

HYBRID POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE UKRAINIAN SOCIAL ORDER: THE SUSTAINABILITY PROBLEM, AS SPECIFIED BY MAX WEBER'S THEORY

Yuriy Ruban,
Larysa Komakha,
Oleh Zubchuk,
Igor Tkachenko,
Viktoriya Gura

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
04050, 12/2 Akademika Romodanova str., Kyiv, Ukraine

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Abstract. *This paper focuses on the hybrid nature of the Ukrainian political and administrative process. It argues that the deeply rooted inconsistency of social order in Ukraine was produced by the rapid redefinition of the basic principles of economic and social life in the last two decades, after the fall of the Soviet Union. The lack of legitimacy is the core reason for this hybridity and is a problem of cultural and social values. A legitimacy deficit brings plebiscitary trends to politics and develops instability in legislation and administration. This research applies the potential of Max Weber's theory to explain previous internal political crises and to accentuate the consequences for public administration in Ukraine. A comparative juxtaposition of Weberian concepts and meanings can be used to develop a more refined description of the Ukrainian situation. The results of sociological monitoring validate these research conclusions. Hybridity and plebiscitarianism threaten the values of Ukrainian democracy and impede democratic governance. Only comprehensive political and administrative efforts can ensure the integrity of this order and decrease the risk of far-reaching instability.*

Keywords: *plebiscitarian politics, hybrid politics, social order, Max Weber theory, public administration, bureaucracy in Ukraine, Euromaidan, Russian aggression against Ukraine.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *plebiscitarinė politika, hibridinė politika, socialinė tvarka, Maxo Weberio teorija, viešasis administravimas, biurokratija Ukrainoje, Euromaidanas, Rusijos agresija prieš Ukrainą.*

Introduction

The adjective *hybrid* is used widely in depictions of Ukrainian politics. Hybridity means the specific mixture of contradictory rules that define the decisions of participants in different social,

political, and economic processes. In the same situations, actors may select different normative frames in which to proceed with their interests effectively. This happens because some actors have the privilege of acting not in the main frame of formal legislation but according to rules reserved only to members of special, loosely defined groups. The number of members in the privileged group can be small, as in the case of receiving licenses to exploit oil or gas deposits, or it can be large, as in the case of avoiding taxation. By all means, corruption is an entry ticket to these groups and a guarantee of their wellbeing, but while corruption is sometimes used as a symptom of hybridity, it is not the only reason for it. Hybridity in the Ukrainian context means more, including political instability and slow economic development. Two high-intensity political crises occurred in past decade, causing riots that were eventually resolved, and the Ukrainian economy has failed to approach that of neighboring countries. These facts require a convincing interpretation in the general frame of hybrid politics and governance understanding.

Methodology

In this research, the authors argue that the conceptual apparatus of Max Weber's theory can help to disclose the reasons for hybridity. The authors propose the development of the ideas of social thinkers, aiming at the answers to the following questions: What are the social factors which form the hybridity of Ukrainian politics? In what way do these factors influence politics and bring to life the plebiscitary tendencies in it? What does the aggrandizement of plebiscitarian politics mean for public administration?

We explain the choice of Max Weber's theory based on the relinquishment of the theoretical frame of a preset transition from totalitarianism to democracy, which is based on the internal logic of a market economy. The conclusion of T. Carother's seminal article functions as a summing-up of transitology. "The transition paradigm was a product of a certain time – the heady early days of the third wave – and that time has now passed. It is necessary for democracy activists to move on to new frameworks, new debates, and perhaps eventually a new paradigm of political change – one suited to the landscape of today, not the lingering hopes of an earlier era" (Carothers 2002, 20).

The search for a new paradigm is on the move. Meanwhile, researchers developed the Weberian approach, which repudiates the determinism of a market economy, liberal democracy, human nature etc. One recent bibliography demonstrates significant interest in the development of Weber's heritage (Sica 2004). In Weber's theory, a society, a state, and a bureaucracy are heuristic concepts or ideal types. In our research, according to Max Weber's methodology, the Ukrainian political and social phenomena can be described as ideal types. These phenomena are constructed "by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct (*Gedankenbild*)" (Weber 1994b, 90, italics in the original).

