

Socio-political cleavages in Central and Eastern Europe (on the example of Poland)

The article discusses the features of formation new socio-political cleavages opposed to the classical cleavages of Lipset and Rokkan in the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The basic thresholds of institutionalization sociopolitical cleavages are revealed in article. Based on the analysis of parliamentary elections (1989-2011) in Poland socio-political cleavages in the country are defined.

Keywords: sociopolitical cleavage, threshold of institutionalization, transit, political and party system.

Соціополітичні поділи у країнах Центрально-Східної Європи (на прикладі Польщі)

В статті розглянуто особливості становлення нових соціополітичних розмежувань на протигагу класичним розмежуванням Липсета і Роккана у країнах Центрально-Східної Європи. Визначено основні пороги їх інституалізації. На основі аналізу парламентських виборів (1989-2015) у Польщі визначено які соціополітичні поділи інституалізувалися в країні.

Ключові слова: соціополітичний поділ, поріг інституалізації, транзит, політичні і партійні системи.

The wave of democratization that spread worldwide in the mid 70's, has led to an acute need for the revision of the traditional cleavages based on the left-right ideological spectrum. Researchers increasingly interested in study of new lines of cleavages, on which values they were formed and how they influenced on party system forming in post-communist countries.

One can't avoid the sight of the fact that over the past decade in particular the scientific interest to the problems of socio-political cleavages in Central and Eastern Europe and their impact on the party system has increased. Of particular relevance is the question of socio-political cleavages in post-communist countries, which formed a stable political system.

In the post-totalitarian reality and transit democracy cleavages are crucial determinants of party systems.

Latent opposition in postcommunist society not only clearly different from those that characterized the previous authoritarian regimes, but also the formation of a new value system make for the emergence of new cleavages inherent for post-industrial countries, leading up to postmateriality society. This system sociopolitical cleavages largely determines the features configuration of the political system of society, changing with the change of the general orientations of society and types of regimes.

According to A. Moreno, “transitional” democracies of Central and Eastern Europe characterized by three main cleavage values: pro-and anti-reform values, liberal-fundamental and authoritarian-democratic values.

The first valuable differentiation (pro-and anti-reform value) includes attitudes towards economic reform – the government against private property and economic individualism, attitudes towards political reform and social changes related to abortion, nationalism and religion. The poles of this cleavage are defined as liberal, democratic and market preferences, on the one hand, and conservative, authoritarian and static preferences on the other. This line of conflict is called reform cleavage.

As for the cleavage based on the liberal-fundamentalist values, it includes attitudes in different countries to religion, authoritarianism and abortion. Liberal-fundamental cleavage attracts cultural values, such as religion and nationalism, and contrasts with the more liberal views that emerged in the analysis of attitudes towards abortion.

The third cleavage is attitude towards authoritarianism and more open democratic form of government. This cleavage is the only cleavage that is present in all post-communist societies. Around these dominant political values struggle main political forces in post-communist countries, they also determine the appropriate configuration of the party system¹.

On the other hand, one can't deny the fact the classic cleavages inherent to Western Europe, also constituted in Central and Eastern Europe, mainly cleavages on socio-economic, ethno-linguistic, religious and territorial basis. However, an open question remains – why countries with similar social cleavages formed different configurations party system? Thus, O. Meleshkina draws attention to the importance of taking into account the institutional thresholds relating to the socio-political cleavages, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, namely the threshold of legitimacy, inclusion, representation, majority rule.

These thresholds characterize participation in politics citizens and political parties. The presence of high threshold limits the institutionalization of cleavage, while low thresholds stimulate this process. Therefore, analysis of the impact of institutional thresholds for objectification of socio-political cleavages in post-communist countries can, according

¹ Moreno A. *Political Cleavages. Issues, Parties, and the Consolidation of Democracy* / A. Moreno. – Westview Press. – 1999. – 205 p.

to O. Meleshkina, explain the differences in the configuration of party systems with similar cleavages².

