On the edge of chaos: irreversible consequences of the power legitimacy rupture

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Considering political decision-making as the core of power implementation process, this paper suggests that the lack of legitimacy of the concrete political decisions can be a strong reason for the scenario of social frustration tendencies. The article introduces the notion of 'legitimacy rupture', i.e. irreversible process of the power delegitimation, that can emerge when a tension between the power-holders and society, and the inter-network disagreement inside the ruling elite regarding the decision-making, are simultaneously take place.

We state that under the present conditions of the tight cross-nationalization and a legitimacy rupture in any one political system is an extremely dangerous phenomenon as it can cause a state of turbulence on a large scale, and entails unexpected consequences for concrete actors, their internal and external policies, as well as for the international system on the whole.

Thus, the article refer to the analytical categories of the chaos theory and nonlinear systems when studying conditions and consequences of power delegitimation or building scenarios of/for potential one. In respect to methodological principles of the chaos theory on the examples of conflict situation in Syria and Ukraine, we illustrate how legitimacy rupture in particular cases of decision-making transformed into bifurcation points and caused uncontemplated consequences overwhelming its primary targets and scope.

In order to articulate the validity of studying power delegitimation through chaos theory explications the study reveals that the current social and political trends of post-democratic development directly or indirectly effect the entropy growth.

Keywords: political decisions; power delegitimation; chaos; entropy; Syria; Ukraine.

Introduction.

There always have been a number of various factors influencing political life, which being combined randomly can produce unpredictable effects at any scale of governance. Taking into account the variety and close interrelationship of the world political actors, blurring of lines between the domestic and foreign policy, legitimacy crisis in a particular political system may lead to consequences unpredictable in terms of scale and effect. Making optimum decisions is becoming more difficult as the political environment is getting more complicated and less predictable.

Power legitimacy decrease not only in social crisis periods but also in stable political systems remains a topical problem for contemporary political research (Volpato, & et al. 2010; Colón-Ríos, 2012; Beetham, 2013; Ceva, Rossi, 2013; De Fine Licht, 2013; Fleming, Jones 2013; Schoen, 2013; Tong, Lei, 2014; Schneider, Eberlein, 2015). At the same time, the problem concerning the consequences of power delegitimation processes is not completely investigated yet.

Turbulent political events of the recent years, as conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, prove that under the conditions of global development the multiversity in the world affairs, unfortunately, does not guarantee the legitimacy and democratic nature of the decisions made, particularly in matters of using the force. It seems expedient to refer to the analytical categories of the chaos theory and nonlinear systems when studying conditions and consequences of power delegitimation or building scenarios of such potential event.

The goal of this article is to determine the effects that may be caused by the power delegitimation in its extreme

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form, i.e. legitimacy rupture. The focal point is political decision-making, as we regard it as keystone of power exercising. The research logic of our study presuppose several steps. The thirst one is to find out evaluation parameters of power legitimacy and its opposite process, i.e. power delegitimation according to scientific discourse. The second step is to reveal methodological frame of extrapolating chaos theory on the problem of power delegitimation. Then, on the cases of Syria and Ukraine it will be shown emergence of chaotic effects when power delegitimation reach to its extremes. Finally, in order to define modern challenges facing power legitimacy we will refer to the Colin Crouch' concept of post-democracy, which most exhaustively describes the current trends in social and political development.

Evaluation of Power Legitimacy and Forms of Delegitimaiton

Politics fulfill a special function compared with other forms of social activity because decisions mandatory for all members of a society are made within the political framework only. Loyalty of those affected by the decisions has a great importance for fulfilling this function. The faith in legitimacy comes into being where the rules in force that define who, when and in which order can make decisions are regarded as mandatory irrespective of the evaluation of the decisions made according to the rules. Legitimacy also serves as a basis for the political system stability, i.e. its ability to neutralize negative impacts from outside (economic blockade, political pressure, disinformation, threat of force, etc.).

In classical studies, legitimacy problem has been considered mostly in system-functional methodological frame. For instance, Lipset stated that legitimacy "involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society" (Lipset, 1959, p. 6). The Easton's model designates "input" as the society's requirements or forms of support to the authority and "output" as decisions or actions of the authorities (Easton, 1965). So a feedback is formed which impels both the society and the power to new actions, and the political system itself seeks then a dynamic balance, i.e. political stability. Moreover, the emotional support of the kind is provided regardless of the results of the authorities' activity. Luhmann noticed that "a system – economic, legal, or political – requires trust as a input condition. Without trust, it cannot stimulate supportive activities in situations of uncertainty or risk… Through lack of trust a system may lose size; it may even shrink below a critical threshold necessary for its own reproduction at a certain level of development" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 104).

