

NEVER ENDING POLITICAL TRANSITION IN UKRAINE AT THE BACKGROUND OF THE EXPERIENCE OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: DYNAMICS AND CORRELATION OF POLITICAL REGIMES AND SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

The article tests the assumption that political transition in some countries can be incomplete, at least for a very long period of time, or restored even after the completion of democratization and consolidation of democracies. This is done based on both the modernization, as well as transitological and institutional interpretation of political transition. Empirically, the comparative analysis was carried out on the basis of the case of Ukraine, particularly by taking into account the dynamics of development and making a correlation between the options (more democratic or more autocratic) of hybrid political regime and various options of systems of government (primarily semi-presidentialism) in Ukraine. It is stated that semi-presidentialism can certainly contribute to democratization and completion of political transition in Ukraine, but only in the case of further approval and prolongation of its premier-presidential, rather than president-parliamentary version. This partly corresponds to the logic and choice of systems of government in Central and Eastern European countries, which use parliamentarized systems of government.

Keywords: political regime, political transition, system of government, hybrid regime, Ukraine, countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

NIEKOŃCZĄCA SIĘ TRANSFORMACJA POLITYCZNA NA UKRAINIE NA TŁE DOŚWIADCZEŃ KRAJÓW EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ: DYNAMIKA I KORELACJA REŻIMÓW POLITYCZNYCH I SYSTEMÓW RZĄDÓW

Artykuł bada założenie, że transformacja polityczna w niektórych krajach może być niepełna nawet przez bardzo długi okres lub przywrócona nawet po zakończeniu demokratyzacji i konsolidacji demokracji. Dokonuje się tego w oparciu zarówno o modernizacyjną, jak i tranzytologiczną oraz instytucjonalną interpretację transformacji politycznej. Empirycznie analizę porównawczą przeprowadzono na podstawie przypadku Ukrainy, w szczególności uwzględniając dynamikę rozwoju i dokonując korelacji między opcjami (bardziej demokratyczną lub bardziej autokratyczną) hybrydowego reżimu politycznego a różnymi opcjami systemów rządów (przede wszystkim półprezydenckich) na Ukrainie. Stwierdza się, że półprezydenccjalizm z pewnością może przyczynić się do demokratyzacji i zakończenia transformacji politycznej na Ukrainie,

ale tylko w przypadku dalszego zatwierdzenia i przedłużania jego premierowsko-prezydenckiej, a nie prezydencko-parlamentarnej wersji. Odpowiada to częściowo logice i wyborowi systemów rządów w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, stosujących parlamentarne systemy rządów.

Słowa kluczowe: reżim polityczny, transformacja polityczna, system rządów, reżim hybrydowy, Ukraina, kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej.

У статті перевірено припущення про те, що політичний транзит у деяких країнах може бути незавершуваним, принаймні впродовж дуже тривалого періоду часу, або ж відновленим навіть після завершення демократизації і консолідації демократій. Це зроблено на підставі як модернізаційного, так і транзитологічного й інституційного трактування політичного транзиту. В емпіричному розрізі порівняльний аналіз здійснено на підставі кейсу України, зокрема через врахування динаміки розвитку та здійснення кореляції поміж опціями (більш демократичними й більш авторитарними) гібридного політичного режиму та різних варіантів систем правління (передусім напівпрезиденталізму) в Україні. Встановлено, що напівпрезиденталізм неодмінно може сприяти демократизації та завершенню політичного транзиту в Україні, однак винятково у випадку подальшої апробації і пролонгації його прем'єр-президентського, а не президентсько-парламентського варіанту. Це частково відповідає логіці та вибору систем правління в країнах Центрально-Східної Європи, які послуговуються парламентаризованими системами правління.

Ключові слова: політичний режим, політичний транзит, система правління, гібридний режим, Україна, країни Центрально-Східної Європи.

The issues of political transition have been very popular in Political Science for about half a century, although they are considered by different groups of researchers, in particular the representatives of modernization, transitological and institutional approaches/paradigms. Therefore, various scholars have developed different ideas over a long period of time about what political transition is, what the types and directions of political transition are, what stages does political transition consists of, as well as what consequences does political transition leads to, etc. However, probably the most interesting question, especially in the light of the realities that the world is facing in the recent decades, concerns whether political transition in a particular country and generally (that is theoretically) must necessarily be completed, including in the format of initially democratization and later liberalization or consolidation of democracy, etc. Or on the contrary, can political transition be interpreted as “never-ending” one? Since certain country is able to show more democratic or autocratic features in one or another case, which of course are influenced by various factors, including political traditions, political culture, inter-institutional relations, design of political system, etc. This article proposes to answer this question using the example of Ukraine, which is often positioned (both by theorists and

practitioners) as the case of incomplete or ongoing transition to democracy. However, it is proposed to do this simultaneously at the background of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), which (according to a number of scientists) have completed or almost completed their transition and became consolidated (sometimes semi-consolidated) and liberal democracies on the eve of their accession to the European Union. On the other hand, these countries were not chosen by chance, since other researchers and various research projects have recently noted the processes such as the “erosion” of democracy both in the world in general, as well as in European countries in particular. Therefore, Political Science faces the question of whether a consolidated and liberal democracy, which has completed its transition to democracy at first glance, can “erode” and deconsolidate, entering a new “round” or format of transition, including in another direction (and therefore understanding) than the transition toward democracy. At the same time, special emphasis in this context will be made on the structuring of political transition due to the identification of peculiarities of relationship between political regimes’ transition and dynamics/transition of systems of government in Ukraine at the background of Central and Eastern European countries.

