

Public Policy Analyses as Nonlinear Tool for Assessing Probability of Democratic Development

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There are two traditional ways of assessing political regime transformation: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down approach usually means modernization driven by political elites. This type of transformation is, usually, evolutionary, slow and, hopefully, more consistent and lasting process. Bottom-up transformation, instead, supposes that broad masses of citizens are involved into politics and make revolutionary change (last decade events of this kind in post-Soviet states were known as “colored” or “orange” revolutions). We argue that this “traditional approach” may be called “linear”, as it suggests a “linear connection” between “two extremes” – as top-down and bottom-up regime transformation drivers (either driven by elites or by masses).

In our paper we claim that such “linear” approach is too simplified and inadequate, as this process is much more complex. We need to take into account a lot of political actors, social factors and institutional conditions that influence political transformation and democratic development, that make this “picture” far more diverse, than one to be depicted on “one line of transformation” (from “authoritarianism” to “democracy”, as transition theory teaches)

That is why we suggest to use different tools of assessing transformation that begin with description of political transformation in multidimensional way.

Multidimensional model of political transformation allows to see political change not in simple – linear – way, but changing differently in different vectors.

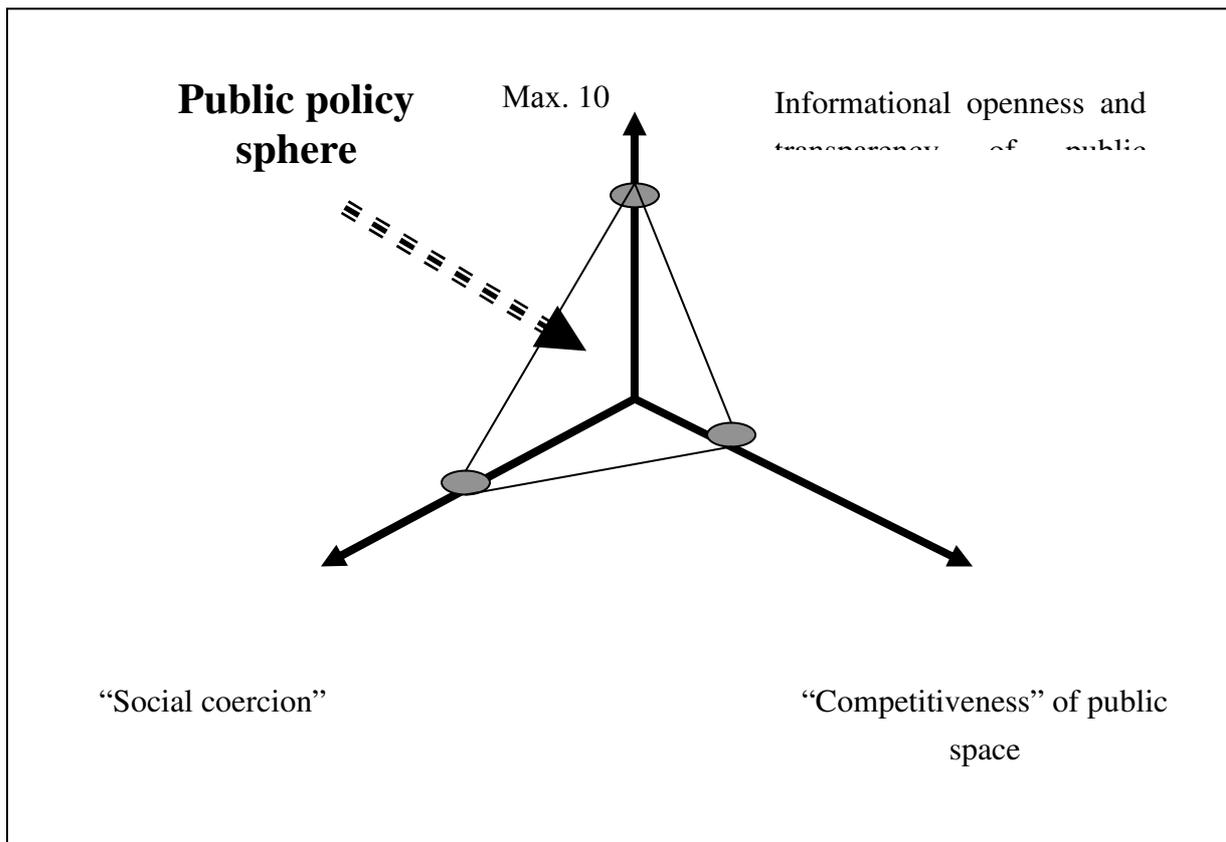
To create such a model we used three different components: a) concept of political sphere of J.Habermas, b) R.Dahl's "vector analyses" approach and c) civil society "diamond" as an assessment tool, developed by CIVICUS project.