The contemporary scientific discourse interprets legitimacy in a multidimensional format, evaluating legitimacy both in a spectrum of normative and perceptive aspects. According to Gilley, legitimacy is "an endorsement of the state by citizens at a moral or normative level" (2006, p. 502). By using a constitutive (cause) or substitutive (effect) approach to measure political legitimacy, he proposed a set of indicators, such as evaluation of state respect for individual human rights, confidence in police, confidence in civil service, satisfaction with democratic development, evaluation of current political system, satisfaction with operation of democracy, use of violence in civil protest, voter turnout, quasi-voluntary taxes.

A complex articulation of the concept legitimacy is offered by Brown, who points out six fundamental types of legitimacy: "*regulatory legitimacy* is grounded in a compliance with regulations and legal requirements; *associational legitimacy* is created by ties to other actors or institutions widely recognized as legitimate; *performance legitimacy* is based on demonstrated expertise, capacities, resources and services to stakeholders; *political legitimacy* is rooted in representing the interests of members of constituents; *normative legitimacy* grows from embodying and acting from widely held values and norms; *cognitive legitimacy* comes from consistency with the expectations and concepts that shape how stakeholders understand the world" (Brown, 2008, p. 35).

Exploring effects of transparency in decision-making on public perception of legitimacy De Fine Licht defines perceived legitimacy as "an overarching term encompassing public trust for authorities' handling of a policy area as well as public willingness to accept decisions and decision-making procedures" (de Fine Licht, 2013, p. 3).

More aggregated seems Beetham's three-dimensional vision of power legitimacy, who defines it as "comprising legality or rule conformity, the justifiability or rules, and confirmation through expressed consent" (Beetham, 2013, p. 205).

The mentioned above and numerous other interpretations found in the literature, show that consent, confidence and trust are dominant and interdependent characteristics of power legitimacy. Thus, legitimation is gaining legitimacy that is a dynamic process of reconciliation through mutual recognition, justification and trust. Therefore, the loss of the credit of social trust, public esteem, and even cancellation of the gained political status can be recognized as delegitimation. The primer stage of power delegitimation that is according to Beetham (Beetham, 2013, p. 207), "a divergence or discrepancy between the constitutional rules and beliefs that should provide their justification" can be defined as the *legitimacy deficit*. Disappointment of the public about the ideals and concepts of the policy, strategic programs of the elite and the methods for implementing them, and at its political leaders is a significant manifestation of *legitimacy crises*.

Habermas (1975) states that a legitimacy crisis comes out of discrepancies or inconsistence between the goals and values of the reformist regime and the views of the majority citizens on the needed forms and methods of social regulation renewal, norms of fair governance, distribution, etc.. This crisis is about the changes occurring when the social structure is being broken when the status of the most important conservative (traditional) institutions is threatened, while political system fails to adequately respond to the increasing demands of the main social groups.

The common denominator for all above legitimacy interpretations is reconsidering legitimation as one-dimensional process, which evolve authority (political elite and governmental institutions) as an object of legitimation and public (citizens) as a source of producing legitimacy.

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However, with respect to Putnam, Leonardo and Nanetti' findings (Putnam, & et al., 1994) we state that legitimation of the political decision primarily take place in the horizontal dimension (between the participants of a particular political network), and in the vertical one (between the power holders and the society). When both dimensions of the legitimation process are complimentary to each other, the society generates powerful social capital, which provide the stable system development. If the trust relations in the horizontal dimension are broken, but strong dependency connections remain, that society moves towards autocracy. If otherwise, there is absence of strict rules of hierarchical submission, but the strong horizontal interaction between citizens, society is moving towards anarchy.

Power Delegitimation Through Chaos Theory Explication

Applying bidimensional interpretation to legitimacy, we argue that the process of power delegitimation may possibly have two outcomes. One is legal-normative - rebooting of the authority, with the elite in power giving it up in favor of the counter-elite while preserving its internal legitimacy and integrity of its network, and ensuring a chance to eventually return to governance. The other one, more radical, is legitimacy rupture, an act of irreversible delegitimation accompanied by non-conventional practices of the government overthrow. Legitimacy rupture inside the ruling elite circles conditioned by the internetwork conflict about the decisions made. In other words, a legitimacy rupture as an irreversible form of political power delegitimation occurs when the crisis of horizontal legitimation of political decisions (inter-elite conflict) overlaps the crisis of vertical forms of legitimation (society vs elites).

