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The Problem with Discussion on External Influences on Political Regimes: Theoretical Dimension

The main purpose of this article is to investigate the state of scientific debate about the problem of external influences on political regimes. As a result of the study of the problematic aspects of the existing discussion on the specifics of external influences on the stability of political regimes and their transits, it is possible to identify certain points of consolidation of the theoretical basis. For modern political science the problem of external influences on political regimes is determined by both theoretical and practical dimensions. In the theoretical dimension, political science considers external factors and processes that affect the efficiency of a particular political regime, its stability or instability and the possibility of transit to other types of political regime. Also, the theoretical dimension considers the specifics of the ratio of external influences of different value models included in political regimes of particular type.

Thus, the theoretical aspect separately considers the problem of the ratio of the influence of democratic and non-democratic political regimes on other political regimes, and accordingly considers the geopolitical aspect of such influence along with the quantity of political regimes in the geopolitical environment of a particular country. Based on this dimension, the practice considers specific examples of external influences on the political regimes of certain countries in a certain geopolitical environment. However, if the theoretical dimension is characterized by many differences in the definition of basic concepts and processes, practice loses the chance to effectively use real data, and thus - to develop strategies to protect the efficiency of political regimes or fight with undesirable external influences. Such strategies are important especially for countries in transit and those in an unfavorable geopolitical environment.

Keywords: *democracy, political regime, hybrid regime, democratic transit, autocratization, democratization, external influence*

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Проблема дискусії щодо зовнішніх впливів на політичні режими: теоретичний вимір

Головна мета цієї статті – дослідити стан наукової дискусії навколо проблеми зовнішніх впливів на політичні режими. В результаті дослідження проблемних сторін існуючої дискусії щодо специфіки зовнішніх впливів на стабільність політичних режимів та їхні транзити можливо виділити певні точки консолідації теоретичного підґрунтя. Для сучасної політичної науки проблема зовнішніх впливів на політичні режими одночасно визначається теоретичним та практичним виміром. В теоретичному вимірі політична наука розглядає зовнішні фактори та процеси, що впливають на ефективність певного політичного режиму, його стабільність або нестабільність і можливість транзиту в інші типи політичного режиму. Також теоретичний вимір розглядає специфіку співвідношення зовнішніх впливів різних ціннісних моделей, що включені в політичні режими того чи іншого типу.

Так теоретичний аспект окремо розглядає проблему співвідношення впливу демократичних та недемократичних політичних режимів на інші політичні режими, а



відповідно розглядається і геополітичний аспект такого впливу, кількість тих чи інших політичних режимів в геополітичному середовищі певної країни, що може впливати на ефективність політичного режиму цієї країни. Відштовхуючись від цього виміру, практика розглядає конкретні приклади зовнішніх впливів на політичні режими певних країн в певному геополітичному середовищі. Однак якщо теоретичний вимір характеризується великою кількістю розбіжностей у визначенні основних понять та процесів, практика втрачає шанс ефективно обробляти реальні дані, а відтак – розробляти ефективні стратегії захисту ефективності політичного режиму або боротьби з небажаними зовнішніми впливами. Такі ефективні стратегії є необхідними особливо для країн в стадіях транзиту та тих, що знаходяться в несприятливому геополітичному середовищі.

Ключові слова: демократія, політичний режим, гібридний режим, демократичний транзит, автократизація, демократизація, зовнішній вплив

Introduction

The scientific discussion on defining the essence of the phenomenon of political regime and democracy in particular points at the necessity to consider the transit of political regime under the simultaneous external influence of democratic and non-democratic actors. The result of complex influence in an environment that cannot be defined as unambiguously democratic depends on the interaction of internal and external factors for the target country, including the specifics of the environment (quantity of democratic and non-democratic neighbors, strength of ties with actors which represent the efficient democratic systems).

Studying the process of democratization of Ukraine and Poland, V. Kobylnyk (Kobylnyk, 2010) notes that the influence of external actors on the transformation of political regimes of both countries was implemented through specific political and economic support for local democratic trends.

The researcher points out that at the beginning of the democratic transition, Poland made a concrete choice of the Euro-Atlantic direction of foreign policy. Along with a clear definition, the process of adapting the legislation to the standards of the European bloc began, which was supported by specific programs, significant investments and assistance for the development of the institutional and military sectors of Poland. Ukraine, in its turn, has chosen the principle of multi-vectorism in foreign policy, which has not received unequivocal support from the prevailing democratic actors abroad, in contrast to Poland.

Thus, the researcher concludes that the mass support of Poland by democratic actors, and the inconsistency of external influences on the transformation of Ukraine, facilitated the process of democratization in the first case, and complicated it in the second case. In practice, this principle demonstrates the specific process of democratic transits in the post-Soviet geopolitical space,

including Ukraine and its immediate geopolitical environment. Besides this historic example shows an urgent need of profound political research on the specific dimensions of external influences on political regime, especially considering recent geopolitical challenges.

