






REVIEW

Historical development of political structures in the context of the modern russian-ukrainian war: key vectors

Desarrollo histórico de las estructuras políticas en el contexto de la moderna guerra ruso-ucraniana: vectores clave

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the study aims to analyze the evolution of political institutions in Ukraine. Hence, the main objective is to analyze the evolution of political institutions in Ukraine within the framework of the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, with an emphasis on the main vectors of change and their impact on the country's political system.

Method: the research employed content analysis, thematic analysis, and coding to systematically examine relevant scientific literature and other sources on the topic. These methods were applied to identify and categorize Ukraine's political structures' main themes and transformations.

Results: the results determined that the most significant changes in the system of development of political structures took place after the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, which necessitated systemic changes in the political organization of Ukraine. It was also established that Russian aggression influenced active transformations in the political structures of Ukraine, in particular, the modernization of the state apparatus, the growing role of civil society, active international support, decentralization of power, and strengthening of national identity.

Conclusions: the conclusions also emphasize that there are challenges related to the crisis of confidence in parliamentarism and the party system. However, the study recognized that the transformations that took place as a result of Russian aggression created new opportunities for the development of the state body and political structures of Ukraine.

Keywords: Political Structures; Russian-Ukrainian War; Political History; History of Ukraine; Influence; Changes.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el objetivo del estudio es analizar la evolución de las instituciones políticas en Ucrania en el marco de la moderna guerra ruso-ucraniana, haciendo hincapié en los principales vectores de cambio y su impacto en el sistema político del país.

Método: la investigación empleó el análisis de contenido, el análisis temático y la codificación para examinar sistemáticamente la literatura científica pertinente y otras fuentes sobre el tema. Estos métodos se aplicaron para identificar y categorizar los principales temas y transformaciones de las estructuras políticas de Ucrania.

Resultados: los resultados determinaron que los cambios más significativos en el sistema de desarrollo de las estructuras políticas se produjeron después de la Revolución de la Dignidad y el inicio de la invasión rusa de

Crimea en 2014, lo que hizo necesarios cambios sistémicos en la organización política de Ucrania. También se estableció que la agresión rusa influyó en las transformaciones activas de las estructuras políticas de Ucrania, en particular, la modernización del aparato estatal, el creciente papel de la sociedad civil, el apoyo internacional activo, la descentralización del poder y el fortalecimiento de la identidad nacional.

Conclusiones: las conclusiones también destacan que existen retos relacionados con la crisis de confianza en el parlamentarismo y el sistema de partidos. Sin embargo, el estudio reconoce que las transformaciones que tuvieron lugar como consecuencia de la agresión rusa crearon nuevas oportunidades para el desarrollo del cuerpo estatal y las estructuras políticas de Ucrania.

Palabras clave: Estructuras Políticas; Guerra Ruso-Ucraniana; Historia Política; Historia de Ucrania; Influencia; Cambios.

INTRODUCTION

The long process of development of political elites and structures in Ukraine is characterized by tangible changes, especially taking into account the current realities of the deployment of Russian aggression against Ukraine. An important factor in the context of modern war is the military factor, which will definitely have its influence on the functioning of political life, the evolution of the social system, etc. Such an influence on the internal political dynamics of Ukraine's development will therefore have a deep impact, however, the birth and formation of new elites through the prism of external challenges is not a novelty for Ukraine: the historical process of such a phenomenon is quite lengthy and has been partially studied.⁽¹⁾ Besides, the Russian-Ukrainian war is such a powerful conflict in modern times, which will have a decisive influence on the further future of Ukrainian politics, that the Ukrainian elites did not know.⁽²⁾ The war, which began in 2014 with the occupation of Crimea by Russian troops, turned into an armed confrontation in the eastern regions of Ukraine, and in 2022 turned into a full-scale military confrontation with the troops of the Russian regime, which until then tried to give the appearance of "legality" to its actions.⁽³⁾ The new vectors of activity of political structures became a reaction to the external challenge to national security and the survival of Ukrainians, which will stimulate further structural transformations.

