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DEMOCRACY BUILDING IN UKRAINE: KEY CONTRADICTIONS

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Initially, the project for building democracy in Ukraine was characterized by a certain contradictory nature and suggested that liberalization of forms of public life should have been superimposed on the relatively intensive processes to form a political nation.

During the entire period of social reforms in Ukraine the public awareness has been focusing on several marks of national development. The concepts of "building a state", "building a civil society" and "formation of a political nation" were most widespread. Their value and strategic priorities often competes with each other in reality.

The focus on "building a state" unambiguously makes the national idea of state sovereignty higher than the social idea of democratic self-government. Although a national idea is usually based on conservative values, as it has not been based on substantial tradition since Ukraine's independence (institutions and public practices), it has quite quickly lost its motivation. The project for "building a civil society" cannot be directly connected with a certain historical period of Ukrainian independence to date, as it was present in the public sphere with a utopian background, which was not fed by connection with reality so much as extreme remoteness from the same. This status of a distant, yet inapproachable ideal spawned both the advantages and disadvantages of the concept of a "civil society".

The project to "form a political nation" emerged in the Ukrainian intellectual space later on, when the projects to "build a state" and "build a civil society" had started to become ceremonial attributes of public communications rather than products reflecting the current trajectory of the country.

Today therefore, the concepts of a "civil society" and a "political nation" are equally present in the public awareness of Ukraine as landmarks of national development, public and political transformations and are often used as mutually complementary components of a single strategy.

The path of democratic transit in Ukraine emerged as more complicated. Here, the authoritarian political regime had not managed to consolidate itself, when faced with the activism of the civil society. On the one hand, it was part of a society oriented toward the national modern that stood against the restoration of post-Soviet authoritarianism and, on the other, a considerable layer of intellectuals and businesspersons oriented toward the postmodern version of liberalism and globalism.

The theory of democratic transit, which was mainly formed within the limits of the institutional approach, paved the way for democratic management institutions to adopt a decisive role in transforming non-liberal communities. It proposed a simple solution. As liberal transformations in the West resulted in formalization of the respective standards, values and practices in the form of democratic institutions, an adverse effect could be expected and the emergence of a liberal society based on democratic institutions.

The end result was unexpected in some respects, resulting in a so-called façade democracy, with a significant portion of actually functioning social standards and principles degraded to demonstratively feudalistic forms. At the same time, however, the institutional frame (or façade) of the political system remained "improved". Moreover, client-based, corrupt and demonstratively criminal social structures not only learned to utilize the institutions of representative democracy, but also managed to fit the democratization changes themselves in the context of their own corporate strategies.

In terms of political history, the previous period of Ukraine can be characterized as an oligarchic consensus; ruined at a certain stage by an attempt to monopolize power by Yanukovych's surroundings.

The 2014-2015 crisis resulted in the political domination of "political projects", rather than parties in the classical sense, as major subjects of political competition, projects, which, given the character of their emergence and functioning, balance between business start-up logics and the promotional laws of pop stars.

The most important means of assessing the quality of democracy, Ukraine has degraded, during the period when it was supposed to actively arrange its democratic bases. One answer may be that the conscious efforts targeting democracy have not yet spawned sufficiently comprehensive consequences. However, it is already clear that instead of adopting progressive social innovation, we have social mutation, which resembles the expected result according to certain exterior features, but which radically contradicts the conception of reform.

Oligarchy in the Ukrainian political and social context means a situation, when wealth is used to preserve a monopoly of power and power is converted into wealth. In fact, an oligarchy means

usurpation of power, when people are deprived of sovereignty and major management facilities are appropriated by an organized group.

Only the republic may become an alternative to oligarchy in Ukraine. The republic, as we understand it, denotes a kind of political organization of citizens, who founded the state, based on common values and generally accepted rules of community life.

Key words: building democracy, civil society, political nation, oligarchy, republic.

Conceptual landmarks of a transit society

During the entire period of social reforms in Ukraine, after the ultimate refusal from the Marxism-Leninism doctrine, public awareness has been focusing on several "objectives", which had differing levels of topicality and popularity at various times, but which remain under discussion even today. The concepts of "building a state", "building a civil society" and "formation of a political nation" were most widespread.

