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Postmaidan Ukraine: Middle Class in the Shadow of Reforms

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Introduction

The Revolution of Dignity at the end of 2013 – beginning 2014 embarked on a new stage in the history of Ukraine, which was indicated from one side by signing and ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, the Government's approval of the Action Plan for its implementation, a number of important reforms, and, on the other hand annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of a part of Donbas by the Russian Federation. The death of more than 13 thousand members of the armed forces and civilians during the conflict, the loss of industrially de-

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veloped regions, the emergence of 1.5 million internally displaced persons – all this negatively affected the country's social and economic development in the postmaidan period, including the status of the national middle class.

It is a widely accepted thesis that the middle class is a key to social and political stability of society. The effectiveness of democratic transformations depends on its quantity and quality; it is the middle class that is a social base for many of the reforms that are taking place in modern Ukraine. After all, representatives of the middle class in their value advantages are oriented towards a market economy, competition and private ownership.

The socio-demographic structure of the Ukrainian middle class in general is consistent with the perceptions of the middle class in developed countries – according to age and educational indicators. Its core is 12–15% of the population. Moreover, there are layers on the periphery of the middle class, the representatives of which do not correspond to all, but only to one or several criteria for enrollment in the middle stratum. We call these people a potential middle class, it constitutes almost 35% of the population. 31% of respondents referred themselves to the lower class, a bit more than 1% to the higher one. Among the middle class, the five largest groups are distinguished: specialists (36% of the whole middle class), skilled workers (15%), entrepreneurs (11%), managers (10%), pensioners (9%) (Razumkov Center, 2016, p. 34).

The specificity of the middle class in Ukraine consists in the fact that it has inherited from the Soviet social structure relatively high dependence of its representatives on the state. Among them there is too miniscule part of the owners – entrepreneurs, farmers and tenants. The overwhelming majority is made up by workers and persons who are dependent on the society or their families (pensioners, pupils, students). It makes the middle class of Ukraine extremely sensitive to the economic and political situation, vulnerable to crises and dependent on the situation in the labor market (availability of jobs and labor price). All these factors “activated” after the events of 2013/14, which led to certain changes in the national middle class.

Therefore, the *purpose* of this article is to identify the leading tendencies of the middle class transformation in postmaidan Ukraine and to identify the factors that affect them.

Presentation of basic material of the research

The following Ukrainian scientists are conducting research on genesis specifics of the middle class in modern Ukrainian society: O. Aleksandrova, S. Brodska, V. Burega, S. Oksamytna, O. Kutsenko, V. Savchuk, O. Symonchuk, E. Libanova, S. Makeiev and others. The characteristic features of the social-class structure in a transformation society are analyzed by the following scholars of the CIS countries: E. Avraamova, A. Avtonomov, L. Beliaeva, Z. Holenkova, M. Horshkov, S. Horiunova, H. Dylyhenskyi, T. Zaslavska, A. Zdravomyslov, V. Inozemtsev, Yu. Levada, N. Tykhonova, O. Shkaratan. The factors of development and the causes of decline of the classical middle class in Western society, as well as the methodological foundations of its study can be found in the works of the following Western scholars: T. Batler, M. Savage, L. Corey, K. Eder, M. Gordon, P. Hutber, I. Kraus, D. Lockwood, G. Marshall, C. Mills, K. Slomczynski, E. Wraght.

The mechanism of social classes formation is presented in the works of O. Kutsenko (Kutsenko, 2006). In general terms, the process of becoming the middle class as a social one subordinates to the laws of self-organization of social systems – which is partly described by N. Luhmann (Luhmann, 2012) and E. Giddens (Giddens, 2009), among which the basic ones are:

- striving for *distinguishing* (or making identities, oppositions, hierarchies and alternatives, which is possible due to the action mechanisms of reflection and self-description);
- striving for *designating* (or symbolical legitimizing the distinctions made through nominations, expectations and the system of rules);
- striving for *reproducing and restoring differences* on the basis of continuous reflexive monitoring of social actions “self” and “others”;
- *production of cooperative effects* of actions on the distinction, designation, reproduction and restoration, leading to the formation of social relations and the structuring of the society.