The stated issues are multifaceted ones and have been considered in a whole array of scientific elaborations. In particular, the phenomenon of political transition and its options are discussed by such researchers as D. Acemoglu and J. Robinson¹, L. Anderson², M. Bratton and N. van de Walle³, M. Bernhard⁴, A. Croissant⁵, M. de Melo, A. Gelb and C. Denizer⁶, G. Di Palma⁷, D. Epstein, R. Bates, J. Goldstone, I. Kristensen and S. O’Halloran⁸, J. Fidrmuc⁹, S. Haggard and R. Kaufman¹⁰, J. Linz and A. Stepan¹¹, M. McFaul¹², G. Munck and C. Leff¹³, E. Osaghae¹⁴, V. Popov¹⁵,

¹ Acemoglu D., Robinson J., A Theory of Political Transitions, *“American Economic Review”* 2001, vol 91, nr. 4, s. 938-963.

² Anderson A., *Transitions to Democracy*, Wyd. Columbia University Press 1999.

³ Bratton M., van de Walle N., *Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press: 2011.

⁴ Bernhard M., Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe, *“Political Science Quarterly”* 1993, vol 108, nr. 2, s. 307-326.

⁵ Croissant A., From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asian Democratization, *“Democratization”* 2004, vol 11, nr. 5, s. 156-178.

⁶ De Melo M., Gelb A., Denizer C., Patterns of transition from plan to market, *“World Bank Economic Review”* 1996, vol 10, s. 397-424.

⁷ Di Palma G., *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions*, Wyd. University of California Press 1990.

⁸ Epstein D., Bates R., Goldstone J., Kristensen I., O’Halloran S., Democratic Transitions, *“American Journal of Political Science”* 2006, vol 50, s. 551-569.

⁹ Fidrmuc J., Economic Reform, Democracy and Growth during Post-communist Transition, *“European Journal of Political Economy”* 2003, vol 19, nr. 3, s. 583-604.

¹⁰ Haggard S., Kaufman R., Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule, *“American Political Science Review”* 2012, vol 106, nr. 3, s. 495-516.

¹¹ Linz J., Stepan A., *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Wyd. JHU Press 1996.

¹² McFaul M., The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World, *“World Politics”* 2002, vol 54, nr. 2, s. 212-244.

¹³ Munck G., Review: Democratic Transitions in Comparative Perspective, *“Comparative Politics”* 1994, vol 26, nr. 3, s. 355-375; Munck G., Leff C., Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective, *“Comparative Politics”* 1997, vol 29, nr. 3, s. 343-362.

¹⁴ Osaghae E., The study of political transitions in Africa, *“Review of African Political Economy”* 1995, vol 22, nr. 64, s. 183-197.

¹⁵ Popov V., Shock Therapy versus Gradualism: The End of the Debate (Explaining the Magnitude of the Transformational Recession), *“Comparative Economic Studies”* 2000, vol 42, nr. 1, s. 1-57.; Popov V., Shock Therapy versus Gradualism Reconsidered: Lessons from Transition Economies after 15 Years of Reforms, *“Comparative Economic Studies”* 2007, vol 49, nr. 1, s. 1-31.

D. Rustow¹⁶, H. Welsh¹⁷ and others. At the same time, some of the researchers, in particular E. Alessandri and M. Altunışık¹⁸, I. Berend and B. Bugarić¹⁹, J. Brownlee²⁰, J. Calleros-Alarcón²¹, F. Coricelli²², C. D'Amore²³, E. De Giorgi and S. Grimaldi²⁴, J. Fox²⁵, V. Gelman²⁶, C. Gershman²⁷, K. Gleditsch and J. Choung²⁸, F. Guliyev²⁹, J. Hellman³⁰, C. Lawson³¹, S. Mendelson³², J. Newell and M. Carbone³³, G. Pasquino³⁴, I. Turan³⁵, Z. Turk³⁶, J. Wright and A. Escribà-Folch³⁷, point out the potential/optionality of the so-called “newer-ending” (unfinished) political transition or at least are skeptical that political transition in the direction of democracy should be interpreted as such that still can be finalized, as well as generally the process of development of any political regime. At this background, more and more scientists, in particular D. Ambrose³⁸, T. Carothers³⁹, P. Cerny⁴⁰, M. De Beistegui⁴¹, J. Gerschewski⁴²,

¹⁶ Rustow D., Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model, “*Comparative Politics*” 1970, vol 2, nr. 3, s. 337-363.

¹⁷ Welsh H., Political Transition Processes in Central and Eastern Europe, “*Comparative Politics*” 1994, vol 26, nr. 4, s. 379-394.

¹⁸ Alessandri E., Altunışık M., Unfinished Transitions: Challenges and Opportunities of the EU's and Turkey's Responses to the “Arab Spring”, “*Global Turkey in Europe Working Paper*” 2013, vol 4.

¹⁹ Berend I., Bugarić B., Unfinished Europe: Transition from communism to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, “*Journal of Contemporary History*” 2015, vol 50, nr. 4, s. 768-785.

²⁰ Brownlee J., Portents of Pluralism: How Hybrid Regimes Affect Democratic Transitions, “*American Journal of Political Science*” 2009, vol 53, nr. 3, s. 515-532.

²¹ Calleros-Alarcón J., *The unfinished transition to democracy in Latin America*, Wyd. Routledge 2008.

²² Coricelli F., Democracy in the post-communist world: unfinished business, “*East European Politics and Societies*” 2007, vol 21, nr. 1, s. 82-90.

²³ D'Amore C., The never-ending Italian transition, “*South European society and politics*” 2007, vol 12, nr. 2, s. 247-251.

²⁴ De Giorgi E., Grimaldi S., The Italian political system in the last twenty years: change, adaptation or unfinished transition?, “*Contemporary Italian Politics*” 2015, vol 7, nr. 1, s. 3-9.