One can't avoid G. Sartori idea that political elites can actualize, or otherwise conceal certain contradictions that arise in society. This is especially significant, in our point of view, for post-communist countries, where pre-election rhetoric of most political leaders/parties based on conflict issues.

According to S. Eliseev, the processes of consolidation of party systems in post-communist countries affected by a number of factors, including:

1. institutional legacy of authoritarian rule: a) institutional traditions and norms, b) parties-heirs ideological positions of contemporary regimes and c) party, formed on the basis of mass democratic movements,
2. institutional regime of new democracies, which include: a) the form of government, b) the format of the electoral system, c) politico-legal strengthening of boundaries.

The author also believes that the stability of party systems often depends on social and political cleavages in conditions of political competition. This is the initial condition for the establishment and development of a pluralistic party system. The clear structure of the social and political cleavage is a prerequisite for the consolidation of the party system, increasing its stability and reducing fragmentation.

S. Eliseev said that in the phase of democratization crucial role in the development of party systems in Eastern Europe had played three institutional variables: politico-legal consolidation of borders, the choice of the form of rule and the type of electoral system³.

A. Kulik believes that, among other factors, key events that influenced the socio-political cleavages are fall of authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe, the peaceful revolution in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence in its place 15 post-socialist republic in 1991, the spread of neo-liberal democracy during the third wave, the globalization of political and economic world view, which changed the traditional idea of the nation-state and its sovereignty, strengthening of EU as a supranational entity with its own parliament, elections and European supranational parties and inclusion to EU post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the information revolution in post-industrial societies, which changes ways of political mobilization and political participation model, the relationship between state and citizens and between voters and parties, "Americanization" policy in Europe, the complexity of the social structure and system of differences and gradual evolution of representative democracy from the majority model in which parties play a major role in the representation of distinction, to pluralist, where the party is increasingly concede

² Мелешкина Е. Ю. Концепция социально-политических размежеваний: проблема универсальности / Е. Ю. Мелешкина // Политическая наука. – 2004. – №4. – С. 11–29

³ Елисеев С. Социальные и политические размежевания, институциональные предпосылки и условия консолидации партийных систем в демократическом транзите / С. Елисеев // Политическая наука: Социально-политические размежевания и консолидация партийных систем. – 2004. – № 4. – С. 64–89.

the role to groups of interests, the crisis of traditional institutions of representative democracy, reflected in falling confidence in elections, political parties and the state, increase in absenteeism and anomie, and finally the transformation of international terrorism in domestic policy factor that limits the rights and freedoms⁴.

Thus, the structure of socio-political cleavages in Central and Eastern Europe has its own characteristics. Cleavages going out from socialist past and reflected primarily in the mental characteristics of voters – authoritarian values of strong state and a strong leader, while losing importance, still determine the existence of the “split” between those who received benefits from the “old” regime and those who won as a result of “transition” period.

The high degree of mobilization in the communist regime, negative perception of voters the communist past largely explain those fact that individuals in Central and Eastern Europe don't identify themselves with political parties, varying in their party-political preferences, passive, tend to respond positively on rhetoric of populist and nationalist parties.

From a methodological point of view it should be noted that the socio-political cleavages in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are considered in terms of two completely opposite concepts. The first of them – the concept of “tabula rasa” argues that the socio-political cleavages only in transit time begin their formation. Thus the impact on the political system of society should only divisions that formed after the collapse of communist regimes. Thus cleavages inherent to historical past divisions wouldn't reflect the political system until the new cleavages find their mark in political institutions.

Author of the second approach G. Kitchelt considers that in the states of Central and Eastern Europe “two cleavages are in the process of forming: left-right (social and economic) and the authoritarian-liberal”. Thus the main public confrontation occurs between democratically oriented opposition that formed during the decomposition of the communist regime, and the old elite that try to hold power⁵.

