Peculiarities of Civil Society Institutions in Ukraine and Great Britain: General Trends and National Specificity

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Abstract

The relevance of the research is determined by the fact that the formation of civil society is one of the necessary conditions for the advancement of Ukraine on the path of carrying out socio-economic, political and legal reforms. In this context, the experience of Great Britain, a country with a high level of development of socio-economic and political-legal institutions, is extremely important for Ukraine's entry into the circle of highly developed and democratic countries.

The purpose of the article is to determine the peculiarities of civil society institutions in Ukraine and the UK, as well as the identification of general trends under conditions of national specificity.

The results of the research. The article analyzes the peculiarities of the development of civil society institutions in Ukraine and Great Britain. It is shown that for both Ukraine and Great Britain, the concept of civil society is not one that is clearly understood by the scientific community and is widespread among the public. In both countries, mechanisms of state regulation have been strongly developed, which set very specific tasks of maintaining a balance between the regulatory body of the state and the effectiveness of independent non-state actors. In the absence of stable practices of effective collective action of public entities in Ukraine, the task of studying the British experience of their implementation in the conditions of regulation seems particularly relevant and practically significant.

Conclusions. It has been proven that the problems of Ukraine and Western countries have a lot in common. After the collapse of the bipolar international system, everyone expected the West to teach Ukraine how to build a civil society. Today it can be stated that the problems of Ukraine and Great Britain are increasingly similar and in this context the exchange of experience is very important. The problem of corruption in Ukraine is more serious than in most Western countries, but it is also quite serious in them and has common roots with the Ukrainian one.

Keywords: civil society, institutions of civil society, Ukraine, Great Britain, state authorities, state regulation, corruption

Особливості інститутів громадянського суспільства в Україні та Великій Британії: загальні тенденції та національна специфіка

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Анотація

Актуальність дослідження обумовлюється тим, що становлення громадянського суспільства є однією з необхідних умов просування України на шляху проведення соціально-економічних, політичних і правових реформ. У цьому контексті надзвичайно важливим для входження України до кола високорозвинених і демократичних країн є досвід Великобританії, країни з високим рівнем розвитку соціально-економічних і політико-правових інститутів.

Мета статті полягає у визначенні особливостей інститутів громадянського суспільства в Україні та Великій Британії, а також виявлених загальних тенденцій в умовах національної специфіки.

Результати. У статті проаналізовано особливості розвитку інститутів громадянського суспільства в Україні та Великобританії. Показано, що як для України так і Великобританії концепт громадянського суспільства не є таким, що однозначно розуміється науковим співтовариством і є широко поширеним в середовищі громадськості. В обох країнах потужний розвиток отримали механізми державного регулювання, які ставлять перед собою конкретні завдання з підтримки балансу між регулюючим органом держави і ефективністю незалежних недержавних суб'єктів. За відсутності стійких практик ефективної колективної дії суспільних суб'єктів в Україні завдання вивчення британського досвіду їх реалізації в умовах регулювання видається особливо актуальним і практично значущим.

Висновки. Доведено, що проблеми України та Великобританії мають багато спільного. Після краху біполярної міжнародної системи вільні очікували, що західні країни привернуть до себе уроки громадянського суспільства. На сьогодні можна констатувати, що проблеми України та Великобританії більш схожі і в даному контексті об’єднані досвідом є дуже важливим. Проблема корупції у Україні серйозніша, ніж у більшості західних країн, але і в них вона теж досить серйозна і має спільне коріння з українською.

Ключові слова: громадянське суспільство, інститути громадянського суспільства, Україна, Великобританія, органі державної влади, державне регулювання, корупція

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**Introduction.**

The process of civil society formation is extremely complex and controversial one. Today, the formation of civil society is one of the necessary conditions for the advancement of Ukraine on the path of carrying out socio-economic, political and legal reforms. In this context, the experience of Great Britain, a country with a high level of development of socio-economic and political-legal institutions, is extremely important for Ukraine's entry into the circle of highly developed and democratic countries.

