

Place and role of the Eastern European countries in the world political framework

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Abstract: The states of the Eastern European region have great geopolitical, geo-strategic and geo-economic interest to the entire international community. The political and economic transformations in the Eastern European countries had systemic character. The reforms in the sphere of economy, politics and even ideology were interdependent. Obvious presence and great volume of the external factor of influence on countries of Eastern Europe definitely determines the specificity of their development; it's impossible to ignore this external influence upon investigation of political regime transformation mode in these countries. Moreover, the external factor of influence is the principal factor in the process of formation and in the process of transformation of political regimes and entire political systems in countries of Eastern Europe.

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Introduction

Until recently the leading analysts in the field of geopolitics have debated whether the inland power is more important than sea power and what region of Eurasia is vital important in terms of the entire continent control. Harold McKinder, one of the most outstanding geopoliticians, at the beginning of this century became the initiator of the discussion resulted in his concept of Eurasian “supporting territory” (which, as insisted, should include the entire Siberia and the most part of Central Asia) and later – conception “of the heart” of Central and Eastern Europe as the vitally important base for dominance over the continent. He popularized his concept of “heartland” by famous aphorism:

Who rules the Eastern Europe, possesses the Heart of land;

Who rules the Heart of land, possesses the World Island (Eurasia);

Who rules the World Island, possesses the world [1].

Eastern Europe is a part of Europe characterizing its eastern territories. As a term, Eastern Europe has no strict definition and clear boundaries. At the present day, according to the UN definition, Eastern Europe includes the following states: Belorussia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldavia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Czech Republic [2].

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in the process of formation and in the process of transformation of political regimes and entire political systems in countries of Eastern Europe.

Initial belonging of countries of this region to the European civilization and European political culture stipulates for availability of such internal factors of transformation which may not exist in countries with other civilizational basis. First of all, this is indestructibility of civil society and its permanent influence on the political process. These are original historical traditions included into the structure of European political culture. This is the special state of mass consciousness affecting the perception of liberal and communist ideologies in different periods of history of countries of this region, and other factors [3].

The essence of Eastern Europe was dictated in VIII century by its resistance to geographical localization and description. In 1769, for example, military actions between Russian army and lordly confederates changed political boundaries of two countries three years prior to the official partition of Poland. In VIII century cartography did not elaborate the competent description of Eastern Europe. Concept of the existence of Eastern Europe was as interim region between Europe and Orient [4].

Main part

Countries of this region have many common things in historical and social-economic development. After the Second World War they were united by the belonging to socialistic economic system that stipulated for stable economic relations with each other and USSR. Majority of these countries participated in the Council for Mutual

Economic Assistance and Political Block of Warsaw treaty.

In 1988-1990s USSR transited to the policy of "new political thinking" resulted in the denial of interference to the affairs of Eastern Europe and crash of socialism. August putsch in Moscow and the consequent change of the state system in USSR in 1991 finally liquidated the possibility to build socialism by the Soviet example. Eastern European region restored geopolitical independence. New period in its history began [5].

Democratic "velvet" revolutions in Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, popular revolt (revolution) in Romania, unification of German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany, dissolution of Yugoslavia. Revolutions in Eastern Europe were democratic and anti-totalitarian. Except Romania and Yugoslavia, change of authority was peaceful.

During 1990-1992s radical reorganization of political and legal system was in all Eastern European countries. The key objective of constitutional construction was formation of state similar to the most mature, accepted samples of legal democracy. New state system was based on the political pluralism, publicity, multiplicity of parties, separation of powers, strengthening of individual rights. It became clear in 1990s that implementation of the idea of "return to the bosom of Western civilization" was more difficult than it was supposed. It was understood that interests of Eastern Europe correspond not to its absorption by western economic and military structures, but real integration to the world society securing its own cultural, economic, geopolitical originality, strengthening of internal relations in the regions. It shall be mentioned the interaction of countries of so called Visegrad Group on which basis Central European Free Trade Zone was established (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, since 1995 - Slovenia). Eastern European countries are active participants of other integration associations – Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Council of States of Baltic Sea, Cooperation of Carpathian regions.

The system changes that began in the Eastern European countries in the late 1980s were one of the most important and significant world events at the turn of the century.

Carrying out the political and socio-economic transformations in the Eastern European countries were preceded the weighty preconditions due to a number of external and internal factors. The process of transformations of the Eastern European countries was preceded by a number of features, herewith the categories of internal factors include geographical, cultural, historical and economic, the

external factors include an influence of intergovernmental organizations (in particular, the requirements associated with entry of these organizations), as well as external financial support [6].

In turn, among the factors that influenced the process and the dynamics of political, economic and social transformations, we can emphasize the changes in political and economic spheres, as well as internal changes, turned up within the boundaries of states, and accordingly, the external – resulted from the influence of the international situation.

The profound political and economic changes in the Eastern European countries caused the fierce disputes in the scientific community with respect to expediency of the success or inefficient arrangement and inconsistency of the implemented reforms. In the early 1990s there were two scientific concepts, trying to prove the continuation of political democratization in the conditions of inevitable deterioration of the economic well-being of the population.

The first concept called as "a model of incompatibility" consists in such assumption that with increase of freedoms the citizens will respond to the economic problems and social disparity by mass protests and resistance to the reforms [7].

The second concept called as "a model of compatibility" is based on the assertion that democracy could vice versa conciliate the political problems caused by the economic difficulties. Advocates of this approach believed that economic difficulties could threaten the market reforms only in a "shoddy democracy" [8].

