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The role of political traditions in the mechanics of political system of modern Ukraine

Specific nature of historical development that is anchored in politico-social experience of the nation has a significant influence on present political processes that cannot be explained by considering only the current state of political institutions and present political constellation. Political traditions, in which the most stable elements of historical experience are reflected, have a strong influence on the development of norms and values of the mass consciousness and on motivation of political behavior that appears to be an important factor in the operation and in development of the political system.

Various representatives of humanities turn to the concept of “tradition”, which displays a variety of past modernity depending on beliefs and traditions – from existing habits to the types of social order. Thus, this concept can not be unambiguous interpretation because of its complexity and multidimensionality. Etymologically, the concept of “tradition” comes from the Latin word – “transfer”. Although the fact of the tradition of a socially significant information is not denied by any researcher, the emphasis in interpretation can be treated in different ways: as the content to be transferred, or as the process of transmission. This allows to distinguish two main approaches to defining traditions – the objective and functional.

Object-oriented approach has the definition of substantial side of tradition and its components. Within this approach, the tradition is considered as fixed in the society norm of settings that creates a program behavior and provides a sample action. In the definitions that belong to the functional approach, the focus is fixed on the importance of tradition as the transmission – transferring anything from generation to generation. Tradition – a neutral term used to refer to “transmission” through which behaviors, estimates and beliefs are passed on from generation to generation and thus fixed or that also could be perceived as a means of interaction

with space and time, which ensures the continuity of past, present and future, any activity or experience that is both universal mechanism of succession.

One of the most fundamental definitions used in modern literature, was formulated by S. Eisenstadt. Tradition, in his understanding, is “frozen symbolization of models of social order and the set of codes that outline the scope of restrictive cultural agenda, beyond participation, and which offer ”adequate,, choice goals and examples of behavior; tradition may be regarded as modes of assessment and authorization and legitimation of all cultural integrity and social order or any of its parts”¹. S. Eisenstadt could does not only reflect in the definition the main features of tradition – durability, symbolic, significance level of social organization and behavior of the individual, but also isolates a number of their functions – regulatory, integrative, functions of legitimation of social organization and socialization of the individual.

After having analyzed the given definitions the following integrative rendering of the concept “political tradition” can be offered. Political tradition is a way of recording of significant content of politico-social experience, that is historically formed and transmitted from generation to generation; and a mechanism for political and cultural continuity that includes storage, transmission and reproduction of stable, repeating elements of this experience in the new conditions and environment. Such definition allows us to reflect both parts of the political culture: the content side of political traditions as well as functional significance. To understand a tradition as complex phenomena it is important to understand not only the transferee of objects of inheritance, but legacy processes functioning in the new socio-political conditions.

From a content point of view, the political tradition is a complex system that includes various components and has a certain structure. We can define two levels of structure in the system of political traditions. First, it is an internal mental level associated with consciousness and subconsciousness, which includes symbols, myths, stereotypes, values and norms. Second, the structure of political traditions includes external behavioral level, reflecting the peculiarities of political interaction among themselves and with the political system. At this level, the traditions include certain behavior patterns and designs options, including their specific manifestations such as custom and ritual. In addition, the structure of political traditions can distinguish a third level – institutional. In many ways it is derived from the mental and behavioral levels, but we can speak of specific traditions interaction in the branches of government, as well as in state and society.

Archetypes lie at the core of political tradition, the most common and universal archetypes associated with the collective unconscious acting reflection of experience of previous generations in the structure of the psyche. It should be noted that archetype is a form of empty formal element, because it is mistakenly

¹ S.N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change and Modernity*, John Wiley, New York 1973, p. 139.

identified with some defined images and scenes. Action archetype manifests itself in the tendency of forming ideas around one central idea: idea may differ materially in details, but the idea that is underlying remains unchanged. When filled archetype as pure forms of political content, it is specified as a political myth.