Moreover, despite the lack of direct contradiction between them from a theoretical perspective, which means that if desired, these approaches could be united to form a comprehensive program for social transformations, their value and strategic priorities often competes with each other in reality.

The focus on "building a state" unambiguously makes the national idea of state sovereignty higher than the social idea of democratic self-government. Although a national idea is usually based on conservative values, as it has not been based on substantial tradition since Ukraine's independence (institutions and public practices), it has quite quickly lost its motivation.

The Ukrainian state was developed by the former Soviet political establishment, which paradoxically distanced itself from the global outlook and cultural attributes of the Ukrainian national identity. It was the only possible "state approach" in a country that actually maintained the Soviet social structure and political culture. However, among the liberal and national-oriented intellectuals, the project to reanimate the former Ukrainian SSR, even under the cloak of independent Ukraine and with ideological and stylistic inclusion of national colors did not attract any significant support.

The concept of "building a state" is mainly associated with the short presidency of L. Kravchuk and the transitional period between the first and second presidencies of L. Kuchma. Moreover, these periods all swiftly ended in internal political crises and sporadic protests, which is why nowadays, this public project has practically lost its adherents and may only be reanimated in the following two radical variants: as a project of a more consistent nationalistic regime and as one of radical post-Soviet restoration (particularly, implemented according to the Belorussian or Russian models).

The project for "building a civil society" cannot be directly connected with a certain historical period of Ukrainian independence to date, as it was present in the public sphere with a utopian background, which was not fed by connection with reality so much as extreme remoteness from the same. This status of a distant, yet inapproachable ideal spawned both the advantages and disadvantages of the concept of a "civil society".

Political discussions irrevocably recognized the desirability and even need to "build a civil society", but at the same time, no-one associated this notion with a real programme for public transformations. The concept of a civil society, therefore, played the role of a rhetorical conclusion for most public discussions and safeguarded the strategic uncertainty and conceptual incompleteness of the Ukrainian public reform project as such.

As a rule, the developed "civil society" was mentioned as the prerequisite for national development, which is not sufficiently presented nowadays; though with hope for the future by allowing disengagement, to a certain extent, from the real contradictions of public life in a given place and at the given time. In line with this distant landmark, there are usually appeals to "form a middle class", achieve a new top-quality "national elite" and hopes for the "new generation".

The project to "form a political nation" emerged in the Ukrainian intellectual space later on, when the projects to "build a state" and "build a civil society" had started to become ceremonial attributes of public communications rather than products reflecting the current trajectory of the country.

Despite sounding somewhat academic, the concept of a political nation acquired a special conceptual and value connotation in Ukraine, as determined by the specific character of the cultural, historical and political concept applied to formulate the same.

The idea of a "political nation" as a public project enabled to a) formalize the refusal from the ethnocentric approach to the national state project; b) connect the interests of patriotic citizens with the functioning of the state political system; c) determine a new identity model, which could become the object of modern social technologies and state policy; d) renew the stylistics and rhetoric of cultural, public and political discussions by encouraging their participants to advance new ideas and initiatives.

Today therefore, the concepts of a "civil society" and a "political nation" are equally present in the public awareness of Ukraine as landmarks of national development, public and political transformations and are often used as mutually complementary components of a single strategy.

Alongside, depending on what the notion of a "civil society" represents, its development can be understood as certain targeted activities which underpin the political nation or as other activities which suggest an alternative strategy for public transformations.

In the first case, a civil society is understood as one of citizens who share certain values and global outlooks, manifest solidary will, take joint decisions and interact based on political institutions. In this context, the development of a civil society and formation of a political nation represent the same process and these two notions only differ by the focus of examining the issue of public self-organization. The notion of a civil society focuses on the social qualities of every citizen and dominating standards and methods for interaction between social actors, while that of a political nation mainly appeals to social integration factors, such as identity, collective self-awareness and political involvement.

Alternatively, when we refer to a civil society as an aggregate of autonomous individuals and their groups that separate themselves or, to a certain extent, oppose from or to the state, the strategies to form a political nation and develop a civil society are formulated differently. They reflect the dialectical unity of integration and disintegration processes, which can always be found in society, but may become a direct contradiction when building a nation. In particular, the strategy for autonomation of a civil society represents an additional factor to delegitimize political institutions formed to maintain the unity of a political nation, such as identity, human rights and obligations, parties, ideologies and bureaucracy.