Discussion

A human being lives in a community, but not every community can develop itself into a society. Interests socialize people if they manage to adjust and incorporate them rationally. "A social relationship will be called 'associative' (*Vergesellschaftung*) if and insofar as the orientation of social action within it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement, whether the basis of rational judgment be absolute values or reasons of expediency. It is especially common, though by no means inevitable, for the associative type of relationship to rest

on a rational agreement by mutual consent” (Weber 1994a, 40–41, italics in the original).

Social relations in society form order as a mechanism for interest-joining and adjustment, which promote the spread and repetitiveness of social acts. “Only then will an order be called ‘valid’ if the orientation toward these maxims occurs, among other reasons, also because it is in some appreciable way regarded by the actor as in some way obligatory or exemplary for him” (Weber 1994a, 31). Legitimacy is the obligatory attitude to some patterns of action. Its definition is the “prestige of being considered binding” (Weber 1994a, 31).

Power forms order – order is impossible without it – but power, as an asymmetrical relation between people, is not concentrated only in a state; it transcends the whole of society and calls it into existence. The modern state “possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation, to which the organized activities of the administrative staff, which are also controlled by regulations, are oriented... It is thus a compulsory organization with a territorial basis. Furthermore, today, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it” (Weber 1978, 56). The word “possesses” was here used as an equivalent of the original *beherrschen*, which addresses the Weberian concept of *Herrschaft* and means authoritative leadership more than ownership or domination.

A state is a leader in forming and maintaining social order, but is not identical to it. The coercion legitimacy of the state is a decisive argument in keeping or modifying the order. The state can internally enforce compliance with its legislation and can accept the intervention of its bureaucracy, but that legitimacy is formed by a complex interplay of state authority and powers inside the social order. The role of state authority is to sustain the legitimacy of the order; the role of the different dispersed powers participating in social relations is the same. In other words, their joint efforts ensure its obligatoriness and exemplarity. If they demonstrate an unwillingness or inability to cooperate, the order will collapse, and society and the state will disintegrate following it. The last years of the Soviet Union provide a good example of such an order.

We may build on the consequent chain consisting of interests, power, society, and the state. The state here is an important feature. Rationality in understanding and pursuing interests depends upon the mindset which exists in human consciousness. Mindset-based rationality may be described as the part of the consciousness which follows the influence of values. Any social order should presume differences between the interests of different social groups. Despite that fact that power may compensate for the social order and destroy borders between the interests of social groups, order is still meaningful for all participants. The meaning of order was formed in a specific culture, which endows humans “with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance. Whatever this significance maybe, it will lead us to judge certain phenomena of human existence in its light and to respond to them as being (positively or negatively) meaningful” (Weber 1949, 81).

Social groups have a better chance of ensuring the legitimacy of the order if they are endowed with the power to define the content and the meaning of the cultural-symbolic realm. Empowered social groups are better equipped to defend their interests.

Ukraine had to create an internal social order after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Weberian approach demonstrates the cultural problem which emerged in the newborn country. There can be no argument against the fact that the USSR was a totalitarian state. This state wanted not only to possess social order but also to replace it with a bureaucratic procedure. In the first years of Ukrainian independence, state hierarchies defined rational models of an individual's self-esteem and legitimate interests, and sought ways to ensure them as they had during Soviet times. Power

and a human itself could not exist outside the state – this was the principle of Soviet order.

Such an order was destroyed primarily by the spread of market relations across Ukrainian society. However, market relations do not lead to the creation of a new social order – an order, and a state behind it, still have limited influence over the economic behavior of market participants. These ways of behavior could lead to significant impacts on a social order and a state. The spirit of capitalism came to Ukraine in the most common form of monopoly, which brought the means-ends rationality, incompletely simplifying and unifying the space of economic activity.