I. The scientific discussion around the problem of external influences on transit of political regime

The problem of democratic transit is widely studied in Western political science. At the current stage of development of Ukrainian political science, it is also actively considered by domestic researchers. The following researchers profoundly studied the problem of democratization (and the reverse effect of autocratization): L. Diamond, S. Huntington, G. O'Donnell, R. Riggs, F. Schmitter, R. Dahl, K. Carothers, D. Rostow, D. Cohen, H. Linz, R. Vanderhill, T. Ambrosio, S. Levitsky, L. Way, J. Tolstrup, P. Brooker, and others.

Transitology studies the process of political regime change through the dimension of transit i.e., the transition from one regime to another (for example, from autocracy to democracy), and transformations, which create a specific process of development of the country's political system.

In this regard, R. Vanderhill (2012) points out that in political science the question remains unsolved of why in some cases external influence lead to the development of autocratic regime, and in some cases, they do not affect the development and stability of autocracy significantly. It has also not been decided whether the influence of external factors on the political regime (in particular, autocracy) is the result of coincidence, or whether there is a generalized rule to which any influence of external factors on the development and stability of the political regime (in particular, autocracy).

In this regard, O. Tansey (2015) points out that in history there are few examples of countries with immunity to external influences. Conversely, many

historical examples point to situations of external support for despotic leaders. When some autocracies are isolated in the international arena, some enjoy cross-border allied support, which strengthens the political regime. From the researcher's point of view, we can identify three external factors that affect the stability of the political regime (in particular - autocracy).

The first factor is the factor of passive influence of an external actor, which is not intended to influence the change of local policy in the country of influence. This factor includes the cross-border impact of examples and patterns, globalization and its impact on the economic and political spheres. The second factor includes the unintentional influence of an external actor on domestic policy, which leads to the strengthening of autocratic leaders as opposed to the real goals of the external actor. The third factor involves deliberately sponsoring autocracies, where the external actor has a specific goal of supporting autocracies in the affected country for a number of reasons through a number of methods and tools. (Tansey, 2015).

In addition, O. Tansey points at two specific mechanisms through which external actors influence local politics in the affected countries. The first mechanism is information that includes signals of reduction (or increase) of potential losses due to certain behavior. The second mechanism is the specific protection by external sponsors and their support of local elites, which helps to exercise and maintain power. (Tansey, 2016).

Considering the similar problem, S. Levitsky and L. Way (2010) analyzed the impact of the environment on the stability of the political regime in transition countries. Researchers have concluded that external factors directly affect the democratization process, provided close ties with democratic actors. They emphasize that states with a hybrid regime are more likely to democratize if they have close ties with Western democracies. According to researchers, political and economic support for external democratic actors limits the power of the ruling elites, which in turn affects the prospects for transit to democracy in transitional regimes. But if ties with Western actors become weak, a transitional regime that has not completed the transition to democracy is likely to return to authoritarianism. (Levitsky, 2010).

This idea also appears in the study of R. Vanderhill (2012), who points out that in a region dominated by autocratic states, the processes of spreading democracy are less possible. Conversely, the more democratic neighbors there are in the region, the less likely it is that autocracies will be stable, and the leaders of these autocracies will try to influence local transit regimes to prevent them from final transition to democracy.

Considering the problem of external influences on political regimes in post-communist countries, O. Marchak also emphasizes that political changes in Ukraine in recent decades are not unique to one state, but are part of a complex process of democratic transformations with post-autocratic states since the late twentieth century. This idea corresponds to the concept of S. Huntington (1997) and determines that the transit of the political regime in the direction of democratization should be viewed through the prism of the global democratization trend. Among the factors that in one way or another affect the success of political change in the direction of democratization O. Marchak (2007) names the factor of external cultural influence in the form of the attractiveness of the Western democratic model. In general, this idea is consistent with the ideas of the researchers who find the democratic concept attractive in terms of values. In addition, it highlights the problem of mismatch between the trends of democratization and autocratization due to the fundamental differences of democracy and non-democratic models in terms of cultural influences and the attractiveness of the value package. (Burnell, 2010).

II. The problem with terminology in the study of external influences on political regimes

According to the ideas abovementioned, even the scientific distinction between democratic and non-democratic external influences on political regimes is debatable and lacks any common terminological basis. In this regard, J. Tolstrup emphasizes that non-democratic external influences are defined in different terms (Tolstrup, 2015). S. Levitsky and L. Way use the term "black knight", T. Ambrosio calls the external influence of undemocratic actors "authoritarian resistance", R. Vanderhill uses the term "spread of autocracy", J. Tolstrup himself uses the term "negative external actor".

