

# Institutional Interaction in the Network Society: Public Authorities, Opposition, Interest Groups

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## ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the institutional interaction in the network society. At this stage of Ukraine's political development, the process of further institutionalization (formation of institutions of a democratic society) requires the improvement of mechanisms of institutional interaction. First of all, it is about the interaction between the parliament, the president and the government, which takes place against the background of the institutionalization of the opposition and interest groups. Its main participants, which decisively influence the effectiveness of institutional interaction, include public authorities, the opposition and interest groups. It is these agents that this article focuses on. Modern institutional design is formed in the process of interaction between public authorities, the opposition and interest groups. This interaction is communicative. Therefore, this study combines institutional and communicative dimensions of political development. This led to use neo-institutional methodology, especially – historical institutionalism, the institutionalism of rational choice. From the point of view of historical institutionalism, the effectiveness of institutional interaction depends on the "path traveled", and representatives of rational choice institutionalism focus on opportunistic behavior and rent-seeking by public authorities in the process of institutional interaction. The main feature of effective governance is not just the presence of certain institutions, but ensuring their communication in order to solve pressing socio-political problems. The requirement to increase the effectiveness of communicative interaction is becoming a priority for post-Soviet countries.

**Keywords:** *institutions, public power, institutional interaction, neo-institutionalism, network society, opposition, interest groups.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Consolidation of democracy in Ukraine requires increasing the effectiveness of institutional cooperation. It is not just about communication between the institutions of the "power triangle": parliament - president - government. It is necessary to involve in institutional interaction all institutions of public power (central government and local self-government), the institution of opposition (especially parliamentary), as well as interest groups (pressure groups). After all, the fundamental condition of a consolidated democracy is the institutionalization of public power, opposition and interest groups [1].

Understanding the context is extremely important for the study of institutional interaction. "Sensitivity" to the context allow us to interpret institutional interaction as a set

of practices and the context of their implementation. Let's agree: "The study of institutional interaction explains verbal activities and mechanisms of interaction through which institutional practices are implemented. I demonstrate that for a sensitive analysis of these practices, the analyst must have sufficient knowledge of the context. The agent may focus on expert knowledge or organizational procedures that are perceived as appropriate for the practice, but not known to outsiders in institutional setting" [2].

In this study, such a context is the transition to democracy (which involves the introduction of democratic institutional interaction) and the formation of a network society. Institutional interaction, its norms and rules must correspond to the context of this "double" transition of

Ukrainian society: 1) from authoritarianism and Soviet traditions of centralized institutional interaction to democracy (electoral, and ultimately - consolidated); 2) from Soviet modernization and post-Soviet demodernization to a network society in which the context of institutional interaction is determined by the development of Internet communications and social networks. Note the following opinion: "If there is a discrepancy between the political order (social reality) and legality (as a set of legal norms and rules for gaining and retaining power through public support), then there is a revolutionary situation of transition. This is how the political orders of traditional modern and postmodern societies were created, with their inherent notions of legitimacy and legal and constitutional norms of legality (legality) of public power. That is why, if national elites choose the path of legitimizing public power through reliance on Ukrainian society, they must stand firm on two "whales": democracy and the information society. The latter is characterized at this stage by Internet communications and their important component - social networks" [3-5].

In the domestic context, effective institutional cooperation is hampered by changes in legislation, including constitutional changes in the division of powers in the "authority triangle" and the lack of legislative definition and regulation of lobbying [6]. It should also be noted the personification of Ukrainian policy, both government and election campaigns (suffice it to mention the "nominal" election blocs "and the result of the political party" Servant of the People "in the early parliamentary elections in 2019, which was entirely due to the victory of V. Zelensky in the presidential campaigns), underdeveloped vertical and horizontal networks of communication between the political system (including public authorities, opposition and interest groups) and society. In modern Ukrainian society, ensuring institutional interaction is an important component of many political processes: from the development of democracy and decentralization to the institutionalization of the party system and parliamentarism, the establishment of vertical and horizontal communication between public authorities, opposition and interest groups.

Strategic tasks for the political development of the country can be realized only in the process of institutional cooperation. All of the above indicates the relevance of the chosen research topic.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study of institutional interaction in the network society necessitated the construction of methodological program based on a combination of neo-institutional theory

and communicative approach. On the basis of neo-institutional theory, in particular its types, such as historical and discursive institutionalism, as well as the institutionalism of rational choice, the institutional dimension of interaction between public authorities, opposition and interest groups is determined.

According to the provisions of historical institutionalism, institutional interaction at this stage depends on the "trajectory of previous development." Its peculiarities in the domestic context include the post-authoritarian state of political interaction, which determines the presence of political and social pathologies: confrontational interaction, low political activity of citizens, the dominance of vertical communication, ignoring feedback mechanisms, and so on. Discursive institutionalism allows us to define institutional interaction as a process of public communication between public authorities, interest groups (pressure) and the opposition. In a networked society, social networks and mechanisms of e-democracy mediate such interaction. From the point of view of institutionalism, rational choice will increase the efficiency of institutional interaction will reduce transaction costs, realize the public interest (rather than serve private interests) and limit opportunistic behavior,

The communicative approach allows the authors to look at public power through the optics of generalized means of communication, emphasizes institutional interaction as series of successive selections of the best answers and actions. General scientific methods (induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, generalization, etc.) and special methods (historical and comparative) were also used.