In the paper we analyze cases of political transformations in Ukraine, Russia and Kyrgyz Republic we will show how to describe political space in different axes. This method allows to develop much more adequate tool for both – analyzing drivers of "revolutionary" political transformations, and forecasting probable "predominant vector" of their democratic development.

Public Sphere of J.Habermas and Public Policy Space as new definitions to study public policy and democratic development allow to differentiate specific features of this phenomena: its usual description as Sphere and Space, changing borders of this Space that depend on changing legal framework, including rules and restrictions of this space for openness and transparency, and probability of this Space transformation in - at least - three different vectors. Public Policy sphere and space can be studied using quantitative indicators for its measurement and graphic representation (see Picture 1).

We can represent Public policy sphere as 3-dimensional space. Y-line means informational openness and transparency of public policy, it can be measured by such indicators as number of media actors and their freedom from Government control, ability of citizens to find adequate information on the issues of their concern. X-line means "competitiveness" of public space and can be measured by number of political actors, their resources and their opportunity to participate in policy making and level of their influence on decision making process. Z-line means "social coercion" and can be measured by coercion of major political and social interests, level of different social group interests' adequately addressed in policy decisions, to which extent the interests of "masses" are met, or – to which extent "masses" are satisfied by those decisions (including the cases of strong use of propaganda and brain-washing, - if only it "works").

Picture 1.