**Analysis of previous research and publications.**


Important contributions to the problems under study were made by such European researchers as Borkowska M., Kawalerowicz J., Elgenius G. (2024) in the article “Civil Society, Neighbourhood Diversity and Deprivation in UK and Sweden” the relationship between the density of civil society organizations (CSOs) at the district level, diversity and deprivation is investigated. The authors compare Great Britain and Sweden, two countries with different traditions of civil society and regimes of the welfare state. In the UK, contrary to what might be expected from the statement that diversity negatively affects trust, thereby limiting civil society activity at the local level, the authors state a positive relationship between the density of civil society organizations and their diversity (Borkowska, Kawalerowicz, & Elgenius, 2024).

British researcher Kenny M. (2024) believes that civil society is a dense network of groups, communities, networks and connections that stand between the individual and the contemporary state. This up to date definition of civil society has become a familiar component of the main directions of contemporary liberal and democratic theorizing. In addition to its descriptive properties, the terminology of civil society carries a number of ethical and political aspirations and consequences. According to some of its supporters, the achievement of an independent civil society is a necessary prerequisite for a healthy democracy, and its relative absence or decline is often called both a cause and a consequence of various modern socio-political ailments (Kenny, 2024).

Qin Y. (2023) in the article “Grassroots governance and social development: theoretical and comparative legal aspects” proves that democracy, as a political regime and a political system in which people are recognized as the source of power, is currently facing new challenges. In this study, an attempt was made to evaluate the potential and prospects of the legal conceptualization of the concept of management at the grassroots level and the adaptation of personal self-government systems from the point of view of the social growth of communities (Qin, 2023).

Important contributions to the study of civil society have been made by such authors as Zeng Y., Jiang J., Li J. and Göbel (2023). The conventional wisdom holds that one-party regimes are inherently hostile to civil society, since organized citizens can threaten the regime's political dominance. Contrary to this point of view, the authors argue that Governments of countries with a one-party system can tolerate or even actively encourage genuinely voluntary civil society organizations when these organizations can help effectively resolve conflicts in the sphere of distribution within society arising as a result of economic modernization (Zeng, Jiang, Li, & Göbel, 2023).

European researcher Clifford, D. (2021) in the study looking at the geographical impact of changes in local government funding on the voluntary sector in England believes that over the past decade the local government finance system in England has undergone a “truly revolutionary change”: overall revenues have fallen and councils are now more reliant on local taxes. It is important to note that the nature of the changes varied geographically, with city councils serving poorer communities experiencing the largest cuts to their services. The author examines the impact of these spatially uneven changes on the voluntary sector (Clifford, 2021).

In the article “Problematising concepts and methods for civil society research in superdiverse neighbourhoods” of such prominent European researchers of civil society as Elgenius, G., Phillimore, J., Borkowska, M., & Kawalerowicz, J. (2022) there is a call for scholars to develop methodologies and theories that will enable research across the full range of civil society activities. The authors advocate a holistic approach to civil society research using comparative and mixed methods that
facilitates the study of the nature of civil society activity, its forms, patterns and experiences. The concept of “superdiversity” is useful for reflecting changing demographic complexity based on age, gender, nationality, religion and immigration status, as well as different ideas about rights and the labor market.

An important source for studying current trends and new information is the Almanac of the National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO). The unprecedented demand for services during the pandemic and the current systemic crisis are having a profound impact on the voluntary sector. Now more than ever, we need reliable data to understand this sector. The NCVO Civil Society Almanac takes a critical look at voluntary sector finances, volunteers and the workforce (NCVO, 2022; 2023).

The purpose of the article.

The main purpose of the article is to determine the peculiarities of civil society institutions in Ukraine and Great Britain, as well as the identification of general trends under conditions of national specificity.

The results of the research.

It should be noted that for both Ukraine and Great Britain, the concept of civil society is not one that is clearly understood by the scientific community and is widespread among the public. In both countries, mechanisms of state regulation have been strongly developed, which set very specific tasks of maintaining a balance between the regulatory body of the state and the effectiveness of independent non-state actors. In the absence of stable practices of effective collective action of public entities in Ukraine, the task of studying the British experience of their implementation under conditions of regulation seems particularly relevant and practically significant. In addition, the study of the peculiarities of the financial and economic relations of state and public entities, which have received sustainable development in Great Britain and are only at the stage of fragmentary implementation in Ukrainian conditions, is of important value.