Political myth is the archetypal structure aimed at self-field of society or people. In the national political mythology the following components can be distinguished: the myth of power (the good king, “strong” hand), myths about heroes, saviors, myths about the “golden age” myths identification (of the same origin or connection to a specific territory) military myths, etc. J. Armstrong offered the concept of “myth engine” which means a “constituent myth of a community, which explains and justifies its existence”². This concept emphasizes the dynamic and mobilizing character of myth, which is used when necessary to predetermine group action of political community, especially of the state itself.

It may seem that through rationalization of political life, political myths lose their meaning. However, the reality of social and political processes is filled with spontaneous mass mythology, which intertwine elements of traditional myths and present. Modern Mythology records itself in artistic and imaginative rational and irrational form of orientation, prevailing in the society with respect to the current political system and its elements, the political process and its participants, the same as the orientation of the nation (state) in relation to other nations and the world community as a whole. These myths, the content of which may relate to remote or recent past, impose distinct mark on national political consciousness.

An integral part of the structure of political traditions are political symbols that conditionally express certain ideas, values and ideals of the social community. Through national political symbols (mainly flag, emblem and anthem), that are necessary attributes of national and state identity, the political system and the nation integrate as a whole. Historical names and ceremonies can be considered as other symbolic forms. Symbol itself is characterized by such properties as ambiguity, complexity of associations to symbol and openness to the introduction of new meaning. Any symbol has a multiple semantic structure so complex in each case how widely this symbol has been historically involved in different semantic systems.

Forms of symbols that provide cultural heritage, hides the dynamic content, which is determined by historical facts and by the nature of the current political situation. For example, the national flag of Ukraine has two equal horizontal bands of blue and yellow. Yellow (gold) and blue colors were used on the arms of the Kingdom of Rus of XIVth century. They are also found in the coat of arms of Russian lands, princes, nobles and cities of the Middle Ages and early modern times. In the eighteenth century the banners of Cossacks often were made of blue

² *Tsennosti i simvoly natsionalnogo samosoznaniya v usloviyah izmenyayushchegosya obshchestva*, otv. red. L.M. Drobyzheva, T.S. Guzenkova, Moskva 1994, p. 40.

cloth with gold or knight in scarlet robes. In the year 1848 Ukrainian Halychyna used the blue and yellow flag as the national flag. In the years 1917–1921, during the Ukrainian Revolution, this flag was the national flag of the Ukrainian People's Republic and of the Ukrainian State. During the XX century blue-and-yellow flag served as a symbol of Ukrainian national resistance against the Communist Soviet occupation. In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this flag was *de facto* used as state flag of independent Ukraine, and on September 18, 1991 it received a new legitimacy as a symbol of Ukraine. State Emblem of Ukraine – the golden trident on a blue shield is a national symbol of Ukrainian liberation struggle era of XXth century. The central figure of a heraldic emblem is a Trident of St. Vladimir I., Grand Prince of Kiev, the ruler of Russia. Since ancient times it was revered as a magic trident sign, a kind of talisman. Its modern image was formed in the time of the UPR. Thus, the modern Ukrainian national symbols emerged, not today, but is a continuation of the ancient historical traditions of our people.

The structure includes political traditions and political stereotypes – a kind of social stereotypes in which objects of political reality are schematic and simplistic, with a strong emotional component. A stereotype is a simplified image of various social processes, political events, representatives of national and religious groups, etc., that can easily become international. Stereotyping of the concepts facilitates their transmission from generation to generation, and is based on the willingness to perceive an object or event from the standpoint of prior experience. B. Lippman believes that “we distinguish why our culture has provided a meaning for us, and we try to perceive what we have isolated from the surrounding world in the form of stereotypes created for our culture” in the diversity of reality³. Thus, the socio-political behavior finds expression not only in analytical work of consciousness, but also in a certain inertia of thinking characteristic of individuals and social groups whose behavior may be motivated by entrenched prejudices, fantasies or errors.

