

Comparative analysis of cooperation mechanisms between power authorities and civil society institutions: by the cases of Russia and Great Britain

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Abstract This is a summary of the author's Candidate of science Thesis, supervised by Professor Oleg Fomin (Department of Political Science at the P.A. Stolypin Volga Region Academy of Public Administration, Russia) and defended on December 18th, 2009 at the Saratov State Social and Economic University (Russia). The thesis is written in Russian and available from the author upon request. It retrospectively analyses different theoretical approaches to studying state–civil society cooperation, defining those which are mostly suitable to analyse such type of social interaction, specifically in comparative context. Consideration of constantly increasing role of civil society practically elsewhere in the world, on the one hand, and evident appearances of democracy crisis, on the other, became the basic prerequisite for the analysis with a focus on the potential of civil society as a key actor in the process of interaction. However, author expresses critical research view pointing out objective conflicts inherent in civil society as the arena with the plurality of interests and identifying not only positive but also negative aspects resulting from state–civil society interaction.

Keywords Civil society · Power authorities · Mechanisms of cooperation · Institutional environment of civil society · Third sector structures · Binary analysis

This thesis aims at revealing common and specific (national) features of cooperation mechanisms between power authorities and civil society institutions in two countries: Russia and Great Britain. It is mentioned that the majority of the existing comparative research (at least, in Russian practice) nowadays are conducted within

In Russia, the first scientific degree is called candidate of science (rudely compared to PhD) in a relevant field. The review of a thesis presented here was defended for getting a degree in political science. The second scientific degree is doctor of science (in a relevant field also).

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the transitological paradigm (transfer from authoritarian to democratic regimes) what limits spatial frames of a cross-national research with countries or regions with those countries that experience consequences of post-communism. Recognizing importance and the heuristic potential of such approach, the author proceeds from other basics for comparison and chooses countries with different past following methodological principles of binary analysis. This supposes not only contrasting equivalent analytical units but contributes a lot to reevaluating processes and practices in native country after having a look to other experiences.

The structure of the thesis presents introduction, theoretical and empirical chapters both of which are sub-divided into two sections, two annexes with applied index methodology and graphic presentations of civil society condition in macro-regions of the UK and Russia, conclusion, and the list of bibliography.

Introduction contains brief argumentation for urgency of the topic, its scientific state of art, research aim and tasks, specific item for analysis within the topic, theoretical, methodological and empirical basis, scientific novelties, theoretical significance of the research, practical applicability of its results, their testing.

Chapter I fully covers theoretical and methodological approaches to studying process of interaction between state and civil society. The first section of this chapter presents theoretical analysis of the structure of social relations through analytical differentiation of public space within the research tasks into state (public), economic (market) and namely civic spheres. Such differentiation is conditional one and in practice public space looks much more complicated still this becomes a suitable analytical tool in the context of the research tasks for analysing tendencies characterizing certain sphere, studying nature of “frontier conflicts” and forecasting them.

The second section of the Chapter I focuses on political connotation of the concept “civil society”. The political component makes this concept different from other relevant ones, such as non-profit, non-governmental, voluntary etc. Each of these terms characterizes but does not accentuate its particular feature. To simplify this, civil society is a political concept as linked to implementing governance aiming at promoting and protecting economic, social and political interests of citizens. Any process of interaction is essentially communication process. In this section the author makes an attempt to extrapolate the traditional communication theory to the process of such type of social interaction as between state and civil society.

Chapter II is devoted to the complex analysis of a civil society structure in two countries, its institutional basics as well as to revealing national peculiarities and tendencies of its functioning. The first section of the chapter focuses on analyzing certain cases and deviations of governing influence both from the point of power authorities and civil society institutions. To solve this task, secondary analysis of the results of index research and certain national research were used. It showed differences in character and sphere of realizing controlling and regulating mechanisms in the studied countries. In Russia this control is transferred to the political sphere resulting in strengthening restrictive measures, in Great Britain regulation has mainly the economic character.

The second section of the Chapter II studies peculiarities of state–civil society cooperation at local (municipal) level in comparative contest as the level where such interaction adopts instrumental character. In British practice material (economic)

forms of cooperation are widely spread in distinction to the Russian one where such forms are developed fragmentarily and non-material (non-economic) forms of cooperation prevail. Some characteristics that mostly refer to business, such as client orientation, business-plans, domination of external target audience allow the author to describe British model as business model. On the one hand, it provides sustainable development of civil society and third sector structures, but, on the other, leads to its higher dependence on state what breaks the independent nature of civil society. Pointing out the necessity of developing economic basics of civil society and economic forms of its cooperation with power authorities in Russia, the author meanwhile highlights advantages and disadvantages of the model with domination of economic mechanisms.

Conclusion contains the main results of the research, essential theoretical generalizations and prospects of further topic development as well as practical recommendations to power authorities in strategies of cooperation with civil society institutions.

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