

ПОЛІТИЧНА ТЕОРІЯ

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WHEN IS POSTCOMMUNISM OVER?

In this article, the problem of postcommunism time limits is considered. The author, treating postcommunism as a transition period from the left-totalitarian model of social organization to a new one concludes that it is over in those countries where the communist regimes collapsed at the turn of 1980-1990 years. Although various postcommunist countries have acquired different parameters of their political, economic, socio-cultural systems, a new noncommunist quality of social relations has already established itself.

Keywords: postcommunism, transitional society, social system, political regime, democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism.

Романюк О. І.

КОЛИ ЗАКІНЧУЄТЬСЯ ПОСТКОМУНІЗМ?

Розглядається проблема часових меж посткомунізму. Трактуючи посткомунізм як період переходу від ліво-тоталітарної соціальної моделі до нової якості суспільного організму, автор робить висновок про його закінчення для тих країн, де комуністичні режими зазнали краху на межі 1980-1990 років. Хоча різні посткомуністичні країни набули відмінних параметрів своїх політичних, економічних та соціокультурних систем, проте нова не комуністична якість суспільних відносин вже встигла усталитися.

Ключові слова: посткомунізм, перехідне суспільство, суспільна система, політичний режим, демократія, авторитаризм, тоталітаризм.

Романюк А. И.

КОГДА ЗАКАНЧИВАЕТСЯ ПОСТКОМУНИЗМ?

Рассматривается проблема временных границ посткоммунизма. Трактую посткоммунизм как период перехода от лево-тоталитарной модели к новому качеству общественного организма, автор делает вывод об его окончании для тех стран, где коммунистические режимы рухнули на грани 1980-1990 годов. Хотя разные посткоммунистические страны приобрели различные параметры своих политических, экономических и социокультурных систем, однако новое некоммунистическое качество общественных отношений уже успело упрочиться.

Ключевые слова: посткоммунизм, переходное общество, общественная система, политический режим, демократия, авторитаризм, тоталитаризм.

A notable trend of political science literature of recent years is a significant reduction in publications on postcommunist issues. Such a trend may indirectly indicate that the process of postcommunist transformation is over or almost over, at least in those countries where communist regimes fell at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. However, this assumption requires confirmation by theoretical studies and empirical indicators. Although currently there are many scientific papers on postcommunism, but the question about the limits of its social and political phenomenon is still quite problematic. This article attempts at giving a scientifically substantiated analysis of the completion of the postcommunist period.

1. What is postcommunism?

The word «post-communism» literally means «after communism». Accordingly, postcommunism usually means a *specific period of social development after communism*. However, this understanding of postcommunism provides no qualitative nature of this period. Polish political scientist Andrzej Richard notes that the concept of postcommunism «means a system, not yet fully formed, it is not determined, and therefore the emphasis is on the fact that this system arose from another definite one» [1, s. 468].

As any period with the preposition «post», postcommunism is a transitional period of social development, which changes the quality of the social system. The understanding of the transitional nature requires an analysis of the essence of its starting and final positions. The movement from the initial position to the final one is defined as transition or transformation. Although the political science literature there are attempts to contrast the concepts of «transition» and «transformation» [2, c. 47], but in fact they describe the same process, but from different positions. The concept of transition – from a position of determining its starting and final quality points (transition from point A to point B); the concept of transformation – from the standpoint of quality changes that occur in the process of transition (quality A is transformed into quality B) [3].

At the starting position of postcommunist transformations are systems, the quality of which is conditioned by the more or less long functioning of the previous communist regimes. The indicator of the beginning of a postcommunist transformation is the loss power

by the Communist Party, or at least a monopoly on its realization [2, c. 44; 4, c. 73]. The final position of postcommunism is be they acquisition of new (non-communist) quality by social system. In this context, bow ever, a question arises as to quality of the social system can be considered «non-communist» and what can indicate that it has acquired such quality.