Consequently, the most important mechanisms of classes formation are: 1) awareness of the individuals of their “social self”; 2) striving for realizing their activity and structural potential; 3) available and at the same time mobile structural limitations of actions (Kutsenko, 2002).

If the presence of the middle class as an element of the social structure in Ukraine is beyond doubt, then the process of its formation as an integral social community is far from being complete.

Firstly, the current middle class is a kind of “crossroads” of mobility, when the most intense movements in the society occur either within the

middle stratum or between them and other sectors of society. Hence there are the difficulties with attempts to clearly capture the boundaries of the middle class, since they are mobile and changing.

Secondly, in these conditions, the groups and layers that make up the middle class are rather heterogeneous both in social origin and in the place in the system of social labor division. The formation of the Ukrainian middle class is taking place not so much due to the influx of new people, but due to the adaptive abilities of its representatives. Therefore, today in Ukraine, the middle class, on the one hand, is very mobile, and on the other hand, it is a conglomerate of such socio-professional groups whose interests are difficult to reconcile under the current conditions, to bring to a “common denominator”. In addition, the factors of rather high territorial and settlement differentiation are imposed on various occupational interests.

Almost half (46%) of the middle class are specialists and managers – in other words the intellectuals. At the same time, only a part of the former Soviet intelligentsia succeeded in adapting successfully to new social realities by entering the post-Soviet middle class. Adaptation of the former nomenclature (managers) was significantly more successful: former managers more often found themselves in post-Soviet management, and in business. Only 28% of Ukrainian specialists can be classified as middle class, while among managers this figure is 39% (Razumkov Center, 2016, 45).

There is one more important condition in this context. In Ukraine, for many people, especially in the upper strata of the middle class, the path to success was not due to the accumulation of knowledge, professionalism, which in the civilized world is recognized as the main resource of the middle class, but due to the proximity to “large” money, contacts. The impossibility of realizing by the majority of representatives of the middle class their social requests blocks the formation of a stable social model of behavior.

In the middle class there are no obvious signs of forming group identity in terms of the growth of self-organization level. The main problem of self-identification is the gap between the real state of things and striving of most Ukrainians to belong to the middle class. And the main threat of self-organization of the middle class is the low level of needs in legal and legitimate channels of defending their own interests, everyone relies on his own resources and inner circle. It is also necessary to agree with the authors’ research (Razumkov Center, 2016, p. 53) that the representatives of the Ukrainian middle class are building their social class identity based on three foundations: first, partial identification with the wealthy strata of the Soviet era (when the symbol of well-being was the posses-

sion of “flat-car-dacha”); secondly, comparing oneself with the normative model of the Western middle class on the basis of education, qualifications, but not welfare, and thirdly – separating oneself from the “higher class” (“oligarchs”) and removing from the lower one. This separation obviously reveals ethical nature: “We have provided our own welfare with our own work.” Removal from the lower class has a different nature, rather socio-psychological – a certain self-affirmation (“we have managed, we have not given up”).

In other words, the state and number of the national middle class are influenced by two opposite trends: on the one hand, high internal potential, and on the other hand – adverse external factors. At the same time, the latter include not only the consequences of Russian aggression and hostilities (which is obvious), but also those hidden structural deformations that accumulated during the period of Ukrainian independence and hindered the creation of grounds for market economic development. It is a question of several systemic destabilizing risk factors that impede the implementation of Ukraine’s development strategy.

