ДЕМОКРАТИЧНА КОНСОЛІДАЦІЯ ТА ПОЛІТИЧНІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

Maxim Rozumny,
Doctor of political science, Professor,
Kyiv Metropolitan Borys Hrinchenko University
ORCID: 0000-0001-9930-2989; email: rozumnyi@gmail.com

DETERMINANTS OF DEMOCRATIC MODEL CHOICE IN NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES

At the beginning of the period of democratic transformation, the political systems of the former Soviet republics had a unified institutional base which they had inherited from the half-ruined empire. Apart from this, the introduction of democratic principles also took place within the framework of a unified approach formulated in the early 1990s by Western conceptions of democratic transition. The democratization processes that began in the former Soviet republics after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 led to radically different results. The thesis that historical and cultural prerequisites have a decisive influence on the choice of a democratic model is confirmed mainly by the experience of building democratic political systems on the territory of the former USSR. Some countries immediately abandoned the path of democratic development, others no less resolutely adopted the political model of liberal democracy, others balanced between these positions for decades, and a fourth group established stable authoritarian regimes.

It is not possible to explain the variation in outcome only by means of cultural differences and situational factors; the thesis about the decisive role of prerequisites for the successful establishment of democracy therefore will need clarification. Attention should particularly be paid to the fact that the complex socio-political transformations of the post-Soviet space included not only the liberalization of regimes, but also the processes of building new independent states. At the same time, most of these countries were inclined to reproduce one or another model of the state inherited from the preceding historical period. The author's assumption is that this difference is the most significant in the question of the prerequisites for building democracy. According to this criterion, the newly independent states can be classified as 1) post-imperial regimes, 2) post-colonial regimes, and 3) anti-imperial republican state projects.

Key words: democracy building, post-Soviet states, post-imperial, post-colonial.

Introduction. Historically, democracy, or what we now understand as democracy, has developed in several countries as a result of their long internal evolution in the wake of liberalism and republicanism. But there are very few such countries on the world map. In fact, a liberal-democratic model developed on the basis of local political tradition only in the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. All other countries of Europe and the rest of the world endorsed the principles of democratic government at a given stage of their evolution under the influence of external factors of modernization and dependence on the centers of world capitalism.

The third wave of democratization, according to S. Huntington (the fourth wave according to F. Schmitter), created the outlines of political reality, which is currently considered by the annual Democracy Index. This democracy level assessment reflects the results of the democratization processes and the accompanying processes of anti-democratic reversals during the last 70 years.

Several indicators that characterize existing political institutions and practices rank the states according to the degree of their democracy.

The best-known indices of democracy are published annually by the British private company *The Economist Group* (who also publishes the weekly *The Economist*), which was founded in 1941 by the international non-profit organization *Freedom House,* funded largely by the US State Department.

Freedom House distinguishes between indices of freedom and indices of democracy, although the imposition of these criteria on the assessment of a particular political regime in a particular country shows a close correlation.

In the global ranking of freedoms, countries, and territories (unrecognized states) are divided into free, partially free, and unfree (Freedom House, 2022). According to the criterion of

democracy, these same countries are on a scale between a consolidated democracy and a consolidated authoritarian regime. Intermediate positions are semi-consolidated democracies (Central European countries) and transit or hybrid regimes in which elements of democratic governance are combined with remnants of authoritarianism.

The following institutional elements of a political regime are assessed:

1. Competitive multiparty system.

2. Equal and universal suffrage.

3. Free and fair elections, which are held regularly in accordance with established norms and show no signs of falsification.

4. Possibility of access to voters of political parties and candidates through the media and through public campaigns.

The presence of all these elements makes it possible to identify a regime as an electoral democracy. To qualify as a "liberal democracy", suffrage and freedoms must be complemented by a wide range of civil liberties.

It is evident that the focus of the assessment is mainly on procedural issues of government formation, and the degree of regime liberalism is determined by the status of the individual in public space (including the degree of their independence from prevailing social values or ideas).

But does this process of spreading democracy display any regular features? When we look at the map of the world through the "freedom indexes" prism, we notice that the most successful establishment of liberal norms, and consequently the building of democratic institutions, occurred in:

A) the former British colonies (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, South Africa),

B) Asian countries under the military and political control of the United States (Japan, Republic of Korea),

C) the countries of the European Union,

D) Latin American countries that have gone through several stages of democratization (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile) and

E) many small and island states, most of which have adopted the British Westminster political model in their postcolonial period.

The geographical location, dominant religion, and racial or cultural-civilizational affiliation are not decisive in this regard. The only exception to this rule is the Islamic world. In fact, no Muslim country recognizes existing indices of democracy as completely free and/or democratic.

This suggests that the main prerequisite for successful democracy building is the inclusion of a country and its political elite in the structure of the *capitalist world-system* (I. Wallerstein) formed in the postwar period around the Euro-Atlantic community.

