



Between Street Mobilization and Backroom Dealing: The Power to Prevent Action at the Ukrainian Parliament (an Evidence of the Coleman Index)

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Abstract

Street protest mobilization is one of the most important features of political system in contemporary Ukraine. Why do political parties appeal to streets? When does such activity become most probable? This research article proposes descriptive analysis of dependence between power to prevent action at the legislative body and tendency to be involved in street protest mobilization in the context of parties at the Ukrainian parliament of the 8th convening and street protests in October 2017. The main conclusion is that weakness or absence of power to prevent action at the parliament makes more probable street protest of this political force.

Keywords: power to prevent action, Coleman index, street protests, backroom dealings, Ukrainian parliament.

1. Introduction

Institutional imbalance challenged democratic consolidation in Ukraine. This imbalance is a consequence of turbulent social changes after the Euromaidan. Weakness of formally organized parliamentary system provides channels for non-formal influence on legislative process: from street mobilization to backroom dealings between politicians at the parliament. On the one hand these non-formal institutional practices provide real possibility to initiate important political actions; on the other hand, these risky activities might de-legitimize parliamentary system. It is very important to understand the decision-making process at the parliament. The parliament is a collective body in which decision-making process is based on formally organized rules and procedures. Taking into account these rules and procedures as well as basic features of different groups of which consist the parliamentary body might be a precondition of, in terms of James S. Coleman, “rational reconstruction” of the legislative process (Coleman, 1993). Such reconstruction allows researchers to make further analysis much more prognostic and pragmatic.

2. Research methodology

One of the well-proven measures relevant to analysis of decision-making process is the Coleman index. Despite the fact that Coleman’s famous article is high cited by social and political scientists, however “its main points are not taken sufficiently seriously” (Leech, 2002). Coleman

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paid attention to collective choice, decision-making process, his findings and conclusions might be interesting in the context of analysis of the legislative process, especially in the Ukrainian context in which that tool was not used.

The theorist substantiates a set of measures which are relevant to evaluation of different aspects of collective choice and decision-making process: (1) the power of collectivities to act, (2) the power of members to prevent an action, and (3) the power of members to initiate an action. The power of collectivities to act in general “provided by a set of constitutional rules” actually, by basic principles of the procedure (for example, ordinary majority or supermajority of votes, right of veto, etc.) (Coleman, 1986: 201). In the case of ordinary majority voting, the power of members to initiate action coincides with consequences of the power to prevent action. Suppose the existence of community of 100 members in which all members vote: 51 is a number of votes that is essentially important for any collective choice as well as 51 is a number of votes for prevent any initiative. Therefore, according to such constitution, the Coleman index through evaluating the power to prevent some decision or action, evaluates general weight of such group in decision-making process. The power to prevent action might be an indicator of general influence of particular group on decision-making process in a collectivity.

The mathematical proof of the index see in (Coleman, 1986: 204-205). The power to prevent action $P_i(N)$ of a particular party or group (party i) is $P_i(N) = \eta_i / \omega$, an equation in which denominator is a number of winning coalitions and numerator is a number of coalitions in which this party or group is a determining member. The index value is a ratio between these two variables.

The winning coalition is a coalition consists of subset of members which controls a sufficient number of votes that essential for prevention any action or decision in a legislative body. “Any action or decision” means action which based on the principle of ordinary majority voting. If group of members departs the coalition and after that coalition loses its majority, this group is a critical voter or determining member of the coalition.

The logic of analysis is following: (1) determine groups (in this case it means political parties) in the collective body (parliament); (2) determine among all possible coalition combinations all winning coalitions; and (3) determine status (critical or not) of a groups in all winning coalitions. It is possible to calculate Coleman index after that according to his equation.

3. Street mobilization in Ukraine and parliamentary politics

Protests were activated by non-parliamentary political parties, first and foremost by the New Force Movement, in summer and autumn 2017. 17 October 2017 around 4500 people joined protest near the parliament building with claims of more resolute anti-corruption fight and electoral reform. *Batkivshchyna* (the “Motherland party”), *Svododa* (the “Freedom party”), “*Samopomich*” declared their support for proposed protest. These parties as well as Opposition bloc – political force that mainly represents interests of financial and industrial oligarchy – supported protests against liberal healthcare reform. What kind of preconditions provoked widespread interest in current street protests among parliamentary political parties? Is it possible to connect street mobilization of parliamentary political parties with weak influence at the parliament?