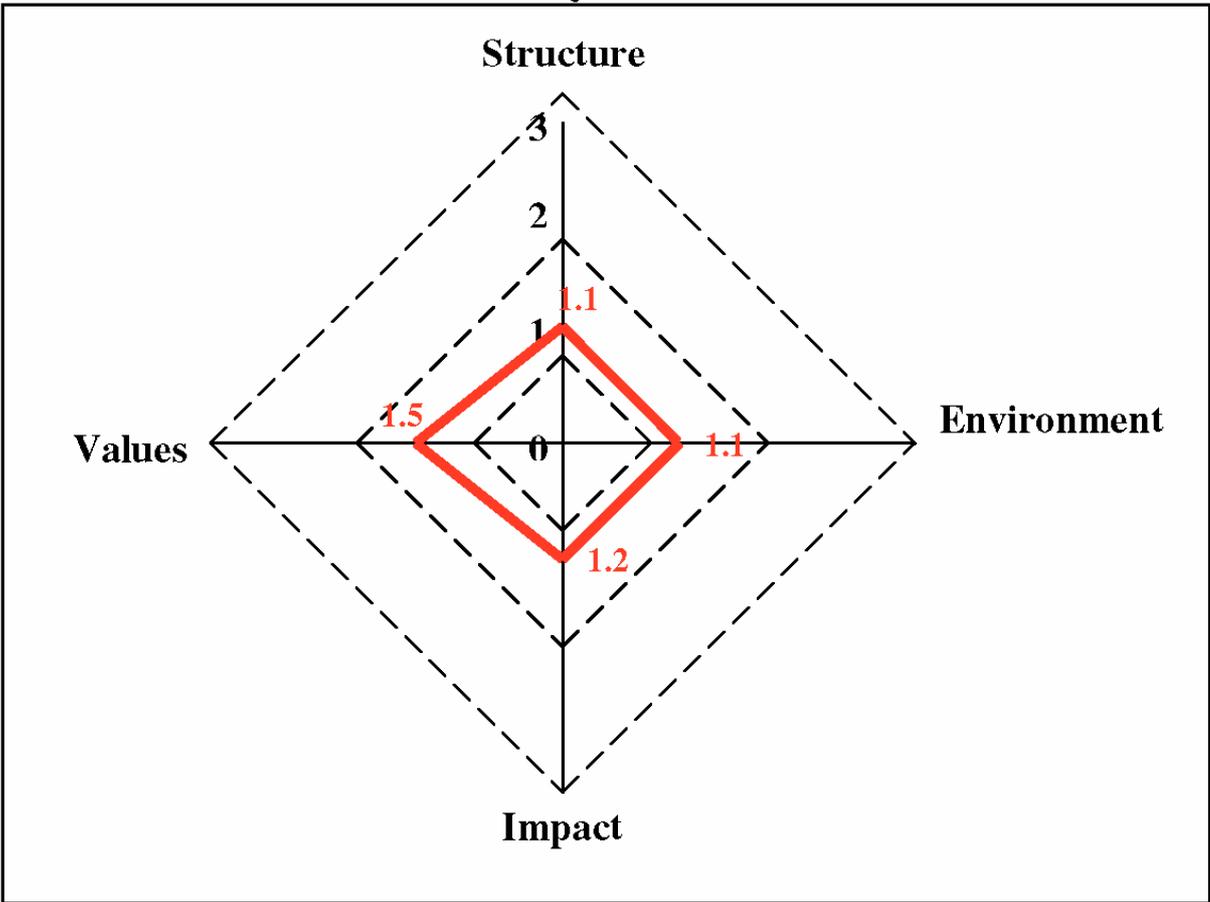


The CIVICUS Civil Society Index carried out by the CSI as part of the international Civil Society Index (CSI) project coordinated by “CIVICUS” – “World Alliance for Citizen Participation”. The CSI is a comprehensive needs assessment and action-planning tool for civil society actors at country level, which is currently being implemented in more than 50 countries around the world.

At the core of the project is the concept of civil society, which is defined as “an arena, situated for the most part outside family, state and market, in which people voluntarily interact for the promotion of both their own and public interests and the common good”. This definition includes a large number of diverse entities, including voluntary organizations, professional bodies, trade unions, local informal and formal community and sports organizations. Stakeholder Assessment Group (SAG) scored 70 indicators, which are grouped under four dimensions: structure, environment, values and impact. The indicators are a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators, and each one is scored on a scale from 0 to 3. The scores

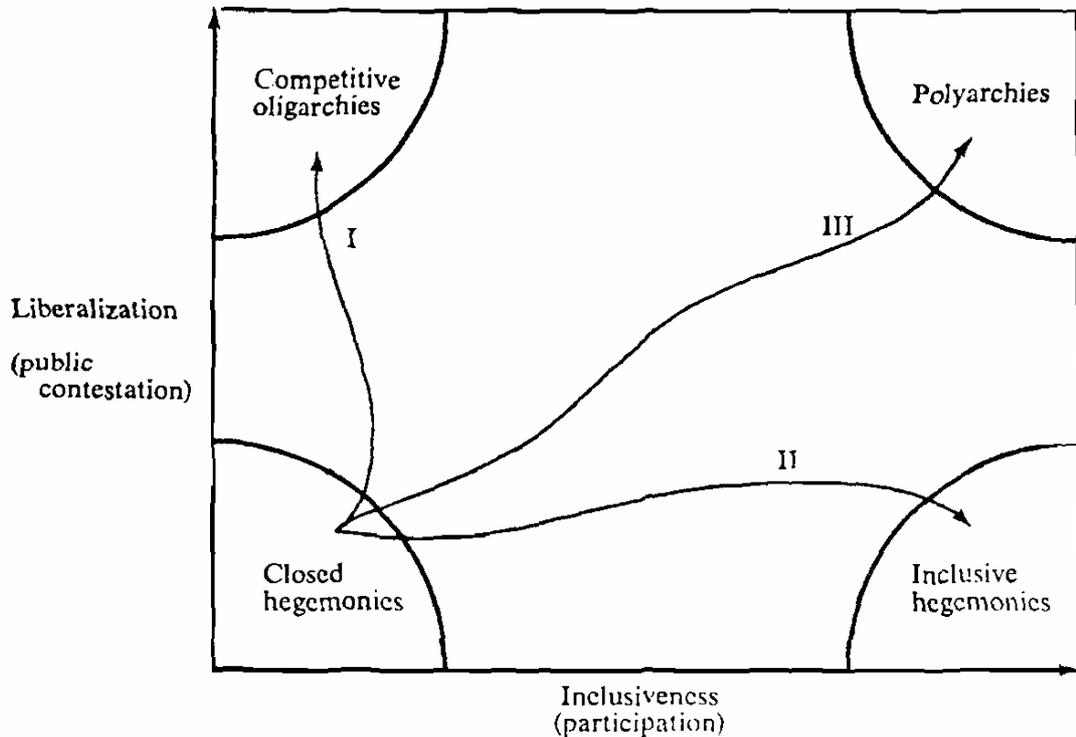
are then averaged to give an overall score between 0 and 3 for the four key dimensions of civil society: structure, environment, values and impact. Together these four scores are used to plot the visual representation of civil society, the Civil Society Diamond.