## **3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH**

Institutional interaction in a network society is divided into: 1) direct communication between public authorities, opposition and interest groups; 2) mediated communication. The point is that modern institutional interaction is mediated by mass media and political communications. Positions of public authorities, opposition and interest groups are presented in communicative space. The activities of public authorities in the communicative space are represented at the levels of central government (parliament, president, government), regional authorities and local self-government. In the process of institutional interaction, the following areas of public authority are subject to improvement:

- coordination between different authorities;
- increasing attention to cooperation with the mass media as an important means of influencing public opinion;

- increasing the efficiency of press services on the Internet.

The following factors hinder the introduction of an effective model of indirect communication: 1) the oligarchic model of activity of the Ukrainian mass media, which has been formed over the last 30 years; 2) noting the favorable trends in the introduction of electronic services, we emphasize the need for further development of information, legal and organizational mechanisms of e-government.

In a networked society, new challenges arise for public authorities. First of all, they concern the need to ensure inclusiveness (broad and comprehensive participation of citizens) in the process of developing and implementing public policy. The model of electoral democracy, which limits the political activity of citizens to participate in elections, considers them exclusively as voters, whose role is to transfer the mandate to the electorate, is outdated. Electoral democracy, although it involves the participation of citizens in voting, neither technologically nor politically meets the requirements and technological capabilities of a networked society. On the contrary, the modern model of consolidated democracy is based on a broader interpretation of political participation.

#### **4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

In the process of institutional interaction in the network society, agents must take into account all the benefits associated with the development of Internet communications, including social networks, and use them. In modern society, increasing the effectiveness of institutional interaction is also associated with the activation of non-governmental organizations, the institutionalization of political parties. It should be noted such a direction of institutional interaction as the horizontal interaction of international institutions [7]. The role of institutional cooperation in ensuring European integration cannot be underestimated. It should be emphasized once again that "One of the most important trends in modern international relations is the integration process, designed to significantly change the political picture of the world. The development of a united Europe testifies to their complexity and ambiguity. For Ukraine, European integration is a foreign policy priority. Such a choice in favor of the development of European civilization involves the introduction of European social standards. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out radical social and political reforms that in the future will allow Ukraine to join the European Union. This, in turn, will require urgent solution of the most important strategic tasks for stabilization of socio-economic development of Ukraine, development of effective measures for social protection, consolidation of

central and regional governments for their practical implementation" [8].

According to W. Parsons, "The idea of public policy presupposes the existence of life's sphere or sector that is not private or purely individual, but is carried out jointly. "Public" means those aspects of human activity that require governmental or social intervention or at least joint action" [9].

In the network society there are significant changes in the understanding of public authority's role [10]. They are due to complex social transformations in the process of transition from industrial to information society, when political communication and communication technologies become an important part of consolidated democracy, decisively influencing institutional interaction [11].

One of the main conditions for effective institutional interaction is trust in the media [12].

It should be emphasized that "relations between political actors and their interaction with civil society institutions, mass media and experts, citizens today are mediated by information technology. That is why in the public space the priority is not the dominance of the state in all spheres of social life, but the establishment of constructive interaction with society through information technology in order to implement and protect the person's rights" [13].

Public authorities, the opposition, and interest groups should become full participants in such interaction.

For public authorities, among other things, the growing importance of the communicative factor results in the need to reorganize the activities of press services and increase attention to social networks. Regarding the first point, the main attention during the work of press services should now be paid not to traditional mass media (television, radio, press), but to communication on the Internet (website, e-mail, messengers, etc.). Regarding social networks: "Technological innovations (from the Internet to smartphones, from e-mail to social networks) are changing the usual perceptions of social order and related legitimacy concepts. Social networks have not only brought together millions of users, but have also created technical opportunities for feedback and inclusiveness for all network members" [13].

Also, the formation of a network society transforms our ideas about the legitimacy of public authority. It should be noted that "... institutions of public power and political actors need a new, both in form and content, justification of their own legitimacy, different from those that dominated the modern era. In particular, in the past, the process of

legitimization of public power involved the following steps:

- formulation of the goal of social development by political actors based on instrumental rationality;
- search for the most effective means to achieve it;
- rational explanation of the essence of their own actions to different social groups;
- calculation of costs and benefits for society from the implementation of a strategy;
- taking into account the behavior of other political actors;
- assessment of the situation as a whole. In modern conditions, under the influence of globalization and informatization, there are new challenges to the traditional understanding of legitimacy.

An adequate response involves abandoning the instrumental understanding of rationality, paying attention to communicative rationality, and simplifying feedback between government and citizens" [13].

