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## **THE "WEAK STATE" CONCEPT: THEORETICAL ROOTS AND PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION**

In the modern world, almost simultaneously in the texts on national security strategies of the United States and the European Union the *weak states* are mentioned as the main threat to security for the whole world. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that weak states have long been the subject of research by Western scholars. It covers the search for solutions to problems in several areas, including the post-Soviet transfer, the issues of the African continent development and formation, the study of security issues in the Middle East, and so on. The article attempts to identify discrepancies in definitions and categorizations, as well as to analyze the preconditions and ways to overcome the position of "weak state", in particular in the foreign economic and security sector. The main theoretical approaches to the definition of weak states in the foreign literature have been analyzed, but in domestic research this question is very rarely raised by scientists. The threats to international security of countries with a "weak state" status have been summarized. The study concludes the definition and assessment of the weak states status, namely, weak states in different regions of the world and in particular in Ukraine. Within the framework of this research, it has first been proposed to clarify the definitions of "weak" and "failed" states, as well as to determine the principles of the weak state existence along with the neighboring large country, and clearly defined preconditions and ways of overcoming its political and economic weakness, on the example of Ukraine.

**Key words:** *Weak states; Failed states; State; Ukraine; Democracy; Stable government; Political transfer.*

### **Introduction**

Currently, one can observe the different dynamics of the states development: the downturn, numerous crises, rapid development or stable evolution. It has to be noted that the listed negative processes are, to a greater extent, natural and manageable, but nevertheless sometimes unpredictable, dangerous for ordinary citizens, and for the whole surrounding. Numerous forecasting attempts in such cases are not effective, mainly because crisis states (or, as the authors of this article call them "weak state") appear to have state-political institutions with a democratic facade, and civil society (albeit at the initial state), and more or less stable power, and ideally prescribed legal norms, but development does not go along the path of development of stable indicative democratic countries, and always chooses its "distorted" path with crisis pitfalls, own social so-called sideways and financial disasters. Thus, no copying, complete or selective, can provide one hundred percent guarantee of "proper development" and a stable welfare growth of such a state.

Many researchers of the political transferring processes try to find an answer to the question: "Why does copying democratic institutions and the implementation of the ideas of modernization in some countries have a tremendous success, and in others, initially, doomed to failure?" In some ways, a new, growing popularity in Western Europe and, especially in the United States, "theory

of a weak state" can be the answer to the question. Thus, it is necessary to consider some of the features of "the theory of weak states" and the arguments of the researchers concerning this phenomenon, which can bring the answer to the question "how to succeed in a separately taken state" (Zelinska, 2017: 163).

Regardless of or perhaps because of the numerous approaches to statehood in general, and in particular to the weak states, there is no coherent and unique definition of a weak state.

It has to be noted that traditional political sciences (in particular, realism and liberalism) have little to explain concerning the issue under study because they are not able to describe the principles of the weak state existence, the rules and conditions for its survival in the world where democracy generally prevails.

The same problem of "scientific gap" is observed within the framework of the so-called "hybrid paradigm" in the process of democratization, namely in studies by Larry Diamond (2002), Andreas Schedler (1998: 91-107), David Collier and Steven Levitsky (1997), Thomas Carothers, Jean Griegel (2002) and others. Gruegel (2002: 68-91), for example, only mentions the possible relationship between the nature of state power and the establishment of democracy in the state as one of many aspects in the democratization process (Zelinska, 2017: 165).

In previous studies, the author (Zelinska, 2017) also

adhered to a somewhat controversial approach to identifying the concepts of "failed state" and "weak state", largely because of the above problem, the lack of a clear definition of these concepts in foreign and, moreover, domestic researchers. According to R. Rotberg (2004), the possibility or impossibility, efficiency or inefficiency of providing three groups of political goods by the state to the citizens is the basis for the division of states into strong states, weak states, "states that do not perform their functions" (failed states) and "collapsed states".

Weak states make a wide circle which is:

1) naturally weak due to the physical and geographical situation or unfavorable ecological and economic situation and resource constraints;

2) initially strong, but demonstrate, at some stage of their functioning, weakness because of unsuccessful management, despotism, internal contradictions, or external attack;

3) states of a mixed type combining the characteristics of the two above-mentioned ones.