In this context, it is rather important to understand the meaning of bifurcation points, i.e. critical points in which the sensitivity of the system to the initial conditions becomes stronger, and its chaotic nature manifests itself in a more radical form leading the system to the so-called edge of chaos. As soon as the system reaches the bifurcation points, it becomes conditioned by less foreseeable behavioral patterns. This hypersensitivity turns the bifurcation points into existential one-of-a-kind historical moments.

One of consequences of the globalization is the appearance of the completely new set of interrelationships between components of the world-ruling events. In complex systems, it is very difficult to control potential scenarios following the approval of particular decisions and to predict the outcomes. It is not easy to model the consequences of a combined action of several dynamic factors because the impact of any such combination may vary from extremely significant to practically zero on the course of events that will unfold afterwards. It is also worth mentioning the danger of unrealistic expectations of the readiness of a system to respond effectively to any circumstances associated with the initial stage of the event. These circumstances, i.e. the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of acting factors, are the source of a "butterfly effect", when a minimum impact can lead to a huge resonance. That might happen even on the background of optimum conditions of the entire stable system, although, at a different set of the initial conditions, no considerable

changes may be expected despite any focused attempts. In the chaos theory "the butterfly effect" is an explanatory term to describe the consequent course of events when a particular action within a non-linear system may entail significant changes at further stages (Lorenze, 1995). Furthermore, as Kiel and Elliot stated, "systems with very similar starting conditions in their evolutions may diverge to very different systems and structures over time" (Kiel, Elliot, 1997, p. 25). A typical example of such a situation-dependent modulation is an attempt to implement innovative social development tools (political and economic reforms) in the context of traditionalist system of social interaction. The most often cited causes of following crises are social, political and economic instabilities. However, these causes can be the consequences of particular decisions that are, at first sight, temporally and spatially unrelated to the crises.

The introduction of the chaos concept, borrowed from the mathematical and physical sciences, to the socio-political area highlighted effectively the critical bifurcation points and relevant pathways in the dynamic development of political systems (Bird, 1997; Theil, 1969). That made possible to characterize the patterns of conditions and stages of their existence by certain sets of order-chaos correlations. Chaos can be defined as a dynamic system, demonstrating a complex behavior, irregular and non-recurrent, with occasional manifestations, but at the same time preserving the hidden order. Being present at a particular (obviously, initial) stage of the development of the political system, chaos provides a certain excessiveness of opportunities and ensures evolutionary flexibility, changeability and adaptability. The physical measure of chaotic contents in the system behavior is *entropy*. Broadly defined, this is a measure of the system disorder: the less its elements conform to a certain order, the higher its index, which means a dramatic decline in the system's ability to realize its task (Boltzmann, 1974). In a thermodynamic system, reaching the entropic climax entails a thermodynamic elimination; similar consequences may occur in social realm. "An entropy value for a unitary social system is analogous to a temperature reading for a thermodynamic system, such as a volume of gas" (Coleman, 1975, p. 37). By understanding the current level of entropy, and evaluating its further course, reasonable conclusions can be made on the functional ability of the system and probability of its destabilization and destruction. In the context of the present work it is worth mentioning that the increased political entropy is associated with the power delegitimation tendencies. There is a spontaneous factor in gear in any society. In trying to understand the objective forces moving political processes, one should consider that some events often are not on the surface, but of hidden nature. The history is full of examples of swift and unpredictable changes that became the consequences of legitimacy ruptures in political systems. If a more recent example is needed, then the pre-conditions of the current conflicts in Syria and Ukraine can be addressed.

