

ПОРІВНЯЛЬНА ПОЛІТОЛОГІЯ

DOI: 10.26565/2220-8089-2020-38-04
УДК 321.6/.7

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THE END OF POSTCOMMUNISM AND THE TRENDS OF THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EX-POSTCOMMUNIST COUNTRIES

The article is devoted to clarifying the problem of the end of postcommunist transformations and the essence of the further development of the ex-postcommunist countries. The avalanche collapse of the communist regimes at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s led to the beginning of postcommunist transformations. Today it can be stated that this process is over. The author argues this conclusion with the following considerations: 1) any transformational process, the essence of which is to replace one quality of society or its political system with another, cannot go on indefinitely, it must end someday; 2) the end of the transformation process is due to the establishment of a new quality; 3) the totalitarian nature of the previous communist regimes presupposes the multivariate end of postcommunist transformations.

Various postcommunist countries have achieved different results during transformations. In Central-Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and a number of countries in South-Eastern Europe, postcommunist transformations have culminated in the establishment of democracy. The transformations of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was over the establishment of authoritarian regimes. Neo-totalitarian regimes have emerged in Belarus, Russia, and Turkmenistan. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine, political development fluctuates between democracy and authoritarianism for a long time. The author concludes that the period of postcommunism in all these countries finally over in the middle of 2010s.

The end of postcommunism marked the beginning of a new stage in the socio-political development of the ex-communist countries. Its main tendencies are revealed in this paper. The author includes in such: 1) a fall the level of democracy in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe; 2) a strengthening differentiation of political development of single regions and the countries; 3) a growth of nationalism; 4) a changes in relations with the EU; 4) a strengthening Russia's interference.

Keywords: *postcommunist transformations, the end of postcommunism, post-postcommunism, democracy, authoritarianism, neo-totalitarianism.*

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КІНЕЦЬ ПОСТКОМУНІЗМУ ТА ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ПОДАЛЬШОГО РОЗВИТКУ КОЛИШНІХ КОМУНІСТИЧНИХ КРАЇН

Досліджуються проблеми закінчення посткомуністичних трансформацій та сутності подальшого розвитку колишніх посткомуністичних країн. Лавинний крах комуністичних режимів на межі 1980-90-х спричинив початок посткомуністичних трансформацій. Сьогодні можна констатувати, що цей процес вже закінчено. Наводяться відповідні аргументи для такого висновку: 1) будь-який трансформаційний процес, сутність якого полягає в заміні однієї якості суспільства або його політичної системи на іншу, не може тривати безкінечно, він має колись закінчитися; 2) закінчення трансформаційного процесу зумовлене усталенням нової якості; 3) тоталітарний характер попередніх комуністичних режимів зумовлює багатоваріантність закінчення посткомуністичних трансформацій.

За час посткомуністичних трансформацій різні країни досягли відмінних результатів. У країнах Центрально-Східної Європи, Балтії та низці країн Південно-Східної Європи посткомуністичні трансформації закінчилися усталенням демократії. Трансформації Азербайджану, Казахстану, Таджикистану та Узбекистану закінчилися усталенням авторитарних режимів. У Білорусі, Росії та Туркменістані виникли неототалітарні режими. В Албанії, Боснії і Герцеговині, Вірменії, Грузії, Косово, Македонії, Молдові та Україні тривалий період політичний розвиток коливається між демократією та авторитаризмом. Стверджується, що період посткомунізму остаточно завершився в середині 2010-х.

Кінець посткомунізму поклав початок новому етапу політичного розвитку колишніх комуністичних країн. Визначаються основні його тенденції: 1) падіння рівня демократизації в країнах Центрально-Східної та Південно-Східної Європи; 2) посилення диференціації політичного розвитку окремих регіонів та країн; 3) зростання націоналізму 4) істотні зміни у відносинах з ЄС; 5) посилення втручання Росії.