Traditionally weak states include ethnic, religious, linguistic and other intergroup issues that eventually move from a latent conflict phase to an open armed conflict. The main indicators of economic development in the weak states are extremely fast, the level of corruption inside the country is increasing, and the form of government is often despotism (Mashura, 2015). That is, the problem is a rather fine line of determination in which case the state is weak and is itself "weak state", and in which the state is a vivid example of failed one. The prior author's identification of these definitions will be corrected in the framework of this study and provides more precise definitions and characteristics.

The Barry Buzan's (1991) author view on the issue of the weak states existence has to be taken into consideration as he believed that the essence of any state is a combination of the three main components that form a triangle, namely, the institutional expression of the state (bureaucracy) - administrative, legal and legislative authorities, coercive forces. This indicator also covers the rules and procedures under which public administration is carried out. It is worth noting that the model does not pay particular attention to whether the existing institutions are democratic or not.

The second component of the triangle is the idea (spirit) of the state (nation) - an idea that connects people in socio-political unity and answers the question of how organized the state is and why it exists. The indicator relates to terms such as nationality and ideology, which is particularly strong in national states.

Finally, the third component, the physical basis for the existence of the state (territory) - since the basis of the state are people, a certain territory, natural resources within the state borders. Another author Kalevi Jaakoo Holsti (Holsti, 1997: 83) also notes that the variables in this indicator have to change over time, except for the boundaries of a specific territory, the position of which in the late epoch is considered almost as "Sacred" and unchanged. The latest figure in the Buzan public model is the most important in his opinion.

Consequently, the conclusion can be made that weaker states are those ones where the influence of ideas (spirit) and bureaucracy is too weak for the unmanaged space possessed by the state, in order to protect the territorial integrity, full-fledged life and the implementation of international norms incorporated in the UN Charter (and if speaking in general, then at least basic human rights).

In turn, Paul Brooker (2000) explores the phenomenon of state weakness in the context of the political regimes in Africa, which draws attention primarily to the inability of elites within African dictatorships to pursue an effective and constructive policy. Despite the fact that strong states are almost absent not only in Africa but also in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, Brooker does not address the obvious relationship between the type of political regime and the strength / weakness of the state. Analyzing the regimes, he only assumes the possibility of deconstructing the existing non-democratic regime in the future towards consolidation, but does not consider regimes in weak states as self-sufficient and rather long-lasting phenomenon.

Therefore, the main objectives of this study, above all, to overcome the differences in definitions and categorizations, as well as assess the status of weak state (and its prospects for Ukraine, which, unfortunately, is already in the category of world weak states and poses a threat to world security).

### Methodology

The main methods of scientific knowledge used in the study are systemic (weak state is considered as a separate system, which exists among other state systems), structural-functional (the weak state is investigated taking into account all its components that determine its functionality and interact with each other), comparative (for the identification of commonly important features in various political systems and their institutions), the socio-cultural method (the functioning of a weak state depends, in particular, on the type of political culture in society), and the method of forecasting appointment (providing a model for further development of weak state within Ukraine).

### The results of the study are:

the proposed work is one of the first studies in the domestic science of the weak states status existence in the context of all changes in the global sense and the political system of Ukraine in particular. The status of weak state for each country is decisive, whose changes may lead to changes not only in the political system of the state, but also in its place and role in the world arena and in the international security system.

In this context, the main scientific results of the work, which are characterized by novelty and reveal the logic and the basic concept of the article, have been formulated:

- clarification of definitions of "weak" and "failed" state;
- conditions of the existence of states in the status of weak state near the neighboring powerful country;
- Ukraine in the status of weak state: preconditions and ways to overcome.

### Discussion

Weak state can be defined as a country / state that has all the attributes of a democratic state (in particular, state-political institutions), but not the ability to fulfill the basic functions of the state and provide public services to its citizens. This state can be a separate sovereign entity within the world community, to be an independent actor in world politics. However, these hybrid states, which are inherently weak in nature, undoubtedly have all the signs of a democratic regime: "democratic" elections are being held, the "democratic" elections are proclaimed and even "almost adhered" to freedom of speech and assembly, the rights of citizens are respected, the arbitrariness of power is reduced, in other words meet the minimum

procedural requirements, but regular, acceptable and predictable democratic procedures will never lead to the formation of a truly strong state. At the same time, democracy is not replaced, it is preserved, but it functions in a special regime that serves the interests of the ruling elite and individual groups, or even, as already mentioned above, one person (*Zelinska, 2017*). The concept of "weak state" is used to refer to a group of countries where the modernization process explicitly does not evolve or even goes back: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Bosnia, the Philippines, some Latin American countries, and former Soviet republics.

