

MAIN FACTORS AFFECTING THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION PROCESS IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to show the main socially determined reasons for the hitherto failure of the transformation process in Ukraine. Social factors of failures have been divided into external and internal ones. The main external one lies in the imperialist politics of the Russian Federation exploiting the existence of the "homo sovieticus" and a large Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine. Internal factors are divided into the ones related to identity problems of Ukrainian citizens (ethnic diversity and, again, "homo sovieticus") and those resulting from the weakness of political elites, which, for almost the past quarter of a century have not been able to lead to the creation of even the initial phase of a civil society in Ukraine.

Keywords: system transformation, society, Ukraine

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Introduction

The objective of the paper is to show the main socially determined reasons for the hitherto failure of the transformation process in Ukraine. A quarter of a century ago, the pursuit of the nations of Central-Eastern and Central Europe, on the one hand, and the weakness of authorities in Moscow resulting from losing the cold war, on the other hand, gave the oppressed people of this part of Europe a chance of gaining true freedom.

The first stage, i.e. obtaining by the particular nations of actual independence, was initiated by Poland at the end of 1989. Actually, this process is still continuing today, and its latest (so far) episode has been Kosovo's gaining independence. But the current activities of the authorities in Moscow (2014) clearly show that they are seeking its reversal more and more actively in its former sphere of influence. Nevertheless, one must clearly indicate that the whole time since the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics - Russia, as an heir to the Communist regime, seeks to rebuild its influence. This is a multifaceted action; only by looking at the spatial aspect of these actions, one can see Russia's interference in the affairs of Georgia (the successfully completed from its perspective case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and a failure in the case of Adjara), of Moldova (the successful case of Transnistria), of Azerbaijan (supporting the separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh), and of Ukraine (stationing of the Russian Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol). Still, following the Euromaidan taking place at the turn of 2013 and 2014, as a result of which the government of Mykola Azarov and President Viktor Yanukovych were overthrown and the full pro-European course was adopted, Russia began much firmer action in the form of a hybrid war.

The second phase is related to political reforms carried out in particular states. A characteristic feature of transformations in countries of the region was a shift from the model of a centralized communist state – based on a one-party or a quasi-one-party model into a model based on the principle of a democratic rule of law (Jaskiernia, 2002). While

gaining independence and facing the need to reform their economies, the former Communist countries were in a double disadvantage. On the one hand, they had to implement thorough reforms to eliminate the remnants of centrally controlled economy. On the other hand, they had to deal with the process of globalisation and associated with it postmodern changes in economy. Discontinuation of the existing economic networks became an additional problem in the former Communist countries (Stryjakiewicz, 2004). This process most strongly affected countries arising from the ruins of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

These processes resulted in a very large diversification of particular countries. Below, this is exemplified by changes in the gross domestic product based on purchasing-power-parity (PPP) per capita GDP in the period 1992–2013 (Fig. 1). As an example, three countries created from the dissolution of larger states were taken into account: Croatia (from the former Yugoslavia), Latvia and Ukraine (from the former Soviet Union), and two that were not subject to disintegration: Poland and Romania. On the other hand, one can look at these five countries through the prism of success or failure of transformation processes. Here, on the one hand, there is an indisputable success of Poland and Latvia; on the other hand, there is Ukraine with an equally indisputable failure, and Croatia and Romania being in an average situation.