The very nature of the third sector is such that it is more diverse than business and the state. With all the differences between the largest corporation and a small family firm, and the military unit from the Ministry, business as a whole is subordinated to the logic of increasing resources, and the state to the logic of power (with the selection of dominant interests through political struggle and the imposition of duties on citizens and organizations to ensure them through taxation mechanisms). However, at the moment, at least in Ukrainian practice, the spheres of business and the state have undoubtedly been studied much more. Most of the research of the third sector is exploratory in nature, conducted at the local level and based on informative, but, as a rule, limited in scope surveys (Agapov, 2016).

The third sector is the sphere of free choice of goals by the participants themselves, where the bearers of various interests are not measured by power and influence, but act by cooperating and minimally interfering with each other. In other words, the Third Sector is an arena of a less limited and therefore more diverse manifestation of many tendencies, motivations, behavioral options, criteria for success and failure. Therefore, the understanding of all the processes taking place in it requires versatile empirical material, a combination of various research methods and approaches to its study.

According to the authors of the liberal trend, civil society should be an independent institution that would control the government, preventing corruption and arbitrariness. Conservatives have a rather negative attitude to citizens' participation in governance – excessive manifestations of democracy are fraught with chaos due to the insufficient governance experience of ordinary citizens. If civil society has the right to existence, then as a structure, it closely interacts with the state, but does not encroach on changing it. The main enemy of public initiatives, as English history has shown, can be bureaucracy. Excessive expansion of the state apparatus can sometimes lead to the fact that the actions of the authorities become uncoordinated and therefore less effective. This conclusion, in our opinion, is as relevant for some states today as it was for Great Britain at the beginning of the last century (Agapov, 2016).

A market economy and a democratic state function under the civilizing influence of civil associations and non-governmental organizations. Today, this is the key formula of a democratic social state reformed in the conditions of globalization, which removes the traditional left and traditionally right ideas about the role of the state in the economy. The state is entrusted with arbitration and civilizing functions as well as civil society is entrusted with control over business and the state. Thanks to this policy, the democratic welfare states of the industrial west transformed the market economy into a social market economy. These states ensured an effective course for social justice with the help of a progressive tax and its redistribution (Mikhalsky, 2012).

This policy was especially effective in Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries, which have reached the current high standard of living. High taxes levied on big business became the basis of social assistance and social services, provided a system of social insurance and development of public sectors. Business agreed to these conditions, having
solidarity with society and following both patriotic attitude and economic rationality. Solidarity was defined by the social state as a struggle for human rights and gender equality.

The welfare state assumed responsibility for the market as an institution of innovation, which exists alongside other similar institutions – science, education. That is how the market was actually understood by the classics of liberalism, such as F. Hayek. For this, the state assumed the function of ensuring freedom of entrepreneurship not only from the state, but also from monopolies, shadowy and criminal structures that oppress this freedom. The main question for Western social democracy, which owns the idea and practice of the welfare state, is whether it is possible to maintain the welfare state in connection with the transition of society from the industrial phase of development to the informational, post-industrial one, as well as in connection with the process of globalization. Today, the democratic social state of the West is facing these challenges, as well as the challenge of European integration (Mikhalsky, 2012).

Thus, the interaction of state power with public organizations appears as a system of state-public administration or public administration, which is implemented in the format of social partnership and involves the operation of a number of mechanisms in the functional dimension. “The most common of which are: the lobbying mechanism; mechanism of scientific and public consultation; the mechanism of public discussion of issues, the mechanism of examination; mechanism of human rights activity; mechanism of public control” (Mikhalsky, 2012, p. 629-630). At the same time, the integrating elements in such a management system can be the following typical models of advisory bodies: public council, public expert council or expert commission, public expertise center with a network of independent experts, non-governmental research (analytical) centers (Mikhalsky, 2012, p. 630-631).