Firstly. Modern Ukrainian society and Ukrainian bureaucracy are deeply affected by mutual distrust and illness of nepotism with the instincts of kleptocracy. Certain hopes of Ukrainians, generated by Euro-maidan and related to the figure of P. Poroshenko, have not been realized. Not only the belief in any authority has been lost, but also the trust of citizens in the key institutions of the state. So, in 2017, the government was trusted by only 7% of respondents, the Verkhovna Rada – 5%, the President – 11%, the prosecutor’s office – 9%, and courts – 8%. Among these state institutions, the army had the highest level of trust – 46%, volunteers – 56% and churches – 51% (Monitoring of the Institute of Sociology, NAS of Ukraine, 2017). In five years after the Revolution of Dignity, the authorities failed to overcome corruption, the system of obtaining state orders and redistribution of the budget in favor of “their” oligarchs. Failure to fulfill the conditions of the symbolic “public contract” between the government and civil society caused disillusionment of the population, which was manifested in the results of the vote at the presidential election in April 2019, when 73% voted for a young, inexperienced but off-system candidate V. Zelenskyi.

The biggest threat to the society is that people have lost trust to each other. A significant part of Ukrainians do not trust other people to different extents: only 19% do not have the feeling that most people must not be trusted. All others noted as follows: occasionally – 46%, periodically – 27%, almost always – 9% (Monitoring of the Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2016). All this means that the

implementation of any crisis overcoming projects will be quite problematic, because without trust it is impossible to achieve the planned results of strategic development.

Secondly. 62 reforms proposed after Euromaidan seemed to radically transform the Ukrainian society and strengthen the position of the middle class. In accordance with the Strategy for 2020 reforms, the amount of changes expected was supposed to be so big that the state would not have sufficient resources (human, material, financial) for their simultaneous implementation. For example, the first priority was to declare a capital-intensive program of energy independence, which required huge investments and a radical restructuring of entire Ukrainian economy.

To ensure maximum cumulative effect for the entire socio-economic and socio-political system, it is necessary to put into practice three main directions of transformation:

- transform institutional foundations of society functioning and its economy – to create civilized norms and rules for implementation of socio-economic activity;
- transform infrastructure of public relations and form the climate of trust in the society – to maximize the interaction between citizens and their organizations at different levels and in different regions, creating a new format for social integration;
- transform the system of formation and development of a person – both its “human capital”, and, above all, its cultural-value dimension.

The first of these directions depends to a large extent on the success of putting into force measures envisaged in the Association Agreement with the EU, which should bring the Ukrainian economy closer to the basic norms of the functioning of European countries, and above all – the quality of political leadership and the efficiency of the renewal of the state apparatus and eradication of corruption in it. The second and third directions foresee the completion of much more complex tasks, first of all – overcoming factors that in general impede the development of Ukrainian society and the formation of the middle class in it.

Let us consider the main ones in more details.

1. Socio-economic factors. Even after a decisive break with the Soviet past and the proclamation of decommunisation, Ukraine’s economy remains the descendant of the Ukrainian SSR economy – with a large number of outdated and inefficient industrial enterprises, environmentally not-friendly technologies and noncompetitive productions. Updating these capacities and moving to the world standards requires foreign investment, but “big” capital is not in a hurry to come to Ukraine. As early as 1935, L. Corey drew attention to the fact that in *economically weak*

countries, the actions of large foreign capital impede the normal development of the middle class: the industry of these countries is suppressed in favor of the export of agricultural products and raw materials, and industrial goods are imported; only those industries that dominate the economy and generate profits are developing, namely energy, mining and transport arteries. As a result, the development of these countries turns out to be incomplete, “cut short” and, accordingly, it “does not form a middle class capable to fight for power and create democratic traditions” (Corey, 1935, p. 145). The proof of this is the experience of a number of Latin American countries that, after the departure of foreign monopolies, suffered a sharp deficiency in their own skilled personnel.

In the latest Ukrainian history, we see the persistent lobbying by transnational corporations the legislative norms that discriminate domestic machine-building and transport in the mining development with the participation of foreign investors. In such a situation, there is a closed circle: economic development, which contributes to the formation of mass middle class, does not occur, because society does not form middle class, capable of rationalizing social existence.

In modern Ukrainian society there are various simultaneous factors that interfere with the formation of the middle class. On the one hand, the extraordinary *concentration of large financial capital*, genetically linked with power, on the other – *maintaining significant state regulation in the economy*, as well as *increasing the share of social expenditures of the state in support of the quantitatively growing lower classes*. As a result, one part of the former “Soviet middle class” lost its material and social status, and hence its possibilities for its reproduction. The other part, albeit preserved economically (in the bulk of the population – with a decrease in the professional qualification level and standard of living due to the general tendency of precarization), is still not significant subject of the political process.