The principles of this approach suggesting domination of the individual over the collective, private over public, increased care for minorities' social comfort, theory and practice of multiculturalism, pacifism and escapism create generally unfavorable conditions under which to disseminate mobilizing ideas and actually render consensus decisions on key issues related to national development impossible.

The major strategies for the design of the Ukrainian nation represented by concepts of state development, formation of a civil society and a political nation can be qualified as major politico-ideological trends of the modern world, such as etatism (in the wider sense of the word, as used by M. Castells [1], for example), capitalism (as one of the versions of liberalism, which, according to M. Castells, dominates in the globalized trend today) and republicanism.

Contradictory nature of the liberal and national projects in Ukraine

Initially, the project for building democracy in Ukraine was characterized by a certain contradictory nature and suggested that liberalization of forms of public life should have been superimposed on the relatively intensive processes to form a political nation. Such superimposition would have proceeded unhindered had it been the 19th or early 20th century. The classical European modern era really paved the way to establish institutions of a liberal society in national forms.

The national self-awareness at the time emerged naturally during national liberation movements or wars against external enemies accompanied by ideological nationalism, identity unified via education, printed media etc. At the same time, democratic institutions were established during acute internal political conflicts, in the forms of revolutions, civil wars, parliamentary crises, ideological radicalism and political extremism.

However, such a route to democracy is unacceptable in the postmodern era, with its tendency to avoid aggravating contradictions and disapproving of ideological and political extremities. The "vegetarian menu" of the democratic transit of the late 20th – early 21st century, which the West offered to post-Soviet democracies, mainly comprised recipes for denationalization, the development of civil society and installation of political institutions of liberal democracy, which the developed countries had optimized by that time. Accordingly, if classical Western democracies were formed based on centuries of their own experience, post-Soviet countries were offered to lead that way for a short period and based on other countries' experience fixed in the form of institutions, standards and values, which should have been taken for granted.

The experience of Central European countries integrating into the European cultural and political space proves that such a "discipular" approach to building democracy may be successful. The procedures for joining NATO and the EU meanwhile are firstly motivated by bitter experience of Soviet totalitarianism and secondly, by the example of prosperous Western countries remaining at the height of their might and prosperity, allowing the formation of a socio-political order, which generally meets the modern democratic standard. The thesis of the "return" of the respective countries and nations to their original identities, which refer to European civilization, was the ideological motivator behind this process.

Accordingly, social innovation in Central Europe, made under "laboratory" conditions and Western control and support (including direct financing of structural and institutional reforms, investments and building modern infrastructures) was a success.

However, such "laboratory" conditions could not be created for the countries of the former USSR (except the Baltic States). Besides, the liberal projects in these countries, as stated above, had to be implemented under conditions of active development of nations and states. The contradictory nature of the national modern and liberal -democratic postmodern trends, exacerbated by weak "discipular" motivation and the lack of real support for the post-Soviet societies by the West – all these circumstances significantly complicated the process of implementing social innovation in the form of Western democracy in the post-Soviet space. In most cases, it spawned hybrid regimes, which saw authoritarian power meeting the population's paternalistic expectations and democratic institutions functioning in formal "demonstrational" mode. These societies formed in various parts of the modern world (Latin America, East Europe, South East Asia, the Middle East) are described by political analysts as neo-patrimonial. [2]

The path of democratic transit in Ukraine emerged as more complicated. Here, the authoritarian political regime had not managed to consolidate itself, when faced with the activism of the civil society. On the one hand, it was part of a society oriented toward the national modern that stood against the restoration of post-Soviet authoritarianism and, on the

other, a considerable layer of intellectuals and businesspersons oriented toward the postmodern version of liberalism and globalism.

Due to certain historic circumstances, the vector of liberal -democratic motivation in Ukraine coincided with the anticolonial (national liberation) protest, as a return to authoritarianism in domestic policy meant a return to the orbit of the reviving Russian Empire in foreign policy. At the same time, the contradictory nature of the "national renaissance" logics and the requirements of liberal-democratic pluralism (and denationalization) spawned and continues to spawn numerous ideological misunderstandings and political excesses.