Main studies and publications. Why is democracy successfully established in some countries but not in others? Why do some nations seek freedom (in the sense of liberal ideology), while others are not attracted to this state? What are the roles of cultural features and historical traditions in the process of democratization? Do economic factors, social structure, demography, and character of the elite matter at all?

These issues have been considered in many works on the theory of democratic transition, as well as in numerous studies of specific cases of democracy-building in different parts of the world.

The collapse of communism in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, which took place between 1980 and 1990, raised questions about the logic of democratization in terms of practical guidelines. This historical challenge prompted many Western intellectuals to make important theoretical generalizations and develop strategies for building democracy. The dominant approach among Western scientific and expert opinion during this period was transitology.

The transitology approach was established in post-communist political science in the early 1990s (D. Rastow, S. Huntington, H. Linz, F. Schmitter, G. O'Donnell, A. Przeworski). It paved the way for the formation of a theoretical and technological basis for democracy building in the post-Soviet countries and in the Central and Eastern Europe region. It was endorsed, furthermore, by Western governments and non-governmental foundations in their endeavors to support democracy.

As the third wave of democratization (S. Hantington) spread to Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere in the 1990s, promoters of democracy extended this model as a universal paradigm for understanding democratization (Carothers, 2002, p. 6).

The transitologists considered, essentially, the "technique" of transition to democracy itself, focusing primarily on the behavior of political elites, their ability to compromise, their ability to reach agreements on the "rules of the game", and awareness of the ruling groups of the content and goals of democratic reforms.

Depending on the type of elites and their behavior, J. Munk and K. Leff justify the possible existence of nine forms of democratic transition: revolution from above, revolution from below, reform from above, perestroika / post-perestroika, "velvet revolution", reform from below, reform through the gap below, reform through entanglement, and reform through compromises (Munk, and Leff, 1997, p. 345).

Nevertheless, the path of all transformations, in this theory, has a certain optimal invariant, the search for which is the main subject of transitology studies.

This approach reflects the belief widespread among Western scholars and politicians that democracy is a universal model of governance that can be standardized and applied to any environment. "It naturally follows that political democracy must mean the same thing irrespective of the state or part of the world where it is examined. East, West, North, South – economically developed or less developed country – it makes no difference to how the *concept* (and thereby our dependent variable) is to be defined. On the other hand, here and there on the map the *requisites* for the application of democracy may be different" (Hadenius, 1992, p. 35).

The results of democratization reforms turned out to be quite different in different countries. The question therefore arises, are the differences in the results of democratization projects the result of certain "mistakes" or shortcomings of the reform processes themselves, or were they determined by some objective circumstances? Such circumstances could include, in particular, historical, cultural, and institutional prerequisites, as well as the situation in which the transition to democracy occurred.

The concept of democratic transition was aimed at finding a universal path to democracy. Its theoreticians and practitioners from among Western donor organizations promoted a specific algorithm of reforms which was supposed to function regardless of the prerequisites and situational factors of each specific country.

At this time, the question regarding the necessary preconditions for the transition to democracy did not take a central place in the theorizing. The issues of objective conditions and the necessary preconditions for the transition of a country to democracy had receded into the background.

A thesis advancing the non-importance of taking the specific historical, cultural, and social conditions in which democracy is built into account had even become widespread. Some of the early works in transitology also reflected the "no preconditions" view of democratization, a shift within the academic literature that started in 1970 with Dankwart Rustow's seminal article, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model" (Carothers, 2002, p. 8).

However, this assumption was not confirmed by the practice of democracy building. Thomas Carothers stated that the various assumed component processes of consolidation – political party development, civil society strengthening, judicial reform, and media development – almost never conformed to the technocratic ideal of rational sequences on which the indicator frameworks and strategic objectives of democracy promoters are meant to be built. Instead, chaotic processes of change prevailed that went backwards and sideways as much as they went forward, with this not occurring in any regular manner (Carothers, 2002, p. 15).

This leads to the conclusion that the cultural, social, and historical preconditions, which differed in each country, must have had a decisive influence on the results of democracy construction.

Since "preconditions for democracy" were enthusiastically banished in the heady early days of the third wave, a contrary reality – the fact that various structural conditions clearly weigh

heavily in shaping political outcomes – had been working its way back in, Carothers noted (2002, p. 16).

However, the theory of democracy, which was actively developed in Western political thought during 1960-2000, includes approaches and concepts that are oriented towards a more careful attitude to the prerequisites for democratic transitions than classical transitology.

The experience of building democracy in the countries of Latin America, Southern Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region (the second wave of democratization, according to Huntington) has confirmed the importance of considering the circumstances in which a transition to democracy takes place. The initial conditions for building democracy mean, on the one hand, the possibility of establishing a democratic standard of government in a certain community, and on the other hand, pointing out the obstacles that stand in the way.

