



Does Economy Affect Political Choice? Evidence from Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

In this paper economic performance as a determinant of political choice in a transition nation has been analyzed. The bulk of public choice and politic study literature published in the recent decades (see e.g. Bustrikova & Zechmeister, 2017; Jastramskis, Kuokštis and Baltrukevičius 2019; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier 2019; Talving 2018; Valdini & Lewis-Beck 2018) delivers results that support the economic vote hypothesis not only in developed countries, but also in certain transition nations. Thus, the authors set out to ascertain whether this hypothesis holds in the conditions of Ukraine.

The paper is based on an analysis of panel data collected in Ukraine since independence. The authors try to find out whether economic performance really has an influence on the outcome of political choice in such in a specific nation in transit as Ukraine. Due to relevance criteria only three out of seven presidential elections in Ukraine have been analyzed with respective association to economic data of the pre-election period. It is proven through a panel model that, unlike in countries with developed democracies, in Ukraine the retrospective economic vote in presidential elections was not observed; it turned out to be prospective instead with regard to the latest presidential election in 2019.

The authors presented a set of possible reasons to explain this phenomenon: lack of democratic experience, relying on heuristics and emotions, low public mood among others. Some of them have been flagged by us before on a theoretical level (Slukhai 2021). It has been demonstrated that Ukrainians' political choice in 2019 has consequences for the economy, which may contribute to the loss of a nation's development guidelines for a certain period of time, as well as subsequent social disappointment.

The results achieved could be applied to the prospective development of the economic and political situation in Ukraine; it may give clues on how the country could develop after the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war is over.

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