One example is the misunderstanding of the identity conflict that accompanies the power crisis in Ukraine, ongoing since 2004. The identification of civil conflict in Ukraine as an inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflict, which the world community faced up to in the Middle East or the countries of former Yugoslavia, is a methodical mistake. Analogies with the conflict between Vendee and Paris during the French Revolution or the North-South conflict during the American Civil War seem more appropriate.

The fact is that it is not archaic identities based on tribal or confessional commonality that are in conflict in Ukraine, but different parts of the political nation in the process of its establishment. The delimitation is not aligned with ethnic features and language identity, but divides the citizens involved in the national building project and the reactionary part of society intending to maintain the status quo or return to the pre-national (imperial) period. Accordingly, the suggestions to settle the Ukrainian conflict based on A. Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy on the Bosnian precedent will result in defeat. The internal conflict here reflects not the country's division, but, conversely, a convincing symptom showing united public awareness and the national organism as such. In particular, this is proved by sociological survey data, which demonstrates the vigorous growth of the intention to maintain the country's unity during this period involving aggravation of political and ideological proneness to conflict. [3]

However, the current crisis involves not only objective preconditions, but also specific perpetrators and political figures that utilized the contradictory nature of the transitional identification of Ukrainians for covetous aims.

It is insightful to compare two indicators, namely the results of the 2002 national parliamentary election and 2004 presidential election respectively. We are particularly interested in the results of political forces that later boosted motivation among adherents to pro-Western and pro-Russian vectors of Ukraine's development. We mean "Our Ukraine" and Viktor Yushchenko, on the one hand and the Party of Regions and Viktor Yanukovych, on the other. Accordingly, in 2002, Yushchenko's party won the support of about 24% of voters in the national multi-mandate constituency, while the then ruling party, "For United Ukraine" Bloc, won only 12%. It is noteworthy that the ruling bloc only won an absolute majority of votes in the Donetsk Region, headed by governor Yanukovych.

Two years later however, support for the two major presidential candidates, Yushchenko and Yanukovych, was almost even (initial voting results of 39.87 and 39.32%, respectively). What happened over two years allowing the support of the authorities and their representative to double during the election campaign? The answer is the sharp change in the accents and political messages of the ruling party. After seeing its obvious loss in the traditional centrist positioning (moderate patriotism, care for the state, focus on everyday needs of people), the headquarters of the future presidential candidate Yanukovych staked on the pro-Russian reactionary electorate by motivating it with a nationalistic threat represented by the pro-Western candidate Yushchenko. It is fair to say that similar mobilizing technology was applied by Yushchenko's headquarters earlier (in 2002), when it turned its candidate from a successful banker and official into the leader of national renaissance.

Accordingly, during the power struggle, the administrative and economic groups utilized the latent conflict of identities associated with the process to form a political nation. In future, the respective corporations would find this motivation lever irresistible, despite of the direct threat to the state, which the escalation of the civil conflict imposed.

From this perspective, the election strategy applied by the Party of Regions on 2012 was a turning point. Despite expectations, the political force of President Yanukovych did not stake everything on civil reconciliation, but on escalation of the conflict, by adopting a scandalous law immediately prior to the election, which actually restricted the official status of the Ukrainian language and in so doing, triggered the forceful resolution of the conflict of identities; implemented in 2013-2014. However, it is reasonable to suppose that Yanukovych and his environment were already determined in this decision, not so much by the logics of the domestic political struggle as by the foreign political obligations before the Russian Federation.

It is safe to say that the identity card was initially played by the oligarchic groups in the domestic political struggle and later became the subject of trade in the foreign political market.

Vector of democratic transformations in Ukraine

The theory of democratic transit, which was mainly formed within the limits of the institutional approach, paved the way for democratic management institutions to adopt a decisive role in transforming non-liberal communities. It proposed a simple solution. As liberal transformations in the West resulted in formalization of the respective standards, values and practices in the form of democratic institutions, an adverse effect could be expected and the emergence of a liberal society based on democratic institutions.

Accordingly, the major democratization strategy and tactics involved establishing non-government structures everywhere and installing democratic standards and procedures formed in the West in the process of its own liberal evolution into the post-Soviet political reality.

