

## THE VOICE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AND ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY IN UKRAINE

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**Abstract.** *The purpose* of the article is to determine the role of the middle class in political democracy and economic democracy in Ukraine. The role of the Ukrainian middle class in the revolutionary events of 2004 and 2013–2014 – the Ukrainian Maidans, the influence of the middle class on the results of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine and its presentation in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine are noted. The pendulum-like oscillation of self-identification of the middle class between "service to the oligarchs" and "resistance to democracy," the basis of civil society, is noted. The emphasis is placed on the fact that democracy is the rule of the middle class, and the principle of equal freedom is at the core of economic democracy. The compromise between capitalism and democracy is the need to distribute the public good under the supervision of political democracy in the interests of the middle class. *Methodology.* The theory of economic democracy was used to study the essence and characteristics of the middle class in Ukraine. By means of sociological methods of empirical research middle class identification by indicators of income, education, labor (employment), consumer behavior is given. Differences of "European" middle class from Ukrainian middle class are marked. In connection with the fact that the level of income of the Ukrainian middle class does not correspond to the indicators of EU countries, the necessity of application of subjective indicators to determine self-identification of middle class representatives in Ukraine is substantiated. The definition of the middle class from the opposite, i.e., what the middle class *is not* (not the oligarchs, not the authorities, not the working class, etc.) is also applied. *Results.* The trajectories of the middle class in Ukraine have been defined – from active participation in the Ukrainian revolutions to the role of a servant of the oligarchic regime. The middle class is well positioned to establish a regime of political democracy and to oppose the oligarchic-lumpen alliance. What hinders this is the insufficient activity of the middle class during election campaigns and especially after them. The oligarchs' established monopoly in the economy and media space allows for effective election campaigns in the mass media and the financing of political parties. This nullifies attempts of the middle class to establish political democracy in Ukraine. The growing role of the new middle class – intellectuals and representatives of the creative industries – has been noted. The self-identification factors of the middle class include a sense of justice, responsibility for the future and the practice of democratic values. According to sociological research, representatives of the Ukrainian middle class strive for democratic changes, overcoming corruption, deconstruction of the oligarchic regime, and implementation of market reforms. They have higher education, are interested in art, go to restaurants, and can sometimes afford vacations abroad. The political parties that declared support for the middle class and defined it as a target group in the elections included the "Team of Winter Generation," "Veche," "Self Reliance", and "Voice". The first two were perceived as oligarchic projects, while the last two parties made it to parliament, respectively, in the eighth and ninth convocations. Separately, the 2019 elections, in which the voice of the middle class became truly powerful, are examined separately. The "old faces," representatives of the post-Soviet oligarchy, and bureaucrats lost in the majoritarian districts. The middle class refused to support those politicians and parties that had become "servants of the oligarchs" in parliament, taking an important step in building not only a political democracy, but also an economic

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democracy. *Practical implications.* The results of the study can be used in the process of European integration of Ukraine, the implementation of reforms to develop political democracy as the rule of the middle class and economic democracy as a democratic system of redistribution of public resources. *Value/originality.* This study of the middle class and economic democracy allows us to understand the economic factors that influence politics, the role of the middle class and its characteristics in the process of establishing political democracy and economic democracy in Ukraine.

**Key words:** middle class, economic democracy, political democracy, oligarchy, political revolution, principle of equal freedom, elections.

**JEL Classification:** D72, F59

## 1. Introduction

The middle class in Ukraine is probably the most enigmatic social phenomenon since independence in 1991. Gradually realizing itself in the economy as a small and medium business, in politics it, like a Cheshire cat's smile, now appears, playing a decisive role at the next historical crossroads, then disappears right before one's eyes. Studies of economic democracy point out that under current conditions there is ample room for redistribution of economic power between the rich, the poor, and the middle class (Ringen, 2004). This requires the establishment of a regime of political democracy – putting economic power under the control of the middle class. The compromise between capitalism and democracy is as follows: "...those who own instruments of production consent to the institution of the private ownership of capital stock while productive instruments consent to political institutions that permit other groups to effectively press the claims to the allocation of resources, the distribution of output" (Przeworski & Wallerstein, 2021).