Some of these prerequisites are described in a number of academic sources. A general list of these contains the work in particular of A. Fisun, who considers the situation of democratic transition in terms of a set of factors (economic conditions, modernization, the existence of a nation-state, civil society, religious and civilizational affiliation, international status) (Fisun, 2006, pp. 146-147). The role of each of these will definitely require additional interpretation.

It was generally accepted in the literature of 1960-1980s that democratic governance is impossible without an appropriate political culture, formed as a result of complex changes brought about by modernization (Lipset, 1960; Dahl, 1971). This understanding is based on the classic works of the founders of modern European social and political theory (Schroeder, 1998).

"The 'bottom-up' view of democratization is rooted in the dominant social science paradigm in the United States since World War II through the 1970s-modernization theory. According to this viewpoint, democracy in its modern form – involving an emphasis on individual political liberties, procedurally fair elections, and impersonal legal institutions that enforce both majority rule and minority rights – is possible only after a prolonged prior process of social modernization" (Hanson, 2010, p. 176).

Some researchers have since then reconsidered the correlation between democracy and modernization. The experience of undemocratic modernizations (USSR, Nazis Germany, Singapore, China), which were considered quite successful, was complemented by the opposite experience of de-modernization, which, according to some observers, took place in the post-Soviet space following the democratic reforms. The contradiction between the democratic and the modernizing vector has even been generalized in the form of a political dilemma (Inozemtsev, and Dutkiewicz, 2012).

Another important precondition is the resilience of state institutions, which in the context of the transition to democracy may face serious tests of strength. Socio-cultural preconditions and situational determinants are of key importance for determining the direction of movement – challenges that face the community in a particular historical period and in current internal and external situations.

The stimulus of democratization, which arises as a reaction to the previous period of suppression of freedom and the extent to which the country was closed, can be directed onto a constructive course only if it is based on established principles of national unity and the existing mechanism of government (rational bureaucracy).

It is also important to take into account the state of political culture and traditions of political organization that precede and create an institutional, cultural, and ideological basis for the choice of democracy model.

The classic path of democratic transformation followed by European countries and North America involves a sharp rise in citizen participation in the affairs of the state. If statehood itself is not sufficiently stable and the state bureaucracy is not competent and responsible enough, such an intervention of the unprepared masses for political participation may result in state mechanisms losing functionality. As a result, another failed state emerges instead of a new democracy.

The examples of North and South Korea, the People's Republic of China and Taiwan (Republic of China), Western Germany and the former GDR, show that history, language and

religion do not imply a strongly determined choice of democracy model. Instead, external influence and the situation in which the choice of political model occurs, may be more important than historical inertia. Many examples confirm that the choice of democracy in an ideologically polarized world meant, first of all, a decision to join the so-called Western world (the block of developed capitalist countries).

At the same time, an external factor can act in an ambivalent way. External intervention that undermines the authoritarian regime and/or "punishes" it for undemocratic methods of governance will only destabilize the state, leaving just two ways out – a) permanent chaos and degradation of state institutions or b) a restoration of authoritarianism in a new form.

Democracy as a way of governing requires exceptionally rational political behavior and motivated civic participation, which come about only as a result of fundamental changes towards modernization. Attempts to build democracy along with modernization can be successful in the long run only under the consistent patronage of developed countries.

Young democracies that remain on the periphery of the capitalist world-system as a rule do not survive. They have low resistance to internal conflict and external interference. As a result, they become either corrupt raw materials appendages of the transnational economy or satellites of more powerful authoritarian states.

Discussions. Currently, democracy is undoubtedly an ideology under the banner of which the liberal forms of social organization promoted by the West for the rest of the world are expanding. It is noteworthy that only with the formation of the Euro-Atlantic community under the unconditional leadership of the United States has the establishment of democracy become a banner of such expansion.

The alternative view, for this reason, sees democracy as the political component of a more general Westernization process, and defines the democratic political model itself as a type of export. Like other exports of goods from developed countries, democracy is attractive to its consumers and raises high expectations. "Power and hegemony do not explain everything. Western political models spread and become globalized because – perhaps principally because – they are imported. They are sought after and integrated because they meet the strategic needs of the important actors, and thus result from individual choices guided by incentives and rewards, hopes and expectations" (Badie, 2000, p. 91).

However, in practice, importing often generates tensions, opens gaps, and frustrations, says Bertrand Badie. The reason for such discrepancies stems from the significant differences between the needs of people who have formed a democratic model for themselves and those who have imported it to address not yet fully realized goals and desires. "Fundamentally, it designated the transfer into a given society of a model or practice of a political, economic, or social nature, that was invented and developed in a historical context foreign to it and that derives from a fundamentally different social order. The dysfunctions that accompany this process tend naturally to crystallize into acute cultural dissonance; but such acuteness itself is not the founding element" (Badie, 2000, p. 91).