However, the end result was unexpected in some respects, resulting in a so-called façade democracy, with a significant portion of actually functioning social standards and principles degraded to demonstratively feudalistic forms. At the same time, however, the institutional frame (or façade) of the political system remained "improved", including with the recommendations of the Venice Commission in mind.

Moreover, client-based, corrupt and demonstratively criminal social structures not only learned to utilize the institutions of representative democracy, but also managed to fit the democratization changes themselves in the context of their own corporate strategies. One example is the permanent processes of "administrative reform", manipulations with the election system and controversial collisions of the domestic "constitutional process".

The evolution of the Ukrainian party system during the period "before and after the Maidan" waxes eloquently on this objective law.

Despite the fact that since 1998 (the year of the first parliamentary election held according to the proportional system), political parties have, in theory, been the main focus of political responsibility, the source of personnel and voicer of people's interests and their roles in the process of constitutional and election law, changes have just been strengthened, although the party system itself has been gradually declining all the while.

This can be proved by a) the rate of distrust at political parties reflected by social surveys; instability of the party system with continuously changing leaders, amalgamations and controversies, political "suicides" and unfriendly "mergers"; c) the tricky, non-transparent and non-democratic structure of parties themselves, mainly built around the public figure of the leader and/or the source of shadow financing.

In terms of political history, the previous period of Ukraine can be characterized as an oligarchic consensus; ruined at a certain stage by an attempt to monopolize power by

Yanukovych's surroundings. Political parties served this consensus in the sense that they a) did not allow "alien" elements not incorporated in their crime families to operate the levers of political and administrative control; b) played a balancing role in resolving periodic conflicts among relevant parties and facilitated the quotation of spheres of interests; c) acted to catalyze social tensions as by-effects of the rule of oligarchs.

The 2014-2015 crisis was distinguished by the high level of dynamics in the Ukrainian political system. The Party of Regions, the most powerful party structure of the entire independence period and considered the ruling party, vanished from the scene and the Communist Party of Ukraine became politically marginal. Earlier, the political project of S. Tihipko "Strong Ukraine" was through, as well as the association of "orange" forces under the "Our Ukraine" brand. "Fatherland", one of the most consolidated political parties, split and lost its leading positions.

As early as during the preparatory periods for the Euromaidan and during the post-revolution period, a short evolution from bloom to waning was experienced by political parties such as "Svoboda" ("Freedom") and the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Freedom (UDAR). Significant crisis phenomena can be observed, even among the victors of the 2014 parliamentary election, the Radical Party of Oleg Liashko, "Samopomich" (Self Reliance) of Andrii Sadovyi and "People's Front" of Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Oleksandr Turchynov.

The situation with the pro-presidential political force, which changes its name every election campaign, is uncertain, as well as with the Opposition Bloc, which intends to strengthen its adherence monopoly of reactionary electorate.

The 2014-2015 crisis resulted in the political domination of "political projects", rather than parties in the classical sense, as major subjects of political competition, projects, which, given the character of their emergence and functioning, balance between business start-up logics and the promotional laws of pop stars.

At the same time, the "market" for political representation itself, i.e. the demand for ideology, leadership and activities, has essentially remained static. The Ukrainian society remains predominantly trammeled by the same ideas, motivations and emotions, as it was throughout the whole period of independence. With paternalism, instability and a partial conflict of identity, the search for influencers, a lack of trust in institutions and expectations of a "powerful hand" remain the stand-out features.

It is also likely to be these relatively infantile features that underpin the efficiency of manipulating technologies that proved their worth in the Ukrainian political market and triggered the current critical state of the party system and system of political representation.

The archaism and narrow-mindedness of social demands and expectations of the electorate are exploited by the political class to obtain a management mandate according to democratic procedures. For this purpose, it utilizes postmodern media technologies, rendered more convincing by mechanisms for archaic violence against the will and awareness of individuals, such as bribes, intimidation and involvement in corporations.

The emergence of new political projects based on the network, virus and other mobilizing technologies, all of which financed by alternative sources, including external, is a consequence of applying such approaches. Advertisements of party brands are becoming increasingly aggressive, party leaders are becoming increasingly glamorous and the environment of "party activists" is becoming more professional; acquiring features of corporate closeness.