One of the main prerequisites for the rise of the middle class, and consequently of political and economic democracy, is the spread of the principle of equal freedom. Since the Enlightenment, the principle of equal freedom has become the basic moral reference point by which the legitimacy of social and political institutions has been judged (Archer, 2002).

Although today we lack empirical data regarding the starting conditions and genesis of the middle class in Ukraine. The gradual overcoming of totalitarianism and the introduction of equal freedom is associated with the process of the collapse of the USSR. Probably, at the beginning of the 90s the middle class was formed as an heir of the intelligentsia and the Soviet bureaucracy, shadow speculative business and power structures. In Ukraine, the middle class has gone from semi-legal businesses, impoverished intellectuals, and "serving the oligarchs" to the driving force behind the Maidans, a class of volunteers, activists, and volunteers who provide resistance to Russian full-scale military aggression.

The middle class in Ukraine emerged with the beginning of "restructuring" and "publicity". Political democracy is associated with the policy of "restructuring" and "publicity", the first shoots of which could be observed in Ukraine in the late 80s of the twentieth century – early 90s, starting as an initiative "from above", led not only to the development of national identity, and formed the preconditions for the middle class (Yakovlev, 2015).

It is largely thanks to the middle class that Ukraine has been at the forefront of the post-Soviet democratic transformation. Yes, one should not underestimate the role of the middle class in the Ukrainian political Maidans – the "Orange Revolution" (2004) and the "Revolution of Dignity" (2013–2014). These events twice radically changed the political course of the state in the direction from authoritarianism to democracy, at least to electoral democracy. After overcoming the political crisis and the opposition coming to power (in 2005 – President V. Yushchenko, and in 2014 – P. Poroshenko), the activity and cohesion of the middle class was not enough to put pressure on the government to implement market economic reforms. The middle class has always made a democratic political choice. For Ukraine, it is a choice in favor of a proportional electoral system, a parliamentary-presidential model, and democracy as the rule of the middle class (Yakovleva & Yakovlev, 2020).

What about economic democracy? Having made political revolutions and won political democracy (at least in its electoral dimension), the middle class did not ask for a social revolution and the establishment of economic democracy. Rather, it fell back into disrepute. Or, more precisely, pushed out of the field of public politics was an effective alliance of oligarchs and the "lower" classes from the point of view of retaining power. This alliance was called "oligarchic-lumpen" in Ukrainian publicity.

Political democracy is impossible without a middle class. Economic democracy is understood as the redistribution of economic power among individuals, as the involvement of the people in economic power directly rather than through elected representatives (Ringen, 2004).

In a democracy, the decision is made by a majority of citizens, which limits the political choices of others. The middle class, thanks to its activism, has played a significant role in times of dramatic change. In elections, and especially after them, the middle class is still losing the competition for economic democracy – the establishment of a fair distribution of public resources. During election campaigns in Ukraine, oligarch candidates with populist rhetoric always win. It is about face-changing oligarchic parties, not about the essence of politics (Kroytor & Yakovlev, 2020) and the political discourse that is supported by the oligarchic media (Yakovlev, Amirov & Stoliarova, 2021).

Oligarchs nominate candidates who, thanks to populist rhetoric, receive the support of the majority of voters. This fully applies not only to political competition, but also to economic competition. Although the free market is able to distribute products and services, taking into account the preferences of small groups or individuals, even in conditions of free competition, political and economic choices are available to the citizen, limited by collective choice. Economic democracy limits the choice of any individual. This provision of economic science can in no way justify the fact that in Ukraine the oligarchy, through media influence and lobbyism in parliament, pushes the middle class to the margins of economic policy. It should be noted: "The distorted system of the Ukrainian economy, where the lion's share of production is concentrated in the hands of large and very large businesses, and most of the population works either for them or for the state, which pays miserable salaries to its employees, also determines the distorted system of distribution of society into classes." (Zanuda, 2013)

Increasing the participation of the middle class in a just economic distribution, which Ukraine so desperately needs in the present conditions, is directly dependent on its role in politics. Political democracy creates the conditions for the middle class to be represented in politics. Note that the middle class can become a driving force not only to overcome oligarchy, but also to revive economic democracy in the global dimension (Ringgen, 2004). Why hasn't the middle class in Ukraine taken advantage of this opportunity so far?