Ключові слова: *посткомуністичні трансформації, кінець посткомунізму, пост-посткомунізм, демократія, авторитаризм, неототалітаризм.*

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КОНЕЦ ПОСТКОММУНИЗМА И ТЕНДЕНЦИИ ДАЛЬНЕЙШЕГО РАЗВИТИЯ БЫВШИХ КОММУНИСТИЧЕСКИХ СТРАН

Исследуются проблемы окончания посткоммунистических трансформаций и сущности дальнейшего развития бывших посткоммунистических стран. Лавинный крах коммунистических режимов на рубеже 1980-90-х положил начало посткоммунистическим трансформациям. Сегодня можно констатировать, что этот процесс уже завершён. Приводятся соответствующие аргументы для такого вывода: 1) любой трансформационный процесс, сущность которого заключается в замене одного качества общества или его политической системы другим, не может продолжаться бесконечно, он когда-то закончится; 2) окончания трансформационного процесса обусловлено установлением нового качества; 3) тоталитарный характер предыдущих коммунистических режимов обуславливает многовариантность окончания посткоммунистических трансформаций.

За время посткоммунистических трансформаций разные страны достигли различных результатов. В странах Центрально-Восточной Европы, Балтии и ряде стран Юго-

Восточной Европы посткоммунистические трансформации закончились установлением демократии. Трансформации Азербайджана, Казахстана, Таджикистана и Узбекистана закончились установлением авторитарных режимов. В Беларуси, России и Туркменистане возникли неототалитарные режимы. В Албании, Боснии и Герцеговине, Армении, Грузии, Косово, Македонии, Молдове и Украине политическое развитие длительный период колеблется между демократией и авторитаризмом. Утверждается что период посткоммунизма окончательно завершился в середине 2010-х.

Конец посткоммунизма положил начало новому этапу политического развития бывших коммунистических стран. Определяются основные его тенденции: 1) падение уровня демократизации в странах Центрально-Восточной и Юго-Восточной Европы; 2) усиление дифференциации политического развития отдельных регионов и стран; 3) рост национализма; 4) изменения во взаимоотношениях с ЕС; 5) усиление вмешательства России.

Ключевые слова: *посткоммунистические трансформации, конец посткоммунизма, пост-посткоммунизм, демократия, авторитаризм, неототалитаризм.*

The avalanche collapse of the communist regimes at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s led to the beginning of postcommunist transformations. Although they had a much more complex structure than previous political transitions due to the fact that radical changes had to take place not only in politics but also in the economy and social culture and to the binary nature of transformation processes in most countries¹, today we can state that postcommunist period is over and new period begun.

The problems of the end of postcommunism were raised in the works by Charles King (King 2000), Andras Bozoki (Bozoki 2004), Peter Gross and Vladimir Tismaneanu (Gross&Tismaneanu 2005), Oleh Havrylyshyn (Havrylyshyn 2006), Paul Kubicek (Kubicek 2009), Peng Lü (Peng Lü 2012), as well as in one of my previous publication (Romanyuk 2017). The new stage, which came after postcommunism, was covered in the latest reports «Nations in Transit» by Freedom House². However, the questions of the

essence of postcommunism³, the identification of its end and the trends of further development of the former communist countries are still debatable. The **aim** of this paper is to express my vision of these questions.

What is the end of postcommunism? My thoughts on the end of postcommunism, which I set out in my previous work (Romanyuk 2017), are follows.

First, any transformation process cannot last indefinitely, it must end someday. The period during which the transformation process takes place is defined as the transformation period. The transformation period ends with the end of the transformation process. The essence of the transformation period is the change of one quality of society or its political system to another. Thus, the identifier of the end of postcommunist transformations and postcommunist period should be considered the change of communist quality to a new (non-communist) one.