Picture 2.



R. Dahl argues that democratization is “made up of at least two dimensions: public contestation (extent of permissible opposition, political competition) and the right to participate (inclusiveness)”. This space allow Dahl to speak about four types of political regimes and kinds of change in regimes (see Picture 3).

Picture 3¹.



By combination of all those three methods of the “visual description” of the complex phenomena of the society and the social space to the analysis and measurement of change in Public Policy, Civil Society and Political Regimes we suggest a more adequate tool to assess and analyze political transformation in multidimensional way.

¹ “Let me call a regime near the lower left corner of figure a closed hegemony. If a hegemonic regime shifts upward, as along path I, then it is moving toward greater public contestation. Without stretching language too far, one could say that a change in this direction involves the liberalization of a regime; alternatively one might say that the regime becomes more competitive. If a regime changes to provide greater participation, as along path II, it might be said to change toward greater popularization, or that it is becoming inclusive. A regime might change along one dimension and not the other. If we call a regime near the upper left corner a competitive oligarchy, then path I represents a change from a closed hegemony to a competitive oligarchy. But a closed hegemony might also become more inclusive without liberalizing, i.e., without increasing the opportunities for public contestation, as along path II. In this case the regime changes from a closed to an inclusive hegemony. Democracy might be conceived of as lying at the upper right corner. But since democracy may involve more dimensions than the two in figure, and since (in my view) no large system in the real world is fully democratized, I prefer to call real world systems that are closest to the upper right corner polyarchies. Any change in a regime that moves it upward and to the right, for example along path III, may be said to represent some degree of democratization. Polyarchies, then, may be thought of as relatively (but incompletely) democratized regimes, or, to put it in another way, polyarchies are regimes that have been substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation” (Dahl R. Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 1971. P.1-48).

We begin our analyses with the multi-vector description of “starting point” of democratic transformation, f.ex. “Closed Hegemony”, as they are very different in every country, using the picture of “public space” and of “diamond tool” – to see, what are the qualities of this “hegemony”, how is it structured. Then we explore a most probable vector of democratic development from this starting point, not only assessing Liberalization and Inclusiveness but using other indicators in different dimensions of Public Policy Sphere (informational openness and transparency of public policy, opportunity of different political actor’s participation and level of their influence on decision making process, level of different social group interests’ inclusion in decision making process) and of Civil Society development (structure, environment, values and impact).

According to our case studies and using the “complex non-linear tools” we argue, that we could forecast that in short-and-medium-term vector of political transformations in Ukraine is very probably turning to path I (Competitive Oligarchy), in Russia – to path II (Inclusive Hegemony), in Kyrgyz Republic - to path III (Polyarchy).

But in long-term perspectives it can be changed and to forecast this change we have to monitor all analyzed indicators and parameters of Public Policy Sphere, of Civil Society development and of Political Regimes for a longer period of time.

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