Migration processes and their negative influence on the formation of the middle class in Ukraine. By this is meant the labor migration of Ukrainians abroad. As for the total number of Ukrainian labor migrants who work abroad simultaneously, by 2018 their estimates range from 1.5 to 5.0 million (Ukrainian society, 2018, p. 79). Taking into account the number of people paying taxes in Ukraine, the magnitude of unregistered employment and probable accounting mistakes, the most likely is that the estimate of the number of simultaneously working abroad Ukrainians amounts to 3.0 million people (Libanova, 2018).

The main reason for labor migration is the low level of wages and the overall life of the Ukrainian population. In 2017, the size of both the min-

imum and the average salary in Ukraine, calculated on the NBU exchange rate, was significantly lower than in all EU countries, including the countries of Eastern Europe (Ukrainian society, 2018, p. 41). The minimum wage in euro per month in Ukraine in 2017 was 120 euro⁴. The average gross wage in the private sector of the euro per month in Ukraine in 2017 amounted to 237 euro⁵. According to the monitoring of social changes in Ukrainian society, in 2017 half of Ukrainians (50.0%) were dissatisfied with their lives, and 55.6% with the situation in the society. Almost half of the polled (48.4%) respondents believe that no improvement in their lives will occur in the nearest future (Monitoring of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2017).

Social mobility in the labor market. The decrease in the standard of living of the population negatively affected the general demand in the domestic market, which, in its turn, became an obstacle to the growth of production volumes. In addition, the low adaptability of a large part of the population, which is accustomed to work in conditions of relative stability, low labor mobility or its absence led to a decrease in the efficiency of labor potential use, an increase in the number of unoccupied people, which, in its turn, causes social tension.

Reduction of working-age rural population. Beginning in 1997, under the influence of the unresolved social and economic problems and the unattractiveness of agrarian reforms, the migration trend was defined as “village-city” and, moreover, “village-abroad.” In recent years, a significant proportion of rural residents left the country for earnings or other settlements abroad. The number of people who were dissatisfied with the conditions of employment and living in the countryside, who became dependent in finding a job increased, their share almost twice exceeded the relevant indicators for the cities (Kraievskaya, 2015).

The main transformational trend of the territorial placement of the rural population, caused by migration processes, is the gradual degeneration of the village settlement network, the transition of villages into the lower category of the population or their complete depopulation. Rural

⁴ For comparison: Bulgaria – 235, Romania – 275, Lithuania – 380, Latvia – 380, Poland – 453, Hungary – 412, Croatia – 433, Slovakia – 435, Czech Republic – 407, Estonia – 470, Greece – 684, Portugal – 650, Slovenia – 805, Spain – 826, United Kingdom – 1393, Ireland – 1563, Germany – 1498, Netherlands – 1552, France – 1480, Luxembourg – 1999, Belgium – 1532 EUR (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=earn_mw_cur&lang=en).

⁵ For the comparison: Bulgaria – 637, Romania – 742, Lithuania – 880, Latvia – 1054, Poland – 1115, Hungary – 1067, Croatia – 1261, Slovakia – 1259, Czech Republic – 1250, Estonia – 1353, Greece – 1588, Portugal – 1802, Slovenia – 2218, Spain – 2418, Great Britain – 3482, Ireland – 3810, Germany – 3813, Netherlands – 3975, France – 3929, Luxembourg – 5462, Belgium – 4511 (<https://ru-geld.de/salary/europe.html>).

Settlement Network of Ukraine is represented by 27401 rural settlements (excluding Crimea), in which at the beginning of 2018 there were 13015,4 thousand people, which makes up 30.8% of the total population of the country. As a result of depopulation and administrative-territorial transformations in 1991–2018, 454 villages or 1.6% of their total number disappeared from the territory of the country. The leaders in the process of gradual collapse of the village settlement network were Kyiv (-6.6%), Kharkiv (-3.9%), Chernihiv (-3.6%) and Mykolaiv (-3.5%) regions (Ukrainian society, 2018, p. 154–155).