The main research issue to which the proposed study is devoted is the examination of the main stages of historical transformations of Ukrainian political structures through the prism of the effects of the modern war with Russian troops and opposition to the Kremlin regime in the diplomatic arena. Special attention, under such circumstances, will be devoted to key changes in various vectors. First of all, we are talking about reforming the systems of the state administration apparatus, the growth of the role of civil society in political life and the social field in general, the important role of international support for the organization of state steps of various directions, the adaptation of legal and political institutions to the new realities of life during martial law. Also, the historical impact of the war on the political tradition is distinguished by the actualization of the topics of decentralization, local governance, strengthening of the features of national identity and rallying around common interests.

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war has influenced the transformation of a number of political and social factors that have been forming for many decades. Contemporary literature has studied various issues of the war's development, however, from the perspective of historical evolution, development of national identity, and the impact of the war on domestic and foreign policy. One of the important issues addressed in the scientific literature is the historical origins of war and the formation of national identity.^(1, 2, 3) For example, T. Kuzio⁽²⁾ characterized in detail the influence of Russian nationalism on the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war. At the same time, according to O. Hurska & I. Parshyn⁽⁴⁾, historical memory is an important component in the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, and according to the authors, it is important to form it at the stage of education.⁽⁴⁾ In addition, A. Blau analyzed the use of the history of political thought for modern geopolitical purposes. The author also emphasized the dangers and potential of this approach.⁽⁵⁾ Also, according to E-S Zehelein⁽⁶⁾, historical heritage is important in modern political culture and government decision-making.

L. Derviş described the problem of the transformation of geopolitical perceptions within the framework of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its impact on future regional relations. It is important that the author analyzed how the war changes geopolitical perspectives and affects regional politics, which is important for studying changes in political structures.⁽⁷⁾

A. Dolzhenko described the key preconditions of the hybrid war between Ukraine and Russia, but the author drew attention to a number of economic, political, and information aspects.⁽⁸⁾ M. Dunford described the main causes of the crisis in Ukraine, drawing attention to the historical, political, and economic factors that led to the escalation of the conflict.⁽⁹⁾

T. Datsiuk et al. (2023) identified the role of historical politics and its impact on the development of the

Russian-Ukrainian war. The authors also analyzed key historical events and their political consequences.⁽¹⁰⁾

T.Halytska-Didukh et al. investigated the relationship between public history and historical politics of Ukraine and its influence on the formation of the historical consciousness of society in the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war.⁽¹¹⁾

At the same time, D. Thomas offered a research observation and analysis of the current war between Russia and Ukraine through the prism of an external observer. The value of this work lies in emphasizing the geopolitical and social consequences of the war.⁽¹²⁾ For the theoretical base, other studies are also important, in which the methodological toolkit is formed.^(13,14,15) M. Herpen (2016) described the impact of Putin's propaganda machine on Russia's current foreign policy.⁽¹⁶⁾ These works identify different aspects of the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war, with the authors mainly focusing on the analysis of foreign policy structures and the development of Ukrainian national identity. However, this paper will try to take a broader approach to the problem and provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical development of political structures within the framework of the current Russian-Ukrainian war. Among the list of important tasks that form the modern challenges of Russian aggression, there is a special emphasis on the extent to which the war has a tangible impact on the modern organization of political structures.^(17,18,19) For this, attention is paid to the special characteristics of the historical context, which will make it possible to understand the main regularities and original trends that are at the basis of the defining political course of Ukraine. The implementation of such a research vector aims to contribute to a much deeper understanding of those social and political processes that are already taking place and have a tangible impact on the near future of state building in the realities of post-war development and reconstruction of Ukraine.

The aim of the article is to conduct a systematic analysis of the historical development of political structures during the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, to identify and quantify the key vectors of change, and to evaluate the tangible consequences of these developments on Ukraine's political system. Research questions:

1. How did the evolution of political structures in Ukraine take place and what events influenced it?
2. What is the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the development of political structures?
3. What are the noticeable changes in the political system as a result of Russia's aggression and what are the challenges of its further functioning?