We may rely here on the instrumental rationality concept, which may be useful to depict individual profit as the result of the activities of social groups. Such a linkage between individual and group interest influences human social behavior as a reason for gains or losses. Economic rationality is marked by “deliberate adaptation to situations in terms of self-interest” (Weber 1994a, 30) and tends to expand over all human life. However, its “self-consciousness and freedom from subjective scruples is the polar antithesis of every sort of unthinking acquiescence in customary ways as well as of devotion to norms consciously accepted as absolute values” (Weber, 1949; 30). The societal shift to economic rationality presumes the wide spread of a “morally skeptical type of rationality, at the expense of any belief in absolute values” (Weber 1994a, 30).

In the first decade of Ukrainian independence, the most active economic groups in Ukraine quickly accepted the rationality of the capitalist/market enterprise, with its worldview orientated towards private consumption. They quickly cast aside old norms and values, but did not sufficiently supply new ones with the “prestige of being considered binding”. Science, law, and the arts, basics for the development of social values in Ukrainian culture, suffered from a protracted crisis caused by dramatic societal changes. Culture had a limited ability to bring the rationality of these values into a new social order. The lack of new social values produced by culture-limited mindsets created a significant deficit of legitimacy.

The deficit of social values, ideas, and rational behavior was compensated for by the import of specific patterns of social activities adopted from other cultures and societies. However, these rationales failed to become persuasive for a significant part of society in Ukraine. The eclectic competition between new and old rationale and their social grounding is still far from finished.

Inconsistency in social order does not mean the paralysis of social life. People live in different circumstances and orders, and some of them consist of many participants. However, fragmented social orders perform mostly at the local level, where the rationality of interests is seen through the prism of local culture and personal ties. The Razumkov Center, a Ukrainian think-tank, argues that citizens have a comparatively high level trust in local self-governance, while parliament and central executive authorities – with the exception of law enforcement institutions and the armed forces – experience a lack of trust (Razumkov Center 2021).

The Rating Group of the Ukrainian sociological agency argues in its research that there is a prevalent, clear perception of the incapacity of the existing order. It also reveals the perception of the incapability of the state legislature and administration to possess power. The absolute majority of respondents (84%) consider that Ukraine endures a lack of social order. Considering the conclusions of this research, there is an urgent need to install sustainable order, even at the expense of freedom. Only 11% of respondents answered that the country lacks liberties and supported its expansion even if it diminishes the chances for order (Rating Group 2021).

The inconsistency of order transforms itself into hybridity in politics. Different social groups foresee their interests in different rationalities defined primarily by market logic. Those interests stay separate and inconsistent from values of culture. Inclusive and comprehensive social order

and the rule of law are not yet built. The choice between the rule of law and informal norms and relations affects specific social interest and reduces the legitimacy ratio among concerned groups. To achieve their own goals, social groups create informal coalitions that include public officials, representation in public authorities inside the state, and the owners of financial resources out of it. This is the most widely-used way to defend the interests of social groups; where formal or informal norms are used to defend the interests of empowered social groups.

In Ukraine, the phenomenon of the hybridity of public administration means that local and national bureaucracy is divided based on its functionality: one part represents the interests of informal, empowered social groups; and the other one performs its administrative functions formally. This phenomenon also creates a cultural problem. According to Weber, bureaucratization and the influence of modern administration are the effects of influential interests. Prepotent groups pursue the rationalization of accumulation and the distribution of expanding material wealth, and the “existing bureaucratic apparatus is driven to continue functioning by the most powerful interests which are material and objective, but also ideal in character” (Weber 1949, 224).

If the social groups controlling the state see their interests in expanding education, health protection, and social security in society, then the administration will satisfy it. Such a responsibility creates the influence of public administration at different levels of social life. “Only by reversion in every field – political, religious, economic, etc. – to small scale organization would it be possible to any considerable extent to escape its influence” (Weber 1949, 224).