Consequently, the evolution of the Ukrainian party system reflects the decay of the system as a means of politically representing the democratic model as such. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that many experts and active citizens seek an alternative to such representation in other public forms, particularly the non-government sector. This alternative is ideologically connected with the civil society concept, which, as stated above, is one of the constants of the

democratic transit awareness. This is why understanding the major vector of transformations is contingent on adding a review of how civil society institutions evolve, which took place simultaneously with the metamorphoses of the development of parties, to our analysis.

Over the past two decades, Ukraine has been consciously implementing a program to "build a civil society", the main mechanism of which was to secure financing for various projects of domestic non-government organizations (NGO) by foreign donor organizations.

The development of liberal democracy in the ruins of totalitarianism seemed to constitute spontaneous self-organization of local forms of the "civil society" on new (liberal, market, competitive, pragmatic) bases, which should have been gradually and collectively grown to form an integral democratic society.

For this purpose, the institutions of civil society obtained external support, which should have given them a decisive competitive advantage in the struggle against "outmoded" social forms, which persist due to the ideocratic, transnationalistic and paternalistic motivation of the population.

However, in Ukraine, just as in most other post-Soviet countries, these expectations proved false, as was also recognized by several Western researchers. [4]

The large-scale transformation project based on the strategy to institutionalize the "civil society structures" de facto spawned a thin social layer of public figures, most of whom were "leaders" of fictitious grantees and only a few of which were actually acting expert centers and separate mobilizing units of liberally oriented youth.

Moreover, despite the main assessment criterion of each project financed by G. Soros, the NED or the NDI of social importance measured as the number of people, whose lives may be influenced by implementing the planned measures, the ideologists of civil society development have achieved almost nothing in the past 20 years. Instead, they merely managed to dominate the public conceptual sphere.

The concept of civil society development was established in the process of permanent recruitment into respective public discussions of domestic intellectuals, for whom adoption opened up new prospects for comprehension of the public reality. Under conditions of bankruptcy of the Marxist ideological scheme, these prospects were expected and in demand. They included a very powerful motivating factor of freedom from previous dogmas and stereotypes.

The effect of liberation was even more virtuous given the emergence of an alternative income source, which was exclusively important to the layer of intellectuals actually deprived of the social order on the part of corrupt bureaucracy and criminalized businesses, which, during the entire period of transformation, monopolized the national distribution of public benefits.

The concept of civil society development thus gained a small, but very influential group of support in Ukraine. This group, retaining a certain autonomy to a greater or lesser extent with regard to "wild" extra-institutional practices, which tended to guide Ukrainian society in the real lives of most members, established its domination among experts and, almost unchallenged, formed a conceptual component of the domestic political discussion.

Consequently, the respective notions defined the generally accepted coordinate grid, which today is experiencing verbalization and comprehension of practically any public problems. From project descriptions and reports on project implementation, popular brochures and lecture notes, these notions became analytical and strategic elaborations, documents on state policies and party programs. It often happened automatically, without any references to original sources, theoretical and methodical discussions, understanding of the internal contradictory nature of concepts and assessment of their connection with the social realm.

Ultimately, it led to the same consequences as the institutional support for the party system. The monopoly of parties in the political sphere is perceived as the same non-alternative

condition for democratic development as is the delegation of the functions of expression and protection of public interests to non -government organizations. However, the first and second functions are implemented de facto in an explicitly unsatisfactory manner and are turning into an means of obvious fraud and manipulation.

Crisis of the democratic project in Ukraine

The most important means of assessing the quality of democracy, Ukraine has degraded, during the period when it was supposed to actively arrange its democratic bases.

One answer may be that the conscious efforts targeting democracy have not yet spawned sufficiently comprehensive consequences. However, it is already clear that instead of adopting progressive social innovation, we have social mutation, which resembles the expected result according to certain exterior features, but which radically contradicts the conception of reform.

There may be several explanations. Firstly, the democratic transit project may be utopic and unrealizable in principle. Secondly, the measures taken may have been incorrect or insufficient. Thirdly, although democracy in Ukraine is being arranged properly, the process includes a crisis component, which we can currently observe.

To prove or deny the first and third versions, we should not so much study the Ukrainian experience in building democracy as generalize the world experience, which is outside the limits of our study theme. Accordingly, we will restrict ourselves to a more detailed analysis of the second version. If it is correct, then either our assessment of the original social environment that should have been reformed or that of the efficiency of the suggested measures must be wrong. Regardless, we should ensure adequate identification of the political life currently established in Ukraine as the original focus of our analysis and subsequent actions.

