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The content and factors of political stability

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Political stability is a key factor in the effective functioning of the state. The study of political stability is particularly relevant in contemporary conditions, where many states face challenges such as political turbulence, economic instability, and social polarization. The absence of effective mechanisms to ensure stability can lead to crises in state governance, increased social tension, and a loss of trust in political institutions. Therefore, a comprehensive study of the essence of political stability, its structural characteristics, and key factors is an important task for political science. The aim of this article is to analyze conceptual approaches to defining political stability, determine its essence, and identify the main factors that contribute to its strengthening or, conversely, its destabilization. To achieve this goal, comparative, systemic, and structural-functional methods were applied. The study found that political stability is based on a combination of institutional, economic, social, and foreign policy factors. Among the key stability factors identified are the effectiveness of state institutions, the level of political participation of citizens, economic development, social cohesion, and the influence of global political processes. A political system that can adapt to changes, respond effectively to challenges, and maintain a balance between power and society has significantly higher chances of long-term stability. In this context, the formation of transparent political governance mechanisms, the fight against corruption, and the creation of effective mechanisms for civic participation in decision-making are crucial. The findings obtained may be useful for further research on political stability, particularly in the context of analyzing crisis processes in modern democratic and authoritarian regimes.

Key words: political stability, political system, power, democracy, legitimacy, effectiveness.

Introduction. Political stability is one of the key factors in the effective functioning of the state, ensuring social harmony and sustainable development. It determines the ability of a political system to adapt to internal and external challenges while maintaining the legitimacy of power and public trust. In the context of globalization and dynamic changes in the global political landscape, the issue of stability becomes particularly significant, as its disruption can lead to crises, social conflicts, and political turbulence.

The study of the essence of political stability involves analyzing its conceptual approaches, identifying its main characteristics, and examining the mechanisms that ensure it. At the same time, it is crucial to determine the factors influencing the level of stability, among which political institutions, economic development, social processes, the level of civic participation, and international influences can be distinguished.

Main studies and publications. Among the numerous studies and publications that explore the essence and factors of political stability, the works of the following researchers deserve special attention: T. Grozitska, I. Kiyanka, M. Balan, M. Nikolaeva, T. Pergler, V. Kolyukh, A. Krap, and others.

The purpose of the study. The aim of this article is to analyze the content of political stability and the factors that determine it.

Methodology. This study employs the following research methods: comparative, systemic, and structural-functional. The comparative method was used to analyze different approaches to defining political stability. The systemic approach and the structural-functional method were applied to examine the interconnections between the factors influencing the formation of political stability.

Discussion. The word “stable” (Latin *stabilis*), according to the explanatory dictionary of modern Ukrainian, means “firm”, “unchanging”, “resilient” [2, p. 1185]. However, in this sense, it is not entirely suitable for characterizing political stability in a democratic society, which is not unchanging and rigid but rather dynamic in nature.

In a broad sense, stability is interpreted as a state of orderly and dynamic societal development, where all its subsystems – economic, political, social, and cultural – function harmoniously and in a balanced manner. At the same time, absolute stability, understood as the complete absence of change, can only be theoretically achieved within an entirely static political system, which is practically impossible. Therefore, the correlation and balance between stability and change serve as important criteria for assessing the effectiveness of a political system.

Political stability is a condition of a society’s political system, a network of relations between various political actors characterized by a certain degree of resilience, unity, and integrity, as well as the ability to function effectively and constructively [10, p. 631]. The key attributes of political stability include government efficiency and consistency, clarity in the procedures and conditions for making and implementing political decisions, the legitimacy of the political system, its ability to adequately respond to internal and external changes, and its capacity to apply force (coercion) within legally defined situations.

The Ukrainian researcher I. Kiyanka proposes defining political stability as a set of institutionalized structures capable of adjusting political processes both internally and externally [4, p. 13]. The researcher outlines the following typology of political stability for-

mats: state stabilization, which maintains stability within the framework of the political system (works of F. Bealey, K. Dowding, F. Kimber, D. Jaworski); democratic stability (D. Jaworski); government stability concerning power structures (E. Zimmerman); legitimate stability (D. Siring); and consensual stability (A. Stepan, A. Lijphart). As she emphasizes, “political stability is determined not only by a set of relationships between various political actors capable of cooperating holistically and constructively, but also by its ability to balance conflict situations in society. Additionally, it includes mechanisms within the political system that can regulate the legitimacy of political processes and act as a guarantor of the system’s integrity” [4, p. 13].