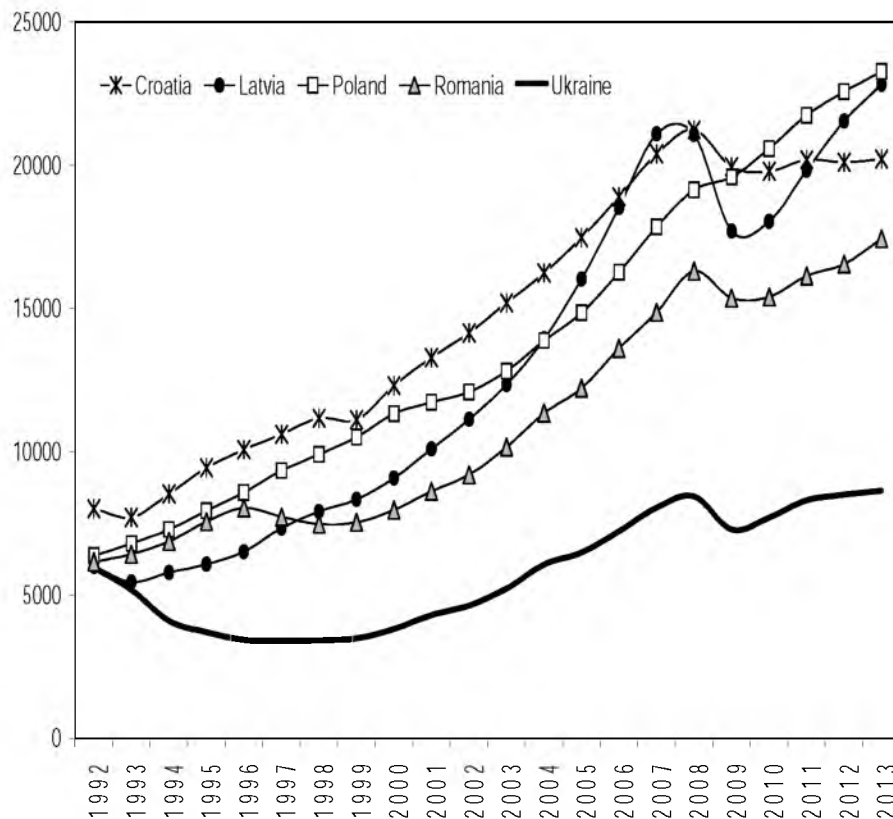


Fig. 1. Change in gross domestic product based on purchasing-power-parities (PPP) per capita GDP in selected post-Communist countries

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2014.

Exogenous factor related to the effects of the Russian Federation

Ukraine's transition from totalitarianism to democracy is definitely longer than in most European post-Communist countries. In addition, this process has not ended. The process of democratization of Ukraine is also not linear and is characterized by frequent changes in the transformational phases. Furthermore, it is clearly visible (second half of 2014) that geopolitical stability of the entire area of Central and

Eastern Europe will depend on the prosperity of the transformation in Ukraine.

Among the external factors inhibiting the democratic transformations in Ukraine, the main role is played by the destructive politics of the Russian Federation, in terms of both economic and social development. In the past, the current territory of Ukraine was a significant part of the socio-economic potential of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. Besides, according to the official Russian version of history, the cradle of the Russian statehood was just within the limits of today's Ukraine. With this in view, the Russian pro-imperialist circles consider the return of Ukraine under the political control of the Kremlin as a key element in reconstruction of the Russian geopolitical power. Despite the fact that Russia has formally acted as the guarantor of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty since 1991, Ukraine is constantly experiencing interference in its internal affairs on the part of the Russian Federation (Kuczabski, Michalski 2014).

The current Russian political elites, represented by V. Putin and his circle, derive from old Soviet elites. They have given up Communist demands, yet kept the pro-imperialist vision of Russia as a world power. Adopting assumptions derived from the times of the USSR about the impact zones, Russia seeks to restore its dominance in areas of the so-called near abroad. Due to the scale and the geographical location, Ukraine remains a key element of this strategy.

Attempts to integrate Ukraine into the orbit of Moscow's geopolitical influence have escalated since taking over political power by V. Putin in 2000 and reached its apogee in 2014. The recovery of Russian influence in Ukraine (before 2014) had been intense and multifaceted. Significant investments in reconstruction of the former empire were accompanied by a favourable situation in the energy markets, and what followed, by increasing Russian revenues from exporting oil and gas. Much effort was put on taking control of the Ukrainian information fields, promoting the so-called "Russian world" (Русский мир), and on widespread expansion of the network of Orthodox parishes in a hierarchical relationship with the Patriarch of Moscow.

In addition to actions formally complying with the law, the Russian authorities have carried out a hidden policy in Ukraine aimed at weakening Ukraine as an international player. Investment was especially made in information discrediting of Ukraine as a reliable partner in international economic relations (such as accusing Ukraine of stealing the piped gas). Various forms of Russian pressure on Ukraine also include energy blackmail (two open gas wars in 2006 and 2008), and a number of trade wars, constantly waged by the Kremlin. When all of the explicit and the "hidden" forms of pressure on Ukraine proved ineffective, the Russian authorities appealed to the regional dimension of military aggression, leaving the declaration of war on a large scale as the last argument in reserve in the politics of subduing Ukraine.

Endogenous factors related to identity

After regaining the statehood, Ukrainian authorities formally declared democratic values as a basis for the development of the country, but unfortunately this did not translate into the actually implemented strategy of the country's development. Power in Ukraine was taken over by the former post-communist political elites that have been brought up in the traditions of the totalitarian Soviet Union. The main cause of the lack of political will to actually rebuild the Ukrainian state on the principles of democracy lay in the remnants of the USSR, especially citizens' very little trust in public authorities, social paternalism, and a lack of consistency in corrective actions. This resulted in the fact that virtually in all areas of life, either social or economic ones, effective reforms failed to be carried out (e.g. Tymkovich, 2005). Pervasive corruption is one of the consequences particularly painfully felt by the society (Holmes, 2009; Kuzio, 2014).