2. The ways of postcommunist transformations (theoretical aspect)

According to the transitional paradigm the desired end point of political transitions in the modern world is liberal democracy [5]. But these transition processes don't always reach that point. In the literature based on the transitional paradigm, such as in Samuel Huntington [6, p. 40-46], two directions of transitive process are analyzed – from authoritarianism to democracy and, conversely, from democracy to authoritarianism. However, the transitional paradigm had been developed on basis of studies of successful and unsuccessful transition to democracy from authoritarian regimes. The analysis of postcommunist transformation requires the inclusion of a third position – totalitarianism. On the scale of political regimes, totalitarianism and democracy occupy extreme positions, because their political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics are diametrically opposed to each other. Authoritarianism is placed between totalitarianism and democracy because by the characteristics features of the political sphere it is closer to totalitarianism, and by the characteristics of non-political areas it is closer to democracy. As I mentioned in one of my earlier works, this disposition presupposes not two but three variants of regime changes: 1) direct transition from totalitarianism to democracy; 2) transition from totalitarianism to authoritarianism; 3) transition from one form of totalitarianism to another [4, c. 74-77].

3. The results of postcommunist transformations (practical aspect)

The time elapsed after the start of postcommunist transformations confirmed the correctness of my hypothesis. The transitions in the postcommunist area did occur in three directions, but at different speeds and consistency. According to a monitoring by Freedom House, the quality of postcommunist political systems by the early of 2017 could be characterized by the following table (tab. 1).

Table 1

Political systems of postcommunist countries [7; 8]

Democracies				Hybrid regimes	Authoritarian regimes	
Electoral	Liberal	Consolidated	Semi-Consolidated		Semi-Consolidated	Consolidated
20	13	7	6	7	1	8

Notes: 1. The number of electoral and liberal democracies is based on Freedom in the World 2017.

Liberal democracies are the systems of the on the list of electoral democracies and having the status of «Free countries».

2. The number of consolidated and semi-consolidated democracies, hybrid regimes, and semi-consolidated and consolidated authoritarian regimes is based on Nations in Transit 2017, but this study does not take Mongolia into account.

The best results of postcommunist transformations have been achieved by seven countries – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. In these countries, the economic and political reforms have been carried out, as a result of which for two decades they have gained the status of countries with a market economy, and their political regimes have enjoyed the quality of not only liberal democracies, but consolidated ones. Since these countries have radically transformed their economic and political systems, the end of the postcommunist period is beyond doubt for them.

Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia have somewhat worse results. They are also countries with a market economy and liberal-democratic regimes, but these regimes are semi-consolidated. To this group also belongs Mongolia though included in the Nation in Transit program. However, consolidation of the political regime is not the main indicator of the end of the transition period. Deconsolidation can take place in relatively stable systems as a result of an aggravation of relations between leading political forces or an increase in dissatisfaction with the government by the public, or a breach of public contract by the authorities. The political regimes in Hungary (1994–2013) and Bulgaria (2004–2007) were also defined as consolidated, but an aggravation of intra-political relations turned them into semi-consolidated ones.

The advancement in the process of postcommunist development in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is quite different. Michael McFaul envisaged the possibility of the transition of postcommunist countries not to democracy, but to a new form of dictatorship as far as fifteen years ago [9]. According to Freedom House, the political regimes of these countries have acquired the

characteristics of consolidated authoritarianism. Political power is concentrated in the hands of one person or a small group of people, the rights and freedoms of citizens are substantially restricted, is managed by of society widespread violence, there is no electoral mechanism of inheritance of power. However, significant changes have taken place in the economic sphere – the institution of private property has been legalized, business structures have arisen, elements of market regulation have been put into practice. Describing the processes of postcommunist transformations in this group of countries, Oleg Havrylyshyn remarks that «in a practical sense, it is sad to say that they have been «completed» so far, because these countries have been trapped in the oligarchic-autocratic regime of partial capitalism and are far from developed democracy» [10, p. 255]. At the same time, one can distinguish two subtypes of socio-political systems in this group.

The first is the countries the economy is dominated by private sector, although the close link between big business and the ruling elite deforms market relations. These include Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In these countries, postcommunist transformations end with the creation of classical authoritarian systems. In early transitologic works, the transition to authoritarian regimes was seen as a negative result of transitory processes, which was caused by a dichotomous understanding of their direction. By inertia, such opinion embraced postcommunist transformations as well. However, under postcommunism, such a perception of transition to authoritarianism does not seem to be correct. If we compare the new (authoritarian) one with the previous (totalitarian) state, we must conclude that the transition from totalitarianism to authoritarianism is a certain positive step in the development of socio-political system, since authoritarian regimes ensure society much more

freedom than totalitarianism. Although expanding boundaries of freedom is limited to the transition from totalitarianism to authoritarianism, and that applies to more non-political spheres of social life, such expansion immanently causes structural preconditions for a future (in perspective) movement towards democracy.