The effectiveness of the interaction between civil society and the state at the current stage in Ukraine in the context of increasing the legitimacy of the government requires the implementation of a set of measures, namely: 1) strengthening the role and influence of advisory structures at state authorities; 2) active involvement of public organizations in the examination of draft legislative and regulatory acts; 3) development and implementation of the state program of professional training of specialists in the field of management of public organizations through the system of public and private universities; 4) promoting the development of the internal system of financing public organizations – by expanding tax incentives for business structures; 5) conducting a nationwide campaign to spread knowledge and understand the role of civil society organizations among the general public (Manjola, 2009, p. 14).

It should be added to the above that an important component that can really improve the interaction between the state and the public sector and increase the legitimacy of the government is the eradication of corruption at all levels of state administration. It is the corruption component that is a real obstacle, which not only hinders, but often blocks the possibility of implementing public initiatives, exercising public control over the activities of state bodies and their employees. The reluctance of state bodies to promote open access to information about their activities, the influence on the coverage of information in the mass media, and therefore on the formation of public opinion, as well as public consciousness in general, do not contribute to the growth of public trust in the state as a reliable partner in building a democratic, legal and social state.

Conclusions regarding the real formation of civil society institutions in Ukraine are ambiguous. In no way can one speak of the absence of civil society and the impossibility of its development. After all, there is a network of active public organizations and unions, as well as legal support for the creation and operation of civil society institutions. Various forms of public activity are functioning and developing. However, in Ukrainian realities, unfortunately, they tend to grow during the worsening of the socio-political and economic situation, and are not traditional ones, historically formed and fixed in the public consciousness as a necessity, a form of life activity.

In general, it can be noted that the insufficient development (qualitative, not quantitative, because the real involvement of the population in public organizations is not high, compared to the number of registered organizations) of civil society institutions, as well as political institutions, the state of the political culture of Ukrainian society, as well as the real protectionist position of the state authorities, instead of the declared openness and transparency, does not yet contribute to public control over its activities. This inhibits the process of forming a quality model of interaction between civil society and the state. After all, social partnership cannot be realized in the absence of acceptable conditions for all participants. However, the very fact of the existence of a network of civil society organizations and their public recognition, the private sector and the mass media striving for independence is an important positive indicator. After all, any social changes begin with the institutional formation of individual organizations, which, in the process of their functioning and development, establishment of internal and external relations, form a new type of relations, and accordingly, a new type
of culture, which in societies with democratic aspirations is embodied in political culture activist type, and therefore contributes to the improvement and expansion of the sphere of influence of new institutions of civil society and their stable functioning, the influence of public organizations on the activities of state bodies in order to ensure the needs and interests of citizens and their associations.

In Ukraine, the basic legal foundations for the development of civil society have been created; a network of public institutions has developed, thanks to which public life has acquired the characteristics of a civil society. The effective mechanism of cooperation is the development of strategic documents. Our proposed algorithm for developing a civil society development strategy includes 8 blocks, consecutive stages: analytical, problem definition, target, creating conditions, motivational, resulting, monitoring and evaluating. European practice proves that the main principles of interaction between non-governmental organizations and state authorities should be: participation, trust, accountability and transparency, independence. It is necessary to further create favorable conditions for the formation and development of human civic competences at all levels of education and in all components of education, which will enable citizens to better understand and exercise their rights in the conditions of democracy, to be responsible for their rights and responsibilities, to take an active part in socio-political processes, as well as consciously ensure the protection, establishment and development of democracy (Skyba, & Sheludko, 2019).

In particular, it is necessary to organize informational and educational activities aimed at improving the qualifications of civil servants and local self-government officials on civil society issues. Organization of scientific work with university students on this topic, conducting scientific conferences, round tables, etc. at which actual problems of the development of civil society would be discussed. The implementation of a strategic course for integration into the European Union, ensuring the comprehensive entrance of Ukraine into the European political, economic and legal space, the establishment of common European values and standards requires the establishment of Ukraine as a country with a developed democracy and the presence of effective democratic public control. Public control is one of the types of social control, which is carried out by associations of citizens and citizens themselves (Skyba, & Sheludko, 2019).