This contradiction in the process of building democracy was identified by a certain part of the expert community when the "third wave" of democratization had just begun. These researchers were somewhat skeptical about the experience of building democratic regimes, for instance in Latin America. In most parts of the Third World, authoritarian systems dominated the political landscape at the beginning of the great transformation period, concludes Mehran Kamrava (Kamrava, 1993, p. 1). Researchers associated the growth of authoritarian tendencies with the role that the system of world capitalism assigned to developing countries in terms of their functioning (Thomas, 1984).

The abandonment of the democratic model and, in many cases, the restoration of authoritarian regimes, were explained by the fact that democracy was not the best way to achieve the two main goals of the governments of developing countries. These goals are to increase their own legitimacy, and the institutional development of their governance.

In many cases, authoritarian methods succeeded in solving these problems far better than democracy. According to Kamrava, "Different types of governments develop out of these efforts, of

course not without the influence of individual factors, ranging from personalist regimes to bureaucratic-authoritarian and populist ones" (Kamrava, 1993, p. 1).

The only advantage of choosing democracy was the possibility for the elites of developing countries to be accepted into the club of developed ones.

Cases. When the countries of the former Socialist Camp (the USSR and its satellites) joined the "free world", dominated by the cult of democracy, it became one of the largest and most sudden expansions of Western civilization.

Post-Soviet countries have undergone a long period of transformation. During the past thirty years, many events have taken place that need to be understood in the context of the general trends of liberalization and democracy building.

Most of the post-Soviet democracies followed the path of Latin American, Asian, and African states, which during the 1970s and 1980s took a difficult path from enthusiastic attempts at liberalization to various forms of democratic reversal.

The democratization processes that began after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, at least as far as declarations go, have led to radically different results across the range of former Soviet republics. A radical reversal from choosing democracy to the actual restoration of the Soviet system took place in Belarus and then in Russia. Some forms of authoritarianism have taken hold in several Asian and Caucasian republics of the former Soviet Union (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan), while others have, from time to time, become hotbeds of political instability (Kyrgyzstan, Armenia).

The circumstances and drivers of these processes have become a subject of investigation for a significant number of observers and researchers, although the reasons for democratic or authoritarian choice needed to be clarified in every individual case, together with the logic of democratic transitions and anti-democratic reverses in the post-Soviet space.

All attempts to build democracy in the post-Soviet countries are united by one common premise – a unified organization of power. According to formal features, all former republics of the USSR had the same political systems, they had largely similar laws, judicial systems, executive bodies, and quasi-representative bodies (councils). Each republic inherited the same structures of Communist party leadership and parts of the entire power apparatus.

In addition, the Soviet government made every effort to unify the social structure, economic rules, culture, and collective identity of the peoples of the whole country.

Nevertheless, the evolution of post-Soviet countries led to quite diverse ways. Experience of Communist rule gives peoples in different lands a common past, but that does not imply a common future (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer, 1998, p. 224). Modern authors even question the appropriateness of using the concept of "post-Soviet", considering the rather different political realities of the countries of Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia. Perhaps post-Soviet may indeed be the last major geo-political periodization in the history of the West (Holland, and Derrick (eds), 2016, p. 149). However, the different vectors and paths of the evolution of post-Soviet regimes and nations themselves form a good basis for comparison and classification, especially when investigating the experience and logic of democratic transformations.

The motivation for democratic change in Russia was the most complex and internally contradictory. On the one hand there was a strong demand for liberalization and modernization (in fact, consumerization) in response to a perceived backwardness in comparison with the West, and in the context of the memory of the victims of the totalitarian regime. At the same time, democracy left no chance for the preservation of imperial greatness, questioned Moscow's dominance in the post-Soviet space, and began to threaten the integrity of the Russian Federation itself (the declaration of Chechnya's independence 1991).

The external factor in the case of Russia's transition to democracy was the Western programs of democracy support and the elements of "coercion to democracy". Eventually this impact played a negative rather than a positive role in the history of Russia's democracy building. For Russians democracy became associated with humiliation and subordination to the West.

The West realized that external stimulus methods were ineffective, but only at a time when anti-democratic reversal in Russia had already taken place, albeit long before the open confrontation with Russian authoritarianism and imperial revanchism in 2014 and especially in 2022. A "Western hand" is seen in any event the Kremlin does not approve of, from NATO and EU enlargement to demanding a degree of admission for the Soviet Union's past wrongs towards Central-Eastern European countries. Most recently, Russia even claimed responsibility for events it does not approve of, such as the democratization of the former communist world (Pourchot, 2008, p. 119).

One can also point to another reason for Russia's sharp anti-Western reversal during Putin's rule. His team saw relations with the West in the context of the so-called patron-prevalence relationship. This type of relationship involves that the patron demands the client adheres closely to the patron's international position, with the patron being willing to tolerate the client's independence in its own internal affairs (Shoemaker, 1984, p. 30).