Political symbols, myths and stereotypes create a certain image of political power and political reality in general. Although the images of power can vary due to individual actions of politicians, political events and variability of mass sentiment, the deeper layers of these images are distinguished by sustainability because unconscious people usually rely on these layers, rooted in deep traditions of national political culture. Not only current images are presented in the mass consciousness but it is also a great power. These images are influenced by the existing national political culture, concepts of reference, which have a high degree of consistency in different people. The fact that they want to see the power of ordinary citizens to affect their electoral choice in support between elections, the range of opportunities that are open to government officials in the performance of their functions.

³ P.S. Gurevich, *Politicheskaya psichologiya*, Uniti-Dana, Moskva 2008, p. 395.

The images of ideal power and its characteristics are directly related to political values. Political values are stable over time generalized in abstract standards that define what is right and what should be inherent in the society. Values manifest themselves in those criteria on which positive or negative rating events are taking place and on the political reality in which individuals justify and defend their behavioral choices. By leading political values we mean freedom, equality, justice, stability, order, etc. It is the dominant values shared by most of society that comprise the constitutive basis of political culture. They appear perfect, ultimate goals, that have targeted the social and political behavior.

The behavioral level of structure of political traditions is the practical expression of the mental content level. Political values and norms influence the formation of political motivation, finding reflection in certain behaviors and actions. Samples of actions inherent in the political traditions, often appear in the form of specific precedents, as tradition has always turned to traditions. Precedent may be a certain way people interpreted the behavior of previous eras, which recognizes outstanding individuals worthy of emulation. These people act as personalized ideas and actions that are an example for new generations.

A part of behavioral – level structure of traditions is custom – a habit of behavior that took root over time and implemented voluntarily and spontaneously. According to Weber, such practice is “generally not guaranteed by external factors, which are in fact governed by voluntarily – or just” not thinking “or just a” convenience “or for some other reason – and likely in compliance that can be expected for the same reasons, by people from the same circles”⁴. In Ukrainian political culture custom can be considered as „relatives” interactions, which is informal, but has significant effect on the functioning of political institutions.

Ritual is a practical implementation of the symbolic content of political traditions as a special model of political action. The ritual – a standardized set of cultural and symbolic content action undertaken in situations prescribed traditions. The coronation of the monarch, the inauguration of the president, parades, participating in social activities are the examples of political rituals. They are an important manifestation of political involvement or rather dissatisfaction. Thus, mass ceremony accompanying the rise to power of a new leader – a means of strengthening the legitimacy in terms of the involvement of the masses in politics, when the population of the state symbolically shared the glory and power of the leader.

Thus, political traditions, on the one hand, accumulate and remain in some forms of meaningful social and political experience of the nation that forms a constitutive basis of political culture, and on the other hand it is the mechanism of transmission, reproduction and further development of experience. From a content

⁴ M. Veber, *Osnovnyye sotsiologicheskiye ponyatiya*, [in:] *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya*, Progress, Moskva 1990, p. 634.

point of view, the political tradition is comprised of stable images of political reality and power, embodied in symbols, myths and stereotypes, as well as value-normative guidance of political consciousness and political behavior of the samples, which are stored and played during the social and political transformations. They are the result of the development of society and reflect the historically developed social and political experience, which is passed from generation to generation.

Political traditions are an integral part of political and cultural context of the functioning of political systems – combination of historical, social, psychological, values and behavioral factors that determine the specificity of power relations between society and the state in specific circumstances of time and place. In the mechanism of functioning of political traditions the legitimacy of relations of domination and submission, the integration of the political system and society based on the production of a national-state identity of citizens motivated by social and political actors in a particular type of political behavior, as well broadcast and informal norms “rules” that influence the effectiveness of political institutions are carried out.

According to the specific conditions of time and place nature of the influence of political traditions of the political system can be both functional and dysfunctional. Mass values have become mutually matching character for stable and efficient functioning of the political system and political institutions. In Western countries, where the political system occurred naturally, institutional structure and political and cultural “genotype” coevolutioned today and mutually reinforced each other. In this case, the tradition of supporting the stability of the political system is creating among members of society emotional and affective commitment to its basic values and principles.