Second, the new quality is characterized by more or less long-term consistency. The transformation period differs from the «normal» one in that there a change in social quality in the first case, while changes occur within the established quality in the second event. Namely, the establishment of a new (non-communist) political system should be considered the end of the postcommunist period of the ex-communist

¹ Of the 30 post-communist countries, 24 (80%) were newly formed states that emerged as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the socialist and then the new Yugoslavia, and the «velvet divorce» of Czechoslovakia. As a result, within the framework of the transformation process, there were two transitions: socio-political (transition from a totalitarian system) and national-political one (transition to a sovereign national statehood).

² Nations in Transit program was set up to study reforms in the former communist countries. Today it covers all these countries except Mongolia.

³ Thus, Peng Lü sees China and Vietnam as «the third camp of postcommunism» (Peng Lü 2012: 353). However, as the political systems in China and Vietnam remains communist due to the monopoly rule of the communist parties, their control over economic development and the official status of communist ideology, it is not possible to consider them postcommunist countries.

countries development, after which a new period begins. Peng Lü notes that when the normalization is achieved and stabilized, the transition is over and the new problems of these countries «are not transitional matters anymore» (Peng Lü 2012: 350-351).

Third, if the end of the transition from authoritarian regimes was the establishment of democracy or the failure with its establishment, the totalitarian nature of communist regimes leads to more options for determining the end of postcommunist transformations. They may end in the establishment of democracy or authoritarian regime, or a return to the totalitarian quality of society (Romanyuk 2017: 6-8).

When and how did the postcommunist period over? Postcommunist transformations lasted of different time period and had ended in different consequences in various countries.

In Central-Eastern Europe (Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary), the Baltic (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and a number of countries in South-Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Croatia), postcommunist transformations lasted from one and a half to two decades and are over the establishment of democracy. Andras Bozoki aptly remarked that «just as neither Germany nor Italy were called postfascist countries in 1960, fifteen years after the Second World War, so Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have shed the title of postcommunist states, fifteen years after Communism fell» (Bozoki 2005: 34). The establishment of democracy in these countries is ambiguously evidenced by their accession to the European Union, which requires its new members to have a stable democracy, a functioning market economy and to ensure respect for fundamental civil liberties and political rights. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the EU in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and Croatia in 2013.⁴ The establishment of democracy in these countries is also evidenced by the Huntington's «two-turnover test» according to which democracy can be considered consolidated if the authority twice passed after the first free elections from one political force to another by electoral way⁵

⁴ The delay in the democratization of Croatia was caused by the Serbo-Croatian war of 1991-1995.

⁵ Thus, Gross and Tismaneanu believe that the postcommunist period in Romania is over when the ex-communists were again ousted from power in the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections (Gross & Tismaneanu 2005).

(Huntington 1993: 267). The «two-turnover test» allows also identify the end of postcommunist transformation in Mongolia.⁶

The postcommunist transformations of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan ended with the consolidation of authoritarian regimes at the turn of the 1990s and 2000s. This is illustrated by the monitoring of Freedom House. Oleh Havrylyshyn noted in this regard that although these countries were caught in a trap oligarchic, autocratic regime of partial capitalism and is far from developed democracy, transitional processes in these countries are finished (Havrylyshyn 2006: 255). The elections are also held periodically in these countries (albeit with the dosed participation of the opposition), but they are not free, competitive and fair.

A special place among the postcommunist autocracies is occupied by Belarus, Russia and Turkmenistan, where the tendencies of re-totalitarianization have taken effect. Their systems are characterized not only by the autocratic nature political power but also the state-monopolistic character of the economy, ideological control and brutal interference of the government in private life. As for Russia, we must add to this its imperialist and expansionist foreign policy. Such systems should be defined as neo-totalitarian, as they are not only different from classical totalitarianism, but are not communist. Neo-totalitarian systems in different countries of this group have their own specifics. The 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. The Belarusian system is a conservative totalitarianism that retains many elements of the Soviet era, but power persecutes the Communist Party (as well as the opposition as a whole). In Russia, imperialist totalitarianism was formed during Putin's rule, as its goal is to create a «Russian World» based on the annexation of territories inhabited by ethnic Russians and the so-called «Russian-speaking population». Since during the functioning of such regimes new (non-communist) system quality has been established, it should be noted that the

⁶ Mongolia became an electoral democracy and gained the status of a free country in 1991 [Freedom in the World 1992-1992: 330-332]. The 1992 parliamentary elections were won by the ex-communist MPRP. The next parliamentary elections brought victory to the DP. As a result of the 2000 elections, MPRP returned to power.

postcommunist period is also over in these countries.