However, it should not be ruled out that at some point Putin desired to be a fully-fledged patron himself and dismiss the client's obligations in full, or, more likely, that in the face of intensifying competition between the United States and China he had decided to switch patrons.

In fact, this difference between the status of a metropolis (superpower) and the status of a province (substate) is the first important factor when considering the differences in democratic transition's ways. For Russia, building democracy has been associated with (at least in part) the loss of imperial status, which President Putin later called "the greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century".

Instead, for other post-Soviet countries (though not for all), democracy has become synonymous with national self-determination and political emancipation.

Interestingly, the anti-democratic reversal in the European part of the former Soviet Union began in Belarus, a country with the weakest degree of national self-awareness among its population and minimal signs of state independence. The election of the future dictator Lukashenko in the first round of voting (with an 80% majority) took place in 1994 amid a severe socio-economic crisis and was an expression of the will of most of the country's population to "return to the USSR".

A similar turn in public opinion took place in Ukraine in the early presidential and parliamentary elections that same year. But even at the time, the value of independence and democracy for a large part of the population of this former Soviet republic was higher than the socio-economic price they allegedly would have had to pay for it. The reactionary candidate Kuchma defeated the independence-oriented candidate Kravchuk by a minimal margin. As a result, the new president could not afford to ignore the will of a significant number of Ukrainians for national self-determination or the existence in the country of embryonic forms of rule of law, civil society, and competition politics.

For the Baltic states, leaving the USSR was both a formal and a de facto restoration of independence. The destruction of these states in 1939 left behind a strong national-liberation motivation for Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, which triumphed in 1991 and could no longer be suppressed by promises of economic expediency or nostalgia for Soviet stability. Their accelerated integration into the Western political space has also been an important stimulus for democracy-building in the Baltic States.

The choice of NATO and EU membership was conditioned by the goal of maximizing the distance from the former metropolis of Moscow, but it, in turn, required democratization as a prerequisite for the implementation of a new integration vector. Hence, the external factor played an important role in this process, although it was perceived as an opportunity rather than coercion.

Independent Moldova is an example of an internally divided country in which there are not yet enough ideological and socio-political preconditions for the formation of national unity. The orientation of most of the Romanian-speaking population towards union with, and possible integration into neighboring Romania, left no opportunities for any kind of agreement with the Russian-speaking population of the republic, which later became increasingly focused on imperial reintegration under Moscow's auspices.

Electoral democracy (according to the classification of Freedom House) in this case has become a compromise model of statehood, which does not allow either party to fully realize its political intentions and thus keeps the system in a state of balancing the interests of internal actors and external stakeholders. The specificity of this balance is that the interests of neither party can be fully realized.

A completely different logic in the development of political systems during democratization is observed in the Asian part of the former USSR. Initially, the motive of liberalization was of minimal importance here, as was the desire for national and state independence. The problem was that the main stages of the modernization of Central Asia took place within the USSR, and liberal values were not deeply rooted in the local traditional culture, the latter which has maintained its place much longer than in the European parts of the empire.

The countries of Central Asia were, so to speak, forced to leave the empire, not entirely sharing the sentiments of liberalization and modernization that had the former metropolis in its grip for some time. The paradoxical position of Moscow's Asian satellites was later (already in relation to Russia) formulated by the Soviet poet Rasul Gamzatov from Dagestan: we did not enter Russia voluntarily, so we will not leave Russia voluntarily.

External incentives in the form of possibly accelerated integration into Western civilization from the perspective of Astana, Bishkek, Tashkent, or Ashgabat seemed similarly illusory. Therefore, democracy here could not rely on the concomitant motivations that led to the choice of democracy model in other post-Soviet countries (the Baltic states, for example). Neither social liberalization, modernization, national liberation aspiration, nor the prospects of joining the structure of the West stimulated the democratic transit of Central Asian countries.

The only impetus for building democracy here could be the attractiveness of the very political model of democratic governance. But there is almost nowhere in the world where the pure idea of democracy has had a powerful enough influence to form the basis of radical changes in culture, social structure, and the system of government. Moreover, this idea could not be nourished in Muslim countries of the Asian part of the former USSR where a tradition of strict patriarchal rule held sway.

Finally, the countries of the South Caucasus demonstrate certain individual combinations of the factors already discussed above.

The countries of the South Caucasus have undergone a significant path of modernization since the beginning of the twentieth century when their first nation-states emerged. Some features of the history of Georgia and Armenia are similar to that of the Baltic countries. Here we see strong national self-awareness, traditions of self-government, significant independence of the imperial center, and proximity to European values of freedom and justice.