Recent UK research has focused on the impact of the period of ‘austerity’ that followed the 2008 global banking crisis. There has been a sharp reduction in government grants and service orders, alongside a reduction in the public sector’s own social security and health services. A report by the National Council of Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) (Crees, Davies, Jochum, & Kane, 2016) states that small and medium-sized charities bore the brunt of the financial crisis between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014, resulting in large fluctuations in annual income. Large charities are increasingly dominating the market for publicly funded contracts, while smaller organizations that support local communities or address adversity are disappearing (Hunter, & Cox, 2016).

The ability of smaller third sector organizations to adapt to the changed environment has been limited by the fact that the sector infrastructure organizations to which they may have turned for support in the past have themselves been affected by the end of public funding. Alternative forms of external support, such as larger third sector organizations, have themselves shrunk, and competition for available funding from philanthropic foundations has increased dramatically.

However, there are signs that some small service agencies have found ways to adapt organizationally to reduced funding and uncertainty. Some have scaled back their services and/or their advocacy activities, while others have launched mergers and joint ventures, increased their trading revenues, created “social enterprises” or established business partnerships. In addition to austerity measures, a major incentive for small civil society groups and their activities is the tendency for available public funding (through grants and services) to be accompanied by tighter regulation and more vigilant external oversight, along with the need to adopt more formal organizational structures and more business-oriented management systems. Even organizations that do not receive any government funding are subject to increasingly strict reporting and accounting rules (McGovern, 2013).

Tighter regulation, in turn, can change the informal family culture of small organizations, as well as their ability to adapt to new needs and local conditions. They may face more rigid regulatory trends as a challenge to their autonomy and their freedom to protect the interests of the people they serve; as a threat to their aspirations for community building or social solidarity; or as a threat to their ability to focus limited resources on those most in need. It can be difficult for local public organizations to establish appropriate relations with state organizations with which they are obliged to interact (Ware, 2014).

Recent research focusing on the third sector rather than groups and organizations also reflects the impact of both financial and regulatory pressures. Today, third sector organizations are increasingly competing with public sector organizations (such
as the police and hospitals) for volunteer time. As financial pressure grows, so do the demands of government organizations themselves for volunteer time. People are also under moral and psychological pressure, which forces them to consider volunteering as a civic obligation rather than a voluntary activity.

Moreover, it appears that some small third sector organizations, while struggling with the effects of austerity measures and increased regulation, are finding ways to continue to act as advocates and service providers, sometimes by recruiting more volunteers and sometimes by negotiating partnerships with another organization, which gives them an “advantage in cooperation” (McGovern, 2013).

It should be noted, that civil society first appeared in England in the 17th century as a result of the balance between the conflicting forces that arose – the traditional aristocracy and the middle class and, as a result, the compromise developed by them. In spiritual terms, it was a compromise based on religious tolerance and the rejection of religious fanaticism. In political terms, this was an agreement on “class” coexistence, provided that the bourgeoisie renounced absolute claims to political power, and the aristocracy recognized the right of the new class to freedom of economic, broader, private activity, in particular in the economic sphere. Everyone recognized the right of everyone, especially representatives of religious minorities, to freedom of conscience.

Civil society should be distinguished from other historically known types of society, in which state power has as its counterbalance the autonomy of communities, clans, and corporations. Such, for example, are ancient republics, medieval monarchies, or trading city-states, and even eastern despotisms (their very device provided for the economic and local-administrative independence of rural, craft, and trading communities). Civil society is formed as a system of civil rights and freedom, and its development can be presented as the history of the struggle for their preservation, expansion and institutional consolidation.

Thus, due to a historically certain coincidence of circumstances, a model of society was formed, which marked the new European turn and determined the development of European civilization. Acceptance of the idea of civil society as a slogan of democratic movements, oppositional (whatever concrete form they may take) to the authoritarian-socialist party states in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which at the turn of the 1990-s grew into directly anti-communist ones, as well as in the USSR – reflected aspirations of the peoples of these countries to return to European civilization.