Various discrepancies and conflicts within the country interfere with the creation of a coherent, nationwide policy of real reforms. In Ukraine, in contrast to, for example, Poland in the 1990s, there has not been one value system on the basis of which the identity of the majority of citizens could be developed (Pavlenko, Viter 2006).

As O. Vinnikov and G. Morozov think (1998), despite their declared pro-democratic orientation, Ukrainians are deeply related to the totalitarian state system. Undoubtedly, this was strongly influenced by centuries-long Soviet occupation, especially the Holodomor, with its peak in the years 1932-1933 (Kostiâ (ed.), 2012).

At the beginning of the actual independence in 1991, a significant part of the Ukrainian population could be described as the "Soviet nation", a specific form of ethno-cultural community primarily identified with the Soviet Union, rather than the country of their residence, the then Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. And although formally since 1991 Ukraine is an independent state, informationally and culturally this country long remained in sphere of post-Soviet information/propaganda (Lupacij 2006). Consequently, even in the 1990s a large part of the population of Ukraine had no trust in the changes associated with obtaining the independence by Ukraine. A survey carried out in 1998 clearly shows that. According to this survey, as many as 64% of respondents negatively answered the question whether the declaration of Ukraine as an independent state was a correct political decision (Marčuk 1998). Even in 2005, according to a survey of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 8% of Ukrainians still declared themselves citizens of the Soviet Union (Panina 2005). A significant part of Ukrainian citizens even today is willing to accept a return to the realities of the totalitarian past, which is especially indicated by anti-Ukrainian, and hence anti-European and antidemocratic attitude of separatists in Crimea and in the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces.

The remnants of the Soviet politics also include the current language structure of the country which divides Ukrainians into three groups similar in size: Ukrainian language speaking (residing mainly in the western and the central part of the country and rural areas in the east and south), Russian language speaking (mostly representing a population of large cities and some rural enclaves in the east and south of the country) and the bilingual one (Zastawnyj, Kusiński, 2003).

Very strong regional identity in some cases (Crimea, Donbass, Zakarpattia, Galicia, Bukovina, etc.) is another

problem. The reason for this lies in the complex history of the territory of today's Ukraine. Throughout the period of Ukrainian statehood it was impossible to eliminate in any way the existing regional divisions. It is believed that until today there are very large disparities in lifestyle and national awareness between different regions of Ukraine (Olujko et al. 2005). Although the development and cultural regional diversity is not unique in the modern world (Lupacij 2006), the regional diversity of Ukraine has its specificity. R. Pavlenko and O. Viter (2006, p. 99) point out that "interregional differences in Ukraine are deeper because they have several dimensions: geographic, economic and cultural ones". As a result, inhabitants of different regions of Ukraine think that there are more cultural differences between them than with citizens of the neighbouring countries. This is overlapped with the presence of mutual negative stereotypes among the sizeable population of various regions. They are based on serious ideological discrepancies that are manifested in a different assessment of the same historical events by the inhabitants of different regions, as well as in the choice of different behaviours, and even in an essentially different assessment of the very fact of Ukraine gaining independence (Kordun, 2006).

Civil society?

Since the very beginning of the emergence of an independent Ukrainian state, the governing political elites have faced the need to reform the post-totalitarian legal system. Such attempts, however, have often encountered the lack of acceptance on the part of the paternalistically predisposed majority of the country's inhabitants, namely the lack of the Ukrainian citizens' readiness to participate actively in the realization of their constitutional right to manage affairs of the state and the local government (Kučabs'kij 2009). Alienation of certain legal norms in relation to the actual reality is a negative feature of this situation. The result is the fact that in Ukraine "there is legal nihilism, ranging from higher tiers of the authorities to the citizens" (Lesečko, Čemeris 2001, p. 95).

Formally, democracy (including local democracy) and social justice are the basic elements of the modern legal system in Ukraine in the field of organization of social life and

public administration. In particular Article 5 of the Constitution of Ukraine designates regional or local authority bodies as some of the basic forms of the direct power of the nation. However, the statutory declaration of the citizens' rights in managing public affairs is not reflected in the specific mechanisms of its practical implementation.

The deliberate politics of the Soviet times, when the ruling Communist Party completely usurped the right to designate and implement the state policy fending off all alternative attempts at an influence on making management decisions, should be considered as one of the main causes of Ukrainians' exceptional social apathy (Kučabs'kij 2009). In M. D. Lesečko's opinion (2002, p. 54), Ukraine "belongs to countries with low synergy, which significantly interferes with social consolidation and achieving the synergy effect in order to get out of the prolonged social crisis and attain the level of civilized countries of the world". Social participation was significantly worsened by the governing elites' avoidance and later even actual abandonment of carrying out reforms at the beginning of Ukraine's independence. As S. Ê. Sahanenko (2001, p. 133) notes analysing problems of social activation in Ukraine –"the specificity of the transitional period is more likely to cause political apathy, disillusionment and resentment than activity".