Widespread distribution of poverty (mass impoverishment of the population). This factor negatively affects not only the formation of the middle class, but also the social security of the society as a whole. The boundaries of social security of the impoverishment process coincide with the limits of relative poverty, when effective support for the poor is real. The expand beyond 20 per cent limit is socially dangerous because of the negative impact of poverty on healthy livelihoods of people (a threat to public integrity, a high risk of social explosion).

The emergence of an armed conflict in the west of Ukraine influenced both the security component (Dodonov, 2015) and the overall livelihoods of millions of people due to the sharp deterioration of the socio-economic state of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Kurilo, Aksionova, Sliusar, 2015).

A new phenomenon of “sudden poverty” has emerged in Ukraine, that is, a situation where the population that could be attributed to the middle class suddenly fell short of extreme poverty as a result of the armed conflict (among the “suddenly poor” most were internally displaced persons (IDP) and affected by the conflict population of the two eastern regions).

IDPs who moved from Donbas, in addition to the purely specific displacement problems, faced problems that the whole country felt as a result of the conflict. During 2014 – the first half of 2015, a deep economic crisis unfolded in Ukraine, a part of the economic potential was lost and the standard of living of the population declined sharply. For 2014–2015, Ukraine’s GDP contracted by 15.8%, industrial output – by 21.8%, consumer price growth constituted 60.9% (as per April 2015), the average monthly wage in real terms decreased by 23.3%. As a result of the armed conflict, Ukraine has lost much of its economic and export potential, and the eastern regions have, in addition, lost a large share of human and material resources (Ukrainian Society, 2018, pp. 188–189).

About 3.5% of the population of Ukraine encountered the challenges of forced resettlement. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, as of November 19, 2018, the number of registered IDPs was 1.5 million

(Ministry of Social Policy, 2018). Ukraine is among the top 10 countries in the world with the highest number of IDPs, which has received such status because of the armed conflict and violence, and ranks the first in Europe. The Ukrainian state is inferior only to the countries of the Middle East – Syria (6.6 million IDPs), Iraq (3.3 million), Yemen (2.5 million); as well as African countries – Sudan (3.2 million), Nigeria (2.1 million), Southern Sudan (1.7 million) (Ukrainian society, 2018, p. 190).

Decentralization. If among the initiated by the governments of A. Yatseniuk and V. Groisman numerous reforms were those that give rise to optimism about strengthening the positions of the national middle class, then this is undoubtedly the program of decentralization of a management system. According to this reform, the interests of the members of the territorial communities should be more fully taken into account in the sphere of local self-government; the reform involves the transfer of a significant part of the powers, resources and responsibilities from the executive bodies to local self-government bodies. The basis of this policy is the provision of the “European Charter of Local Self-Government”. In April 2014, the Government of Ukraine approved the “Concept of Reforming Local Self-Government and Territorial Organization of Power”, after which the Plan of Measures for its Implementation, which gave rise to the reform, was approved.

Certainly, it is impossible to state unequivocally that decentralization reform is successfully implemented in Ukraine. It is sufficient to indicate that the alignment of political forces in the Ukrainian parliament did not allow the adoption of amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine on decentralization. Certain problems exist on the ground. But in general, reforms initiated by the authorities create the right legal conditions and mechanisms for the formation of viable territorial communities of villages, settlements, cities, which unite their efforts in solving urgent problems. The new model of financial support for local budgets, which received some autonomy from the central budget, has already justified itself. Starting from August 31, 2015, local self-government bodies received additional sources of income and substantially increased their revenues to their own budgets (up 46%). Moreover, the new system of equalizing the financial capacity of different communities has created powerful incentives for local authorities to increase their investment attractiveness and develop business in their own territories.