The most difficult problem is finding the end of postcommunism in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine, whose development varies between democracy and authoritarianism for a long time (with the difference that some countries cross this border and others approach it and return). In this case, we can say about the «stabilization of instability». The permanent changes in democratic and authoritarian trends in some Latin American countries, as Huntington noted, are their political systems. (Huntington 1993, 41-42). Thus, postcommunist transitions can be considered complete in this group of countries as well, albeit with the establishment of unstable systems.⁷

Summarizing the above, we can conclude that the period of postcommunism in a group of the countries that lost communist regimes at the turn of the 1989-90s finally completed in the middle 2010s. During this time, communist systems were dismantled and new (non-communist) systems created, although they are very different from each other. The end of postcommunism also means that the return of communist regimes is no longer possible. Today, there are no political forces in the ex-communist countries that can turn the wheel of history back. The communist parties of these countries either became social democratic, or were marginalized or banned. Over the past twenty-five years, a new generation, that has been formed in a new social context and has not been zombied by communist propaganda, has entered an active social life.

The end of postcommunism does not mean that in the ex-communist countries there cannot be any new system changes in the near future⁸. However, these will be other transitions that will have their starting and ending positions. Although the consequences of the communist era will still affect the development of these countries for a long time, but not them, but the

latest socio-economic, domestic and foreign policy factors will play a leading role in determining the further trends of their social development.

What trends determine the new period of development? The main trends in the development of ex-communist countries in the new period of their history are as follows.

First, there is a fall of the level of democracy in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. If in 2010, there were 5 consolidated democracies and 7 semi-consolidated ones in this region, the number of consolidated democracies decreased to 3 and semi-consolidated democracies to 4 in 2019. Instead, the number of hybrid regimes⁹ has more than doubled (from 3 to 7) (Nation in Transit 2011 & 2020). The situation in Hungary, which was one of the democratic leaders in the postcommunist period, is particularly striking. After the return to power of FIDES (it won an absolute number of seats in the republic's legislature at the 2010 parliamentary elections (263 seats out of 386) and the formation of a second government by Viktor Orbán¹⁰, processes of curtailment of democracy, attack on political rights and civil liberties, strengthening government control over the mass-media and education began. The result was a rapid decline in the country's democratization rating. Hungary worsened the quality of its political regime from a consolidated democracy to a non-consolidated one in 2014, and it has been characterized as a hybrid one since 2019 (Nations in Transit 2015 & 2020). Poland (another leader of democratization in the 1990s) is deteriorated the quality of its regime from consolidated democracy to semi-consolidated in 2019 (Nations in Transit 2020). Albania (in 2010), Northern Macedonia (in 2013), as well as Serbia and Montenegro (both in 2018) crossed from semi-consolidated democracies to hybrid regimes (Nations in Transit 2011, 2014 and 2017).

⁷ Kubicek believes that the end of postcommunism in Ukraine came as a result of the Orange Revolution (Kubicek 2009: 323).

⁸ The events that began in Belarus in August 2020 were a clear confirmation of this thesis. Until recently, Belarus was considered a pattern of political stability, but the brute falsification of the results of the last presidential election sparked mass protests, which have not stopped for the fourth month and are capable of overthrowing the Lukashenko regime.

⁹ Political regimes are classified as hybrid according to the Nation in Transition's methodology, while Freedom in the World defines of most such regimes as electoral democracies, as government is formed through free and competitive elections.