The satisfaction of the previously mentioned interests by private small-scale organizations contradicts the idea of public administration. Such satisfaction diminishes the influence of the administration and its ability to possess order. The weakness of the state in the administrative dimension brings far-reaching consequences for each citizen. “The standard tropes of modern liberal thought – individual rights, for example – do not function as transcendental limits on state action but are rather the product of action by sovereign states” (du Gay 2005, 45). There is no realistic possibility to enforce civil liberties or human rights without centralized and effective public administration capacities. In the current Ukrainian situation, social groups represented in public administration instead concentrate on their private interests. In this way, they privatize the administrative potential of the state. The fading of the formal state promotes its citizens to exercise their rights and aspirations in different social groups. This self-accelerating process was launched after the 2014 Euromaidan, known as the Revolution of Dignity. A weak state enforces groups, and their enforcement weakens a state.

Currently, the state can exercise its leadership and strengthen order, but the problem is that there are two necessary preconditions for this in a democracy. A wide political coalition demanding changes and supported by citizens should arise to control the state, but why has such a pre-condition not occurred in Ukraine? As we may presume, polls indicate the readiness of the population to support such a program. Max Weber’s theory gives us a somewhat pessimistic but nevertheless worthy answer to this question. “The *demos* itself, in the sense of a shapeless mass, never ‘governs’ larger associations, but rather is governed. What changes is only the way in which executive leaders are selected and the measure of influence which the *demos*, or better, which social circles from its midst are able to exert upon the content and discretion of administrative activities by means of ‘public opinion’” (Weber 2007, 271, italics in the original).

Political parties need to consolidate public opinion and to make such cohesive public views decisive forces in political struggles. However, the spirit of capitalism does not omit politics. Political parties have transformed themselves into “party machines” which conduct their activities in an

entrepreneurial manner. “The decisive fact is that this whole human apparatus – the ‘machine’, as it is revealingly called in English-speaking countries – or rather the people who control it are able to keep the members of parliament in check... The person who now becomes a leader is the one whom the machine follows, even over the heads of parliament. In other words, the creation of such machines means the advent of *plebiscitarian* democracy” (Weber 1949, 339, italics in the original).

Political parties need professional politicians to represent voters’ hopes of changing the world and implement an attractive social order. Thus, elections take on a new meaning. “This is not the usual ‘casting of votes’ or ‘election’, rather it is a confession of ‘belief’ in the vocation for leadership of the person who has laid claim to this acclamation” (Weber 1949, 221).

Meanwhile, rationalization goes further. Contemporary social media has sidelined TV and other outdated techniques of transmitting a voice by ramified party networks. “However, a new elite of experts in communication has replaced the political activist and the party bureaucrat. Audience democracy is the rule for media experts” (Manin 1997, 220). The Razumkov Center’s research results (Yakimenko 2017) are persuasive illustrations of the relevance of the Weberian model in the Ukrainian media environment.

There are two ways for politicians and parties to meet the current challenges of social order. On the one hand, politicians conduct trivial politics aimed at legality and developments in everyday law. The media-facing charisma of party leaders sees them compete for ratings and to have their voices heard, while the acclamations of voters bring concurrent groups to power. Everyday politics is a space of coalitions, bargaining, and compromises, but not radical changes in the existing social order.

On the other hand, less than half of Ukrainian voters enjoy this political triviality – the issues of social order make them see a leader’s charisma through the emotive lens of political ideology. Voters believe that a leader’s victory can not only make things better, but can change the order according to their interests. Voters are not ready to abandon their hopes, even if the basics of liberal democracy are the obstacle. Voters sometimes consider the rule of law and the separation of powers as evil tricks to limit the leader’s authority to implement the will of the people, as in the Russoistic *volonte generale*.

Profound changes of order demand extraordinary politics, starting the process of change with the accentuation of the rationality of value and the ethics of conviction. In extraordinary politics, the legitimacy of the old order is extinct, and the new one prevails. The legitimacy of the new social order reorganizes power relations and forms the domination of new groups and their interests.