Political stability is often – rightfully so – considered in the context of state stability. This is explained by the fact that the state has always been and remains a key element of the political system of society, serving as the fundamental framework for organizing political and other processes in an orderly manner. In particular, the Ukrainian researcher Ya. Kondratyev argues that state stability, in a broad sense, means the long-term ability of state institutions to make decisions and ensure their enforcement without the open use of force, which largely depends on the legality and efficiency of the government [7, p. 986]. In most democratic societies, state stability is primarily based on rational-legal principles. These principles help achieve institutional legitimacy of power, which is founded on citizens’ trust in the form of state governance, the system of government, and constitutionally enshrined state institutions, rather than in individual leaders (Political Stability and Instability).

Ukrainian researcher Yu. Matsiievskiy provides a list of the most common indicators of political stability [9, p. 402]: absence of violence (both within the country and at its borders); long-term existence of the government (and other legally defined institutions of power); presence of a legitimate constitutional regime; absence of random structural changes; regularity of political interactions at all levels of organization; and a set of macro-indicators (economic, informational, security-related, etc.) that reflect the sustainable development of society.

O. Maksymova identifies indicators of political stability that are directly related to the quality of the political system. According to the researcher, the political system itself generates the state of stability in political institutions: “Political stability represents a state of the political system characterized by the unity of its opposing characteristics – resilience and changeability. This unity, which is extremely complex in nature, is achieved through the simultaneous existence of negative feedback (ensuring a stable, linear course of socio-political processes) and positive feedback (stimulating the development of nonlinear processes)” [8, pp. 507–508].

American scholar D. Easton equated political stability with the equilibrium of the political system. He

proposed the strategy of preservation through change as the most effective way to stabilize the political system. This understanding of stability through change is based on systems theory, which considers growth as the primary process of development, involving two functional mechanisms: differentiation and integration. Differentiation encourages the system to transition from one state to another, while integration ensures that this process does not simply become an issue of maintaining the status quo. To achieve this, differentiation trends must be taken into account. According to systems theory, interaction processes include three key functions: input, conversion (transformation), and output. Based on these principles, D. Easton analyzes the conditions necessary for the survival of the political system, which he defines as the interaction through which values are authoritatively distributed within society [14, p. 117]. Stability requires the political system’s ability to distribute these values (both material and ideological) and to encourage most members of society to accept this distribution. The successful fulfillment of these functions, in turn, depends on the mechanisms through which inputs (incoming factors) are transformed into outputs (outgoing factors). The conversion process allows for the mobilization of public resources to achieve goals and coordinate the efforts of society’s members in fulfilling assigned tasks, thereby creating conditions for stability. Thus, equilibrium is achieved by aligning the system’s input and output, which is directly linked to the level of support the political system receives from broad segments of the population [14, p. 319].

The concept of “stability” reflects diverse and relative characteristics of the functioning of political processes and their outcomes, serving as a systemic characteristic of society. T. Parsons views stability within the social system (including its political dimension) as a result of the influence of factors and mechanisms that maintain the system’s tendency toward order. This is achieved through the performance of four key functions: adaptation; goal attainment; integration, which involves a certain level of social solidarity; pattern maintenance and socialization, ensuring the reproduction of socio-cultural models of interaction [17, p. 78]. The functional aspects of the societal system, alongside the differentiation of its elements and roles, contribute to maintaining social and political order. At the core of this order lies normative regulation, “through which collective life is organized” [17, p. 53]. Therefore, according to Parsons, a key condition for the stability of social systems is the integration of value orientations among the subjects of collective action, including political actors. For political stability, it is crucial that the principles of governance align with the actual value orientations of society.

R. Dahl defines political stability through the lens of democratic theory. He considers the presence of a constitutional order as both a defining factor and a manifestation of stability in democratic countries. The author

links stability to the core elements of democracy: public competition for voters' support and the expansion of citizen participation in the political process [13, p. 67].

S. Lipset identifies several key factors for democratic political stability, including the quantitative dominance of the middle class in overall social stratification (the middle class should constitute more than half of the population), a consensus among major political forces regarding fundamental values and rules of the game, and the absence or minimal representation of anti-system parties within the political system. In this case, democratic political stability is largely ensured by a high level of education accessible to the majority of the population, sufficient healthcare, and favorable economic and urbanization indicators. A lack of development in key societal spheres – reflecting governmental inefficiency or even inaction – is perceived as a lack of democracy and, consequently, a lack of stability [15, p. 81].