Today, it can be stated that British civil society is experiencing a serious crisis. It is believed that the root of the problem, in our opinion, lies in the fact that over the past 20-30 years, Western countries, primarily the United States and Great Britain, have begun to abandon their role as financial regulators. They allowed banks to do more and more risky operations. As a result, insurance companies, pension funds, savings banks for housing construction began to invest money in stock markets around the world. Such risky operations are inadmissible especially for savings banks, which require an extremely cautious financial policy, since they give loans for up to 25 years. Banks and financial institutions, especially shadow ones, in their turn, rushed to help them, because they could make good money at the same time. That is the reason of the rapid globalization of the entire economy. Risky operations became more frequent and finally inflated financial bubbles to such an extent that they all burst in 2008 (Hosking, 2015).

In this context, British civil society faced a new challenge: our economy is global and states are national. This disparity has been shown especially acutely in the Eurozone, where the international currency, the euro, is supported only by nation states that do not have a unified fiscal policy. And it follows that economically weak countries, using all the advantages of a single currency, could borrow money under the same favorable conditions as strong countries. However, while enjoying the benefits of a single currency, they suffered from it when they were heavily indebted, like, for example, Greece, without having their own currency. They could only cut government spending as much as possible, further undermining their already weak economy. Debts did not decrease, but only increased. A vicious circle has formed, from which there is no way out. The Eurozone wanders in contradictions created by the inconsistency of national and supranational trust structures (Hosking, 2015).

One very dangerous consequence of the current crisis is the strengthening of radicalism, including neo-fascist parties. It seems to people that some sinister forces rule over them, humiliate them, and undermine their economic life. But, according to the majority of Britons, immigrants are to blame for this: they deprive them of their jobs; receive social assistance that they did not deserve etc. Undoubtedly, their fate is decided not by immigrants, but by international firms and big banks. But neo-fascists demand the deportation of immigrants and advocate a return to their own national economic “bunker” and exit from economic unions.

It should be noted that this is only one aspect of a more general problem. In a global economy, national risk management structures alone are
unable to protect the public, as international capital flows rapidly across national borders and large companies can relocate almost as quickly. Risks can be countered by factors of collective action: “you act, I will do it too”. But no one wants to take the first step without full confidence that everyone else will follow his example. The British government, for example, says it is ready to introduce a tax on financial transactions, but only if all other governments do the same. To make such collective decisions, apparently, there is a “G-20”. But all leaders are so engrossed in dealing with immediate crises that long-term planning is beyond their power. Meanwhile, it is very important. Without the creation of international structures of trust, we will constantly be in a state of transition from one crisis to another (Hosking, 2015).

Conclusions.

Thus, the problems of Ukraine and Great Britain have a lot in common. After the collapse of the bipolar international system, everyone expected the West to teach Ukraine how to build a civil society. Today it can be stated that the problems of Ukraine and Great Britain are increasingly similar and in this context the exchange of experience is very important. The problem of corruption in Ukraine is more serious than in most Western countries, but it is also quite serious in them and has common roots with the Ukrainian one. The City of London is also one of the main centers of corruption in the world, and in this context, our countries should exchange experience on how to fight it. Therefore, civil society is not just a goal that both countries strive for, but an ongoing process. The struggle for a fairer society never stops, it continues.

Both in the UK and Ukraine, state regulation mechanisms have been strongly developed, setting well-defined tasks of maintaining a balance between the regulatory authority of the state and the effectiveness of independent non-state actors. For Ukraine, it is valuable to study the peculiarities of financial and economic relations between state and public entities, which have received sustainable development in the UK and are only at the stage of fragmentary development in Ukraine. It should be taken into account that the nature of the third sector is such that it is more diverse than business and the state. The main enemy of public initiatives, as English history has shown, can be bureaucracy. Excessive expansion of the state apparatus can sometimes lead to the fact that the actions of the authorities become uncoordinated and therefore less effective.

In Ukraine, the basic legal foundations for the development of civil society have been created; a network of public institutions has developed, thanks to which public life has acquired the characteristics of a civil society. It is necessary to organize information and educational events aimed at improving the skills of civil servants and local government officials on the issues of civil society. The implementation of the strategic course for integration into the European Union, ensuring Ukraine’s comprehensive entry into the European political, economic and legal space, the establishment of pan-European values and standards requires the approval of Ukraine as a country with a developed democracy and the presence of effective democratic public control. Public control is one of the types of social control that is carried out by associations of citizens and by citizens themselves.

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