²⁵ Fox J., The difficult transition from Clientelism to Citizenship: Lessons from Mexico, “*World Politics*” 1994, vol 46, nr. 2, s. 151-184.

²⁶ Gelman V., Regime Transition, Uncertainty and Prospects for Democratization: The Politics of Russia's Regions in a Comparative Perspective, “*Europe-Asia Studies*” 1999, vol 5, nr. 6, s. 939-956.

²⁷ Gershman C., The Case for Democratic Persistence, “*Journal of Democracy*” 2018, vol 29, nr. 1, s. 168-173.

²⁸ Gleditsch K., Choung J., *Autocratic transitions and democratization*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association (Montreal, Canada; March 17, 2004).

²⁹ Guliyev F., Post-Soviet Azerbaijan: Transition to Sultanistic Semiauthoritarianism? An Attempt at Conceptualization, “*Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*” 2005, vol 13, nr. 3, s. 393-436.

³⁰ Hellman J., Winners Take all: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions, “*World Politics*” 1998, vol 50, nr. 2, s. 203-234.

³¹ Lawson C., Mexico's Unfinished Transition: Democratization and Authoritarian Enclaves in Mexico, “*Mexican Studies*” 2000, vol 16, nr. 2, s. 267-287.

³² Mendelson S., Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, “*Problems of Post-Communism*” 2001, vol 48, nr. 3, s. 19-27.

³³ Newell J., Carbone M., Italy, the never-ending transition and political science, “*Bulletin of Italian Politics*” 2009, vol 1, nr. 1, s. 1-5.

³⁴ Pasquino G., Studying the never-ending Italian transition, “*European Political Science*” 2006, vol 5, s. 423-433; Pasquino G., Italy: The never-ending transition of a democratic regime, [w:] *Comparative European Politics*, Wyd. Routledge 2008, s. 145-183.

³⁵ Turan I., Turkey's never-ending search for democracy, [w:] *The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics*, Wyd. Routledge 2019, s. 27-36.

³⁶ Turk Z., Central and Eastern Europe in transition: an unfinished process?, “*European View*” 2014, vol 13, nr. 2, s. 199-208.

³⁷ Wright J., Escribà-Folch A., Authoritarian institutions and regime survival: Transitions to democracy and subsequent autocracies, “*British Journal of Political Science*” 2012, vol 42, nr. 2, s. 283-309.

³⁸ Ambrose D., The erosion of democracy: Can we muster enough wisdom to stop it?, [w:] *Applying wisdom to contemporary world problems*, Wyd. Palgrave Macmillan 2019, s. 21-50.

³⁹ Carothers T., The End of the Transition Paradigm, “*Journal of Democracy*” 2002, vol 13, nr. 1, s. 5-21.

⁴⁰ Cerny P., Globalization and the Erosion of Democracy, “*European Journal of Political Research*” 1999, vol 36, nr. 1, s. 1-26.

⁴¹ De Beistegui M., The erosion of democracy, “*Research in Phenomenology*” 2008, vol 38, nr. 2, s. 157-173.

⁴² Gerschewski J., Erosion or decay? Conceptualizing causes and mechanisms of democratic regression, “*Democratization*” 2021, vol 28, nr. 1, s. 43-62.

M. Greven⁴³, A. Grzymala-Busse⁴⁴, P. Guasti⁴⁵, A. Pérez-Linan and D. Altman⁴⁶, D. Rodrik and R. Wacziarg⁴⁷, starting from the 2000s note the processes of “erosion” of democracy in Europe (including in Central and Eastern Europe) and the world, which are actually a manifestation of the fact that previously established and even consolidated democracies will not necessarily remain so (the same) in the future. Finally, such researchers as P. D’Anieri, R. Kravchuk and T. Kuzio⁴⁸, A. Karatnycky⁴⁹, P. Kubicek⁵⁰, T. O’Brien⁵¹, O. Reznik⁵², M. Riabchuk⁵³, L. Shelley⁵⁴, note the peculiarities of political transition in Ukraine, but they rarely correlate the parameters of the transition of political regime and the dynamics/transition of system of government in Ukraine.

Taking into account the ideas of various researchers mentioned above, as well as based on our own assumptions, we consider it appropriate to initially dwell on reflections on what political transition is and why political transition should be studied, in particular within the modernization paradigm as a basic framework regarding the definition of the latter. I would like to start my consideration with some theoretical aspects, particularly regarding the essence of political transition as such. It is well known that the issues of political transition are very popular in Political Science, as it is evidenced by the array of its researchers mentioned above. The questions about political transition are traditionally addressed starting with the so-called “third wave” of democratization, although it is purely logically obvious that they were also inherent in previous “waves” of democratization. Nevertheless, considerations about this became especially obvious on the example of post-communist transformations (in various spheres of socio-political and socio-economic life), which began at the end of the 20th century. A specificity (very strange as for the modernization paradigm) of nowadays is that researchers and practitioners increasingly highlight the fact that the cases of the so-called “never-ending” political/democratic transition still happen. This is even despite the fact that the post-communist countries of Europe were mostly democratized and even integrated into the European Union, and therefore their

⁴³ Greven M., The Erosion of Democracy—The Beginning of the End?, *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory* 2009, vol 13, nr. 1, s. 83-102.

⁴⁴ Grzymala-Busse A., *Populism and the Erosion of Democracy in Poland and in Hungary*, Presented at the conference “Global populisms: A threat to democracy (2017).

⁴⁵ Guasti P., Democratic erosion and democratic resilience in Central Europe during COVID-19, *Czech Journal of International Relations* 2021, vol 56, nr. 4, s. 91-104.

⁴⁶ Pérez-Linan A., Altman D., Explaining the Erosion of Democracy: Can Economic Growth Hinder Democracy?, *V-Dem Working Paper* 2017, nr. 42.