At the same time there are some differences and similarities in the choice of integration vector of the republics of the Caucasus. Since independence, Georgia's orientation towards the West has seemed a certain and apparently irreversible choice, yet at the moment the government of this country is looking for a balance in the West-East orientation. At the same time, due to multiple circumstances (especially economic and military-political), Armenia has been forced to maintain unequal relations of dependence on Moscow. However, this situation has also started changing in recent years.

Elements of authoritarian rule dominate the political system of Azerbaijan. A similar kind of regime existed for a relatively short time in Georgia (under Saakashvili's presidency). Armenia's domestic politics has acquired the character of clan confrontations, but still keeps displaying democratic principles. The difference between these trajectories of the evolution of political systems is largely due to differences in national culture and traditions of power relations.

The Islamic culture of Azerbaijan is related to that of Turkey and other countries of the Middle East and is characterized by a patriarchal power structure. Georgia is characterized by considerable autonomy and the emergence of elites who are prone to confrontation and even anarchy. The highly corporatized nature of Armenia's social structure determines a clannish type of

political life, similar to the Christian countries of the northern Eastern Mediterranean (Greece and the Balkan Slavic countries).

In all three former Soviet republics of the Southern Caucasus, painful territorial issues are an additional factor in national consolidation. For Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, while for Georgia it manifests in the loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Patriotic mobilization more likely leads to the concentration of power and the establishment of authoritarian leadership than to democratic pluralism and respect for opposing views.

The realities and results of democracy-building in the former Soviet Union have led some researchers to conclude, considering the "inversion logic" (Fisun, 2006, p. 149) of democratic transition in post-Soviet states, that there are fundamental differences between the results of the post-Soviet space and the well-studied experience of Latin America and Southern Europe.

This difference has prompted many researchers to refer to the "transition paradigm fiasco" of the early 2000s (Bunce, 2000; McFaul, 2002; Carothers, 2002).

Although the post-Soviet states have not officially abandoned the democratic ideal, their way of governance, the behavior of political elites, and the extent and nature of public involvement show that these countries clearly contradict the expectations of theorists of democratic transition.

The purpose of the study. Some countries immediately abandoned the democratic path of development, others no less resolutely adopted the model of liberal democracy, a third group balanced between these options for decades, while stable authoritarian regimes were established in the fourth.

These distinctions, however, cannot be explained by cultural differences and situational factors alone. That is why the thesis about the decisive role of prerequisites for the successful establishment of democracy needs to be clarified.

Methodology. According to some researchers, two main preconditions for building a stable democracy in post-Soviet states were the existence of a stable state and a consolidated nation. Taras Kuzio, among others, draws attention to the incomplete process of state and nation-building in the countries that have embarked on the path of democratic transformation since 1991 (Kuzio, 2001). He believes that some post-Soviet countries lacked national identification.

Researchers also often point out the fundamental differences between nationalism and democracy when it comes to government practices, identity politics, and dominant ideology. "Nationalism sometimes appears to be fully congruent with democracy as it speaks of freedom, equality, and progress, and galvanizes the positive energy of whole societies. At other times, nationalism and democracy seem almost antithetical, with the former producing mechanisms of exclusion and sentiments of intolerance, and the latter constraining its definition to instrumental mechanisms of a majoritarian representation" (Lecours and Moreno, 2010).

But most observers agree that social cohesion, shaped by some form of nationalism, provides the necessary basis for the introduction of democratic governance mechanisms. It is a sense of nationality, Edward Shiles argued, that provides the necessary "coherence and unity" for civil society action (Shils, 1995, p. 118).

Choosing a democracy model under these conditions appears to be an element of the complex process of national self-determination. It means that constructing a state is the primary social task for the community, and the choice of a democracy model is a subsequent collective intention which depends on the way in which and how successfully the first task has been implemented.

In turn, the form and character of the national state, which arose from the ruins of the former empire, largely depends on the features of the social order (D. North) the nation had inherited from the previous period.

Resultes of comparative analysis. The post-Soviet democratic transition resembles a laboratory experiment revealing the preconditions and factors for the implementation of democracy choice in countries with different cultures and backgrounds.

Regarding the transitional experience of the post-Soviet countries, it is clear that the cultural, social, and historical preconditions, which differed in each country, have had a decisive influence on the results of democracy building. Situational factors were also of importance, the main being an

external influence, the need to defend sovereignty, and the possibility of rapid and comprehensive integration into the world community of democracies.

The path to democratic standards of governance in Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, for whom strategy is inseparable from overcoming dependence on the former metropolis and attempting to integrate into Western structures, has been dramatic and full of internal turmoil. The situation in Armenia is anomalous, with a pro-Moscow foreign policy orientation being combined with efforts to preserve democratic principles in domestic politics.

At the same time, the Baltic States' rapid integration into the Western world (NATO and the EU) has effectively resolved the issue of completing the transition to democracy.