British scholar F. Bealey argues that political stability depends on the legitimacy of the political regime. The disruption of stability within a political system occurs when the legitimacy of the ruling regime is in crisis. This is manifested in the government's inability to perform its legally defined functions or in the presence of illegitimate violence within the political space of the state [11, p. 689].

German scholar E. Zimmerman narrows the concept of political stability to governmental stability. According to him, political stability refers to the functioning of a legitimate government over a certain (preferably long) period without frequent personnel changes, as well as the executive branch's ability to adapt to constantly changing realities. Governmental stability, as the foundation of political stability, in turn, depends on factors such as the type of cabinet, the characteristics of the political parties forming the government and opposition, established traditions of appointing executive officials, and the ability of governing bodies to continuously accumulate positive results and governance experience [20, p. 33].

Considering the scholarly perspectives discussed above, O. Maksymova identifies the minimum conditions necessary for ensuring political stability as the political system's ability to perform its functions (gaining legitimacy, preventing illegitimate violence, maintaining constitutional order, etc.), as well as ensuring a balance among fundamental internal subsystems – institutional, regulatory, functional, etc. [8, pp. 507–508].

American political scientist A. Lijphart notes that political stability is a complex and multifaceted term. In his research, he defines it as a multidimensional concept that includes elements often discussed in comparative politics literature: system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy, and efficiency. The key characteristics of a stable democratic regime are its high probability of maintaining its democratic nature and its low level of actual or potential civil violence [16, p. 109].

Political stability in a democratic society is fundamentally a balance of political forces, meaning it has a dynamic nature. According to Lijphart, the characteristics of political stability include system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy, and efficiency. Collectively, these attributes can be described as functionality, meaning the effective performance of the roles assigned to political actors. The balance of political forces (in a broader sense, the balance among political actors) and their functionality are among the most significant characteristics of political stability, and to some extent, they are included in many definitions of the concept.

American researcher P. Ordeshook argues that “political stability, which is unattainable in any “frozen” democratic system, becomes a reality in a society capable of continuous self-correction and self-adjustment” [19, p. 14].

Ukrainian researcher V. Kolyukh asserts that within the higher organs of modern democratic states, such as the head of state, parliament, government, and supreme courts, political stability manifests as a state of equilibrium (balance) among their constitutional powers and their effective implementation. Conversely, political instability appears as a disruption in the balance of powers and functionality of the state's highest institutions. He distinguishes two groups of factors influencing political stability: institutional and socio-cultural. Institutional factors refer to formalized political phenomena and processes, with the most significant among them being politico-legal institutions – systems of legal norms that regulate specific groups of homogeneous and interconnected political relations. These include constitutional law institutions, enshrined in both fundamental and ordinary laws of the state. Socio-cultural factors refer to political consciousness and behavioral stereotypes, which lack formal expression, are not codified in official acts, and are not legally binding. Among the numerous constitutional-legal institutions, those that have the greatest impact on political stability are institutions of government structure, electoral systems, and party systems [6, p. 6].

Ukrainian scholar A. Krap considers political stability as the dynamic development of society, characterized by the harmonious balance of all its subsystems (economic, political, social, and cultural), which is a necessary condition for the existence and functioning of society. The main criteria for political stability include the effectiveness of decision-making, the presence of political order, and the absence of government crises. As a result of analysis, institutions (norms, procedures, customs, values) are identified as the fundamental mechanisms that contribute to self-sufficiency and the formation of conditions for political stability, political order, and the political system [5, p. 58].

V. Volynets argues that political stability depends on the effectiveness of public authority and legitimacy. Primarily, political stability results from the evaluation of two processes. The first is the assessment of pub-

lic authority's effectiveness, which refers to the actual actions of public authorities and the means by which they fulfill their designated functions. The second process is legitimation, which entails the ability of public authority to generate and sustain belief that existing political institutions are the most suitable for a given political system [3, p. 12]. Both aspects of political stability – effectiveness and the instrumental provision of governance – are closely interconnected. Moreover, they include both rational (logical) and emotional (often illogical) components.

Political stability also depends on the social interests of different social groups and the methods of ensuring their interaction. It is important not only to consider the specificity and autonomy of interests and the diversity of activity orientations but also to understand their interdependence and possible alignment. The formation of political order is based on the presence of shared fundamental interests among different political forces and the necessity of cooperation to protect them.

