

Party building in the states of Central and East Europe at the end of XX – to the beginning of XXI century

The article describes tendencies of the development and functioning of party systems in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the post-totalitarian period. The author explores general principles and national specific features of the party transformation in the countries of the region. There are being analyzed the differences between the party and political development in the countries of the past “socialistic camp” and the processes of party structuring in the countries of Western and Northern Europe.

Keywords: party system, political crisis, political institutions, process of the election, constitutional reform, integration, European Union.

Партійне будівництво у державах Центральної та Східної Європи наприкінці XX – початку XXI століття

У статті розглядаються тенденції розвитку та функціонування партійних систем країн Центральної та Східної Європи у посттоталітарний період. Досліджуються загальні закономірності та національні особливості партійного будівництва у державах регіону. Аналізуються відмінності партійно-політичного розвитку держав колишнього «соціалістичного табору» від процесів партійного будівництва у державах Західної та Північної Європи.

Ключові слова: партійна система, політична криза, політичні інститути, виборчий процес, конституційна реформа, інтеграція, Євросоюз.

Partyjne budownictwo w państwach Centralnej i Wschodniej Europy pod koniec XX – początkowi XXI stulecia

W artykule rozpatrują się tendencje rozwoju i funkcjonowania partyjnych systemów krajów Centralnej i Wschodniej Europy w posttotalitarny okres. Badają się ogólna słuszność

i narodowe właściwości partyjnego budownictwa w państwach regionu. Analizuje się odmienność partyjny-politycznego rozwojowi państw byłego «socjalistycznego biwaku» od procesów partyjnego budownictwa w państwach Zachodniej i Północnej Europy.

Kluczowe słowa: partyjny system, polityczny kryzys, polityczne instytucje, wyborczy proces, konstytucyjna reforma, integracja, Unia europejska.

Political processes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the late XX century have certain common features. For the region, a common push to the beginning of the comprehensive political, economic and social reforms was the collapse of the “socialistic camp”. In these countries, almost simultaneously, the communistic parties had lost their leverages on the social processes which led to the more or less “soft” transferring of the political power to the democratic forces.

The issue of political transformation and the party building in the Central and Eastern Europe had been studied in the works of V. Burdiak, G. Vanshteyn, J. Halygina, B. Geremek, V. Gorbatenko, L. Zashkilnyak, I. Kresina, M. Kril, B. Makarenko, O. Nikogosyan, T. Orlova, V. Shabunina, R. Schuster, J. Yazhborovska, V. Yarovoy and others.

Relevance of the research topic is in the need of scientific studying and forecasting of the trends of party building in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The comparison of the post-communist and Western European countries’ party systems is important.

The object of the study is the post-communist party systems of Central and Eastern Europe.

The subject of the research is the process of party building in countries of the certain region in comparison with the party political processes trends in other countries of the European Union.

With the aim to justify the significant features of formation and functioning of the party systems in CEE States, the author conducted a comparative analysis of the party-political processes in different geographical parts of Europe. The first group consists of the party systems in France and Germany, the second one includes the Scandinavian countries, the third one includes the relevant systems of the Baltic States, the Visegrad group, and also Romania and Bulgaria.

The French multiparty political system was formed during the time of the French revolution and has come through a long way of the democratic tests. At the same time, additionally to the small party formations, a few large parties as the main political players always acted.

According to what T. Orlova notes, till the border of 1970-1980 years the skeleton of the party system had the appearance of the bipolar quadrilateral. Two of his right sides were represented roughly equal in their strength Rally for the Republic (RFR) and the Union for a Popular Movement (UPM), and the two left - the French Socialist Party (FSP) and the French Communist Party (FCP), which also some period time was equilibrating one another. However, since the early 1980s, there was a significant weakening of the UPM and the FCP.

The quadrilateral was replaced by a bipolar structure - the “right” led by RFR and “left”, led by the socialists. In the late 1980s there began the strengthening of the National Front’s (NF) position – the far-right nationalist by its nature, racist party led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, that was a manifestation of the negative attitude of the ordinary French people to the growing of immigrants’ number in the country¹.

Modern party landscape of the French Republic by its ideological criteria can be defined as the structured one with rather stable high electoral trust to the political parties. Although, the recent time there is a certain electoral support for the extremist nationalist parties in France that can be explained as the rejection of the multiculturalism policy by a considerable number of Europeans. But the long competition between “right” and “left” remains unchanged in the political space.

In Germany after the Second World War a democratic political system began to form. Legal status and mode of political parties’ activity were enshrined in the norms of the Basic Law of FRG form 23 may 1949. According to the regulations of the 21st article, the parties ensure the formation of the political will of people and can be freely created. Their internal organization must conform to the democratic principles. Also there was provided the public control over the sources of formation and usage of party’s funds and property².

Despite the lack of the democratic traditions of the political parties’ functioning similar to the French party system model was formed in Germany in the early 1950-ies. On the “right wing” there act the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), the “left wing” is represented by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SDP). Exactly these parties are considered to be the main players on the national electoral races. Among the other parties participating in the political process there are the Free Democratic Party (FDP), Alliance 90 / “The Greens”, the Left party, and they inferior to them by their number and weight in public-political life.