Chaotic Effects of Power Delegitimation: from Domestic to International Scale

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In that situation of Syria a wide spectrum of factors has to be considered; it starts from the food crisis caused by the ineffective economic policy of the Syrian government during the draughts and harvest failures in 2006-2008 to the religious confrontation between the representatives of the confessional communities of the Alawites and the Sunnis. However, the historical bifurcation point was the shooting of the protesters during the anti-government demonstrations in March 2011. The Security Forces opened fire and killed several protesters, which encouraged more people to go out to the streets. This public unrest ignited a wave of protests across the whole country, with people demanding the President Bashar al-Assad to resign. By July 2011 the protests in the cities all over Syria involved hundred thousand people demanding political rights and freedoms in the context of their fight with the regime of the President Bashar al-Assad, whose Baath party had prevailed in the Syrian political system for almost 50 years. However, the most threatening factor for Assad's long-term rule was not the protest movement of the citizens inside the country or the pressure of the international institutions, but the Chief of Syrian military police, Major General Abdulaziz al-Shalal's exit from the governing political network. Other members of the military and police structures followed him into the opposition, which cracked the main force Assad's regime had been reposing on.

Among direct consequences of the civil war in Syria there were at least two, which carried large scale, negative, catastrophic effect. One was the appearance of a new powerful actor of radical orientation – the Islamic state group – onto the political arena. The second was the greatest mass flow of refugees across Middle East and Europe since the World War II. Eventually this entailed a migration crisis in the European Union. That overlapped with Western economic sanctions against Russia, which have had *per se* a negative effect on the economy of the EU countries. As a result, this migration crisis created strong tensions between the EU member-states, enhancing the disintegration tendencies inside the EU.

The events in Ukraine at the end of 2013 – beginning of 2014 showed a low level of the power legitimacy of Viktor Yanukovych's regime. The legitimacy crisis was visibly caused by the refusal of the government to sign the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. The pro-Russian representatives of the political establishment did not satisfy the needs of the citizens oriented to the European values. Yet, the regime in power could preserve itself by handling the social tension, even by taking repressive measures, thus pushing the country to authoritarianism. Actually, Yanukovich appeared to be uncourageous to order such measures. Instead, he delayed the situation until the bifurcation point: the legitimacy rupture was triggered by the beating of students at Independence Square at night on November 30, 2013. It is worth mentioning, that the legitimation of decisions made within the network, existed around V. Yanukovych's family, was ensured by its members affiliated with Russian oligarchy. However, that time the decision to play the force scenario failed to gain full legitimation even inside V. Yanukovych clan's network, but on the contrary, shattered it: Some key participants of the network declared their disagreement with the force actions. Their actual exit

doomed the ruling regime to the irreversible delegitimation followed by the change of the government and of the official political course for the whole country. The legitimacy rupture resulted in an armed confrontation at first inside the country, and eventually in a military intervention of external actors, particularly Russia, which took advantage of the turbulent state of the events unfolding in Ukraine, to annex the Crimea and bring its troops into eastern Ukrainian regions. In so doing, it violated not only the basic principles of international law, but also the geopolitical equilibrium on the world arena.

Taken together, the above examples demonstrate that a legitimacy rupture in one particular political system can create turbulence on a large scale and can entail unexpected consequences for many actors, for their internal and external policies, as well as for the international system overall.

Post-Democratic Challenges to Power Legitimacy

Modern format of political governance and power exercising influences the entropy growth directly or indirectly. A dramatic decline of the role of the representative authorities and commercialized political practices is bringing the traditional functions of the state to outsourcing. It boosts the growth of political and economic elites, and, as a result, even stronger concentration of tools of power in elites' hands. The theoretical reflection of the described trends is in the center of a post-democracy concept (Crouch, 2004). According to this concept the democratization processes, moving parabolic, are at the stage of transformation of the regime with the formal features of democratic governance and further concentration of power in the hands of the corporate elites, whose activity is beyond government regulation and interwoven into the cross-national networks. With practically all formal components of democracy continuing to exist, in the long run we should expect their further erosion. Post-democratic tendencies are supported by numerous data on the decreased level of the voting turnout, declining participation in political parties, and spread of the media policy that replaces socio-political debates with endless election campaigns, TV shows, and multiverse form of what researchers call "politicotainment" (Riegert, 2006, p. 1). The president election campaign in the USA 2016 is a vital example. It is symptomatic that it is this state of political system that Boogs defined as entropy: "Measured by virtually any set of criteria, the political system is in a (potentially terminal) state of entropy, out of touch with the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of people; citizenship-its rights and obligations-has decayed beyond recognition" (Boogs, 2001, p. 1).