The greatest benefits from decentralization have been gained by communities that have managed to unite with others, creating united territorial communities. In their new status, united communities have substantially increased financial capacity by raising their own budgets several

times. At the same time, the pace of community consolidation in Ukraine significantly exceeded similar processes in some other states (Latvia, Estonia, Norway, Denmark), although the process of the association itself remains voluntary – six months after the adoption of the law on community unification around 7% of all territorial communities have consolidated in Ukraine (Haran, 2017, pp. 169). According to the reformers, the implemented measures will lead to a fundamentally different situation in Ukraine and a tangible increase in the number of middle class on the ground. But one should not exaggerate the honesty of the officials: the institutes they create are often artificial, situational and they will hardly defend interests that are contrary to the interests of state bodies. In addition, with the change of the President, a radical change in the entire political course is possible, which makes the future of decentralization reform, as well as other reforms, unclear.

Informal economy and informal relations in general acquire a special meaning in transformational Ukrainian society: they fill in the voids that arise in the breakage of the former institutional system, play a stabilizing role, providing the necessary adaptation opportunities. Institutional transformations inevitably lead to a temporary inconsistency between the old, the usual, “routine” mechanisms of interaction and new formal analogues, and even with the most favorable scenario of the development of reforms, society needs a certain period to tune social norms that traditionally guided its members to new formal boundaries. This transition process in Ukraine was burdened with a number of accompanying unfavorable circumstances, changes in the trends, pace and quality of institutional reforms, the rules for the game that have not been yet fully established for market players and would be transparent and could provide stability for transformational change. Informal relations and institutions in this situation acquire much more significance than formal ones, which ultimately creates a nutrient medium for the emergence and spread of non-standard forms of adaptation in a form of budget funds misuse, delays, non-payment and concealment of wages, secondary employment, etc. Such non-standard forms of adaptation in the informal economy do not provide an opportunity to create a legal basis for the implementation of economic factors for the formation of the middle class.

Furthermore, since 2014 as a consequence of the war in the East of Ukraine there was the formation of a two-sector economy with informal relations as well. It is understood that today in the Ukrainian economy two economic sectors have been formed – enterprises operating in the territory controlled by Ukraine – the “mainland” sector, and enterprises in the occupied territories – the ATO sector, to which, besides the occupied

territories, economic activity in the Ukrainian part of the ATO zone and in the so-called “grey zone” can be referred (Haran, 2017, p. 77). If the “mainland” sector of the economy operates in the regulatory field of Ukraine, the regulatory field of the ATO sector is characterized by a high level of uncertainty regarding the economic rules of the game.

2. Socio-political factors. When analyzing the socio-political factors that impede the formation of the social order and the formation of the middle class as a guarantor of social stability, one should answer the question about bureaucracy – is it a part of the society or its counterpart? (Tikhonova, 2006, p. 6–7). The undoubted fact is that officials are a special state, united by common interests and a peculiar way of life. Understanding the specifics of the interests of the bureaucracy as a special social group, public officials consider it, first of all, in preserving and constantly increasing its influence and power, protecting its own class interests. It is interesting that the population and the officials themselves consider the authorities not as a goal in itself, a guarantee of good prosperity and high social status, but as a tool value. If the money for ensuring a position and high status is more important than power, and the main interest of the bureaucracy is to preserve and consolidate its privileged position, even contrary to the interests of the country and its people, the desire of officials to convert power into money without losing power itself (which is, in fact, a cornerstone of corruption) is absolutely natural.

It is the “union” of the great oligarchic capital and the ruling elite that is the main “mechanism of inhibition”, which impedes the onset of the Ukrainian transformational society on the trajectory of sustainable development. The oligarchic nature of the system that has been formed in Ukraine is recognized not only on the scientific, expert levels but also by ordinary citizens. According to the monitoring of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2015, 44.7% of respondents determined that it is the oligarchs who play a significant role in the life of Ukrainian society. When asked about the definition of what is happening in the country, the relative majority of citizens (44.7%) chose the answer the “struggle between the oligarchs” (Zlobina, Shulha, Bevzenko, 2016, p. 37).