## **2. In search of the middle class in Ukraine: from "servants of the oligarchs" to the creative class**

There is no unity among researchers in defining the essence of the middle class and its social and economic characteristics. On the one hand, the middle class is seen as resistance to oligarchy and

authoritarianism, resistance to democracy and the market economy, the foundation of civil society. On the other hand, the middle class in post-Soviet Ukraine is identified as "serving the oligarchs". The middle class is referred to as an "undefined" class (Zanuda, 2013). One of the markers of the need to form a middle class and to expand the circle of opportunities for middle-class representatives in the economy and politics is the fixation of public opinion on the large income gap between the rich and the poor. The income gap has created a social divide. Thus, in 1993, 79% agreed with the statement that there was a big difference in income, in 1995 – 82%, in 1998 – 92%. The situation has not changed for decades, because in 2019 the figure was 95% (Oksamytna & Symonchuk, 2020).

These attitudes suggest that citizens perceive this unequal distribution as unjust, and that the political order that promotes it is illegitimate. To the direct question "How fair or unfair is the distribution of income in Ukraine?" the vast majority of Ukrainians (94.1%) in 2019 described this distribution as "unfair" or "extremely unfair," still often choosing both answers.

According to experts of the Razmukov Center, "the process of formation of the middle class in modern Ukraine is fundamentally different from Western standards. If in the West the typical representatives of this layer are lawyers, doctors, teachers, middle managers, in Ukraine the middle class (according to the property criterion) includes the so-called "oligarchs' service" – biased employees of mass media, corrupt officials, corrupt lawyers and managers of various foreign companies, elite entertainment facilities, beauty salons and fitness clubs. And this stratum has neither the educational nor the moral level to be a carrier of state ideology, to act as a basis for political and economic development." (Bychenko, Mishchenko, Pyschulina, Rachok & Shanhina, 2016)

The problem lies in the application to the Ukrainian middle class of such criteria as "education," "work," "income," and "status". In Ukraine, the level of education does not mean the level of income that corresponds to the middle class, and the status of teachers and doctors, who should certainly be classified as middle class, in society is far from the ideals of political democracy and economic democracy, because representatives of these professions must resort to additional employment and/or shady practices to improve their financial situation, which negatively affects their status in society. "According to estimates by marketing companies that are interested in calculating how much this middle class can spend, buying apartments, cars, refrigerators, our middle class is between 5 and 15% of the population. We could conventionally call middle class those who work mostly for multinational

companies or big Ukrainian businesses in positions related to the financial and information sector." (Zanuda, 2013)

By the way, the presence of the shadow economy also adds uncertainty, as official statistics on the middle class require considerable refinement.

Because of the obvious difficulties with the identification of the middle class in Ukraine some sociologists suggest the following. First, to distinguish between the "European middle class" (about 2% of Ukrainian citizens belong to it in terms of income) and the "Ukrainian middle class," identified on the basis of the real income of the middle class in Ukraine. In the process of defining the Ukrainian middle class there is a core. This is the part of the population that meets all the criteria of the Ukrainian middle class. The "core" is about 12% of the population. The periphery of the Ukrainian middle class includes those who meet at least one of the criteria. According to O. Balakireva, the following criteria should be used to identify the middle class: 1 – the population whose material and property status corresponds to the interpretation of the middle class in Ukraine (about 35%); 2 – the population with a high professional and educational status (about 40%); 3 – the population that identifies with the middle class (about 45%); 4 – the population that meets almost all the criteria of the middle class, i.e. constitutes its "core" (about 12%) (Chernova, 2014). The instability of the middle class periphery is exacerbated by economic, political and social crises, and in times of war the middle class periphery is threatened with extinction. This will have extremely negative consequences, since it is the middle class that is not only the backbone of volunteers going to the front, but also the volunteers and activists providing the rear. It is clear, however, that the study of the middle class under conditions of war is yet to come.