Public authorities remain the main participant in institutional interaction. The opposition (primarily parliamentary) and interest groups must also be involved in institutional interaction.

As for the role of the opposition in institutional interaction, it is determined «... on the basis of executive-legislative, party-election and other factors and parameters... parliamentary and general political opposition... structured on the basis of multilevel executive-legislative and interinstitutional relations revolving around the political process in the triangle "head of state - prime minister / government - parliament" [14]. The structuring of the opposition, its institutionalization and the acquisition of the appropriate political and legal status in network society is due to the executive and legislative institutional interaction, party and electoral interaction, and so on. The institutionalization of the opposition is a factor that ensures the stability of democratic political system. The importance of ensuring the full participation of the opposition in institutional interaction is due not only to the need to maintain competition in the process of institutional interaction. The effectiveness of institutional interaction in general depends on the opposition's choice of course of action. Here is A. Przeworski's opinion: "after the establishment of democracy, the classic problem of the opposition arises - how to protest strongly and by what means. If the opposition does not become an opponent - does not offer alternatives and does not defend them persistently - then the representative power of political institutions, their ability to

mobilize and attract is weak. But if the opposition vigorously resists, democracy may be threatened" [15, pp. 605–648]. In general, in democratic societies, the opposition plays an important role in various types of institutional interactions. If it is distinguished the opposition communication network, the following variations should be noted: non-party, intra-party, inter-party, opposition, as well as cross-party (cross-party), etc. [16].

According to the authors R. Andeweg, L. Nijzink, T. Saalfeld, the role of the opposition in institutional interaction is determined by three areas: inter-party, cross-party and non-party interaction [17-19].

It is necessary to reveal insights into directions of institutional interaction and determine the role of the opposition in each of them. The authors note that "each of the modalities of relationship between the executive and the legislature must (among other things) be transformed into a certain (theoretically and methodologically separated) type of political, especially parliamentary, opposition as a political institution. In particular, in the case of inter-party modality / interinstitutional relations, government / cabinet ministers and members of the legislature from one party interact with government / cabinet ministers and members of the legislature (in the case of parliamentary opposition only), only with members of the legislature. At the same time, within this modality / variation, various sub-modalities / sub-variations should be distinguished, in particular intra-coalition, when ministers and deputies from one ruling / governmental party interact with ministers and deputies from another or other ruling / governing parties; opposition, when ministers and deputies from the ruling /government party (parties), which is part of the pro-government majority or minority (while maintaining the principle of decision-making on the formation of governments by deputies' majority in the legislature, but a relative or absolute majority depending on national parameters), interact with deputies from the opposition party or parties that are not part of the pro-government majority / minority" [14].

As for the role of interest groups in institutional interaction, it is determined depending on their typology. Let us agree with the opinion of V. Bykovets: "The typology of interest groups represented in modern politics acquires the status of a scientific problem for the following reasons. First, the division of groups by type is the main means of theoretical identification of their activities' content, highlighting the essential features of their composition, organization, role and significance for the political sphere ... Secondly, the change of typology is due to high rates of democratization" [20]. Institutionalization of interest groups (in the public sphere) is problematic in

Ukrainian society, while the events of 2004 and 2013-2014 indicate the predominance of anemic groups, which arise quite spontaneously as a reaction to current political events. For the emergence of such a group in a network society, a certain trigger is enough, which is distributed through social networks. The involvement of anemic groups in institutional interaction is not long-term and is not characterized by content. Only institutional groups are able to effectively represent interests in institutional political interaction. According to another criterion, interest groups are divided into single-target and multi-target [21]. According to V. Bykovets, "structures of the first type, which seek to ensure the adoption of a certain legislative act in parliament, are formed and exist only to achieve this goal. And then either fall apart or reorient to another, no less specific goal. The activity of multi-purpose groups is multidisciplinary and is not limited to the specifics of certain tasks. Thus, many pressure groups can not only interact with the government on decision-making in a particular area of government, but also participate in election campaigns, etc." [20]. In general, the participation of interest groups in institutional interactions allows presenting the interests of the public, various social groups and communities. The advantages of interest groups are the

ability to react quickly to political events and take an active part in network communication. After all, interest groups are formed as dynamic networks of interacting individuals. At the same time, it is dangerous for post-Soviet societies to replace the interests of broad social groups with "narrow" selfish interests of oligarchic groups.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In a networked society, institutional interaction becomes an important factor in political development. Ukraine's transition from electoral to consolidated democracy involves increasing attention to such actors of institutional interaction as public authorities, the opposition, and interest groups. In Ukraine, public authorities in institutional interaction are constantly balancing on the verge of authoritarianism. Another danger is the dominance of narrow-group interests of oligarchic groups, which are presented in the public space as a national interest. In the model of electoral democracy, institutional interaction will always be characterized by a high level of conflict. Instead, the development of Internet communications and social networks creates new opportunities for consensual institutional interaction.

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