But the inability to reach a common terminological basis in the process of studying external influences on political regimes leads to the loss of common connotations. For example, the term "spreader of autocracy" implies that an external actor will purposefully spread a certain type of political regime. And this returns the discussion to the problem highlighted by O. Tansey. In fact, it is difficult to determine the motives of external actors, especially in the case of non-democratic actors who do not show open allegiance to the idea of a political regime in its entirety (unlike democratic actors).

At the same time, non-democratic actors do not necessarily aim at deliberately undermining the democratic foundations of a country and planting non-democratic elements instead. (Ge, Jiang, & Lu, 2017). But if these actors are labeled as "propagators of autocracy", the researcher suggests in advance that the motive of these actors is clear and unambiguous. Although J. Tolstrup (2015) points out that it is too

difficult to determine the real motives behind the actions of external actors, and such complexity leads to the reluctance of researchers to consider this problem in general.

Nevertheless, some studies examine the basic principles of the spread of external influences to political regimes. Thus, the study of R. Vanderhill points to the fact that external actors do influence the stability, efficiency and development of the political regime. The researcher emphasizes the process of influencing of the EU initiatives and incentives in case of the elites of the post-Soviet camp. Thus, R. Vanderhill determines that external actors can indeed influence the change of political regime. (Vanderhill, 2012).

In the framework of the study of democratization processes i.e., the transition to democracy, K. Herpfer, P. Bernhagen, R. Inglehart and K. Welzel point out the following problem. Early studies of democratization considered each transit as an isolated national phenomenon with no connection to the global processes, external influences, or geopolitical features. But, according to S. Huntington's idea of the "cluster nature of democratization", this process should be considered in an international context. And only partially true is the idea of internal factors that cause a change in political regime (in this case the transition to democracy is mentioned). But democratization waves are the result of international trends, so the factors influencing these waves include the activities of external actors, along with transnational forces. (Haerpfer, Bernhagen, Inglehart, & Welzel, 2009).

External attempts to influence the change of political regime within the state (it does not matter whether it is democratization or autocratization) can have different effect and outcome, depending on factors that are not subject to external influence. (Schmitter, 1994). Such factors are, for instance, the local economy or particular quality of local political elites, local social structure, historic and cultural background etc. These factors are especially important in the analysis of the efficiency of external influence on political regimes. According to R. Vanderhill, the process of changing the political regime under external influence depends on several major factors: the balance of power distributed among the local political elite and the nature of relations between the recipient state and the external actor.

Thus, if power in the country is balanced between liberal and illiberal elites, and the relationship with the external actor is multidimensional, covering historical, cultural, economic aspects, the spread of authoritarianism under the influence of the external actor can be higher.

R. Vanderhill's concept provides some answers to the question of why some states are more likely to

fall under the external influence of non-democratic actors or (as J. Tolstrup calls them) "negative external actors". However, the issue remains fundamentally unsolved both due to the lack of unification of the theoretical basis and the inability to unravel the real motives of external actors in historical practice and determine the degree of influence of factors related to the country's response to external influences.

Conclusions

In general, the problem of external influences on political regimes is widely considered in political science through the prism of the actual "transit" as the transition from one political regime to another and "transformation" as a change in the political system. Among the key issues of transit still being profoundly discussed by researchers are the following:

- whether to equate the processes of democratization and autocratization;
- whether autocratization in general is a process of spreading the political regime as a complex model, including the values and norms inherent in this particular regime;
- whether it is possible to reach a terminological consensus on the particular features of negative external influences on the political regime.

The problem of defining basic terms does not make it possible to take the scientific discussion on external influences on political regimes to the next level. Accordingly, the following definitions require the common theoretical basis:

- an external influence;
- an actor of external influence;
- a democratic actor of external influence;
- a non-democratic actor of external influence.

In addition, it is necessary to summarize the factors that determine specific features of external influences on the political regime. According to the existing theoretical discussion, it should be emphasized that the factors of external influences on the political regime can be divided into general groups, such as:

- political factors;
- social factors;
- economic factors;
- cultural factors;
- geographic factors;
- technological factors.

1. The political group is determined by a number of factors related to the interaction of external actors with the political system of the target country, as well as with all external processes that are somehow related to political processes within the country.

2. The group of social factors is determined by those external influences that are related to the behavioral aspects and social structure of the target country.

3. The group of economic factors, respectively, includes external influences aimed at the economic system, economic cooperation, industry, finance, etc. in the target country.

4. The group of cultural factors includes information influences, historical and cultural narratives, influences through the media, art, the introduction of specific archetypes and images in the cultural space of the target country.

5. The group of geographic factors is closely related to the geopolitical concept. It determines the peculiarities of external influences determined by the geographical location of the target country.

6. The group of technological factors can be determined by factors related to scientific and technological development and innovation that may affect the local processes of other countries, including the target country.

This grouping of external influence factors enables further studies and can provide the ground for comparing the strength of the ties of certain groups of external influences on political regimes. Comparing the general groups simplifies the process of searching correlation between the particular external influences and the political regime changes.

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