vote this Sunday in th
nat	ional election?
	☐ Yes, definitely will vote
	☐ Yes, probably will vote
	☐ No, probably will not vote
	□ No, definitely will not vote
	☐ Have not made up my mind

□ Not employed

☐ Working occasionally in different places

6.	Did you	vote in the 1998 Rada election?
		Yes
		No
		Do not remember

7. To keep informed about events and
developments in Ukraine, what information
sources do you use on a daily basis?
☐ Newspaper (please name)
☐ Radio (please name station and
program)
☐ Television (please name station and
program)
program)
8. Is there anyone in the news business, like a
writer or a commentator, that you consider
especially trustworthy and whose opinions you
value:
☐ Please name and give affiliation:
1 1 12 1 13 13 13
9. How would you describe your interest in
politics and government?
□ Very interested
☐ Somewhat interested
□ Not very interested
□ Not at all interested
10. Are you a member of any of the following
organizations? Please check all that apply.
☐ Trade union
□ Professional association
□ Nongovernmental association
☐ Sports club
Political party
11. What political party or association, if any,
do you feel best represents the interests of
people like you? Please record name of party
or association
Thank you for your cooperation.
Thank you for your cooperation.

QUANTIFIED DATA
Focus Group Discussions
September and October, 1999

Table 1 Participants Age By City					
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv	
18 - 25	19	7	8	4	
26 - 35	21	13	2	6	
40 - 45	14	10	3	1	
46 - 50	16	5	4	7	
51 - 55	9	5	2	2	

Table 2: Gender of Partic	pants			
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
Male	33	19	7	7
Female	46	21	12	13

	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
18 - 25	19	7	8	4
26 - 35	21	13	2	6
40 - 45	14	10	3	1
46 - 50	16	5	4	7
51 - 55	9	5	2	2

Table 4 Educational Level of					
r oraciporto	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv	
Primary	2	2	0	0	
Secondary	9	7	2	0	
Technical	21	12	2	7	
University	47	19	15	13	

Table 5 Employment Sta Participants	tus of			
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
Working Full Time	46	26	6	14
Working Part Time	23	12	9	2
Unemployed	1	0	1	0
Student	9	2	3	4

Table 6 Participation in the Total and By City of	1998 Parlian Frontis Grou	tentary Election	l	
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
Yes	55	28	14	13
No	17	6	5	6
Do Not Remember	7	6	0	1

able 7. Number of Focus Group Members Indicating. Readership of This Newspaper			
	Yes	No	
Segodnya	19	16	
Fakty	44	35	
Komsomiskaya Pravda	5	74	
Komanda	4	75	
Kievskiye Vedostmosti	7	72	
VV	3	76	
Trud	2	77	
Odesskiy Vestnik	2	77	
Slovo	1	78	
Uryadovy Kurier	3	76	
Reklama	1	78	
A&F	8	71	
Moskovsky Komsomolets	3	76	
Zerkalo Nedili	2	77	
Pik	1	78	
Yug	1	78	
Verchemaya Odessa	3	76	
Chernomorskiye Novosti	1	78	
Den	5	74	
Business	1	78	
Vercherny Kharkov	1	78	
Gorodskaya Gazetta	1	78	
Vremya	2	77	
Nezavisimost	1	78	
Vercherny Kylv	1	78	
Kievskiye Novosty	1	78	
Golos Ukrainy	1	78	

Table 7a Number of Focus Reading Fakty	Group Men	ibers Indicating		
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
No	35	8	15	12
Yes	44	32	4	8

Table 8: Number of Focus Grou the Identified Radio S		ers Listening to
	Yes	No
Nashe Radio	4	75
Radio Svoboda		78
Gala Radio		76
Radio Nova	1	78
1st Program - Central Radio		72
2nd Program - Central Radio	1	78
3rd Program - Central Radio	1	78
Kievskiye Vedomosti	2	77
Promin	8	71
Russkoye Radio	70	9
Europa +	1	78
Prosto Radio	2	77
Utar	1	78
Odessa +	1	78
Hit FM		77
Simon	2	77
Favorit		77
Radio Onix	1	78
National Radio	1	78
Golos Kyiva	1	78
Deutsche Welle	1	78
101 FM	1	78

	Yes	No
NTV	13	66
RTR	9	70
Inter	54	25
1+1	34	45
UT-2	21	58
ORT	7	72
UT-1	27	52
Utar	2	72
TET	3	76
UTM	1	78
STV	3	76
Mist	1	78
Channel 7	3	76
AITVC	4	75
Simon	3	76
ATV	1	78

Table 11. Number of Focus Group Members Indicating Most Relied Upon Commentator				
	Yes	No		
Parfenovich	2	77		
Veresen	3	76		
Mazur	5	74		
Dobrovo	2	77		
Posner	5	74		
Pikhovshyk	5	74		
Dorenko	4	75		
Kiselev	4	75		
Osokin	1	78		
Victoria	1	78		
A. Krivenko	1	78		
V Moroz	1	78		
A. Kirp	1	78		
N Mikhalko	1	78		
Y Makarov	1	. 78		
A. Lyubimov	1	78		
Mitkova	1	78		
M. Ostapenko	1	78		
V. Dolganov	1	78		
A Tkachenko	1	78		
V. Tkachuk	1	78		
O Busya	1	78		
No One	38	41		

Table 12 Level of Polit	ical Interest in T	otal and By City		
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
Interested	60	31	13	16
Not Very Interested	18	8	6	4
Not At All Interested	1	1	0	0

	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
Progressive Socialist	2	0	1	1
Communist	1	0	1	0
Rukh	2	1	1	0
Socialist	3	1	2	0
Reform and Order	1	0	1	0
Green	1	1	0	0
Social Democratic	2	2	0	0
Peoples Democratic	1	1	0	0
No Party Association	26	9	5	12
Do Not Know	40	25	8	7

Table 14 Number of Focus Gro Membership in an Or	~~~~~	ndicating
	Yes	No
Trade Union	41	38
Professional Association	1	78
Non-Governmental Organization	4	75
Sports Club	13	66
Political Party	3	76

Table 15 Number of Foo Relying on Pol	ous Group Mer Hical Commer	mbers Indicating dators or Wites		
	Total	Kyiv	Odessa	Kharkiv
No	41	17	11	13
Yes	38	23	8	7

ADMINISTRACIONES NO DEPOSES