Analyzing socio-political cleavages in contemporary Poland, we consider them through both theories, because unilateral consideration can't provide a comprehensive description of the situation with the understanding of the structure formation of modern sociopolitical cleavages in Polish society.

Considering the socio-political cleavages in Poland under G. Kitchelt approach, one could argue that in the early 90s of the last century in the political system of the Poland distinguished authoritarian-liberal cleavage. In particular, it confirms by the results of the 1989 elections, in which Polish United Workers' Party won 37, 6% of the votes, Solidarity – 35%⁶. Formed in such a way authoritarian and liberal cleavage contributed to the democratization of the political system and the subsequent establishment of political pluralism. It also can be observed during

⁴ Кулик А. Теория размежеваний в российском контексте: Испитание политическими реалиями / А. Кулик // Политическая наука. – 2004. – № 4. – С. 173-191.

⁵ Kitschelt H. Party systems in East Central Europe: Consolidation or fluidity? / Univ. of Strathclyde. – Glasgow, 1995. – 104 p.

⁶ Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza – Режим доступу – <http://pkw.gov.pl/>

parliamentary elections in 1991, when due to the absence of electoral threshold the Sejm passed the 29 political parties⁷. In the first years after the fall of the communist regime the influence of former ruling elites, transformed and adapted to the democratic regime was quite large, but the authoritarian-liberal socio-political cleavage exhausted itself with the final completion of the transit process and consolidation of a democratic regime in Poland.

Electoral behavior after installing this cleavage has become chaotic, as freedom of choice for long time hadn't been a characteristic of the Polish political system, in which the party system could be considered hegemonic. However, perhaps the most important cleavage of early period of transit was the confrontation between authoritarian elites of the old regime and the democratic political forces.

So we consider that the main cleavage of the late twentieth century in Poland was the confrontation between authoritarian and democratic elites. However, for the early twenty-first century, this cleavage is less visible, due to the successful passage of the democratic transit. Effect of former political elite remains quite noticeable during the first years after the fall of the communist regime, but for modern Poland, this situation is less prominent than at the end of the last century. Former communist elites transformed, adapted to the new democratic "rules" and therefore authoritarian-liberal cleavage almost completely moved to the left-right socio-economic.

Another sociopolitical cleavage in Poland is a territorial, which was clearly visible as a result of the parliamentary elections in 2011. Northern and Western provinces during the vote in the Senate supported most of the representatives of the "Civic Platform", southern and eastern – candidates from "Law and Justice". Thus we can say that the conservative mood of the population increases to the east and south.

At about the same importance for the Polish society is the cleavage between church and state. Despite the secular nature of Poland, religion plays a significant role in forming the socio-political doctrine of many political forces. So, conservatives characterized by performances against the legalization of homosexual relations, abortion and euthanasia, banned by the Catholic Church. Political forces of liberal and social democratic orientation considerably colder attitude to such problems. Socio-political cleavage between church and state being upgraded, appeals to postmaterialism key problems in this context translates society, according to R. Inglehart, to the basis of post-modern society⁸.

Considering the formation of sociopolitical cleavages in Poland in terms of the concept of "tabula rasa" socio-political cleavages begin their formation in the late twentieth century, and no role play classical cleavages presented by Lipset and Rokkan⁹. In this case, the base becomes

⁷ Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza – РЕЖИМ ДОСТУПИ – <http://pkw.gov.pl/>

⁸ Inglehart R. Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies / R. Inglehart. – Princeton: Princeton University Press. – 1997. – 440 p.

⁹ Lipset S. Cleavage Structures. Party Systems and Voter Alignments: an introduction // S.M.Lipset, S.Rokkan (eds.) Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives. – New York: Free Press, 1967. – P1-67.

socio-political cleavages formed on post-materialistic values, and also distinction between value systems of post-modern and industrial society. However, their formation takes sufficiently long period of time, so by the time the impact on the political system of Poland didn't have any socio-political cleavages.