Coleman argued that power in an authority system is power over “a specified set of events”, making possible particular events or making possible prevention particular events (Coleman, 1986: 255). Expected that political parties with zero influence at the parliament cannot succeed in the main goal for all political parties – control over power redistribution and social outcomes of legislative process. Impossibility to act with success according to institutionalized rules and procedures of legislative process would provoke these actors appeal to street, especially

if the protest rate will increase; it is unimportant why – as a result of economic crisis, military threat or unpopular reforms etc. Street mobilization in general is a specific feature of the Ukrainian political system as a consequence of institutional imbalance and contradictory post-soviet democratization. This condition is more favorable for spreading of unpredictable activities, especially protests. However, protest activity does not mean a totally spontaneous one, such type of actions to be subject to general logic and regularities of collective behavior (Coleman, 1994: 198-199). In our case it is possible to suppose existence of structural dependence: a low probability of influence by a particular party at the parliament provides precondition that this party will appeal to street mobilization. It is expected that mentioned above political parties have a power to prevent action at the parliament nears 0. The author assumes the Coleman index might be relevant not only for measuring of the power of a particular party to prevent or initiate action at the parliament, but also for indirect evaluating of predilection degree to street protest mobilization. As index gets a value from 0 – absence of the power to prevent action to 1 – a total power to prevent any action (100% actions and initiatives), we are proposing measurement of party predilection to street mobilization according to such parameters: (1) an index value 0-0.3 – absence or low rate of power to prevent action at the parliament and a high probability to be involved into street mobilization; (2) an index value 0.3-0.6 – moderate power to prevent action by parliamentary methods and high probability join coalition or situational support it; and (3) an index value <0.6 – low predilection to street mobilization and highest probability to be a core of coalition.

Following analysis is concerned coalition formation process and power to prevent action at the Supreme Council of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada) of the 8th convening that was elected after the Euromaidan. This convening of the parliament plays a crucial role in political decision-making process, government formation and providing reforms in Ukraine as a state with a semi-presidential system.

The article 76 of the Constitution of Ukraine provides constitutional membership at the parliament to 450 people's deputies elected on the basis of mixed electoral system: a half of deputies elected according to party list candidates in nationwide constituency, and a half of deputies elected in regional single-member constituencies. Therefore, parliament is composed by parties that overcome the 5% barrier in a nationwide constituency and winners in the regional single-member constituencies. Winners in regional constituencies might be an independent candidates as well as representatives of different political parties. Only 423 deputies were elected to the parliament on 26 October 2014, because it was impossible to organize election in some constituencies under Russian occupation. Table 1 presents allocation of mandates between political parties and independent candidates at the parliament after election results announcement.

Table 1. The allocation of mandates at the Ukrainian parliament of the 8th convening (election results)

Party/Group	Mandates
1. Petro Poroshenko Bloc (PPB)	132
2. People's Front (PF)	82
3. "Samopomich" ("Self Reliance")	33
4. Opposition bloc	29
5. Radical party of Oleh Liashko (RP)	22
6. Motherland party ("Batkivschyna")	19
7. Freedom party ("Svoboda")	6

8. Strong Ukraine	1
9. “Zastup” (A Spade)	1
10. Right sector	1
11. “Volia” (The Will)	1
12. Independent candidates	96

*According to the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, result in a nationwide constituency (party lists): <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp300?PT001FO1=910> and regional single-mandate constituencies: <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2014/wp039?PT001FO1=910>.

A number of mandates for coalition and its real possibility to prevent or initiate any action at the parliament according to the principle of ordinary majority voting are 212. Therefore, winning coalition in this case is a coalition that control 212 or more mandates at the parliament. Following analysis is based on two assumptions that are established on Coleman’s conceptual framework: (1) to omit from consideration possible interior heterogeneity of parliamentary groups. Despite the fact that different interest groups might compose political party, we admit that political party demonstrates relative unity considering strategic and crucial issues; and (2) to omit from consideration ideological divisions. Despite the fact that coalition between Freedom party and Opposition bloc or “Samopomich” and “Strong Ukraine” looks unlikely, but mathematical approach calculates all possible variants of coalition, because it is important for final calculation of the Coleman index. This index is quantitative measure and it does not need to consider such qualitative feature as party ideology.

Follows the assumptions, analysis does not take into consideration an interior heterogeneity of independent candidates; we are analyzing this group as whole as well as other parties at the parliament. The probability of backroom dealings is higher when rate of the power to prevent action in the group of independent candidates higher than in the group of party members. 121 coalition combinations are possible as a minimum, but only 13 combinations are winning coalitions. Table 2 presents result for parties in winning coalitions, as well as Coleman index value for all these parties.