Common to France and Germany features of the party political process over the last 50 years are the following:

- the domination of the “political arena” of the two major political parties of ideological persuasion (“Right” – RFR in France and CDU / CSU in Germany; the “left” – the French Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party of Germany);
- a clear distinction between the ruling party and the opposition while forming a government (the coalition government forms as the exception of the general tendency);
- the high level of public confidence to the political parties (almost until 2010);
- the strengthening of the nationalistic and radical parties in the early 2000-ies while maintaining the trends of the party bipolarity;

¹ Орлова Т. В. Сучасна політична історія країн світу / Т. В. Орлова – К., 2013. – 677 с. – С. 94.

² Конституції зарубіжних держав: Учебное пособие / под ред. В. В. Маклакова. – М., 2009 – 572 с.

- a gradual rapprochement between the ideological platforms of the “left” and “right” around such the fundamental values as: freedom, justice and solidarity, priority of the rights and freedoms of human, necessity of social protection of citizens, ideas of a socially oriented market, decentralization of state power.

Common features of French and German party systems allow us to conclude about the existence of the classical Western European model of party political development.

The Scandinavian countries demonstrate another way of party political development, those also have common features. Political parties in these countries started to be created in the early XIX century, when the unions of the national intelligentsia appeared; those set the cultural goals of the whole-national character. From the very beginning of their existence, the political party had been focused on the ideology consolidating society based on the values of the Protestant religion in its Lutheran form.

The specific of the Scandinavian social system, according to T. Orlova, is in that the population of these countries is fairly homogeneous in its religious and ethnic characteristics, small in quantity, cohesive and such that trusts its representatives in the local bodies, trade unions and Parliament. Scandinavians are distinguished by, on the one hand, the greater individualism, and, on the other hand, by a huge trust to the state, conformity and ability to self-control, that increases the controllability of the society³.

One of the features of the Scandinavian model of the political process in the XX century is a long domination of the social democratic parties on the “Power Olympus” even if these parties do not get the absolute majority of mandate in the Parliament – Folketing (includes 8-10 representatives of the parties), the Storting (6-7 parties) and the Riksdag (5-6 parties). That means, getting the relative majority of votes on the parliamentary elections, the Social Democrats initiate the formation of a coalition government. Thus the management of the Executive power stays in their hands. Such a model identified by stability and efficiency is defined as “consensual democracy” in the political science. The Scandinavian model is characterized by an absence of political crises and fierce competition of political parties and compromise character in political decisions.

Comparing the development of party systems of France and Germany and the Scandinavian countries, it should be stressed that these states had been forming in the “area” of Western civilization, but in different “law families”. I.e., on the one hand, there are common spiritual values (human rights, private property, and competitive economy), those play a role of “the Outlook Foundation” for the nations of these countries. On the other hand, in Western European and Scandinavian countries the different models of political culture have developed. If in the political competition for the French and German party structures the strict adherence to the requirements of the regulations is the most important, for the Scandinavians, historically,

³ Орлова Т. В. Сучасна політична історія країн світу / Т. В. Орлова – К., 2013. – 677 с. – С. 136.

the political customs are on the first place. Law for them has a subsidiary nature. Such a feature of the “Scandinavian political mentality” is associated with the influence of English common law (including unwritten constitutional) on the formation of the Scandinavian (mixed) law system. Exactly this circumstance allows us to understand the difference of the party-political engagement practices in Western and Northern Europe. Civilizational- legal factor has a direct influence on the party-political communication, the mechanisms of the political interests’ articulation and an algorithm for political decisions making.

The formation of democratic political party systems in the States of Central and Eastern Europe was built on the absolutely different historical conditions. After the overthrow of the communist regimes in the early 1990-ies the countries of the region stood on the path of democratic transition.

As it was noted by I. Kresina, the specific character of the political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe is primarily due to the common for them conditions of entering into a transit after the collapse of the socialistic system.

Firstly, before the beginning of the political transformation, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe belonged to the group of not the most economically developed countries of the world, but they were rather developed in comparison with other states of the former socialistic camp.

Secondly, before the Second World War, these countries had already the experience of development in conditions of a democratic statehood.

Thirdly, the geopolitical position of the Central and Eastern Europe countries between Western Europe and Russia gave them the opportunity to observe directly the advantages and disadvantages of both political systems.

Fourthly, having the tragic experience of the statehood and independence loss, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe always aspired to become the full European States with the aim of achieving the high living standards⁴.

In the late 1980-ies, CEE countries had different “starting conditions” for the democratic changes. If in Hungary the process of economic liberalization and political democratization began in the early 60-ies of the XX century, in other countries of the region an authoritarian regime with all its manifestations in political, party, economic, social spheres was “mothballed”.

For example, the socialistic model of the Romania political system was built on the basis of the Constitution of 1965, with numerous subsequent changes and additions. Legally, the Constitution enshrined the classic usurpation communist-partocratic Republic and forbade the political pluralism, activities of any effective political opposition, market economic relations in society.