Secondly, to identify the middle class not by what it is, but by what it is not. It is possible to identify the middle class by identifying those social groups with which representatives of the Ukrainian middle class do not identify themselves. In other words, the middle class is not aristocracy, not power, not working class, not business, etc. (Chernova, 2014). At the same time, in modern society it is possible to talk about a "new middle class" – intellectuals, representatives of the creative class (experts, representatives of the creative industries and creative professions, etc.). Here higher education and the creation of intellectual products are indispensable. Alongside the new middle class is the "old middle class. This refers to entrepreneurs, owners of small and medium-sized businesses. One possible approach is also to study the self-definition of the middle class, the so-called "subjective middle class".

An important factor in the subjective self-identification of the middle class is a sense of justice and responsibility for the future. It should be noted: "Explaining the difference between how many Ukrainians consider themselves to be middle class and the much lower estimates of experts, we suggest adding to the purely material attributes – income, education, ability to buy a house and a car, give education to their children, have access to quality medicine, rest – also a social and psychological factor – responsibility for the future." (Zanuda, 2013)

One of the main criteria for the identification of the middle class is the practice of democratic values. This was fully demonstrated during the Ukrainian squares. Democratic values are one of the most important attributes of the middle class: "...the most common motive for going to Maidan was the brutal beating of protesters in the capital on the night of November 30 repression (70% of respondents). In second place was Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU (53.5%). In third place is the desire to change life in Ukraine (50%)." (Press conference, 2013). According to the next wave of research on the Maidan in 2014, a significant part of it was made up of the middle class: "...by occupation in the modern Maidan-seed ... there are most of all specialists with higher education – 27%, significantly increased the number of entrepreneurs (17%). At the same time there are workers (15%), pensioners (7%) and those with no permanent job (13%) (From Maidan camp to Maidan-Sich: what has changed? 2014).

To self-identify as middle class, sociologists suggest that citizens determine their family's level of well-being on a five-step self-assessment scale: 1) "We can barely make ends meet, we don't even have enough money for necessary foodstuffs"; 2) "We have enough to eat and buy the necessary inexpensive things"; 3) "On the whole, there is enough to live on, but it is difficult to buy durable goods"; 4) "We live well, but we are not yet able to make some purchases (e.g., buy an apartment)"; 5) "We can afford to buy almost anything we want" (Chernova, 2014). The middle class is identified if the respondent chooses positions 3 and 4.

Objective economic indicators of the middle class include income level (which allows for an acceptable standard of living for the family and savings), availability and nature of material assets (availability of at least housing, a car and a summer house), consumer behavior, education at least specialized secondary, employment in non-physical labor, and availability of a permanent job or own business (Chernova, 2014). This methodology is used by the Razumkov Center. According to it, the citizens of Ukraine consider stable income, providing a high standard of living; comfortable housing; work, which

corresponds to qualification and accordingly is paid; durable consumer goods; high level of education; insurance policies, etc. to be mandatory signs of the middle class (Bychenko, Mishchenko, Pyshchulina, Rachok & Shanhina, 2016).