The influence of external factors on the democratization processes of post-Soviet countries is difficult to overestimate. Bidzina Lebanidze, who has researched this problem, concludes that: "As the empirical results have shown, external support is a key factor, which makes the necessary domestic conditions – either the presence of pro-European elites or existence of pro-democratic mass mobilization – sufficient for democratic regime outcome or for the increase of democratic quality" (Lebanidze, 2020, p. 249).

However, it should be noted that in the post-Soviet space the choice of a governance model was made by people who were already in the post-polar era, when external determinants and integration alternatives were not as clear and strong. Even so, the trajectory of subsequent changes in the political regimes of post-Soviet countries differed significantly.

Peculiarly, the democratization process in the post-Soviet space countries was not about transition from a certain established political body to new principles of functioning, but about the emergence of a new state and an attempt to build its political system on democratic principles from zero. Even the Russian Federation in the first years after the collapse of the USSR positioned itself as a new democratic state. This specificity is very important and aligns the post-Soviet experience more closely with post-colonial cases.

The Baltic states restored their nation-state status on the basis developed at the beginning of the 20th century. Its form was that of a national republic, therefore new democratic regimes inherited their basic principles from this prior republican form. The most controversial decision was the refusal to grant citizenship to the "occupiers". This was obviously not a completely democratic action, and the decision has been criticized repeatedly by liberal-democratic observers. However, it followed quite logically from the republican principle and the continuity of statehood.

A similar tenacity of republican approaches can be found in Georgia and Armenia, where national self-awareness and a republican approach to the organization of the state also have a long tradition.

However, attempts to build national states on republican foundations after the collapse of the Russian Empire were either nipped in the bud (as was the case during the Bolshevik occupation of the Ukrainian People's Republic) or did not have lasting historical traditions (Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, the countries of the Central Asia).

Under these conditions, national statehood had to be built on foundations that differed from the republican model. The institutional and cultural heritage of the imperial social order became the basis of these foundations. Above all, this heritage fed the new self-determination of the former metropolis. Due to its size and the preservation of the main repressive apparatus and traditions, the Russian Federation has retained a significant imperialist inertia, but in other parts of the former USSR the post-imperial form of government too maintained an almost monopolistic position.

It can therefore be concluded that in post-Soviet countries a national state could be built on either republican, post-imperial, or post-colonial foundations.

This difference was decisive in the issue of choosing a democracy model, as there is a fundamental difference between republican and imperial principles of government. If the first can develop into a democratic form under favorable conditions, the second is its direct antagonist, sooner or later coming into confrontation with the idea of democratization.

This distinction makes it possible to explain the following: why in Armenia, despite its close rapprochement with Moscow, the democratic principles of political life were preserved throughout

the period of independence; why in neighboring Azerbaijan, despite the relative independence from the former metropolis and the secular character of the state, an authoritarian model was established; why Ukraine and Moldova were not consistent in their movement towards democracy and Euro-Atlantic integration; and why Russia, by returning to the imperial impetus, aggressively abandoned the democratic principles of governmental organization.

From the viewpoint of this distinction, the logic of the newly independent states when choosing a democracy model looks as follows.

The post-imperial form of statehood was established first in one of the most loyal provinces of the former empire – Belarus. Later, the imperial model achieved a political and socio-cultural revenge in the metropolis itself, whose role in the post-Soviet space was inherited by the Russian Federation. In these countries, restoring the imperial social order clearly turned out to be incompatible with the idea of liberal-style democracy.

The post-imperial identity and its associated political culture traditionally had a rather strong position in the case of Ukraine. However, the imperialistic trend was opposed there by the tradition of Ukrainian nationalism, which should be understood as the idea of national self-determination. This movement had a strong position in this large country, especially in its capital and the Western regions, which were part of the Russian Empire (in the form of the USSR) for a much shorter period of time (45 years in the case of Galicia, Bukovyna and Transcarpathia, compared to almost 340 years for the rest of the country).

From a historical perspective, the Ukrainian national movement had strong traditions of struggling for independence. These have gradually developed over the two centuries since the beginning of nationalism in Europe. After gaining independence, the nationalist tradition became the basis for the formation of a new identity for Ukrainians. This approach strongly opposed attempts to return the country to the orbit of imperial revenge, the latest of which began with the full-scale armed aggression by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022.

The history of Ukraine's democratic transition is closely related to the development of a national state in that country. The national self-determination of the population of the former Ukrainian SSR on republican principles was an important precondition for the further transition to liberal democracy itself.

However, a republican model of statehood is not the only possibility; in many cases it cannot be formed in newly independent states due to a certain culture of political participation and a distinct understanding of the phenomenon of power as such. The weakness of the republican idea in such countries is evidenced, in particular, by the absence of notable movements for independence during the collapse of the USSR.

Consequently, in the Asian part of the former USSR, where republican principles did not have significant support in the traditional ideas and customs of the local population, successful construction of state centers did not bring these countries closer to democracy, but, on the contrary, distanced them from the democratic standard of governance.