It is believed that organized local democracy has not appeared in Ukraine yet. The idea of regional and local self-government is still far more in the realm of abstraction than practice (Andresûk, 2000), and the regional and local authorities in Ukraine are almost useless in the construction of civil society (Kujbida, 2001).

The lack of specific mechanisms for the implementation of local democracy in Ukraine results from the lack of understanding of the nature of self-government at both the local and the central level (Kučabs'kij 2009). It should be noted that representatives of the state authorities in Ukraine have never lacked in outright opponents of the European model of self-government, claiming that the Ukrainians are supposedly closer to the specific mentality incompatible with the democratic model of self-government (Girnâk 2001). On the other hand, there is a large group of supporters of radical reforms, trying to transfer typically Western solutions to the

problems of organisation of regional and local authorities to the Ukrainian ground.

Continuous discussion and a lack of a common vision of the reform of the system of power in Ukraine adversely affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the local government structures (Kučabs'kij 2009). Due to this, an additional barrier appeared between the people and units of local government authorities. This results in a loss of citizens' real control over the functioning of offices and creation of a friendly ground for abuse of power, corruption and perpetuating inefficient forms of governance (Lesečko, Čemeris, 2001).

The results of surveys carried out by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and Razumkov Centre (2013) show that as many as 41% of Ukrainian citizens believe that they have no influence on decision-making processes taking place in the local administration, and only 8% of citizens are actively involved in local development. It is clear that the previous government worsened the already bad situation in this regard, since according to similar research from 2008, the percentage of people actively working for local development was 12%. These results clearly show how necessary are measures leading to increasing social participation in the present government and programming development at the local level.

In contrast to the local level, at the level of Ukrainian counterparts of districts and provinces (i.e. raions and oblasts), the local government is in a much more difficult situation than in Poland. Councils of raions and oblasts, not having their own executive authorities, are in fact totally and permanently dependent on the state administration. A system of formally voluntary, but in fact mandatory, delegating powers from local government units of raions and oblasts to local structures of the central administration is a mechanism of such dependence. Based on this, A. Bazir (2000, p. 44) reaches a conclusion that "at the regional level in Ukraine there is no complete local authority, and there is only a model of imitation of the local government". A solution to this problem may lie in developing territorial units at the district and province level on the basis of free elections of territorial communities, their common interests, as laid out in relevant resolutions (Grabovs'kij 2001).

Summary

Clearly, in the past Ukrainian political elites failed to take advantage of the Russian Federation's weakness just after the end of the cold war. They failed to carry out important reforms after the "Orange Revolution". It is evident that after the events of the Euromaidan and the takeover of power in Ukraine by pro-European and pro-democratic political parties, they also failed to begin widespread socio-economic reforms in the country affected by a hybrid war. There is hope that only when the Russian military intervention in Ukraine stops and the normalisation of the socio-economic life in areas affected by military operations takes place, will appropriate ground for carrying out comprehensive reforms in different areas of life be created, forming in the perspective a civil society in Ukraine.

But Ukraine is not the only country which did not make use of the opportunity related to the collapse of the Socialist system. From among European and Transcaucasian post-Communist countries the same group also comprises (of course, for a variety of reasons) Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, and in part: Albania, Montenegro, Georgia, Macedonia, Serbia, and first and foremost, Russia (cf. Antoszewski (ed.), 2006; Lubik-Reczek, 2011; Orlova, 2010; Rapacki, 2009; Zaleśny (ed.), 2010).

The primary determinant of an exogenous nature is a constant Russian interference in Ukraine's internal affairs. This is helped by the "homo sovieticus" being a result of a long occupation of Ukraine by the Soviet Union and the presence of a large Russian diaspora. And when this proved insufficient, the Kremlin authorities did not hesitate to start warfare in Ukraine. Even while taking into account the effects of the Russian military intervention in Moldova and Georgia, no other post-communist country is subjected to such brutal pressure by the Kremlin authorities as is Ukraine.

On the other hand, there is also a whole range of social factors, which also do not favour system reforms in Ukraine. Firstly, one needs to list the already mentioned high level of Sovietization and Russification of Ukrainian citizens. But also of importance are: a considerable variety of regional identity and the initial lack of pro-democratic, pro-market and pro-

Western political elites (as opposed to, for example, Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia)

At the moment it is difficult to predict how the fate of reforms initiated by the new Ukrainian authorities will develop. One can only speculate that were it not for the constant pressure of Russia, the chances would be much greater.

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