⁴⁷ Rodrik D., Wacziarg R., Do Democratic Transitions Produce Bad Economic Outcomes?, *American Economic Review* 2005, vol 95, nr. 2, s. 50-55.

⁴⁸ D’Anieri P., *Understanding Ukrainian Politics: Power, Politics, and Institutional Design*, Wyd. Routledge 2015; D’Anieri P., Kravchuk R., Kuzio T., *Politics and society in Ukraine*, Wyd. Routledge 2018.; Kuzio T., *Ukraine under Kuchma: Political reform, economic transformation and security policy in independent Ukraine*, Wyd. Springer 2016.; Kuzio T., *Ukraine: State and nation building*, Wyd. Routledge 2002.

⁴⁹ Karatnycky A., Ukraine at the Crossroads, *Journal of Democracy* 1995, vol 6, nr. 1, s. 117-130.

⁵⁰ Kubicek P., Delegative Democracy in Russia and Ukraine, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 1994, vol 27, nr. 4, s. 423-441.

⁵¹ O’Brien T., Problems of political transition in Ukraine: Leadership failure and democratic consolidation, *Contemporary Politics* 2010, vol 16, nr. 4, s. 355-367.

⁵² Reznik O., From the Orange revolution to the revolution of dignity: Dynamics of the protest actions in Ukraine, *East European Politics and Societies* 2016, vol 30, nr. 4, s. 750-765.

⁵³ Riabchuk M., Ukraine: Lessons learned from other Postcommunist transitions, *Orbis* 2008, vol 52, nr. 1, s. 41-64.; Riabchuk M., Ukraine’s ‘muddling through’: National identity and Postcommunist transition, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 2012, vol 45, nr. 3-4, s. 439-446.

⁵⁴ Shelley L., Russia and Ukraine: Transition or tragedy?, [w:] *Menace to Society*, Wyd. Routledge 2017, s. 199-230.

transition should have been completed by the formation of consolidated democracies (with the exception of some new member states of the European Union, which were integrated within the status of semi-consolidated democracies).

Consequently, the first question that arises in this context concerns what transition is and what it is like. If we think about transition within the framework of the modernization paradigm, then it is the process of change of a political regime of a particular country to democracy, which takes place during the period of political modernization of society. Therefore, transition in such a case is synonymous and specified mainly as democratic transition or democratization. Thus, political transition is an interval change from undemocratic or autocratic political regime to a partly or fully democratic political regime. Such a political transition should be supplemented by the processes of legal and political breakdown of institutions and practices of undemocratic (autocratic) political regime. As a result, there initially is an establishment and afterwards strengthening of the network of democratic institutions and practices of civil society, as well as consolidation of the democratic functions and roles of state and institutional structures, etc. In general, this means that political transition under the modernization paradigm is something like a “drive” towards democracy and its constant improvement (in other words, it is about choosing and consolidating democracy instead of autocracy).

Given this, it is quite obvious that democratic transition in such a sense should be finished with establishment of consolidated democracy in a particular country. That is why manifestations and ways of democratic transition under modernization need special attention, particularly in Europe. It is well known that this process took place for a very long time and consistently in Western countries, in particular initially in socio-economic sphere and later in political sphere. Instead, post-communist countries tested and even effectively used the logics of simultaneous transition in different spheres. Therefore, scholars believe that some of these countries have even overcome the so-called “dilemma of simultaneity”, that is the triple or even quadruple post-communist transformation from single-party dominance to competitive and multiparty democracy, from a planned economy to a free market, as well as from an imperial system to a nation-state⁵⁵. The successful result was the integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union in 2004 and 2007 (Croatia did it even later). It was revealed and confirmed by the dynamics of changing their political regimes in the direction of greater democracy.

⁵⁵ Saliba I., Merkel W., Dilemma of Simultaneity, [w:] Merkel W., Kollmorgen R., Wägener H.-J. (eds.), *The Handbook of Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*, Wyd. Oxford University Press 2019, s. 471–479.; Smajljaj A., *Democratization and Neoliberalism in the Balkans: The Dilemma of (In) compatibility of Simultaneity*, Presented at International Balkan Annual Conference (2013); Moszczyńska A., The “dilemma of simultaneity” as a conceptual predictor of post-communist countries of Europe modernization’s logistics: Theoretical and methodological cut, *Studium Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej* 2017, nr. 7, s. 111-123.; Ofie C., Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in Central and Eastern Europe, [w:] *The Political Economy of Transformation*, Wyd. Physica 1994, s. 25-43.; Ofie C., Adler P., Capitalism by democratic design? Democratic theory facing the triple transition in East Central Europe, *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 2004, vol 71, nr. 3, s. 501-528.; Centeno M., Between rocky democracies and hard markets: Dilemmas of the double transition, *Annual Review of Sociology* 1994, vol 20, s. 125-147.; Dobry M., Introduction: When transitology meets simultaneous transitions, [w:] *Democratic and capitalist transitions in Eastern Europe*, Wyd. Springer 2000, s. 1-15.; Kuzio T., Transition in post-communist states: Triple or quadruple?, *Politics* 2001, vol 21, nr. 3, s. 168-177.