Political stability is also reflected in compliance with laws and other regulatory acts and in the use of non-violent forms of political struggle. In a democratic system, all mechanisms of power are directed toward achieving a balance of socio-political interests and meeting the needs of civil society. This results in the formation of a self-regulating mechanism of political relations, in which the state plays a leading role, ensuring the regulation of the entire social system to maintain the existing order.

The formation of political stability is a crucial function of political institutions. It is well known that any system can be represented as a structure comprising a series of units or components with stable functions. Applying the concept of “stability” to the political system implies a steady state that allows it to function efficiently and develop amid internal and external changes while preserving its structure. A stable political structure demonstrates a high level of public support for society's governance institutions (the regime) and those in power. It is also characterized by the consistent and orderly transition of ruling elites, the existence of a system of checks and balances to regulate power structures, and the functioning of a multi-party system with an effectively operating opposition.

Political stability and political order can be achieved primarily through two main approaches: coercion or the reconciliation of interests through compromise as stabilization mechanisms. These approaches correspond to dictatorship and the development of democracy, respectively. Political stability achieved through violence and repression is short-lived and illusory, as it is imposed “from above” without public participation, and opposition is suppressed by force. Such stability is characteristic of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, where order is absolutized, and power is monopolized by a single center.

The nature of political stability in democratic regimes is fundamentally different, as it is maintained through mechanisms of continuous self-correction within the political system, based on balancing the interests of social and political groups.

The support of political power institutions in mass consciousness, as institutions entrusted with a defined set of powers, is also a foundation of political stability in society. The delegation of governing authority grants political institutions the right to exercise power, including the use of coercive actions and unpopular measures – since, by delegating these powers, society demonstrates its willingness to submit to these institutions for the sake of security and order.

The delegation of authority and willingness to comply form political trust, from which emerge phenomena such as legitimacy vs. illegitimacy, consent vs. dissent, obedience vs. defiance, and lawfulness vs. anomie. Trust is a form of political capital, a credit based on belief and recognition, or more precisely, on countless credit operations through which agents endow an individual (or an entity) with the authority they acknowledge behind them [12, p. 173].

Thus, political stability is simultaneously the result of the existence and functioning of mechanisms for reconciling interests within a given type of political system, primarily through either compromise or coercion.

Results. Accordingly, political stability is a necessary condition for the effective functioning of the state, socio-economic development, and the preservation of civil peace. It is determined by the balance between governing institutions, societal expectations, and the ability of the political system to adapt to changes. The study has established that stability is not a static phenomenon but is shaped by a complex interplay of political, economic, social, and international factors. One of the key conclusions is that political stability is only possible when state institutions function effectively, the principles of the rule of law are upheld, and citizens are actively engaged in decision-making processes. Political culture, the level of trust in government, and the availability of mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution play a crucial role in ensuring sustained political stability.

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Сутність та чинники політичної стабільності

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Політична стабільність є визначальним чинником ефективного функціонування держави. Вивчення політичної стабільності є надзвичайно актуальним у сучасних умовах, коли багато держав стикаються з викликами політичної турбулентності, економічної нестабільності та соціальної поляризації. Відсутність ефективних механізмів забезпечення стабільності може призводити до кризи державного управління, зростання соціальної напруги та втрати довіри до політичних інститутів. Тому комплексне дослідження сутності політичної стабільності, її структурних характеристик та ключових чинників є важливим завданням для політичної науки. Метою даної статті є аналіз концептуальних підходів щодо визначення політичної стабільності, визначення її сутності та ідентифікація основних чинників, що сприяють її зміцненню або, навпаки, дестабілізації. Для досягнення цієї мети використано порівняльний, системний, структурно-функціональний методи. У ході дослідження визначено, що політична стабільність ґрунтується на поєднанні інституційних, економічних, соціальних та зовнішньополітичних чинників. Серед ключових чинників стабільності виокремлено ефективність державних інституцій, рівень політичної участі громадян, рівень економічного розвитку, рівень соціальної згуртованості та вплив глобальних політичних процесів. Політична система, що здатна адаптуватися до змін, ефективно реагувати на виклики та підтримувати баланс між владою та суспільством, має значно вищі шанси на довготривалу стабільність. У цьому контексті важливим є формування прозорих механізмів політичного управління, боротьба з корупцією та створення ефективних механізмів громадянської участі у прийнятті рішень. Отримані результати можуть бути корисними для подальших досліджень політичної стабільності, зокрема в контексті аналізу кризових процесів у сучасних демократичних і авторитарних режимах.
Ключові слова: політична стабільність, політична система, влада, демократія, легітимність, ефективність.