METHOD

This study is based on an ongoing analysis of the literature and scientific materials available on the Internet. The data collection was systematic and step-by-step. Initially, clear criteria for the inclusion of scientific papers were formed:

1. The study describes the origins of the Russian-Ukrainian war.
2. The work characterizes the impact of the war on foreign or domestic policy.
3. The study characterizes the impact of the war on the transformation of Ukrainian society
4. The paper identifies the causes and trends of the Russian-Ukrainian war
5. The research has theoretical potential to study the impact of wars in the geopolitical and social perspective

Based on these criteria, 85 scientific sources were selected from the Google Scholar database. The following criteria were then applied to include the scientific literature:

1. The study should contain up-to-date information
2. The paper should present a clear methodology and research process
3. The study has practical significance
4. Date range: from 2013 to 2024.
5. The study must be written in English, or at least contain an English-language abstract.

Using these criteria, 35 scientific sources were selected.

The analysis of the selected sources involved the formation of special lists, which included information such as the author, year of publication, and main results. These lists helped to conduct a qualitative thematic analysis of the selected works. This made it possible to find common issues that are valuable in the current scientific literature on the Russian-Ukrainian war. After that, the coding method was also used to analyze the selected data. This allowed us to systematize the information and identify certain key concepts.

RESULTS

The current Russian-Ukrainian war has rather deep historical background, including complex ethno-political and metaphysical origins. The existential paradoxes of this war are, among other things, that in the context of globalization, powerful regional wars in Europe caused by the geopolitical ambitions of an authoritarian regime have not yet occurred since World War II.^(20, 21) Although the causes of the war include a gross violation of Ukraine's territorial borders and integrity through active armed aggression and invasion, researchers have noted certain civilizational aspects and consequences of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.⁽³⁰⁾

The Russian invasion in 2022 has significantly expanded the war zone, where battles are fought with the use of sophisticated weapons, including those prohibited by international conventions. The massive shelling and terror used by Russian troops, numerous casualties among the civilian population of Ukraine, and huge destruction of economic infrastructure caused a large migration wave that quickly affected Europe and the world.^(22, 23, 24)

In addition, military operations in Ukraine have become a testing ground for various means and technologies of information and socio-political influence. The spread of propaganda and aggressive lies was unprecedented since the end of the Cold War. All these factors had a direct impact on political life in Ukraine and the formation of local political structures.

Ukrainian political institutions underwent a long period of evolution between 1991 and 2014, which included both periods of stable development and times of lack of necessary changes. The events of the Orange Revolution of 2004 were significant, paving the way for the formation of renewed political elites focused on state-building and consolidation of the Ukrainian nation. However, due to internal contradictions, strong opposition and lack of structured reforms aimed at the future, the implementation of democratic programs and liberalization of public life were rather fragmentary, and changes in political currents were chaotic: often politicians recognized by the society moved to another party, where they built their careers on other slogans.^(19,25) The most significant changes in Ukraine's political life and political elites occurred after the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014. The annexation of the peninsula and the outbreak of hostilities in the eastern regions of Ukraine demonstrated the need for systemic changes in the political organization of social development.⁽²⁰⁾ The outbreak of the war put Ukraine in front of powerful challenges, the solution of which required an immediate revision of both domestic and foreign policy. In this regard, political elites underwent changes, some of which (communist and pro-Russian forces) were officially banned. The emergence of new democratic forces and coalitions gave a powerful impetus to political life. Besides, the military challenge led to the formation of new realities that, on the one hand, are inherent in Ukrainian society, and on the other hand, are the result of changes that occurred as a result of the war (see table 1).

Table 1. Vectors of changes in political structures in Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression

Vector	Changes	SL
Transformations in the state apparatus	The researchers note that the key vector of transformations in Ukraine's political structures is the transformation of the state apparatus. Responding to military challenges, the Ukrainian government has implemented a number of necessary reforms aimed at increasing the efficiency of public administration, compliance with national security and defense standards. The modernization of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the reform of the police force, and the creation of new branches in the security and defense sector, such as the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) or the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), have given impetus to a change in the political balance of power, a gradual renewal of public life, and the elimination of pro-Russian sentiment. From a historical point of view, this experience is quite unique, as the pro-Russian component in the security forces has always been extremely powerful. Its elimination through outright confrontation has never been done before in the Ukrainian reality.	Eras (2022) ⁽¹³⁾ Kögler (2023) ⁽²⁰⁾ Petrova & Rudus (2024) ⁽²⁶⁾
Increasing the role of civil society	Civil society in Ukraine has its own history of formation and has developed at a rather moderate pace. Russian aggression has caused a sharp intensification. In particular, a movement of volunteers emerged and spread, joining both civic and political parties. Their active participation in the political life of Ukraine has become a tangible factor in stabilizing the political situation. Volunteers were actively involved in political projects, forming new elites and their consciousness. Representatives of the active part of civil society played an important role in monitoring the implementation of reforms.	Kulyk (2023) ⁽²²⁾ Eras (2022) ⁽¹³⁾ Petrova & Rudus (2024) ⁽²⁶⁾
Active international support	International support for Ukraine at the present stage plays an extremely important role. It is not only financial, grant, technical or military assistance, but also institutional support. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has become a rather unique historical precedent when leading European countries and other leaders of the democratic world openly support Ukraine. Such support was not observed during other Ukrainian liberation struggles. Assistance from the IMF, the European Bank, the United States, and many other partners has enabled economic and political reforms that also contribute to Ukraine's democratic development.	Khuntia (2024) ⁽¹⁷⁾ Vorbrugg & Bluwstein (2022) ⁽³⁴⁾ Kuczyńska-Zonik & Sierzputowska (2023) ⁽²¹⁾
Decentralization of power	An active process of decentralization began after the start of Russian aggression in 2014. These changes have had a major impact on Ukraine's political structures, as the granting of additional powers and the transfer of some financial resources to local levels have significantly contributed to the formation of new elites involved in local government.	Vorbrugg & Bluwstein (2022) ⁽²⁷⁾ Eras (2022) ⁽¹³⁾ Kobryn (2022) ⁽¹⁹⁾

Emphasis on national identity	<p>The Russian military aggression had a significant impact on the formation of a renewed view of the national identity of Ukrainians. The rapid growth of patriotic sentiments, recalling and reinterpreting the historical past, and popularizing Ukrainian culture, history, and language have become important trends of our time. At the same time, this has also had an impact on political life: forces and figures who actively promote Ukrainian things and are ready to defend them have come to the forefront of politics. From a historical point of view, the emergence of such elites is quite symptomatic: never before in history have the ideas of Ukrainianness found such support in society.</p> <p>Russian military aggression had a significant impact on the formation of a renewed view of the national identity of Ukrainians. Russian aggression had a significant impact on social history in Ukraine, causing not only political, but also historical changes in the perception of the past and the formation of historical consciousness.</p>	<p>Eras (2022)⁽¹³⁾ Kulyk (2023)⁽²²⁾ Knott (2016)⁽¹³⁾ Petrova & Rudus (2024)⁽²⁶⁾ Halytska-Didukh, et al. (2024)⁽¹⁸⁾</p>
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Thus, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has led to active transformations in Ukraine's political structures, creating new opportunities for the development of the state and political structures. Transformations in public administration, the growing role of civil society and international support, the positive impact of decentralization, the security forces, and the strengthening of national identity have become important elements of political life and the formation of new structures.^(28,29) Many of these transformations have not been observed in the historical record, meaning that the current state and conditions of political elites are different from all other episodes when Ukraine and Ukrainians fought for their independence.