The people can express their own will – to change the social order, voters have to find a politician and vindicate their charisma and vocation by acclamation, which gives the politician the authority to conduct extraordinary politics. Acclamation creates the exceptional legitimacy that is sufficient to implement the most urgent and decisive steps for the future of the state and of voters. This is a description of the plebiscitary solution to the problem of democracy – the crisis of order needs extraordinary politics.

Two Ukrainian revolutions, in 2004 (Maidan) and 2014 (Euromaidan, or the Revolution of Dignity), display the transitions between ordinary and extraordinary politics. Firstly, the struggle between different interests surmounted the limits of conventional politics in 2004. Theology colored the presidential elections, developing them into peaceful public resistance. Finally, a charismatic leader was victorious, but the winner and the groups behind him achieved a trade-off with rivals, together levelling-down politics into everyday routine. This was the main goal of the

constitutional compromise, which transformed Ukraine into a parliamentary-presidential republic in 2004. However, internal problems of social order remained unresolved and caused social disappointment in the future.

Political tensions again increased in 2013–2014, as a result of President Yanukovich empowering himself with all authority by cancelling the constitutional changes of 2004 and returning to the semi-presidential governing regime. Opposition politicians and civil society activists perceived this as an intention to preserve all of the dysfunctions of the social order. In early 2014, citizens saw the Association Agreement with the EU as representing the possibility for change via the implementation of European values. The unwillingness of President Yanukovich to sign the Association Agreement pushed politics toward the extraordinary, causing the Euromaidan in 2014 and prompting further Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The further developments of the Revolution of Dignity revealed the force of desire to change the social order, while also demonstrating the ability of small but influential social groups to preserve it. The search for compromise began, with the help of international mediation, even before the end of the Euromaidan bloodshed in 2014. The first demonstration of the new trade-off was the limitation of presidential authority and the return to a parliamentary presidential republic in 2014. Victory in the first round of the presidential election by Petro Poroshenko highlighted the charisma of the winner, but it did not supply him with the authority for change. In 2014–2018, the fight against Russian aggression as a reason for delay in these reforms was not persuasive for most citizens.

In 2019, political novice Volodymyr Zelenskyy took advantage of this discontent. The unexpected candidate transmuted personal showmanship and popularity into a landslide victory during the presidential elections in 2019. The winner proclaimed that he would use his support of 73% in the second round as an acclamation of his unlimited authority to implement *volonte generale*. Nevertheless, the agreement of influential groups in the parliament to abolish the constitutional compromise does not seem to be possible. The concentration of all authority did not *de facto* transform Ukraine's politics into that of an extraordinary nature. In 2019–2021 there were no indications of a break with political banality, despite anti-oligarchy rhetoric and constant reminiscences of the “will of the people”. Instead, ordinary politics remained a space for compromise and preference for political allies.

Conclusions

A line may be drawn in the constancy of plebiscitarianism, which revealed a social order crisis amplified by internal and external processes in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Instability in the state and in society continues, diminishing the chances for sustainable development. Public administration was inconsistent and its influence was decreasing; bureaucracy was unable to unite and stabilize the legal and administrative order; and the risks of entering into extraordinary politics existed. Political claims towards unlimited authority with the help of acclamation brought the risk of civil conflict and the decline of the still incomplete Ukrainian democracy.

After the beginning of the brutal military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the order of civil society grew rapidly – even surprisingly, for the Western World. In a matter of days, Ukrainian civil society mobilized numerous informal social groups into a firm, resilient, and consolidated social order, consisting of citizens, local community leaders, volunteers, civil society activists, and entrepreneurs. After ten days of aggression, a social order in Ukraine based on empowered social groups emerged, pursuing only one goal – to save the independence of

Ukraine. National interests supported by the rapid legal decisions of parliament, the government, and the President of Ukraine became the only values, consolidating all social groups.