The political culture of modern Ukraine is the successor of Soviet political culture, and in its turn – the political culture of imperial Russia. The state in this type of political culture more often acts as a formation in which the impulses of activity must go from top to bottom. “Ordinary” citizens can only passively expect orders and “favors” distributed from above. Such representations create the ground for strong paternalistic sentiments, when an “ordinary person” delegates responsibility on an official,

and an official, in turn, to political leaders and senior officials. The lawfulness of citizens' participation in governance matters in most cases is rejected by officials. For their part, citizens do not seek political participation and public affairs. They are ready to accept alienation of the bulk of the population from power functions as a convenient state of affairs, which allows most people to do their own business. This leads to a well-known formula, which both the population and bureaucracy identify themselves – everything in the country depends on leaders, and not on ordinary performers. Unfortunately, in modern Ukraine there is a *meditocratic society*, where power belongs to people with average intellectual capabilities, which does not allow it to lead the society.

Limited possibilities for vertical mobility, which is especially characteristic for a system of economic relations, built on oligarchic capital. This system has a marked disproportionate character of the resources distribution (including political ones) in the society. This is also true for Ukraine, where an unstable social structure, most of which consists of the poor, has emerged. The middle class in the oligarchic system cannot be formed as a significant and important element in the class structure of society, but can be in a transitional, even marginal state. A small proportion of the middle class manages to get into higher levels of society, but most of them are doomed to go to lower classes, or for some time to be uncertain in a thin layer between the “top of the rich” and the “majority of the poor”. The authors of the research agree with their colleagues (Zlobina, Shulha, Bevzenko, 2016) that the existence of large middle class does not correspond at all to the logic of the oligarchic system itself, nor to the corporate interests of oligarchic groups that create and increase their capital on the basis of the establishment of monopolistic power in one or another sphere. The existence of an independent social force that is independent of oligarchs' interests, which can stimulate the development of civil society, based on its social interests, create public pressure on the power structures and influence decisions does not correspond to the interests of the oligarchy.

Similarly, the Ukrainian oligarchic system is characterized by the lack of demand for skilled personnel or demand only for those who have necessary contacts. This, in its turn, deforms the chain “education – qualification – income – long-term savings – level of consumption”, which ensures the formation and development of the middle class. Education does not guarantee a job with career prospects. Job does not guarantee income: the salary of representatives of one profession in the private and public sectors varies considerably. Income does not guarantee status, as many sources of high income are illegal.

Conclusions

The Ukrainian middle class is unstable from the socio-economic and socio-cultural point of view and from the socio-political point of view – it is not yet fully a political entity. Taking this into consideration, we can assert that its prospects are ambivalent. To the same extent it is both possible the development of the identified group towards the middle class of the European model, and the marginalization of this group, the loss of its propensity to manifest social activity.

On the one hand, regarding the immediate prospects of the middle class in Ukraine, it can be argued that if the factors that hinder its formation are not eliminated, then the middle class will remain a silent minority in conditions of rising social tensions among the majority of the poor and the permissiveness of the rich.

On the other hand, some of the trends that occurred during the turbulent events of the recent history of Ukraine, which arose from the confrontation between the authorities and the Maidan in November 2013 – February 2014, could not help affecting on the nature and significance of progressive changes in the society. These changes involve further processes of self-organization of the middle class as the basis of civil society, further democratization of social relations, the formation of new norms and values of social behavior, renewal of the basis for social solidarity and responsibility.

From the position of self-organization of social systems (N. Louman, E. Giddens), the Ukrainian middle class passed through three stages of self-organization: striving for distinguishing, striving for designating, striving for reproducing and restoring differences. The most complicated thing has remained – the production of cooperative effects of actions on distinction, designation, reproduction and restoration. However, the very production of these cooperative effects leads to a more optimal structuring of society and the formation of social relations of interaction.

Based on O. Kutsenko's methodology, it can be argued that the middle class of modern Ukraine has realized its "social self" both in accordance with objective criteria (the definition of its own financial status) and subjective (criterion of self-identification and value orientation), however it cannot realize its activity-structural potential yet.