The position of the Ukrainian, i.e., "relative" middle class regarding the political and economic choice of Ukraine in favor of European integration, democracy and market economy differs significantly from the positions of other classes: the oligarchs, as the upper class of Ukrainian society and the poor, as the lower class. Here are some figures: "...26% of the poor – and 55% of the relative (Ukrainian) middle class and 61% of the absolute (European) class would vote for Ukraine's accession to the EU. Internet users: among the relative middle class – 65%, among the absolute – 85%, and among the poor – only 27%, among those who only have enough to eat – 36%." (Bychenko, Mishchenko, Pyshchulina, Rachok & Shanhina, 2016)

While the list of oligarchs in Ukraine has remained virtually unchanged since the 2000s, the middle class, on the other hand, is the most unstable class. The "European" middle class includes 1.5-2% of the Ukrainian population, while the rest – about 35% to 45% – constitutes the "Ukrainian" middle class. This class earns much less income than the European middle class, but has other characteristics that allow it to be referred to this class.

Members of the Ukrainian middle class have higher education, are interested in art, go to restaurants, can sometimes afford vacations abroad, and are politically active. And most importantly, regarding the values of political and economic democracy – they identify themselves as a middle class, seeking democratic changes in politics, over-coming corruption and the thickening of bureaucracy, deconstructing oligarchic artificial monopolies, establishing the rule of law, and introducing economic reforms.

### **3. The promotion of the middle class in Ukraine: from political to economic democracy and back again**

The political revolutions that led to a change in power due to the conflict of elites and the transformation of the political regime through mass mobilization during the protest movements in Ukraine did not lead to profound social and economic changes. J. Goldstone believed that a new wave of politicians, that is, the emergence of new faces in politics could greatly enhance the revolutionary movement and bring about change (Goldstone, 2001). The middle class played the role of a catalyst for political change in the revolutions of 2004 and 2013–2014 and certainly contributed to the "reset" of power, bringing

more "new" faces to parliament each time. It did not become an independent player in either politics or economics. Does this mean that the middle class in Ukraine has turned into a servant of the oligarchs? To answer this question, it is necessary to refer to economic democracy and determine the influence of economic factors on revolutions. Yu. Matsiievskyi believes that the conflict between the elites and mobilization were almost the only common factors in both Ukrainian Maidans, the economic situation was different: "In 2004 the economic situation contributed to the record growth of Ukrainian GDP (12%). After the recession of 2009 (by 15%), the recovery was very slow. According to the results of 2013, GDP showed zero growth. For the entire period of Yanukovich's presidency, there was talk of a possible default. Against this background, the situation in 2014 stands in stark contrast to that of 2004. Although the protests in both cases were not due to material problems, it is the latter that consistently garnered more percentages in responses to what might push people into the streets." (Matsiievskyi, 2014). According to sociologists, in 2014 the majority of participants in the dignity revolution can be attributed to the middle class. At the beginning of the revolution, 64% of the protesters had higher education, 40% were specialists with higher education, and 9% were entrepreneurs. 92% came to the Maidan on their own, meaning they had enough money to support themselves (Ilko Kucheriv "Democratic Initiatives", 2013).

By manipulating the opinion of the majority through media scandals, the oligarchy promotes its representatives to elected office. Political democracy without the middle class has become a regime of support for the oligarchy. In my opinion, after thirty years of authoritarianism and oligarchic domination, the middle class has realized the danger. This explains the role of the middle class in the protests of 2004 and 2013–2014, their participation in armed resistance to Russian aggression, and their volunteer activities. The middle class does not yet have a political party that defends its interests. Although many political projects have sought to garner support from the middle class in elections, from the purely oligarchic "Team of Winter Generation" (2002) and "Veche" (2006) to "Self Reliance" (2014) and "Voice" (2019). The latter two forces successfully made it to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in the eighth and ninth convocations, respectively. However, despite the presence of the "Voice" faction in the Verkhovna Rada, the voice of the middle class is still not loud and powerful enough. It is enough for a temporary political crowd, not for systematic daily political work to defend its own interests: "In elections, the notional middle class (or those who count themselves among them) may well vote for

a party that convincingly promises to act in its interests. But it is not yet able to create and finance its own political force... The Ukrainian middle class is heterogeneous. Moreover, the goals and objectives of different groups belonging to it often contradict each other. In practice it turns out that many of those who today have a high level of income in Ukraine and nominally can be considered "middle class", embedded in various corruption schemes, are representatives of the army of officials or law enforcement officers or associated with oligarchic companies." (Kazanskyi, 2018)