This can be confirmed by the Table 1, which is created on the basis of data of the “Freedom in the World” project by the organization “Freedom House”⁵⁶. In addition, similar conclusions and results can be obtained based on the application of other top comparative projects, in particular “Polity 4 or 5”⁵⁷ and “Democracy Index”⁵⁸ by the EIU. Thus, the project “Freedom in the World” that we used proposes to rank political regimes based on the evaluation and comparison of political rights and civil liberties. According to this project, the lowest score means the highest level of freedom and democracy, and the highest score means, on the contrary, the lowest level or even no freedom. Using the project data, we present the situation and quantitative indicators regarding freedom or democracy in Central and Eastern European countries at the beginning of post-communist transition (in particular, in 1991), on the eve of joining the EU (in particular, in 2003; although some sample countries entered the EU later, than in 2004), in the first year after the beginning of global financial and economic crisis (in 2009), as well as by means of the latest data as of 2021 (estimated in 2022). In addition, the situation in Ukraine is also presented here, but it will be described in more details below. In general, a result was obtained that demonstrates the success of democratic transition in the region on average. However, I suggest paying attention to the Table 1 data highlighted in grey.

Table 1. The dynamics of changing political regimes in Central and Eastern European countries and Ukraine (1991–2021)

Country	1991 (start of post-communist transition)	2003 (before joining the EU)	2009 (after beginning of global financial crisis)	2021 (the latest data)
Bulgaria	2,5	1,5	2,0	2,0
Croatia	3,5	2,0	1,5	1,5
Czech Republic	2,0	1,5	1,0	1,0
Estonia	2,5	1,5	1,0	1,0
Hungary	2,0	1,5	1,0	3,0
Latvia	2,5	1,5	1,5	1,5
Lithuania	2,5	1,5	1,0	1,5
Poland	2,0	1,5	1,0	2,0
Romania	5,0	2,0	2,0	2,0
Slovakia	2,0	1,5	1,0	1,0
Slovenia	2,5	1,0	1,0	1,5
Ukraine	3,0	4,0	2,5	3,0

Źródło: *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

What stands out from these data in Table 1, in addition to everything mentioned above, is that the expected completion of political transition in the direction to consolidated democracy in Central

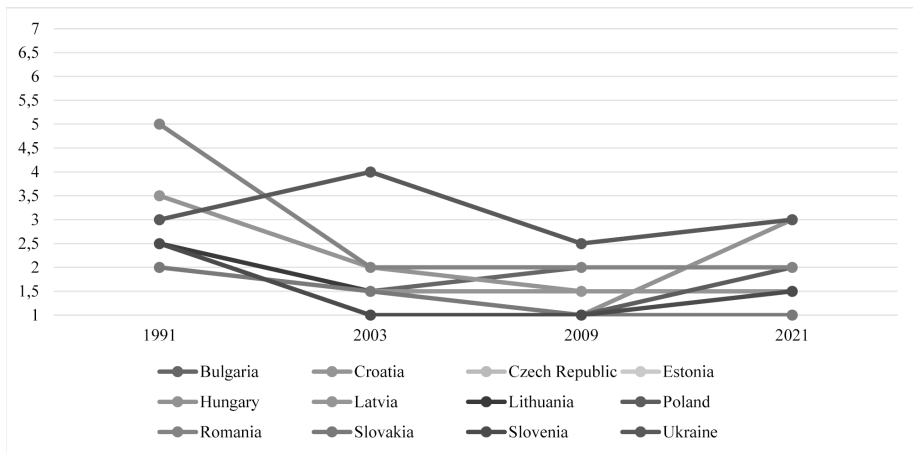
⁵⁶ *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

⁵⁷ *Polity 5 Annual Time-Series, 1946-2018*, Systemic Peace, źródło: <https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

⁵⁸ *Democracy Index 2021: The China challenge*, The EUI, źródło: <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

and Eastern European countries, which was very often talked about before and immediately after the accession to the European Union, is sometimes not the “end” at all. Since there are regressive processes and something like deconsolidation or “erosion” of democracy, for example in Hungary and partly in Poland, as well as some decrease in freedom and democracy in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia. Even more complex processes are the characteristics of Ukraine, where the quality of democracy is either decreasing or increasing, but this country is almost always positioned as partly free⁵⁹ (we will discuss this in details later). All these can be traced from the proposed Graph 1, where the previous data are highlighted graphically and in dynamics.

Graph 1. The dynamics of changing political regimes in Central and Eastern European countries and Ukraine (1991–2021), “Freedom House” estimate



Źródło: *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, Źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

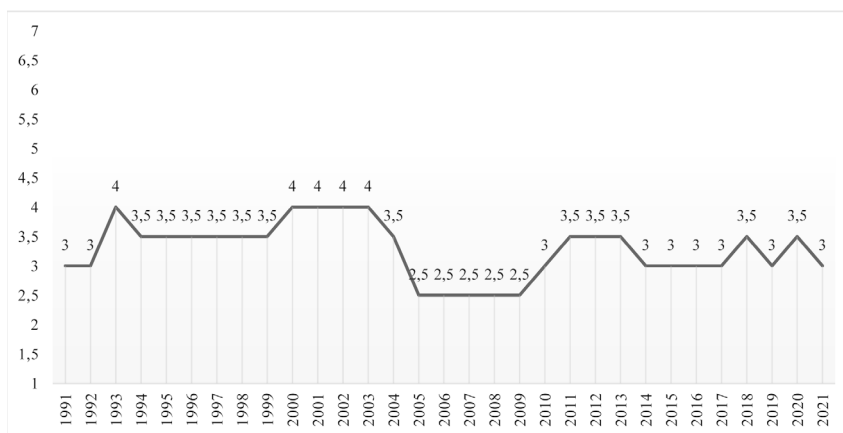
Then what is “never-ending” political transition and can transition at all be understood differently and within other paradigms, in particular transitological and institutional ones? On the one hand, “never-ending” political transition is a temporal prolongation of measures to establish a network of democratic institutions and civil society practices. Nevertheless, on the other hand, “never-ending” political transition is about the inhibition of the processes of consolidation of democracy, primarily due to opposition of the ruling elite. Consequently, political transition within the transitological and institutional paradigms should be understood not necessarily as the transition of a political regime to democracy, but generally as an interval transition from one political regime to another, even within the subtypes of this regime. As a result of political transition, the established or institutionalized political regimes of the past

⁵⁹ *Ukraine: Freedom in the World 2022*, Freedom House, Źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-world/2022> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

are rejected or denied, and new configurations of the rules are constructed instead. However, it also happens that a particular country “migrates” and “varies” between different options of one and the same political regime or between different dynamics of their development.