Only with time it was incontestable that the "model of compatibility" had the right to exist, provided that the national governments in the course of decision-making guided by the principles of maximum political openness of national interests protection and providing the social protection of citizens at the state level.

For the first few years of reforms all the Eastern European countries have run along a difficult path of trials and errors. In the first place it is due to a certain ideological vacuum of the postrevolutionary 1989s.

The events are set so fast that the reformers did not have time to develop theoretically the possible algorithm of the implementation of reforms, determine the financial resources of preserving stability of the transition period, as well as first priority and sequence of the reforms in various areas of public life etc.

No marvel the fact that the foundation of a new political and economic course has been offered to the regional countries by Western neighboring

countries and was accepted as a guideline for action by all the Eastern European countries even at the different stages. For that reason the practice of political restructuring was in general very similar: the common trends of development of individual countries and a vector of the driving forces evolution and dominant processes in the public consciousness.

Conclusion

Common features of the political transformation for the Eastern European countries of the region were the following:

- 1) elaboration and adoption of new national constitutions, laying the foundations and principles of democratic governance, separation of powers for: legislative, executive and judicial;
- 2) depoliticizing the army, law enforcement bodies, public safety establishments;
- 3) the mass participation of the population in the first free elections;
- 4) establishment of multi-party system, the foundation of which were political parties on the basis of civil movements of social times;
- 5) formation of pluralistic policy elites;
- 6) fight of presidents for the expansion of their powers and strengthening the verticals of the president power, which was not crowned with success;
- 7) establishment of self-government structures at the local level.

Assessing the common features of the Eastern European constitutions, one of the most important trends in the political transformation of the region should be a conscious choice in favor of a parliamentary republic and a rejection of the presidential government.

Executive power in the Eastern European countries is presented by governments, the legislative power – by the Parliaments of the republic. Today, the Parliament approves the government composition, controls their activities, and adopts national legislative acts and the laws of Europe.

The restriction of the rights and functions of the president can be considered as one of the essential features of the democratic development of the countries. The strong presidential power in fragile states, which transitional societies are, can enhance the authoritarian tendencies, threaten the entire democratic process. A logical step is the introduction of a parliamentary-presidential form of government with substantial limitation of executive privilege. All the political practice of state-building in Eastern Europe conclusively witnessed it.

Problems of party construction in the Eastern European countries, in turn, can be divided into three groups. The first group includes problems

that are caused by the struggle between the governing center-right coalition and the left-wing opposition, which are considered to be the most typical for every democratic country.

The second group includes problems caused by the struggle within the governing coalition. The third group includes problems of the struggle within each party associated with the initial period of its establishment as a structural unit in the policy. The process of state-building has influenced the course of this struggle, which had an effect on the formation of new political structures in the Eastern European countries.

It is important to note that in addition to the urgent need for political and systemic transformations in the second half of the 90s of the XX century, the region of the Eastern Europe had two strategic objectives that were considered in the conjunction - it is a modernization and restructuring of the economy according to the modern Western model.

In general, the underestimation of the problems of technological backwardness of the region was typical for the Eastern European countries. Today, this issue takes one of the main places among long-term prospects of Eastern Europe. The difficulties of the regional countries with regard to finding a new place in the modern system of international division of labor are resulted from technological backwardness.

However, it is impossible to assess expressly the current state of the Eastern European transformation: it should consider the specific economic transformations of the region as a whole and each country in particular. Two points of view on assessment of the current stage of the Eastern European transformations are formed. The first point of view is based on the fact that the regional countries have successfully passed the first stage of economic reforms, laid the foundation for a gradual compliance with the western standards.

Scheme of phases of regional economic transformation can be indicated as follows:

1st phase – stabilization (5 years), is characterized by the price liberization, completion of socialization of production and systemless privatization;

2nd phase – reformation period (5-10 years), on results of which the banking system was formed, the small and middle privatization and demonopolization were conducted, a new class of owners and entrepreneurs is appeared;

3rd phase – stable increase [9].

The second view consists in interpretation that the most part of this phase is taken by the transformation crisis. Thus, the regional countries

came only to the creation of conditions for future transformation, which obviously would last more than one decade.

There are many such efforts in order to foresee the main vector of the Eastern European development in the future. But, of course, there is no ideal model, because, firstly, it is difficult to foresee all the quick-changing objective and subjective factors, and secondly, each of the regional countries is individual in its own way.

However, a lot of problems remained in the economic sphere of reforming, by the way in political one. This may be due to the fact that for the implementation of social and political reforms, first of all, the necessary precondition is required for the political will of the new Eastern elites, in case of its absence the unrelenting pressure from the outside is required. For implementation of economic reforms, first of all, the time and finances are required.

Resume

The reforms in the field of economy and policy influenced actively each other. Achievements or failure in one sphere were soon reflected on the status and development of others. From the point of view of the historical process the systematic political and socio-economic changes were carried out fast enough. Among the most important unsolved problems of transformations of the Eastern European region should be noted the following:

1) in the economic sphere: keeping the transformation recession status (systemic crisis of transition economies, for example in such countries as Bulgaria and Romania); the lack of foreign direct investments, hindered the economic development of the regional countries; the unsolved problems of restructuring the economy, particularly, preservation of so called «bad» production (metallurgy, base chemistry, extractive industries);

2) in the political sphere: creation of a new type of democratic regimes (so called unliberal democracy with its unripe civil society, weak and dependent mass media, undeveloped local government), strengthening the positions of the extreme right-wing, populist parties with the programs of the new "cleaning up the society from

spots of the communist past" (laws on lustrations, the ban against the communist parties activity, etc.) [10].

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