In our opinion, it is quite reasonable to use a notion to define this form, which has already become ingrained in Ukrainian political discussion and ever more generally characterizes various functional aspects of the authorities, civil society and the mechanisms for political representation. We mean the notion of oligarchy and clearly not the term that Ancient Greek philosophers used to tell forms of government apart. Just like democracy, oligarchy in the modern context includes features of a generalized notion to define the form of the political and economic domination built on estate-corporate solidarity of a limited circle of persons.

The notions of "oligopoly" [5] or "neo-patrimonialism", as used by political observers to define such matters seem more academic and correct. However, the advantage of the term "oligarchy" is in its actual involvement in the language of political struggle and social transformations. This involvement in the interests and strategies of participants in real public processes not only enables the use of the notion of oligarchy as an instrument to study reality, but also as an instrument for transformation of the same.

Accordingly, a modern oligarchy not only denotes the power of a corporatized group built on property superiority. Oligarchy in the Ukrainian political and social context means a situation, when wealth is used to preserve a monopoly of power and power is converted into wealth. In fact, an oligarchy means usurpation of power, when people are deprived of sovereignty and major management facilities are appropriated by an organized group.

An oligarchy means all political and economic life is controlled by several corporations forming a confederacy. They monopolistically distribute financial resources, control authorities, politicians and media. Why is it bad? Because they manage the country in the interests of their groups, not in those of the nation and the difference may be huge.

Oligarchies parasitize the state and ignore the common good, unlike an aristocracy, which Aristotle considered to the optimal form of government, to lead society to prosperity.

How do they manage? Via politicians with power and those who remain in opposition, parliamentarians and officials. Mainly however, using law enforcement agencies and criminals as well as mass media, chief among which is television.

Why is an oligarchy so powerful? Because it controls property and is in a confederacy against citizens. An oligarchy is invincible until consolidated. It can endlessly riffle political packs of cards, nominate new jumping jacks as "tribunes of the people", change places of power and opposition, keep people in tone via political shows and comedies. At the same time, the limits of spheres of influence, schemes of parasitizing on the state and its interests, covering each other's backs and the principle of non-admission of outsiders remain untouched.

This system was established in Ukraine while the government of L. Kuchma was in power and successfully survived the government of V. Yushchenko. The delicate appeal of the leader of the Orange Revolution to "detach power from businesses", which replaced the maximalist slogan "Bandits must be imprisoned", hinted that oligarchies should be removed from state affairs. However, everything actually ended in redistribution of the spheres of influence and even more cynical plundering of national wealth.

The Orange Revolution did not harm the oligarchies, but on the contrary, bolstered their immunity. In particular, it included crisis technologies into its arsenal of self-protection and used these technologies (and the respective managers from among well-known politicians) in future.

Many people consider the Euromaidan an anti-oligarchy revolution. In fact, however, the Euromaidan proved a weapon used by the oligarchy against V. Yanukovych.

By 2013, V. Yanukovych and his "family" had become the greatest threat to the domestic oligarchs. The president acted almost according to the classical Aristotelian scheme – he wanted to monopolize power and replace the oligarchy with a hereditary monarchy. However, lacking both sufficient legitimacy and charisma, he tried to establish tyranny and also give allegiance to the neighboring tyrant.

Oligarchs showed a practically united front against V. Yanukovych and the crisis managers that they hired directed the Maidan's energy into the necessary channel. Finally, the newly-minted tyrant fled and oligarchs restored the status quo.

Moreover, today, at the height of the official "fighting against oligarchy", oligarchies are the sole masters of the country and as strong as never, despite being less consolidated than at the beginning of the second presidency of L. Kuchma, for instance. Almost openly, the groups of oligarchs started struggling for economic assets, law enforcement structures, mass media and power authorization.

The 2013-2014 protest movement and subsequent political changes in Ukraine led to a new coordinate grid, where oligarchic corporatized groups faced the need to coordinate new rules for interaction among each other and with society.