In this context, the case of Ukraine is of especial interest. Let’s visually look at the dynamics of political regime in Ukraine in 1991–2021, particularly on the basis of the same “Freedom in the World” project by “Freedom House” (see Graph 2 below). What can we see? The best indicators – at the level of 2,5 points and the status of the so-called free country – Ukraine had in 2005–2009, during the presidency of V. Yushchenko. In all other time periods, Ukraine has been characterized as the so-called partly free country, although it is designated as an electoral democracy by the “Freedom in the World” project. At the same time, the worst indicators – at the level of 4 points – were during the second term of L. Kuchma’s presidency in 2000–2004. It was after this and as a result of this that the so-called “Orange Revolution” took place in Ukraine, which became a factor for democratization and democratic transformation of Ukraine. Quite similarly, we notice fluctuations in the level of freedom and democracy in Ukraine in relation to each president of this country. Therefore, it was similarly one of the main reasons for the so-called “Revolution of Dignity” in 2013–2014.

Graph 2. The dynamics of the transition of political regime in Ukraine (1991–2021), “Freedom House” estimate



Źródło: *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].; *Ukraine: Freedom in the World 2022*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-world/2022> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

Therefore, the level of democracy in Ukraine increases in one case, and decreases due to an increase in the level of autocracy in the other case. This reveals a kind of “never-ending” transition of political regime in Ukraine, but simultaneously prompts the search for the reasons of the former, including institutional ones. If we do not go into details, we could call Ukrainian political regime a hybrid one throughout the entire political history of independent Ukrainian state since 1991. However, in my

opinion, this is not the case, since this regime is volatile one and fluctuates from one option to another, particularly more or less democratic, etc. There are lots of factors that influence the explanation of one or another type of political regime and the nature of political transition in each country, including Ukraine. These are actually political and administrative factors, the level of electoral participation and competitiveness, the guarantee and implementation of human and citizen rights and freedoms, the level of corruption, socio-economic indicators, etc. However, I believe that the main thing in this context is something else, as well as something that primarily and initially unites the aforementioned factors. That is, something more systemic that follows from the very definition of political regime as such. It is common knowledge that political regime is a way of obtaining and exercising political powers, but rights and freedoms go further instead. I am convinced that the systemic institutional framework of a certain country, in particular inter-institutional relations in the triangle “the head of state – governmental cabinet – parliament”, has a decisive influence on the political regime in this regard. Therefore, it is appropriate here to appeal to the category of system of government. Systems of government can be various, including presidential, semi-presidential or mixed, parliamentary and even semi-parliamentary ones. Presidential system of government (presidentialism) is characterized by a popularly elected for a fixed term president, as well as by presidential administration or cabinet (with or without prime minister) not collectively responsible to parliament, but to president (as in Brazil, Cyprus, Indonesia, Mexico, Singapore, Turkey, the USA, etc.). In turn, parliamentary system of government (parliamentarism) has a non-popularly elected for a fixed term president, as well as a prime minister and cabinet who are collectively responsible solely to parliament, but not to president (as in Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Latvia, etc.). Finally, semi-presidential system of government (semi-presidentialism) is characterized by a popularly elected for a fixed term president, as well as by prime minister and cabinet who are collectively responsible at least to parliament or both to parliament and president (as in Finland, France, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Ukraine)⁶⁰. For each country in political transition, the choice of system of government is probably the most difficult and important task. Its solution – primarily through the adoption or revision of constitution – somehow affects the entire framework of political system, the political process and socio-political life, and thus a future political regime and nature of political transition.

However, the case of Ukraine is very specific even in this context, since this country chose semi-presidentialism, but this choice was incomplete one. Compared to other Central and Eastern European countries, Ukraine started to solve the task of choosing its system of government very late. Since its constitution was adopted only in 1996, but not in the early 1990s as in most other cases in the region. At the same time, Ukraine turned to the option of the so-called semi-presidential or mixed republic, which it has consistently used since 1996. This constitutional system of government is characterized by the position of popularly elected for a fixed term president, as well as by the institution of

⁶⁰ *List of presidential, parliamentary and other countries*, The semi-presidential one, źródło: <http://www.semipresidentialism.com/list-of-presidential-parliamentary-and-other-countries/> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].; *Up-to-date list of semi-presidential countries with dates*, The semi-presidential one, źródło: <http://www.semipresidentialism.com/up-to-date-list-of-semi-presidential-countries-with-dates/> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

cabinet headed by prime minister, who are collectively responsible (or may be dismissed) primarily or necessarily to parliament (and therefore possibly both to president and parliament). A similar system of government in Ukraine was factually used before the adoption of the constitution, although it was rather weakly regulated. Instead, the only exception was the period of 1995–1996, when Ukraine was a temporary case of presidential republic. At that time, the president simultaneously acted both as the head of state and the head of the executive, and cabinet was mainly responsible exclusively to the former, but not to parliament. However, I do believe that this hides the biggest and the most significant problem and the reason for the never-ending political transition in Ukraine. Since the choice of semi-presidentialism in Ukraine has not become a complete and accomplished fact. At least as a result of the fact that this system of government changed from one option to another and vice versa, and this happened more or less simultaneously with the change of Ukrainian presidents⁶¹.