¹⁰ Prior to that, Orbán was the Prime Minister of Hungary in 1998-2002. Paradoxically, Hungary integrated in into NATO (in 1999) and created the conditions for EU accession (in 2004) under his leadership.

Second, the differentiation of political development of single regions and the countries amplifies. In contrast to countries where the quality of democracy has deteriorated, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as the Baltic States, retain their status as consolidated democracies. Moldova (in 2010) and Kosovo (in 2016) improved their status from semi-consolidated authoritarianism to hybrid regimes (Nations in Transit 2011 & 2017). Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine maintain the hybrid quality of their regimes in the conditions of the continuing struggle between democratic and authoritarian tendencies. There has been little movement on the autocratic spectrum. Over the last decade, only Kyrgyzstan has changed the status of its regime from semi-consolidated authoritarianism to consolidated ones (in 2017) (Nations in Transit 2018). Today, only Armenia remains a country with a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime (Nations in Transit 2020).

Third, there is a growth of nationalism. Radical-nationalist parties (Jobbik in Hungary, Ataka in Bulgaria, LPR in Poland, PRM in Romania, SDP in Slovenia, EKRE in Estonia) entered to parliaments or increased their representation there. Nationalist tendencies have significantly intensified in Poland since the Law and Justice Party came to power in 2015. Nationalism flourishes even more in Hungary under Orban's government, and its foreign policy became inherent irredentism. We are no longer talking about Russia, where nationalism is rampant.

Fourth, there are significant changes in relations with the EU. In the past, European integration was a priority for most European postcommunist countries, as it promised to include them in the free trade EU area and led to significant EU assistance in implementing economic reforms and mitigating their social consequences. Today, the wave of Euroscepticism is gaining strength in them. This is due to the decline of the EU economy due to the financial and economic crisis of 2008, which significantly reduced the ability to help new members and candidates as well as that pressure for immediate implementation of EU political and humanitarian standards, without taking into account the specifics of the situation and the state of culture in individual countries, and that a certain disregard for the interests of new members in decision-making by EU governing bodies. The conflict between the EU governing bodies and new members was greatly fueled by the migration crisis that arose in autumn 2015 in connection with the record

influx of migrants from the Middle East and Africa to Europe. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia strongly opposed the introduction of refugee quotas by EU and refused to accept migrants. The pressure on the implementation of quotas by EU has caused great concern in Croatia, Estonia, Latvia and other countries.

Fifth, Russia's interference in the political development of other ex-communist countries is intensifying. When Putin came to power, Russia's policy toward the countries of the former communist camp changed from conservative to revanchist. Its deepest goal is the integration of post-Soviet states into Russia and established controls over the CEE and SEE countries. In order to implement it, Russia resorted to direct military aggression against Georgia (in 2008) and Ukraine (in 2014), thus trying to stop the movement of these countries to the EU and NATO. Russia wage a real information war against liberal democratic governments, standard accusing them in corruption, supporting anti-Western forces, and interfering in elections in other countries.

Conclusion. The understanding that the former communist countries are no longer post-communist has become established in political science as well as in economics. The difference in approaches to the definition of «postcommunism» and the position of its end is due to the social-politic context in which researchers to work. Although the term «post-postcommunism» has appeared in some scientific works¹¹, it has not yet acquired its meaning as conceptual basis.

Of course, the new period of development of the former communist countries is connected with the post-communist one (just as the postcommunist time was connected with the communist one). However, the essence, tasks and trends of socio-political development have changed significantly. If the postcommunist period was characterized by a change in the systemic quality of societies, then in the new period social development takes place in conditions of relatively stable quality. If the main task of the past period was to change the quality of socio-political systems, now such a task has been to preserve them.) The study of the conditions in which the further social and political development of the former communist (now former postcommunist) countries and its tendencies takes place has only just begun.

¹¹ The authorship of this term belongs to Charles King (King 2000).

Some of them were only outlined in this paper. Sure thing, this problem will still attract the attention of many researchers who specialize in the study of postcommunism.

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