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Hibridinė politika ir administravimas kaip Ukrainos socialinės tvarkos nenuoseklumo pasekmė: Maxo Weberio teorijos tvarumo problema

Yuriy Ruban, Larysa Komakha, Oleh Zubchuk, Igor Tkachenko, Viktoriya Gura

Anotacija. Šiame straipsnyje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama hibridiniam Ukrainos politinio ir administracinio proceso pobūdžiui. Jame teigiama, kad Ukrainoje yra giliai išsiskilęs socialinės tvarkos nenuoseklumas kuris susiformavo per pastaruosius du dešimtmečius po Sovietų Sąjungos žlugimo, iš naujo apibrėžiant pagrindinius ekonominio ir socialinio gyvenimo principus. Teisingumo trūkumas yra pagrindinė to hibridiškumo priežastis ir kultūros bei socialinių vertybių problema. Teisėtumo trūkumas politikoje skatina plebiscitines tendencijas, o tai daro įtaką įstatymų ir administravimo nestabilumui. Tyrime taikomi Maxo Weberio teorijos principai, aiškinamos ankstesnės vidaus politinės krizės ir akcentuojamos jų pasekmės Ukrainos viešajam administravimui. Lyginamasis Weberio sąvokų ir reikšmių sugretinimas leido sukurti rafinuotesnę Ukrainos situacijos aprašymą. Sociologinio monitoringo rezultatai patvirtina tyrimo išvadas. Hibridiškumas ir plebiscitizmas kelia grėsmę Ukrainos demokratijos vertybėms ir trukdo demokratiniam valdymui. Tik visapusiškos politinės ir administracinės pastangos gali sumažinti toli siekiančio nestabilumo riziką.

Yuriy Ruban (author),
PhD in Technical Sciences, docent at the Public Administration Department at the Educational and Scientific Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1714-5308>

E-mail: yuriy.ruban33@gmail.com

Larysa Komakha (co-author), PhD in Philosophy, professor, Honored Worker of Education of Ukraine, acting director of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8474-372X>

E-mail: l_komakha@knu.ua

Oleh Zubchuk (co-author), PhD in Public Administration, associate professor, head of the Department of Public Administration at the Educational and Scientific Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6480-409X>

E-mail: zubchuk@ukr.net

Igor Tkachenko (co-author), PhD in Political Sciences, docent at the Public Administration Department at the Educational and Scientific Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3029-4578>

E-mail: 1979i@ukr.net

Viktoriya Gura (co-author), PhD in Economic Sciences, docent at the Entrepreneurship Department at the Faculty of Economics at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4870-4037>

E-mail: viktoriya.gura@knu.ua

Yuryi Ruban – technikos mokslų daktaras, Kijevo nacionalinio Taraso Ševčenkos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir valstybės tarnybos Švietimo ir mokslo instituto Viešojo administravimo katedros docentas, Ukraina.

E. paštas: yuriy.ruban33@gmail.com

Larysa Komakha – filosofijos mokslų daktarė, profesorė, Ukrainos nusipelnusi švietimo darbuotoja, Kijevo nacionalinio Taraso Ševčenkos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir valstybės tarnybos švietimo ir mokslo instituto direktorė, Ukraina.

E. paštas: l_komakha@knu.ua

Oleh Zubchuk – viešojo administravimo mokslų daktaras, docentas, Kijevo nacionalinio Taraso Ševčenkos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir valstybės tarnybos švietimo ir mokslo instituto Viešojo administravimo katedros vedėjas, Ukraina.

E. paštas: zubchuk@ukr.net

Igor Tkachenko – politikos mokslų daktaras, Kijevo nacionalinio Taraso Ševčenkos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir valstybės tarnybos švietimo ir mokslo instituto Viešojo administravimo katedros docentas, Ukraina.

E. paštas: 1979i@ukr.net

Viktoriya Gura – ekonomikos mokslų daktarė, Kijevo nacionalinio Taraso Ševčenkos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir valstybės tarnybos švietimo ir mokslo instituto direktoriaus pavaduotoja, Ukraina.

E. paštas: viktoriya.gura@knu.ua