Some optimism about further self-organization of blurred middle class is caused by the most serious shift towards the socio-political self-identification of the Ukrainian population as a whole. Thus, the significance of the position of "a citizen of Ukraine" has increased by one and half times – from 35.9% in 2013 to 52.3% in 2015. At the same time, such

basis for solidarity as similar prosperity took a back seat: the surge of patriotism has temporarily diminished significance of social-income stratification of the Ukrainian society (Zlobina, Shulha, Bevzenko, 2016, p. 106).

Disappearance of dualism in the integration priorities of Ukrainians and formation of a stable core of supporters of the European direction as the main integration vector also contributes to the consolidation of the Ukrainian middle class on a value-based framework.

We hope that further decentralization processes will contribute to the withdrawal of reforms from the shadow in postmaiden Ukraine. In our opinion, these reforms deserve all possible support, as the state itself creates favorable conditions for limiting the bureaucratic burden that affects small and medium-sized businesses and establishing control from the institutions of civil society. It is decentralization that is a significant factor in expanding boundaries and composition of the Ukrainian middle class upon condition that the potential threat of corruption sale of territorial communities' land is eliminated.

POSTMAJDANNA UKRAINA: KLASA ŚREDNIA W CIENIU REFORM

(STRESZCZENIE)

Artykuł poświęcony jest badaniu dynamiki struktury społecznej społeczeństwa ukraińskiego w okresie po Rewolucji Godności 2013–2014. Autorka stara się zidentyfikować wiodące tendencje transformacji klasy średniej – podstawy stabilności i gwarancje nieodwracalności przemian demokratycznych – w postmajdannej Ukrainie. Zakrojony na szeroką skalę program transformacji społecznej, ogłoszony przez ukraiński rząd (62 reformy), nie mógł zostać zrealizowany z powodu braku niezbędnych zasobów, agresji Rosji w Donbasie i ostrego kryzysu zaufania publicznego do władzy. Państwowa klasa średnia odpowiedziała ograniczeniami ilościowymi i zmianami jakościowymi w swoim składzie. Czynniki, które wpłynęły na ten proces, zostały poddane analizie, a w szczególności: nadzwyczajna koncentracja dużego kapitału finansowego, genetycznie powiązanego z władzą; utrzymanie niezbędnej regulacji państwa w gospodarce; zwiększenie udziału wydatków społecznych państwa na wsparcie niższych warstw; zwiększona aktywność migracyjna Ukraińców po uzyskaniu ruchu bezwizowego z UE; mobilność społeczna na rynku pracy, prekarizacja; redukcja pełnosprawnej ludności wiejskiej; wpływ gospodarki nieformalnej (w cieniu); decentralizacja władzy; czynniki społeczno-polityczne. Stwierdzono, że klasa średnia w postmajdannej Ukrainie już zrealizowała swoje „ja społeczne”, ale nie może jeszcze zrealizować swojego potencjału czynnościowo-strukturalnego.

POSTMAIDAN UKRAINE: MIDDLE CLASS IN THE SHADOW OF REFORMS

(SUMMARY)

The article is devoted to the research of dynamics of the social structure of Ukrainian society in the period after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013–2014. The authors try to identify the leading tendencies of the middle class transformation, the basis for stability and guarantees of the irreversibility of democratic transformations in postmaidan Ukraine. The large-scale program of social transformation, proclaimed by the Ukrainian government (62 reforms), could not be implemented due to lack of essential resources, Russia's aggression in Donbas and an acute crisis of public trust to the government. The national middle class responded with quantitative reductions and qualitative changes in its composition. The factors influencing this process have been analyzed, in particular: the extraordinary concentration of large financial capital, genetically related to power; maintaining essential state regulation in the economy; increase of the share of social expenditures of the state in support for the lower stratum; increased migration activity of Ukrainians after obtaining a visa-free regime with the EU; social mobility in the labor market, precarization; reduction of working age rural population; influence of the informal (shadow) economy; decentralization of power; socio-political factors. It can be concluded that the middle class in postmaidan Ukraine has already realized its "social self," but cannot realize its activity-structural potential yet.

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