The mentioned processes mark the political advance of the century of power of corporations and political demobilization of citizens, when democracy becomes to the uttermost governed acting like "inverted totalitarianism" (Wolin, 2008). The globalization affects the transformation of the basic principles of the democratic governance. In many countries democratic on their face, "the army and other core state institutions are hardly under any public control but instead constitute semi-private corporations in the hands of powerful clans with vast assets extending well

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beyond the military. Just as such countries have a substantial shadow economy and a black market representing perhaps as much as 30% of their GDP, so too do they have a shadow state and an informal model of governance that are unelected and unaccountable" (Pabst, 2010, p. 60). And what is the most important, "these structures go beyond national borders and are tied to transnational networks…" (Ibid).

Such tendencies as blurring social and group identification, diluting the membership of mass political parties, erosion of traditional spectrum of political representation, commercializing civic consciousness cause the conventional content of legitimate practices to change, undermining Beck's postulate that "legitimacy is cannot be bought" (Beck, 2005, p. 240). We believe it is economization of the power legitimacy is the main challenge to post-democratic development because such phenomenon has the potential to replace the traditional public practices of participation in social life with political consumerism. Ineffectiveness of the democratic governance, its inability to ensure a steady economic growth and increase the level of wellbeing of the citizens dwindle its functional legitimacy. There arises the following negative pattern: ineffective political decisions made by the leadership of the state causes low effectiveness of the democratic system, but non-legitimacy of the governance does not allow the government to act effectively avoiding populism.

The threat to modern governmental systems is dependence of a decent level of economic stability and welfare of people, which is extremely difficult to maintain on the background of non-linear development and risks from the globalization processes. The next economic collapse caused by external factors or ineffective decisions of the political elite is very likely to trigger a legitimacy crisis that will result in social tension or even a social conflict. This is why gradual economization of legitimation practices of political decision-making by the democratic regimes in perspective carries larger risks for the political elite and society than preservation of the traditional forms of winning over and maintaining people's trust.

Conclusions

This work has attempted to reveal the power legitimacy concept that requires more attention in understanding how political systems and forms of power exercising actually operate under the current trends in the highly unstable environment. Moving from theoretical interpretations of power legitimacy to the insight into the contemporary practices of its retention we propose to reconsider the legitimation in the dimensional view relying on decision-making as the key mechanism of political power exercising. With regard to the spatial distribution of possible interactions, we argue that legitimacy of political decisions can occur in the horizontal dimension, between the participants of a particular political network (mostly the

elite), and in the vertical dimension, between the political authorities and the citizens. We proceeded from the assumption that the low level or even the lack of legitimacy of political decisions, especially in periods of social crisis, may be a powerful factor that may lead to a legitimacy rupture, which is the irreversible power delegitimation.

The power delegitimation in the form of a legitimacy crisis can be possibly resolved by rebooting the authorities in a legal-normative way. Sometimes elite in power gives it up in favor of the counter-elite, but at the same time can preserve its internal legitimacy and the integrity of its network that in perspective guarantees a chance to return back to the governance scene. However, the system tendencies of power delegitimation often result in the increased entropy in the society that jeopardizes the political regime's stability, and may trigger a legitimacy rupture.

The legitimacy rupture, as a radical form of delegitimation, is conditioned by a double legitimacy crisis: a conflict between the power-holders and society, and the inter-network disagreement inside the ruling elite regarding the decision-making. A legitimacy rupture is accompanied by spontaneous outbreak of social protests, up to a revolution and unconventional practices of government overthrow. The danger of a legitimacy rupture includes its potential role as a bifurcation point starting the long-lasting chain reaction, the "butterfly effect". Although history has seen many precedents of different forms of power delegitimation, the examples on Syria and Ukraine, presented in the paper show that in current conditions of global interdependence a legitimacy rupture in any one political system can result in hard, frustrating consequences, unpredictable in their localization, form and scale. Thus, our attempt to refer to the basic principles and methodological tools of chaos theory seems expedient. Reconsidering legitimacy issue in the frame of chaos theory helps to expand the perspective of studying conditions and consequences of power delegitimation and predicting the stages of their development.

Post-democracy curve of socio-political processes accompanied by dense coalescence of the political and business-corporate elites, significant transformation of erosion of the traditional spectrum of the political representativeness, electoral absenteeism, spreading of outsourcing mechanisms of governance cause intensification of delegitimation tendencies and growing social entropy. Eventually this situation may result in social protests of the disappointed up to armed riots and civil war. The common factors threatening national and supranational forms of governance with a legitimacy rupture are the encapsulation of political decision-making in the network of the elites and lack of effectiveness of institutionalized practices of involving the public in political decision-making, or turning them into a sort of participatory placebo.

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