Similar to many post-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the political regimes of some post-Soviet countries that underwent modernization within the USSR evolved into authoritarianism. Although these countries did not have clear anti-colonial sentiments or organized movements for liberation from dependence on Moscow, they displayed similarities in many parameters of political life with post-colonial societies of the so-called third world, and reproduced political models that, in particular, mimicked the largest wave of decolonization in the 1960s – 1970s.

Conclusion. Differing prerequisites for the development of democracy in the post-Soviet independent states have a decisive influence on motivating the choice of democratic model per se, as well as on the nature of democratic reforms and their possible social and political consequences.

The results of democratic transformations in the countries of the former USSR can be understood in the context of differences in the preconditions for democratic transition. We can assume that the results of democracy-building in each case were significantly influenced by the

peculiarities of culture and historical experience, the society's values, and political challenges facing the leadership of the state and its political elites at that particular historical moment.

These results also show that the basic institutional design of the political system, when it begins to democratize, does not determine the subsequent development. Immediately after the abolition of the imperial center, unified political systems began to develop along radically different trajectories.

The main preconditions that are necessary for the successful functioning of democracy are a stable state (with effective state bureaucracy), and a consolidated nation. It is generally accepted that democratic governance is impossible without an appropriate political culture, which develops as a result of complex modernization changes.

The lack of these factors, under certain conditions, can be compensated for by the rapid and comprehensive (economic, political, informational) integration of the country into the international democratic community, which in this case would be a donor of social order and the resources needed to stabilize the democratic regime.

The specific nature of a political culture and tradition, which had been inherited from the preceding era, may have a significant impact. In this regard, among the post-Soviet countries, one should distinguish those that had a republican tradition of self-government or embarked on the path of its formation during the process of sovereignty, including post-imperial and post-colonial states.

The parts of the former USSR where the imperial model of social organization and its corresponding identity had dominated, perceived the democratization project as an attack on their identity and an attempt by a competitor (the Western community) to weaken their state capacity. On the other hand, in countries where psychological and ideologic distancing from the imperial legacy had prevailed, democratization became an element of state building and the breaking of imperial ties.

Hence it is clear that democracy has the best chance of being established on the basis of the republican form of statehood. Post-imperial societies tend to restore statism and militarism, which are incompatible with democracy. Post-colonial regimes can theoretically be transformed into republican models, but with a high probability of evolving towards authoritarianism.

An important methodological clarification follows from this. Attempts to assess the processes of national emancipation and democratization in the European part of the former USSR in the context of the concept of postcolonialism may not be entirely relevant to their situation. In the case of Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic states and the countries of the South Caucasus, it will be more appropriate to highlight the struggle between the republican project and the post-imperial retrograde impulse, which may have been weak in the early 1990s, but steadily intensified under the influence of the consolidation of Putin's regime in the former metropolis.

Distinguishing between post-colonial and post-imperial identity offers, within this context, a promising direction for further research.

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Максим Розумний,
доктор політичних наук, старший науковий співробітник, професор,
Київський столичний університет імені Бориса Грінченка

Передумови вибору демократичної моделі в нових незалежних державах

На початку періоду демократичної трансформації політичні системи колишніх радянських республік мали єдину інституційну базу, яку вони успадкували від напівзруйнованої імперії. Крім того, запровадження демократичних принципів також відбувалося в рамках єдиного підходу, сформульованого на початку 1990-х років західними концепціями демократичного переходу. Однак, при цьому процеси демократизації, що почалися в колишніх радянських республіках після розпаду СРСР у 1991 році, привели до кардинально різних результатів. Теза про те, що історичні та культурні передумови мають вирішальний вплив на вибір демократичної моделі, переважно підтверджується досвідом побудови демократичних політичних систем на території колишнього СРСР. Деякі країни відразу відмовилися від демократичного шляху розвитку, інші не менш рішуче взяли курс на політичну модель ліберальної демократії, треті десятиліттями балансували між цими позиціями, а четверті встановили стабільні авторитарні режими.

Різницю в результатах реформ неможливо пояснити лише культурними відмінностями та ситуаційними факторами. Тому теза про вирішальну роль передумов для успішного становлення демократії потребує уточнення. Особливо слід звернути увагу на те, що складні суспільно-політичні трансформації на пострадянському просторі охопили не лише лібералізацію режимів, а й процеси розбудови нових незалежних держав. Водночас більшість із цих країн були схильні до відтворення тієї чи іншої моделі держави, успадкованої від попереднього історичного періоду. Автор припускає, що ця відмінність є найсуттєвішою в питанні про передумови побудови демократії. За цим критерієм нові незалежні держави можна класифікувати як 1) постімперські режими, 2) постколоніальні режими та 3) антиимперські республіканські державні проєкти.

Ключові слова: побудова демократії, пострадянські держави, постімперський, постколоніальний.