I don't want to go into details, but there are several classifications of semi-presidential system of government that demonstrate that it should not be viewed as a single entity, but rather as a mixed category⁶². Nevertheless, it is appropriate to refer to the most used and widespread classification of semi-presidentialism into such options as president-parliamentary and premier-presidential systems. The latter is mostly called parliamentary-presidential system in Ukrainian Jurisprudence and Political Science. Nominally, these two types are options of semi-presidentialism, since they are distinguished within its definition and do not interrupt it⁶³. Instead, the main difference between them is who (from a constitutional point of view and nominal regulations) can dismiss cabinet headed by prime minister. It is only parliament in the case of premier-presidential system or both parliament and president in the case of president-parliamentary system. Thus, it follows from this that changing even one article of constitution (which talks about the possibilities and subjects of cabinet or prime minister resignation) can mean the change in the format of semi-presidentialism (see Table 2 for details on the example of Ukrainian semi-presidentialism).

It is clear that Ukrainian semi-presidentialism is cyclical and volatile one. For example, during 1991–1995 – the time of presidency of L. Kravchuk and partly L. Kuchma – Ukraine factually (before the adoption of its constitution) used president-parliamentarism with dual collective responsibility of cabinet and a peculiar balance of powers between the president and parliament. In 1996–2006 – during the presidency of L. Kuchma – Ukraine also used a president-parliamentary system, but in practice it was characterized by a much stronger president.

⁶¹ Lytvyn V., Theory and Typology, Challenges and Consequences of Semi-Presidentialism Within Republican Form of Government and Prospects for its Reformation in Ukraine, *"The Annals of the University of Bucharest: Political Science Series"* 2016, vol 18, nr. 1, s. 35-65.; Lytvyn V., The Stages of Installation and Institutional, Procedural, Political and Behavioral Attributes of Semi-Presidentialism in Poland and Ukraine: Comparative Analysis, *"Studium Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej"* 2017, nr. 8, s. 15-30.

⁶² Lytvyn V., Conditionality, factors and indicators of heterogeneity and typologization of semi-presidential system of government, *"Studium Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej"* 2020, nr. 13, s. 31-55.

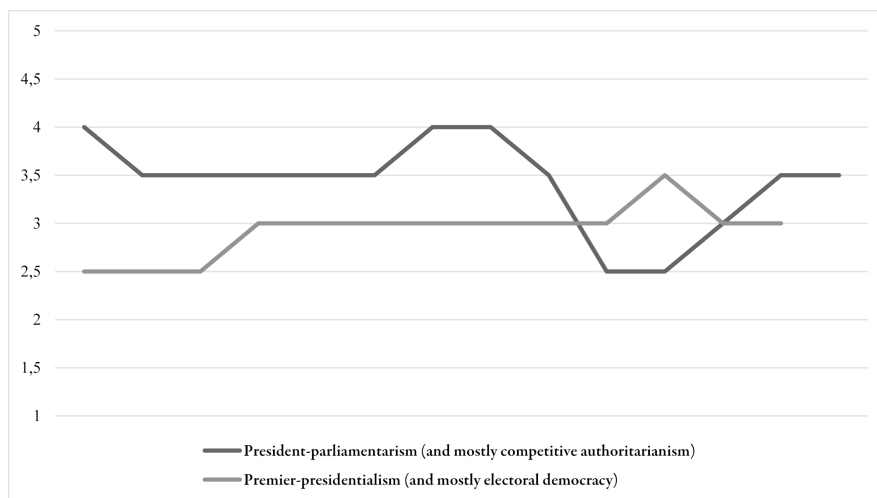
⁶³ Elgie R., Premier-Presidentialism, President-Parliamentarism, and Democratic Performance: Indicative Case Studies, [w:] Elgie R. (ed.), *Semi-Presidentialism: Sub-Types and Democratic Performance*, Wyd. Oxford University Press 2011, s. 157–185.; Elgie R., Semi-Presidentialism and Comparative Institutional Engineering, [w:] Elgie R. (ed.), *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, Wyd. Oxford University Press 1999, s. 281–299.; Shugart M., Carey J., *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1992.; Shugart M. Semi-presidential systems: Dual executive and mixed authority patterns, *"French Politics"* 2005, vol 3, nr. 3, s. 323-351.

Table 2. Volatility of the options of semi-presidential system of government in Ukraine (1991–2022)