The second one is the countries the economy of which is dominated by the state sector, and the government strictly regulates economic relations. These include Belarus, Russia and Turkmenistan. In these countries, state-monopoly capitalism was created, and elements of market relations exist only on the level of small-scale production. These countries have achieved the lowest results in the process of postcommunist transformation. Socio-political systems of these countries can be defined as *neototalitarian*, since they are characterized not only by the autocratic nature of political power and the state-monopolistic nature of the economy, but also by ideological control and brutal interference of the government in private life. As for Russia, imperial ambitions must be added to this. Although these countries have done much to return to totalitarianism in the process of postcommunist transformation, but these totalitarian models proved to be different (noncommunist). As far as economic and ideological criteria are concerned, these models tend not to the left (communist) type of totalitarianism, but to its right (fascist) model. Thus, qualitative changes in the socio-political system manifested in replacing one form of totalitarianism into another are also evident in this case.

This new, neototalitarian quality in different countries of this group has its own specific features. The socio-political system of Turkmenistan can be defined as *patriarchal totalitarianism*, since the introduction of totalitarian relations is justified by the historical and cultural traditions of the Turkmen nation. Under Putin's rule, *imperialist totalitarianism* was formed in Russia. Its fundamental purpose, which today is subject to all social development, is creating the «Russian world» on the basis of annexing territories inhabited by ethnic Russians and, in general, Russian-speaking population. Belarus has a system that preserves most political, economic and socio-cultural elements of the communist time. However, the Communist Party, like other opposition forces, is persecuted. This system, which can be defined as *conservative*

totalitarianism, has existed for more than two decades and is still rather stable.

The most difficult problem for identifying the end of postcommunism as a transitional period is provided by the countries with hybrid regimes – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. The development of these countries, as well as Armenia with its unconsolidated authoritarian regime is constantly fluctuating between democracy and authoritarianism, with the difference that some countries cross this limit, while others are coming to her and returning. In this case, we can speak of some «stabilization of instability». Samuel Huntington noted that such a constant change of democratic and authoritarian tendencies could be characteristic of the political system of some countries [6, p. 41-42].

4. Conclusions

1. There is no single criterion for identifying the end of the postcommunist period. The specificity of totalitarianism as the starting point of postcommunist transformation requires taking into account not only political changes, but also economic and socio-cultural ones.

2. A democracy is not the only possible final point of postcommunist transformations. Postcommunist transformations may also end with creating an authoritarian system or another (non-communist) model of totalitarianism.

3. The consolidation of the political regime is not a compulsory indicator of the end of the transformation process. The transformation period may end with the establishment of unconsolidated and unstable systems.

4. For the countries in which the communist regimes collapsed at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, the period of postcommunism has already ended. In favor of this conclusion, we can provide at least three arguments:

a) for more than a quarter of a century, new different but not communist models of social relations have established themselves in them.

b) during this time a new generation of the population entered the social and political life that had not been influenced by communist propaganda;

c) restoration of the communist system has become impossible in these countries since their Communist parties either moved into the positions of Social-Democracy, or they were banned, or turned into marginal political groups.

5. The end of postcommunism does not mean that all the consequences of the previous communist regimes have already been overcome. There will be a long period of their

influence on social relations in one way or another. However, this influence will be weakened as a result of changes in population generations.

6. The end of postcommunism does not mean that in the former communist countries there cannot be any new system changes in the near future. However, these will be other transitions that will have their starting and ending positions.

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КРИЗОВІ ЯВИЩА ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ СИСТЕМИ

Розглядаються дослідницькі інструменти для вирішення ключової проблеми розвитку політичної системи в умовах кризових явищ. Політичні інститути в умовах системної трансформації виявляють свою вразливість до різного типу і масштабів викликів. Тому важливою є розробка комплексного підходу до аналізу кризи політичної системи. Враховуючи відкритість та нелінійний характер розвитку політичної системи, пропонується поєднати стенфордську модель кризи розвитку та синергетичний підхід.

Ключові слова: політична система, політична криза, точка біфуркації, структурна криза, процедурна криза,