In general, there are several terms derived from the "weak state" ("weak", "failed", "failing" (dying) state) that are more detailed and specific. Scientists came up with the terms "collapsed", "fragile", "traumatized" (damaged) and "diminished" (condensed) state.

Some of these terms, such as "fragile", are more likely to be used in countries that have recently emerged from the crisis or overcame a civil war. Others characterize different stages of the destruction of statehood. The term "failing state" refers to countries that are not at all able to descend from the trajectory of decay. For the most part, they include Lebanon, Guinea, Ethiopia, Mali, Chad, and Libya. The concept of "weak state" is used to refer to a group of countries where the modernization process is explicitly constrained or even goes back - the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Bosnia, the Philippines, and some Latin American countries. The term "collapsed states" describes subjects that in fact do not represent a coherent political space - Somalia, Liberia and Haiti (*Minayev, 2013*).

It has to be noted that the main indicator of a strong state is its ability to maintain political stability in conditions of modernization. Instead, weak states, besides economic and political instability, are often located in unstable regions (with ethnic and / or religious issues). Because of their weakness they become sources of additional instability.

The main attributes of the state's membership in the weak state are:

- loss of physical control over the territory;
- loss of the right (monopoly) of the state to lawful use of force;
- impossibility for collective decision makers to develop;
- the increasing level of corruption and organized crime;
- impossibility of tax collection;
- large-scale displacement of refugees and demographic disasters;
- ecological catastrophes (the example, Chernobyl);
- intrusion from outside.

Of course, to obtain weak state status, there are only a few of the abovementioned features.

Modern researchers assess weak state autonomy for its ability to achieve state objectives, such as security and development, in order to survive. Since they have little opportunity, it is anticipated that weak states have little autonomy and cannot achieve much independently.

According to the definition of Brookings Institution, weak states are poor countries that suffer from significant "gaps" in security, lack of state efficiency and legitimacy. Such states have no control over certain areas of their territory and, therefore, a critical international security capability to deal with the internal threats of the terrorists or armed insurgents appearance. However, given that repressive and authoritarian tendencies may appear in so-called weak states, some scholars regard this term as intrinsically controversial. In addition, a well-functioning state some-

times displays signs of such weakness in peripheral regions:

- states that have ceased to perform their functions (failed states). These are the states whose central government has discontinued existing. Thus, the state has lost physical control over its territory and the legitimate use of force. In fact, such states can no longer create conditions for their own survival;

- collapsed states. They completely ceased to perform their functions and are in a state of complete internal anarchy that affects all spheres of public life (*Rotberg, 2004*).

Interestingly, weaker states can also be seen as a condition for the survival of a neighboring powerful state. If a weak state is in a vital strategic space (be it geography, resource security, economic potential, territory, population or competence, large states can act aggressively to gain control over this weak state.) Weak states in such circumstances will be forced to adhere to the strategy balance: and therefore, win, negotiate or, if they are lucky, remain neutral in an attempt to guarantee their own survival.

Weak states can learn from their specific historical experience and, therefore, continue the policy of neutrality to ensure their continued existence.

Other economists describe the passive policy of the existence of a state in the status of weak state; this policy may include rigid balancing (military campaign or global alliance for countering the threat), soft balancing (diplomacy or economic management of the state to counteract the threat), countering (neglecting the claims of the hegemonic state), blackmail (using threats to obtain some concession), slipping of the leash (increasing abilities irrespective of the existence of neighboring large states), connecting (linking a great power with weak power economically or through institutions) and gluing (the development of a "special relationship" with the powerful state) (*Kassab, 2015: 105*).

However, there is also the opposite situation with the "bad neighbor" - experts recognized the "domino effect" as an extremely dangerous one, when conflicts in one weak state necessarily affect the fragile stability of the same "weak" neighbors. An example of the spread of instability from one "failed" state to its weak neighbors was the situation around Liberia. Conflicts in this country, creeping in during the 1990s, crossed the border and captured Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. Together, these subjects formed the whole "failed region".