Table 2. The power to prevent action at the Ukrainian parliament of the 8th convening (Coleman index)

Party/Group	Coleman index	Number of winning coalitions which include the party	Party as a critical voter for winning coalitions
PPB	0.846	12	11
People’s Front	0.308	12	4
“Samopomich”	0	11	0
Opposition bloc	0	10	0
Radical party of Oleh Liashko	0	9	0
Motherland party	0	8	0
Freedom party	0	7	0
“Strong Ukraine”	0	6	0
Zastup	0	5	0
Right sector	0	4	0
People’s Will	0	3	0
Independent candidates	0.077	2	1

The PPB is a core party for coalition. This political force might prevent around 85% initiatives at the parliament. The PF tends to collaboration; a group of independent candidates is

the most important resource for coalition that might be mobilized, but sometimes with negative consequences for democratic process. These possible negotiations seem to be backroom dealings, because independent candidates do not hold responsibility for their actions towards any corporate actors or communities, they do not subject to party discipline. Therefore, there is a small possibility to conclude an agreement through democratic and transparent procedure with this group. It is symptomatic that independent candidates as whole are more influential than some mainstream political parties. This fact defines this group not only as attractive and influential, but also as unreliable ally in a situational alliance. Heterogeneity of the group will provide the opposition with effective tool against the coalition. The experience of using Coleman index demonstrates well-known conceptual conclusion that influence or weight of particular party at a parliament is determined in an indirect way by the number of party members at a legislative body. For example, "Samopomich" has near five times more deputies than Freedom party, but their real power to prevent action at the parliament at the same "zero" level. It is important to emphasize on some limits of analysis tools: (1) ignored interior heterogeneity of political forces. For example, some deputies from the PPB were involved into anti-government protests in October 2017; and (2) this remark is also relevant to group of independent candidates. Some members of this collectivity represent different interest groups, sometimes conflict groups. The data in Table 2 demonstrates starting potential of particular parties at the parliament. We may compare this potential with real situation in power redistribution at the parliament that was shaped by "migration" between factions and self-organization of independent candidates. Table 3 shows number of members in existing party factions and groups at the Ukrainian legislative body. As of 30 October 2017, 422 deputies were at the parliament.

Table 3. Factions and groups at the Ukrainian parliament of the 8th convening (as of 30 October 2017)

Faction/Group	Number of members
1. PPB	138
2. People's Front	81
3. "Samopomich"	25
4. Opposition bloc	43
5. RP	20
6. Motherland party	20
7. Group of Revival Party	26
8. People's Will	19
9. Non-affiliated deputies	50

*According to official information from web-site of the Supreme Council of Ukraine/
http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/site2/p_fractions.

Following analysis reconstructs the power to prevent action at the legislative body of Ukraine and ignores parties without their own factions and groups (Freedom party, Right sector etc.). 63 combinations are possible as a minimum, but only 10 combinations are winning coalitions. Table 4 demonstrates data correction with new results and significant changes in power redistribution at the parliament. These changes in a greater degree were provoked by self-organization of independent deputies.

Non-affiliated deputies without organized factions and groups lost their power. This collectivity consists of independent deputies and party representatives whose political forces failed in the nationwide constituency. The more visible change in power distribution between two main coalition parties: PPB and PF. The PPB lost a critical component of the power despite the fact that faction membership increased from 132 deputies after election to 138. The power to prevent action of the PF' faction at the same time seriously increased with index value close on the PPB's index value.

Table 4. Factions and groups at the Ukrainian parliament and their power to prevent action

Faction/Group	Coleman index	Number of winning coalitions which include the faction/group	Faction/group as a critical voter for winning coalitions	Changes in the Coleman index
PPB	0.6 (0.846)	8	6	↓0.246
People's Front	0.5 (0.308)	10	5	↑0.192
"Samopomich"	0.1 (0)	9	1	↑0.1
Opposition bloc	0.1 (0)	8	1	↑0.1
RP	0 (0)	7	0	-
Motherland party	0 (0)	6	0	-
People's Will	0 (0)	5	0	-
Group of Revival Party	0.1	4	1	-
Non-affiliated deputies	0	2	0	-

As we can see, factional differentiation weakens general coalition's power to prevent action, but also provide more "strong" interdependence between two basic political parties within the coalition. Factional differentiation is more beneficial to "Samopomich" and much more beneficial to Opposition bloc. The considerable part of independent candidates represented ex-members of the Party of Regions – former ruling party during Viktor Yanukovich's regime. That political force was de-legitimized and lost their influence after revolutionary protests in 2013-2014. Negative symbolic capital and strong association with authoritarian trend determined independent candidacy as much more relevant political strategy than direct party nomination. These deputies founded "Group of the Revival Party" and the "People's Will" group (that very close to Opposition bloc) at the parliament only after election. However, some former members of the Party of Regions self-organized themselves directly and founded Opposition bloc. The one part of former members from the Opposition bloc proposed party list in nationwide constituency, another part used possibility in a regional constituencies. As we can see, majoritarian component of the electoral system was beneficial to former members of the Party of Regions and disadvantaged other oppositional, but "pro-democratic" parties, as well as ruling coalition.