The institutionalization of socio-political cleavages, according to the paradigm of "tabula rasa" in Polish society was held recently. After the elections to the Sejm in 2007, one could argue that at present in Poland finally formed left-right cleavage, which took effect in the next parliamentary elections. Yes, east and south of Poland have traditionally preferred party "Law and Justice", west and north supported the "Civic Platform". If the results of the 2007 elections these parties were 39 and 60 representatives respectively, in 2011 these figures were as follows: 31 and 63 Senators¹⁰. Therefore, it can be argued that the main opposition in a society relayed to the political system of Poland in Senate is the distinction between conservatives and liberals.

At present it is smoothed by three opposition parties joined the Parliament, but at the last election "Civic Platform" and "Law and Justice" scored total 69,07% of voters, that is still significant share in a multi-party system. Thus we can say that the liberal-conservative cleavage in Poland has been formed and will be actual for several next election campaigns.

Table 1. Changes in electoral behavior in Poland

Year	Leaders in elections to Senate	Leaders in elections to the Sejm	Dominant socio-political cleavage
1989	Solidarity -99, Non-party-1	United Polish Workers' Party- 37, 6% Solidarity - 35%	authoritarian-liberal
1991	Democratic Union - 21, Solidarity-11	Democratic Union - 12, 32%, Democratic Left Alliance - 11, 99%	Authoritarian-liberal, but becomes chaotic behavior of voters
1993	Left Democratic Alliance - 37, Polish People's Party-36	Democratic Left Alliance -20, 4% Polish People's Party - 15, 4%	authoritarian-liberal
1997	Solidarity - 51, Democratic Left Alliance - 28	Solidarity - 33, 8% Democratic Left Alliance - 27, 1%	authoritarian-liberal
2001	Left Democratic Alliance- Labor Union - 75 The coalition „Senate 2001” - 15	Left Democratic Alliance - Labor Union - 41% Civic Platform - 12, 7%	authoritarian-liberal, begins the formation of left-right cleavage
2005	Law and Justice - 49 Civic Platform - 34	Law and Justice - 27% Civic Platform - 24, 1%	Left-Right
2007	Civic Platform - 60 Law and Justice - 39	Civic Platform - 41, 51% Law and Justice - 32, 11%	left-right
2011	Civic Platform - 63 Law and Justice - 31	Civic Platform - 39, 18% Law and Justice - 29, 89%	left-right
2015	Law and Justice -62 Civic Platform-32	Law and Justice -37,6% Civic Platform - 24%	left-right

Democratic Left Alliance was formed after the dissolution of United Polish Workers' Party and actually was the reorganized political party of authoritarian elite, which changing shape, tries to retain power, and from election results is noticeable that in the early twenty-first century,

¹⁰ Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza - Режим доступа - <http://pkw.gov.pl/>

it succeeded. That is why it is necessary to consider domination in Poland authoritarian-liberal socio-political cleavage until 2001.

At the beginning of the third millennium starts the formation of socio-political left-right cleavage, which is economic in nature, moral and evaluative aspect. In the present political system of Poland it is dominant, and given the results of the last election remains so for at least another 2 – 3 election campaigns.

Thus electoral behavior in Central and Eastern Europe, despite the individualization of the voter, is still strongly influenced by socio-political cleavages. In fact, the most important is the liberal-conservative cleavage, which describes electoral behavior over the longer first campaign. It can be argued that some socio-political cleavages in Poland were taken after passing the transit and other modernized, but their impact on the configuration of the party system and the choice of citizens continue to be a pressing issue.

Thus, the formation of socio-political cleavages in Central and Eastern Europe can be seen as a complex process of identification and institutionalization in society latent contradictions for a long time had no influence on the political life of societies. Although it is argued that on the political system doesn't have more influence cleavages distinguished by Lipset and Rokkan, but they stay relevant in Poland society, such as "State-Church". Thus socio-political cleavages, as new, formed after the transit and modernized classical still have a significant impact on the determination of the configuration of the political and party systems of Central and Eastern Europe, specially in Poland.

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