On the other hand, Russian aggression has discredited parliamentarism. Despite the fact that the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has passed significantly more laws since 2022 than before, the credibility of MPs' work is constantly declining. Researchers attribute this paradox to the lack of necessary channels for communication, as the number of such channels is quite limited during the war. This decline in trust in the highest representative body of Ukraine, according to scholars, indicates a significant threat to Ukrainian democracy, especially given the fact that this decline occurred against the backdrop of increased trust in law enforcement officials. Existing problems with political structures have led to a crisis of trust in the key actors of Ukrainian political life - political parties and the party system. In fact, in 2012-2013, the crisis of the party system became a reality, as researchers showed a moderate level of public trust in parties, which, moreover, continued to deteriorate.⁽³⁰⁾ The decline in the ratings of parliamentary structures as political organisms has led to many political parties being on the verge of the electoral threshold (in Ukraine, it is 5 %). At the same time, no new extra-parliamentary political forces have been formed so far. Significant activation of civil society is currently taking place outside the political field and party life.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the article is to analyze the historical development of political structures in the context of the current Russian-Ukrainian war, to identify the key vectors of such development and interpretations of the realization of its consequences. The results demonstrate that Ukrainian political institutions have been evolving for a long time. An important stage was the Orange Revolution of 2004, which paved the way for the formation of renewed political elites. However, the next and more productive stage of changes in political structures occurred as a result of the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine's ports in 2014. As a result, transformations in the state apparatus took place, the role of civil society (in particular, activists and volunteers) increased, international support for Ukraine intensified, the administrative and governance system was decentralized, and social emphasis shifted towards reaffirming a clear national identity. These results confirm the researchers' thesis that a crisis situation leads to a sharp intensification of public life, which was also evident in other countries.^(20,23,31,32) At the same time, Ukraine's experience in forming political structures in the context of hostilities is unique, as the European continent has not faced such large-scale conflicts since World War II. It is worth agreeing with those researchers who emphasize the relevance of studying this topic, as it is not known whether the EU countries will not have to use the experience gained from Ukraine. Although such scenarios are currently unlikely (the Kremlin regime's threats remain only theoretical), they indicate that when authoritarian regimes allow themselves to make threats, they are able to carry them out.^(26,30)

There has been a long discussion in the academic literature about the renewal of political structures and institutions. In particular, researchers have emphasized that the war has significantly polarized the political space of Ukraine, which in the future could lead to the formation of a conditional party of "military" and a party of "civilians".^(33,34) Obviously, such calculations are based on certain sociological calculations, according to which military personnel and representatives of other law enforcement agencies may join the political elite. A civilian bloc (volunteers, prominent politicians, civic activists) who have been actively working in the rear is

also formed. Other scholars believe that it is not so much about parties in the classical sense of the word, but rather about individual projects that will be formed for specific elections.^(14, 35, 36) On the one hand, this will allow for a renewal of the political palette, but on the other hand, political projects are much less stable, so it is difficult to determine how successful this effect will be in the future. At the same time, other researchers believe that such a division into “military” and “civilians” will not take place, and political structures in Ukraine will be equally filled with military personnel.^(37,38) The results obtained in this article allow us to emphasize the productivity of political projects, but not of political parties, which are experiencing a significant crisis in Ukraine. Given the vectors of changes in political structures in Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression, the emergence of local elites, civic activism, and affiliation with the military will allow individuals who do not belong to political structures to participate in political structures. At the same time, the consequences of this movement are still difficult to determine. However, despite the significant number of laws passed, trust in the work of MPs has declined, which poses a threat to Ukrainian democracy. A significant drop in the ratings of parliamentary structures has also led to a crisis in the party system, in particular due to the lack of formation of new political forces. Thus, Russian aggression has become a catalyst for significant transformations in Ukraine’s political structures. However, there are challenges related to the crisis of confidence in parliamentarism and the party system.

The proposed methodology used in this article has its limitations. First of all, it is based on the use of English-language scientific literature, while it is equally important to pay attention to foreign-language scientific publications. This will allow for a new assessment of the formation of political structures in Ukraine in the future. Although the results are relevant, further focus will allow us to explore this issue.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the hostilities prompted the need for systemic changes in the political organization. As a result, political elites were transformed, some of which were banned (communist and pro-Russian forces), and new democratic coalitions emerged that revitalized political life. The military challenges forced Ukraine to undertake reforms to improve the efficiency of public administration and national security. This included modernization of the Armed Forces, police reform, and the creation of new agencies such as the NABU and the SBI. Active citizens played an important role in stabilizing the political situation and implementing reforms. On the other hand, institutional support from leading European countries and other leaders of the democratic world contributed to economic and political reforms. Russia’s military aggression contributed to the growth of patriotic sentiment and redefinition of national identity. This included the popularization of Ukrainian culture, history and language, which influenced political life and the emergence of new patriotic elites. Consequently, Russian aggression has led to active transformations in Ukraine’s political structures, creating new opportunities for the development of the state apparatus and political structures.

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