4. Results

The hypothesis is confirmed in this case: absence or low rate of power to prevent action at the parliament (the Coleman index value close to 0) guarantees a high probability to be involved into street mobilization. This tendency is relevant to many protests in autumn 2017 (Motherland party, Freedom party, Samopomich and Opposition bloc). These parties as well as the Right sector, "People's Will", RP, "Strong Ukraine" without significant power to prevent action at the legislative body might be most attracted to street mobilization as a political tactic. All these political forces might collaborate time-to-time on the streets without formal alliance at the parliament. It is important to emphasize that this regularity is relevant to parties with different ideologies: center-right Samopomich and Motherland party (a partly populist), right-wing Freedom party and ideologically indifferent "interest group" Opposition bloc. This analysis is descriptive. Therefore, dependence between power to prevent action at the legislative body and probability to be involved in street protest mobilization needs further research. It is fair to assume that real capacity of street mobilization of different parties will be different. This capacity depends on many aspects that are ignored in this analysis: access to resources (mass media, finance), an extensive party networks on regional levels, general public support, ideological divisions and situational factors. In this case

a high variability is possible, but current trend demonstrates high probability of the aforementioned scenario.

5. Discussions

Situational alliance during a voting is often a consequence of backroom dealing. It is expected that weakness of the coalition might provoke dramatic increase in using this practice. However, this situation provides “room for maneuvers” to groups which represent another side of negotiation and have less power to prevent action. A situational alliance does not mean “staunch” alliance, because it is consequence of unstable preconditions of mutual choices at the legislative body. As Coleman showed, actors face “a sequence of social choices, and can thus exchange their partial control over issues that interest them little for greater control of those that interest them more” (Coleman, 1966: 615). The coalition might collaborate, e.g. with populist-radicals, ideologically closest center-right Samopomich or even Opposition bloc, but it does not mean destroying democracy at all. It seems that cost of reforms will be higher for society, because all of these groups, especially groups that represent interests of oligarchy, want some benefits or abatements.

What becomes clear is the reason why some mainstream, but less influential parties insist on electoral reform (first of all, Motherland party). Election without regional single-mandate constituencies might destroy an important resource of any coalition – independent candidates without clear agenda and ideology, “morass” of the parliament, say in the terms of the French revolution. Obligation to be affiliated with political party might reinforce party organization and promote party prestige and power to prevent action at the parliament of further convening.

Nevertheless, expected degree of mass joining a protest is moderate and credibility to existent political parties is not high – street protest mobilization seems to be not a powerful tool for changing current coalition’s agenda. It might only complicate decision-making process at the parliament and might be a complementary motivation for backroom dealing at the legislative body.

Notes

(1) The Coleman index was used, for example, in research of voting power in the governance of the IMF (Leech, 2002).

(2) Coleman used the term “constitution” much more broadly than strict legal sense. It is about formal and non-formal norms of a particular collectivity that regulate functioning and interactions between members. Actually, this term might be a synonym for term “social contract”. Therefore, constitution is available for groups, organizations, social systems, not only for states, but for all corporative actors (Coleman, 1994: 326-327).

(3) Coleman’s point of view was based on the statement that in “parliamentary systems party discipline is so strongly imposed that serious deviations from it are unusual” (Coleman, 1986: 251).

(4) This is consistent with what Coleman suggested: the less number of members in a winning coalition, the greater benefit of joining (situational in this case) the coalition, because this joining increase weight of vote (Coleman, 1970: 52-53). If rephrase this statement in terms of power, not in terms of number, it will reasonable to assume that with decreasing of power to prevent action, would increase the situational influence of groups which support this coalition ad hoc.

(5) It is not accessible Democratic Initiatives Foundation's report (DIF) on protest attitudes in Ukraine recently, but as of September 2017 it was declared that distinct protest attitude is characterized 21% of adult Ukrainian citizens (DIF, 2017).

(6) According to the Razumkov Center Report – is a Ukrainian think tank – as of 2016 near 50% of Ukrainian citizens do not support any existent political parties in Ukraine (Yakymenko et al., 2017: 51).

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