In countries where political development takes the form of „catch-up” modernization, which also applies to modern Ukraine, new principles of formation and functioning of the political system may conflict with sustainable value orientations and behavioral guidelines citizens. Under these conditions, the influence of traditions on mechanisms of political system is dysfunctional, shown at three levels: mental (crisis of identity and legitimacy), behavioral (participation crisis) and institutional (re-interpretation of content for new political institutions).

However, be aware that a political system itself creates social, political and legal environment in which there are political traditions, making or supporting their reproduction, or a prerequisite for development. Therefore, the transition state as a universal political institutions is capable of, firstly, ensuring the adaptation of the principles and importing them to national traditions, the experience of modernization, such as Japan; secondly, of creating a favorable institutional environment for evolutionary change of “genotype” of political culture, as was done, for example, in post-war Germany. In Ukraine all the necessary institutions of a democratic system were formed, but filling them with appropriate values and

normative content has not happened, largely because of inconsistencies of “genotypes” in political culture.

In the late 1980s, Ukraine entered into a new stage of reforming of the social and political system. Modern Ukraine is a transit type state in transition from authoritarian and totalitarian political regimes to democratic modernization by means of political, economic and social spheres. The political dimension of modernization is a complex process of improvements, updates and changes in the political system, which aims at improving the efficiency of government and public institutions, ordering them according to the requirements of time-based assimilation of the achievements of leading countries.

Unlike most Western countries, in which the processes of political development took place naturally and had the character of “spontaneous” or “primary” modernization, modernization in Ukraine every time takes a “catch-up” or “mobilization” form. A key feature of “catch-up” modernization is that changes in the political system start in place of unprepared public ground in the absence of the necessary political and cultural resources, which greatly complicates their conduct and may lead to results opposite to expectations of both the reformers and the population in whole.

Experience of the political development of Ukraine demonstrated that the formal restructuring of the political system into democratic model and the creation of appropriate institutions is no guarantee of a real transition to democracy. Political tradition in transition is a resource of development, whose importance for the political system can be both functional and dysfunctional. Making a lasting impact on the work of new democratic institutions and political traditions enables to radically transform the content contained in them, consistent with its “genotype” of political culture that emerged historically.

Analysis of the mechanisms of formation and functioning of the political system of modern Ukraine allows to distinguish a number of characteristics, which is largely due to resistance traditions and “genotype” Ukrainian political culture in the interactions between society and the state. Of course, tradition is reproduced unchanged, is their adaptation to the new socio-political conditions, changing forms of their manifestation. It should be borne in mind that a political system performs the opposite effect on the functioning of political traditions, so the transition at the institutional level can and should be laid with prerequisites for change of “genotype” of political culture.

Historical experience of the country and its historical memory which are formed in the context of national character and mentality, with a high degree of stability and very difficult to manipulate significantly affect the formation of modern political culture of Ukraine. They remain in the layers of collective historical memory of the people and significantly influence the formation of modern political values, norms and behavior.

The specifics of the historical development of Ukraine, not least due to the fact that the country has long been ruled by various, often hostile political forces has reflected in its sociocultural space, political culture and consciousness is fragmented and their components – diverse, sometimes contradictory. This is not the only vector division, but most, in our view, essential, because in this case we can speak of commitment to different political traditions, the different features of national psychology and national character and mentality. In particular, the specificity of the formation of political consciousness in “sectors” of Ukrainian society people in Eastern and Western Ukraine was under the influence of different political cultures: the Russian Empire and Poland and Austria-Hungary.

Humbled sense of national dignity, various mental instruction in two parts has taken away Ukrainians from their own cultural roots and have shaped the behavior in mostly contemplative rather than active, active position.