To date, these new rules remain uncertain. On the one hand, there is significant potential to revert to the state of oligarchic consensus, but with a renewed composition of its. This prospect is linked with the character of the Ukrainian political elite, which has not undergone significant changes since the Maidan and instinctively seeks conventional means and instruments for domination. The political technologies that it adopted and accumulated resources (financial, property, administrative, media) practically deprive any neo-oligarchic political alternative, whether a party, public movement or independent media, of any chances.

However, several external factors, objective by nature, hinder efforts to restore the oligarchic model to its fullest extent. Firstly, the low profitability of the socio-economic model attached to the oligarchic consensus and based on corruption and total monopolization. Under conditions of ongoing war and the crisis of the state financial system, this low profitability hinders the very survival of the country.

Secondly, the integration imperative hinders efforts to maintain the oligarchic consensus of the domestic elites. Ukraine exhausted its possibilities to survive off the road of integration processes, ultimately triggering the crisis before the Vilnius summit. Financial, property and legal transparency inevitably manifest themselves in the low competitiveness of our oligarchic groups and break their consensus; an insignificant obstacle for stronger global market players.

Thirdly, the Ukrainian society has already undergone an experience of radicalization and this experience will prompt the active social elements not to adapt to the realities of the oligarchic consensus, but rather to try and destroy them. If we combine this radicalization factor with the external pressures and low profitability of the oligarchic economy, it is clear that no-one will manage to return to the old forms of social dominance in Ukraine.

Republic against Oligarchy

Discourses on possible opponents to oligarchy and capable of overthrowing its dominance usually suggest a "middle class", "fair businesses" and other social groups involved in the market economy mechanisms. In fact, however, the business environment in Ukraine has long been divided among oligarchs' customers and largely functions according to laws of monopolistic and corrupt distribution. Accordingly, this business environment cannot nurture a critical mass of opponents to oligarchs.

You could suggest the potential of "honest security officials". However, the Ukrainian law enforcement sector is so securely controlled by oligarchic groups that only the most wildly optimistic people could consider the emergence of a "Ukrainian De Gaulle" or "Ukrainian Pinochet" to be feasible.

From this perspective, almost no-one counts on professional politicians (particularly deputies), as they themselves are the main imitators of oligarchy-controlled democracy. Until recently, society had certain expectations of independent journalists and the "third sector" activists, but the political season of 2014-2015 seemed to have dashed hopes that a political career and political success would be possible in Ukraine without oligarchs' sanctions.

Today, the oligarchy has demonstrated its unlimited potential to manage public opinion and political processes. It also shows its management methods and mechanisms within the scope of intraspecific competition, which is also where its greatest threat lies.

The fact is that these methods and manipulations are only efficient when concealed, with the state's institutional shell on the surface, while the real levers of economic, administrative, legal and criminal pressure are beyond. When these levers emerge, the charm of façade democracy will vanish, prompting the question of an alternative.

This question will become increasingly persistent until an answer that will satisfy society has emerged.

Only the republic may become an alternative to oligarchy in Ukraine. The republic, as we understand it, denotes a kind of political organisation of citizens, who founded the state, based on common values and generally accepted rules of community life. Although no republic has yet been established in Ukraine, the signs are already emerging amid each spontaneous people's declaration of will and self-organisation. These campaigns are mainly protest-related in nature, but also include an increasingly developed constructive social component. One example is the response of civil society (in the meaning of the republic) to foreign aggression and the need to protect the country. At that time, the protest activities transformed into creation and manifested themselves in numerous volunteers' initiatives.

At a certain stage, the oligarchy learned to utilize civil protests and civil activities as it did for the instruments of representative democracy. However, it is these very civil activities that that represent an alternative to oligarchy, as they bear all elements of the republic.

The republic means an association of citizens, for whom the common good transcends all private or group interests. An oligarchy means an association of people, to whom personal benefits come first and their corporate interest and informal rules of co-existence with similar people come second, while the common good is the sphere of competence of hired speechwriters.

Both oligarchy and the republic use the state and democratic procedures to win, although their might and potential remain unequal. The oligarchy is a machine, which constantly improves its technologies and increases its potential. The republic comprises scattered groups and individuals lacking clear objectives and with still controversial motivations. But oligarchy is gradually exhausting the arsenal of means to support its dominance, while the republic is growing, gaining experience in the struggle and self-organization and increasing the number of its adherents.

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