In Ukraine, the role of the middle class in politics is gradually growing, although it is still minimal. This is partly due to the influence of the oligarchs. More precisely, the political alliance between the oligarchs, who have created monopolies in the economic and information spaces, and the poor pensioners and wage earners. Such an alliance has been dubbed the "oligarchic-lumpen regime". "It is about a distorted system of resource distribution and influence in the political-economic system, where the key players are a few oligarchs who concentrate capital, ownership of enterprises, and therefore control over politics, media, etc. They are interested in depending on them for the rest of the citizens, who would work in their enterprises, have low wages, and obediently support their decisions. Such a model is inefficient, incapable of development, wastes the country's opportunities and potential, making it weak... The way out of this circle is in the state of a powerful middle class: people with property, income, and a civic position that will make them independent of the oligarchs and capable of free decisions and actions. In particular, to participate in decision-making and control power." (Halaichenko, 2017)

At the same time, it should be noted a certain imbalance between the declarations of democratic values and the real behavior of the middle class. Their decisions can often be called pragmatic, they act in their personal interests, reproducing negative practices and serving the oligarchic system. During elections, the middle class always supports oligarchic projects, new faces, populist forces, etc.

However, in the Ukrainian context, according to statistics, the "lumpen" could also include officials who in reality led a luxurious life as a result of corruption. Only in post-Maidan Ukraine at the legislative level (Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine regarding the peculiarities of declarations of property, income, expenses and financial obligations in 2016", 2016) the requirement to declare income by high-ranking officials was established. Their difference from the middle class is the predominance of selfishness over public interest: "Lumpen is a state of mind, not

a social status. I believe that most of our government and the Verkhovna Rada now are lumpen. Because I consider lumpen people to be those who know only two things instead of four arithmetical ones – to take and to divide. And adding and multiplying remain unknown to them." (Zanuda, 2013)

The political activity of the middle class manifests itself not only during political revolutions – the Ukrainian Maidans. The composition of the Ukrainian parliament is evenly transformed. In particular, the defeat of many millionaires and representatives of oligarchic groups in the early elections of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2019 shows the growing influence of the middle class on the voting results and politics in general. The first convocations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine could be attributed to the predominance of the middle class, but the problem is that this was a Soviet and post-Soviet middle class that had no predominant democratic values, did not believe in the market economy and relied more on leaders and heads rather than on themselves. The average deputy was over 45 years old, had a higher education, used to work as an engineer, and among the most common professions were also teachers and agronomists. Starting from the third convocation, economists and lawyers (also professions that fall under the middle class) became predominant. And although in the eighth convocation there were already fewer deputies with higher education, but the profession of manager was popular – from top managers to chairmen of supervisory boards (Krymeniuk & Ott, 2019).

The results of the 2019 parliamentary elections allow to assume that the role of the middle class in Ukraine is growing, although it is still far from the level of European democracies. Thus, under the majoritarian system, middle-class representatives of the "Servants of the People" confidently defeated the parliamentary scales – the millionaires. The losers included representatives of big business and the ruling post-Soviet class, such as V. Bohuslaiev (owner of the Zaporizhzhia company "Motor-Sich", people's deputy of Ukraine, etc.), K. Zhevaho (executive director of "Ferrexpo", beneficiary of "Finance and Credit" Bank, people's deputy of Ukraine, etc.), O. Hranovskyi (Chairman of the Board of Directors of "Assofit Holdings Limited", 8th Convocation People's Deputy of Ukraine, etc.), O. Tretiakov (president of ATEK-95, co-owner of "Hlavred-media" holding, people's deputy of Ukraine of IV, V, VI, VIII convocations, etc.), Ye. Chervonenko (president of the concern "Orlan", people's deputy of Ukraine of the 4th convocation, in 2005 – minister of transport of Ukraine, etc.), B.B. Kolesnykov (former secretary of the Presidium of the Party of Regions, people's deputy of Ukraine of V, VI, VII convocations, former Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister

of Infrastructure in the government of Mykola Azarov (2010–2012), Chairman of the Board of ZAT "Konti"), D. Dobkin (former mayor of Kharkiv and chairman of the Kharkiv Regional Council, people's deputy of Ukraine of several convocations). At the same time, other representatives of the oligarchic class – V. Novynskyi, O. Hereha, I. Rybakov, etc., won in the districts. At the same time in the previous parliament, which was elected in 2014 after the Revolution of Dignity, there were 90 official millionaires out of 423 deputies. Regarding the composition of the ninth parliament, representatives of the media and business culture ("creative class") prevail (Ukrainska Pravda, 2019).

According to the results of snap elections in 2019, the Ukrainian parliament has been renewed by more than 80% (Legislative Initiatives Lab., 2019). The average age of the deputies of the Council of the ninth convocation is 40 years old. Voters once again bet on middle-class representatives: "This time more newcomers came to parliament with the 'Servant of the People' and the 'Voice' party. Of the two dozen members of parliament of the "Golos" party, only the leader of this political force, Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, had previously held a parliamentary mandate. Serving the oligarchs – there are many show business stars, TV anchors, famous bloggers, athletes, journalists, and community activists in the new parliament. In particular, the employees of the "1+1" TV channel and Kvartal 95 Studio became deputies – both employers recently had common business interests with Volodymyr Zelenskyy. A well-known restaurateur, wedding photographer, as well as a toastmaster, a singer, and others are also present on the new Board." (Polishchuk, 2019)

By refusing to support politicians and parties who have become "servants of the oligarchs" rather than representatives of the interests of the middle class in parliament, the citizens of Ukraine have taken an important step toward building not only a political but also an economic democracy.

#### 4. Conclusions

Political democracy implies that power is in the hands of the middle class. The struggle for political democracy in Ukraine confirms this maxim of political science. The Ukrainian middle class tries to actively participate in politics by supporting the revolutionary events – the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the 2013–2014 Revolution of Dignity – and by standing up for Ukraine's European integration

process. In modern conditions, the middle class is in the front line of resistance to Russian armed aggression. Under the conditions of post-martial law, one of the main challenges that Ukraine must overcome is the choice of a further model of development.

The choice between two alternatives (between the lumpen-oligarchic Eurasian model and European democracy) in favor of political and economic democracy necessarily involves the active participation of the middle class, a policy aimed at protecting the interests of the middle class and expanding its economic and political opportunities. What prevents this is the oligarchic regime in Ukraine, or rather the alliance between the highest and lowest economic classes.

Given that the state of the economy does not allow us to determine the presence of the European middle class by income level, in order to identify the middle class in Ukraine the following is proposed.

First, the further use of a five-step income scale for self-identification of the middle class and the study of the level of education and value characteristics allows us to distinguish the core of the middle class (10-12% of Ukrainian citizens) and the periphery (35-45% of citizens).

Second, the middle class in Ukraine is an "uncertain" class because of its constant oscillation of self-identification between "serving the oligarchs" and being a pillar of democracy and civil society. That is why a "new" middle class – the creative class (intellectuals, representatives of creative industries and creative professions, etc.) deserves special attention. The future of democracy depends on their behavior.

Third, identification of the middle class from the opposite is "not oligarchy", "not power", "not working class", etc. One of the main criteria for identification of the middle class in Ukraine is subjective identification – confession of democratic values. This was fully manifested during the Ukrainian political revolutions – the squares of 2004 and 2013–2014.

For the development of the middle class in Ukraine it is necessary to establish and consolidate a regime of political democracy based on the principle of equal freedom, moving from electoral democracy to expanding opportunities for the middle class to participate in politics. This will allow economic and financial resources to be redistributed from the oligarchs in favor of the middle class. In turn, economic democracy will strengthen the role of the middle class and establish political democracy in Ukraine in the process of European integration.

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