Development in various fields of ethnic civilization has put a significant imprint on the mentality and forms of economic, political culture and consciousness of Ukrainian Dnieper and Western Ukraine, and their directions were opposite. In the Russian part of Ukraine at the household level dominated by the idea of all – unity, which sometimes brought to complete dissolution of the Ukrainian nation. For the majority of the social norms of political behavior was conformism; only a small part of some preferred forms of rebellion response. Loyalty to political behavior was the result of oppressive autocratic regime, suppressing all dissent hard, and non-structured society.

As for the western segment of society, political culture was shaped heavily influenced by Latin-speaking western rationalist tradition. However, the double relationship – both from the Austrian authorities and the economically and politically stronger Polish community – helped conservation in her patriarchal provincial features. Trying to protect itself from specific Polonizing generated Galician conservatism aimed at preserving any cost of traditional ethnic values. Yet the ability to self-manifested was more clearly evident here than in the Dnieper. Thus, without understanding the factors that reflect the political culture in historical stereotypes, it is unlikely to explain the features of the political system today.

Political culture in Ukraine was formed on the grounds of the original way of lifestyle of the beaten track and under the influence of next main factors – the individualistic features of Ukrainian mentality, centuries of statelessness and fragmentation leading stratum, the transition to the service to the “dominant nation” of best minds and talents. Fatal gap between the elite and the population deliberately deepened metropolis, seeking not only to kill Ukrainians ability to resist, but dissolve it in Russian or Polish sea⁵.

⁵ L.P. Nagorna, *Politychna cultura ukrayins'kogo narodu: istorychna retrospektyva i suchasni realiyi*, Kijev 1998, p. 21.

Ukrainian researcher Mikhail Riabchuk states, that Ukraine, as each colony has been under the full influence of the metropolis, one consequence of which was the imposition of “natives” in negative self-images, negative ideas about themselves. “Colonized ethnicity colonizers forced to accept – and learn how their own – alien system of stereotypes, and not just someone else, and openly hostile and humiliating [...] Assimilating systems of values of colonizers, the colonized society came into conflict more acute with yourself – native begins to hate himself and thereby deepen their own humiliation and subjugation”⁶.

Even a fast analysis of the characteristics of Ukrainian political processes suggests a decisive influence on the regional factor in political life. To a large extent, this leads to significant problems as it causes different perception, understanding and evaluation of public policy in the sphere of interethnic relations of inhabitants of different regions. Ukrainian cultural landscape is an extremely complex and heterogeneous formation: from West to East the density of rural and urban population increases, the role of European elements of nature and culture diminishes, general look and vitality of the cultural landscape is increasing continentality, industrialization, Russian and Soviet propaganda is growing. Socio-cultural landscape is simplified in the East and South.

It should be noted, that this diversity of cultural landscape is reinforced by the influence of social factors. That means that there are differences not only in origin and different geopolitical gravity regions, but also in their degree of modernization and preservation of traditional culture, and thus the specificity of political attitudes of citizens. Taking the above into consideration, the most industrialized and Russified regions – East and South of Ukraine are simultaneously the most modernized of course, of course with the least remains of Ukrainian traditional culture? As it was in Soviet Union as well. On the contrary, Western Ukraine, being attached to the Ukrainian territory only after World War II felt the impact of modernization the least. In this case we can talk about the different types of modernity that coexist within the same country – the Soviet-Union modernity (East and South), Republican Soviet modernity (Center and North), Central European modernity (West). Each of these types of modernity is a specific way of arrangement of socio-cultural landscape, which reflects both, the specifics of the process of “incorporating” of rights in the environment as well the nature of social and political relations and the ratio of different social and demographic groups, etc.

It is a generally accepted fact today, that there is no and there cannot be any versatile template of a democratic system. Based on some basic principles (separation of powers, rule of law, independence of the court, the election

⁶ M. Ryabchuk, *Vid „Malorosiyi” do „Indoyevropy”: ukraïns'ki stereotypy*, www.geocities.com/ukrexlibris. – 2004. – 3 bereznya.

authorities, guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens, etc.), model democratic system of each particular state is unique and depends on the historical heritage and socio-political experience of the nation embodied in a political-cultural “genotype”. Therefore, the concept of civic political culture provides a balance of different political systems, which are connected as a manifestation of national traditions and democratic values and principles, without which democracy can not exist as a political regime. One of these most important principles is active, enabled, rational citizen participation in political life, allowing them to influence the government and prevent its alienation from society.