⁴ Цветков В., Кресіна І. О., Коваленко А. А. Сучасна трансформація і державне управління в Україні: політико-правові детермінанти: Монографія / В. В. Цветков, І. О. Кресіна, А. А. Коваленко. – К., 2003. – 496 с. – С. 24.

Analyzing the political processes in Bulgaria, V. Burdiak notes that socialistic Bulgaria was generally considered as passive, the only country which had no crisis in relations with the Soviet Union. The 35-year reign of T. Zhivkov led to an almost complete political immobility of citizens. USSR consistently supported Bulgaria, significantly much stronger than the other CEE countries. In the 70-80-ies, the close economic and political ties of NRB and USSR inhibited all anti-government sentiments, dissatisfaction with the regime and the country had no experience of dealing with it. For decades the Bulgarians dutifully perceived the political reality and showed no protests or opposite political activity as other CEE countries' citizens. There were not any uprisings, insurrections, rebellions, political strikes or student demonstrations. The development of the rebuilding processes in the country was hampered by the conservatism of T. Zhivkov and the communist party nomenclature of BKP⁵.

In Slovakia at the moment of the independence declaration (the creation of new state in a result of the legal collapse of Czechoslovakia) there was no developed tradition of political culture. Despite the 20-year period of democratic development between the two world wars, until the mid-twentieth century it has been maintaining the nature of the agricultural country with low level of political engagement of the population and not enough mature civil society. Transformation of the Slovak society into the industrial happened only in the period of the 50-60-ies of the XX century in the conditions of the communist regime⁶.

The Baltic countries, being a long time "under the yoke" of the USSR, also had only a "historical memory" of democratic processes.

Before the post-communist countries in the early 1990-ies there appeared the task of restructuring of the monocratic states into the polycratic ones. It is better to note that the polycratic state should be seen as a set of specific political and socio-economic components. Among these components are the dominance of the powerful middle class in the economic system, political pluralism, decentralization of power. Almost all the CEE countries have chosen the noted path of the polyarchy.

Party political processes in the countries of Central-Eastern European region have common features.

1. In the early 1990s there was the rapid growth of the political parties' number. Ways of formation: the associations of like-minded (creative intellectuals representatives) into the political party; selection of new parties of previously existed; the parties' formation of from civil movements; the restoration of old, "historical" parties.
2. In some countries the prohibition of totalitarian ideologies is proclaimed. Like the norm of the 13th article of the Polish Constitution prohibits the political parties, seeking in their programs to the totalitarian methods and practices of fascism, nazism

⁵ Бурдяк В. І. Політичні трансформаційні процеси в Болгарії у посткомуністичний період / В. І. Бурдяк. – К., 2010. – 56 с.

⁶ Musil J. Czech and Slovak Society / J. Musil // The End of Czechoslovakia. – Budapest: CEU Press. – 1996. – S. 77–94.

and communism. The anti-totalitarian policy in the “young democracies” of CEE led to the transformation of the communistic parties into the socialistic.

3. The main struggle for seats in the parliament happens between democratic forces and the socialists.
4. Political parties have gone the way from a state controlling to a free development.
5. Since the late 1990-ies in the CEE countries the democratic parties of “new generation” (Party of the Hungarian coalition) and the parties of “third way” (National movement of Simeon II in Bulgaria) have been created through the merger of several parties. Mainly, these parties were formed “for the bright personalities” and arose as a challenge to the General disappointment in the party political processes.
6. In the early 2000-ies the radical nationalist parties activated (“Ataka” in Bulgaria, “Jobbik” in Hungary, “For the great Romania”), those take part in the activities of the parliaments and set an anti-European platform.
7. In the end of the first decade of the XXI century there is a significant decrease in the number of political parties and low level of electoral trusting to them (regardless of the ideological direction). The dissatisfaction among people dues to the excessive partyzation policy and political clientism.
8. Party systems in the CEE States are unstable, leading to parliamentary crises. But at the same time the main direction of the party programs convergence remains the deepening of the European integration processes.

Comparing the party political processes in the countries of Western Europe, Scandinavia and Central-Eastern European region, it is necessary to pay attention to their essential differences. If the West European model of party-political communication is a competitive structured-ideological, the Scandinavian model is usually consensual, the party systems in post communist States of Central and Eastern Europe should be defined as ideologically unstructured and focused on the leader’s personality. Such a model is characterized by instability and the inability to articulate effectively the interests of the different social groups and mobilize resources for the sustainable functioning of the state mechanism. Logically the question arises how countries in the region, despite the incompleteness of the processes of the party-political organization, managed to achieve significant results in building polyarchical state? The answer is in the plane of the long European Union’s relations with these countries, since the mid 1990-ies. Exactly these political, administrative and economic requirements of the EU’s Institutions to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the gradual entering the latest into the “single European family” was the “driving energy” of a successful democratic transition. There happened a kind of “pulling up” of the national political institutions till the standards of the European Union.

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