Time period	Constitutional system of government (factual logic)	Type of semi-presidentialism	President (date of office)	Prime minister (date of office)	Level of freedom / «Freedom in the World» (less = > democracy)
August – December 1991	Parliamentary (parliamentary)	–	–	Fokin (24.08.1991 – 01.10.1992)	3.0
December 1991 – June 1995	Semi-presidential (balanced)	President-parliamentarism	Kravchuk (05.12.1991 – 19.07.1994)	Kuchma (13.10.1992 – 21.09.1993) Zvyagilskiy (22.09.1993 – 15.06.1994)	3.0 4.0 3.5 3.5 3.5
June 1995 – June 1996	Presidential (presidential)	–	Kuchma 1, 2 (19.07.1994 – 23.01.2005)	Masol (16.06.1994 – 08.06.1995) Marchuk (08.06.1995 – 27.05.1996) Lazarenko 1 (28.05.1996 – 05.07.1996)	3.5 3.5 3.5
June 1996 – January 2006	Semi-presidential (presidential)	President-parliamentarism		Lazarenko 2 (11.07.1996 – 02.07.1997) Pustovoyrenko (16.07.1997 – 22.12.1999) Yushchenko (30.12.1999 – 28.04.2001) Kinakh (29.05.2001 – 16.11.2002) Yanukovich 1 (21.11.2002 – 05.01.2005) Tymoshenko 1 (04.02.2005 – 08.09.2005)	3.5 4.0 4.0 3.5 2.5
January 2006 – October 2010	Semi-presidential (balanced)	Premier-presidentialism	Yushchenko (23.01.2005 – 25.02.2010)	Yekhanurov (22.09.2005 – 04.08.2006) Yanukovich 2 (04.08.2006 – 16.10.2006) Yanukovich 3 (17.10.2006 – 18.12.2007) Tymoshenko 2 (18.12.2007 – 03.03.2010)	2.5 2.5 2.5 2.5 3.0
October 2010 – February 2014	Semi-presidential (presidential)	President-parliamentarism	Yanukovich (25.02.2010 – 22.02.2014)	Azarov 1 (11.03.2010 – 09.12.2010) Azarov 2 (09.12.2010 – 03.12.2012) Azarov 3 (24.12.2012 – 28.01.2014)	3.0 3.5 3.5
February 2014 – until now	Semi-presidential (balanced)	Premier-presidentialism	Turchynov (acting) (23.02.2014 – 07.06.2014) Poroshenko (07.06.2014 – 20.05.2019) Zelenskiy (20.05.2019 – until now)	Yatsenyuk 1 (27.02.2014 – 27.11.2014) Yatsenyuk 2 (02.12.2014 – 01.09.2015) Yatsenyuk 3 (01.09.2015 – 17.02.2016) Yatsenyuk 4 (18.02.2016 – 14.04.2016) Groysman (14.04.2016 – 29.08.2019) Honcharuk (29.08.2019 – 04.03.2020) Shmyhal (04.03.2020 – until now)	3.0 3.0 3.0 3.0 3.0 3.5 3.0 3.0

After the adoption of changes to constitution in 2004 and their implementation from 2006 to 2010 – during the presidency of V. Yushchenko – Ukraine shifted to premier-presidential system with collective responsibility of cabinet solely to parliament. As a result, the powers of president were significantly limited in favor of prime minister. However, the next president of Ukraine V. Yanukovich did not like this and “pushed” in 2010 through the Constitutional Court of Ukraine a decision on the unconstitutionality of changing the system of government in the past. As a result, semi-presidentialism in Ukraine until 2014 was again implemented through the option of president-parliamentary system, where the president once again prevailed. The Ukrainian semi-presidential system of government made another and the last turn after the “Revolution of Dignity” in 2014, once again becoming a premier-presidential republic. Accordingly, it follows that within the framework of never-ending political transition, Ukraine is characterized by never-ending institutional transition. To show this, let’s superimpose the dynamics of political regime transition in Ukraine on the dynamics of institutional transition or cyclical change of systems of government in this country. This is indicated on Graph 3 and Table 3. What can we see?

Graph 3. Never-ending transition story: correlation of hybrid regime dynamics and types of semi-presidentialism in Ukraine (1991–2021)



Źródło: *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].; *Ukraine: Freedom in the World 2022*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-world/2022> [odczyt: 01.12.2022]; Table 2.

As it is evidenced, there is a direct relationship between the level of democratization or autocratization of Ukrainian political regime and the choice of president-parliamentary or premier-presidential options of semi-presidentialism. This directly proves that hybrid political regime in Ukraine

in 1991–2021 is not a monolithic option of a completed political transition. Since president-parliamentary system in Ukraine (especially during the presidencies of L. Kuchma and V. Yanukovych) contributed more to centralization and monopolization of power, as well as autocratization of the hybrid political regime. Some scholars even called this format of a hybrid political regime as electoral or competitive autocracy⁶⁴. Instead, premier-presidential option of semi-presidentialism (especially during the presidency of V. Yushchenko, as well as partly P. Poroshenko and even V. Zelenskyi) contributed (at least according to “Freedom in the World” project⁶⁵) to decentralization and demopolization of power and thus to democratization of the hybrid political regime in Ukraine. The latter is typically characterized as an electoral democracy (see Table 3 for averaged scores).

Table 3. Correlation of the hybrid regime dynamics and types of semi-presidentialism in Ukraine (1991–2021), “Freedom House” estimate and own averaged scores

	The average scores of freedoms / “Freedom in the World” (less = > democracy)
President-parliamentarism	3,43
Premier-presidentialism	2,92

Źródło: *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].; *Ukraine: Freedom in the World 2022*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-world/2022> [odczyt: 01.12.2022]; Table 2; Graph 3.

This puts on the agenda the main problem to be solved within the never-ending transition story in Ukraine. The fact is that Ukraine has always been characterized by the desire of presidents to dominate the executive and the political system as a whole. This, in turn, largely autocratizes the political regime of Ukraine and is one of the reasons for the incomplete democratic transition in this country. Thus, the construction of democratic country in Ukraine must take place through the correction and reformation of its system of government. Even regardless of the strength of presidents, prime ministers and parliaments, etc. On the one hand, the goal should be to correct the defects of repeated “privatization” of constitutional development and a kind of “revolutionary constitutionalism” in Ukraine. On the other hand, attention should be paid to growing importance of the institution of parliament within formation and responsibility of cabinets and in determining the key political actor in the executive. In general, this should gradually direct political regime and system of government in Ukraine to the European model of parliamentary democracy, where the primary role in controlling the executive is given to parliament, but not president. The actual systems of government in Central and Eastern European countries are the proof of this. Since they have never tried president-parliamentary system, but instead use either parliamentarism or premier-presidential option of semi-presidentialism. Given this, their transitional mistakes and problems are rare and less complicated than in Ukraine.

⁶⁴ Levitsky S., Way L., Elections without democracy: The rise of competitive authoritarianism, *Journal of Democracy* 2002, vol 13, nr. 2, s. 51–65.

⁶⁵ *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, źródło: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> [odczyt: 01.12.2022].

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