The development of civil society and the formation of appropriate civil political culture in a “catch-up” modernization is a long process in which the state is responsible for creating favorable conditions and environment for the inclusion of citizens in the political process. In contemporary Ukraine the necessary legal and political-social conditions are not fully created, and the civil society is not so much developing because of many actions against the state.

The analysis of trends of development of Ukrainian political culture suggests that civic capacity aimed at ensuring public accountability and political rights and freedoms already exists, but is limited in its quantity and geography. This fact was most clearly manifested during the events of Euromaidan of the years 2013–2014. The main success of Maidan as a civil action and self-governing temporary institutions is that it survived and learned to operate on the basis of social self-organization. It became a kind of social-psychological phenomena, which was formed by the new citizens of Ukraine who are willing and able to clean and rearrange the political society and social life. Maidan confirms that the existing of such known from the history of the Ukrainian people features mentality that will inevitably grow in a modern model of democracy, in line with the spirit and needs of post-modern era – with horizontal connections and the last word community in addressing the most pressing social problems. The attractiveness of this model will help to overcome inferiority syndrome that remains nowadays and will strengthen Ukrainian statehood.

However, the political culture of modern Ukraine remains fragmented, and it is manifested in the absence of a basic consensus on the future path of development between government and society and between different regions of Ukraine. An important factor that determines the state of the Ukrainian political culture is regional specificity. Citizen’s belonging to the region remains the dominant factor in their social experience, political and cultural orientations in Ukraine. The fact that different regions of Ukraine were parts of different empires with strongly different level of democracy and modernization has historically led to the formation of different political cultures, different views on the future development of the country.

Such things like forming a democratic political consciousness of citizens, gaining their experience and skills of active political behavior, overcoming the current fragmentation of historical memory and the establishment of the basis of civic political culture becomes very important part of political development in Ukraine. These problems should be solved using specific targets of general political socialization, political education and political education of citizens. It will be possible to unite Eastern and Western Ukrainian if the old dream of existence of Cathedral Ukraine and Ukraine as a single body will be realized. In the interests of the Ukrainian people are not federalization, and “multicultural unity”, but the recognition of regional identity while strengthening and enriching the national Ukrainian community. The formation of Ukrainian political nation and its political culture includes the following essential elements: awareness of unity on the basis of common history, language, cultural traditions, tolerance of Ukrainian ethnicity for many ethnic groups living on Ukrainian territory, multiethnic membership to Ukraine, consolidated institution of citizenship, understanding the importance of achieving the main political goal – building an independent, economically developed, social, democratic and constitutional state.

Olga Zasławska

Znaczenie tradycji politycznej z punktu widzenia funkcjonowania systemu politycznego współczesnej Ukrainy

Artykuł poświęcony jest teoretycznym aspektom studiów nad fenomenem tradycji politycznych i ich wpływem na proces kształtowania się kultury politycznej społeczeństwa. Szczególne miejsce poświęcone zostało wpływowi tradycji politycznych na budowę i zasady funkcjonowania systemu politycznego współczesnej Ukrainy.

Ольга А. Заславская

Роль политических традиций в механизме функционирования политической системы современной Украины

Статья посвящена теоретическим аспектам исследования политических традиций. Раскрывается структура политических традиций, анализируется их роль в политической культуре общества и в механизме функционирования политической системы современной Украины.

Ольга О. Заславська

Роль політичних традицій у механізмі функціонування політичної системи сучасної України

Стаття присвячена теоретичним аспектам дослідження політичних традицій. Розкривається структура політичних традицій, аналізується їх роль у політичній культурі суспільства і в механізмі функціонування політичної системи сучасної України.