Taking into account the traditional realistic view of international relations, international security challenges come from strong, aggressive states that seek to gain greater influence on the international scene and expand their area of responsibility. Speaking about new security challenges, they come not from force, but from the internal weakness of the state, which determines the social, economic and political factors of the state administration.

Consequently, our attention is given to the view of the nature of modern international security and international conflicts that increasingly confirm the transformation of the Westphalian world order into the post-World Transparency, when internal and external factors of state policy affect international security in the same way. In fact, this approach recognizes that the inalienable right of the state to govern the sovereignty of the state within a single country and the inviolability of that sovereignty (a norm that has never been completely respected of the Westphalian) are no more absolute. If the state ceases to be the main actor of international relations, then conflicts are more likely

characterized by civil wars, insurrections, the inability of states to perform their functions, and not intergovernmental wars. The very boundary between internal and external policies is blurred, where actions in response to new security threats are completely in conflict with the standards of inviolability of state sovereignty. Indeed, state sovereignty often becomes a threat to human rights and the human security dimension (*Mashura, 2015*).

It is necessary to come back to one of the tasks of the current research, namely, specifying the definitions of weak state and failed state.

In accordance with the above definition, the authors can point out that weak state is, above all, a weak state at the economic and security level, which is not able to fully satisfy the demands of its citizens.

Talking about a failed state, then this is a kind of "falling into the abyss" of a state, whose state-political power has lost control over its territories and no support for its actions in the population. This is a peculiar final step towards the complete destruction of statehood and the transition to the status of collapsed states.

The most professional list of failed states is the American Fund for Peace, founded in the middle of the twentieth century. Based on the CAST system, the fund examines 12 social, economic, political and military indicators, assesses the ability of the five most important government institutions to provide stability and security, and also, which authors consider important, takes into account risk factors and unexpected (negative) events that may affect the status of the state. Much attention is paid to the vulnerability of the state and the risks of domestic violence in the future.

According to recent reports of The Fund for Peace (*FFP, 2019*) out of 193 members of the United Nations there are sixty or seventy strong states. These are the nation-states ranked first - they include countries such as Finland, New Zealand and Singapore, as well as Canada, the United States, major regions of Europe, and countries such as Brazil and South Korea. After strong countries, there are eighty or ninety weak states: some are almost strong, and some are those at the bottom of the list and tend to fail and can become a subtype, the so-called "failed states". They are weak because they supply less: inadequate quantity of political goods and / or political goods of lower quality. The rest are collapsed states (often around twelve from around the world at one and the same time) that form separate categories.

Interestingly, according to the aforementioned The Fund for Peace (*FFP, 2019*), Ukraine belongs to the category of states with a higher level of danger and instability with an index of 71.0 (however, with a tendency to deteriorate the stability index: in 2019 it is -1.5 a mark in comparison with the indicator of 2018). This is a peculiar confirmation of Ukraine's status as a weak state.

Some Russian researchers point out that the topic of Ukraine as a failed state has recently become particularly fashionable among a certain circle of Russian political scientists - "implacable friends of Ukraine." One of such "friends" is S. Karaganov, who is an important figure in Moscow establishment and the head of the presidium of the Council on foreign and defense policy of Russia, expressed a number of considerations that have to attract the attention of those who are not indifferent to the fate of the Ukrainian state. Similar, and often more aggressive talks about Ukraine and the possible division of its territory are persistently conducted by Zatulín, Prokhanov, Dugin and others, are imposed on Russian society as a geopolitical issue: as before, Russian bolsheviks created

the fantastic propaganda slogans based on bloody reality. There is no doubt that the idea of "desuverenization" of Ukraine, its "uncontrolled territory", "disintegration" into parts is quite seriously processed at various levels of the political, military and intelligence leadership of the Russian Federation: large and small Russian bosses did not forget that their leader in Bucharest shouted during 2007 summit in the moment of an angry revelation: "Ukraine is not a state! What is Ukraine? One part of it is Eastern Europe, and the other one - and very big - is presented by us! "

Even in the distant 2009, in fact, 5 years before the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine, a remarkable article on the matters of Ukraine appeared in the issue of the *American Foreign Affairs* (*Foreign Affairs, 2009: 106-120*). The authors believed that the deterioration of relations between Russia and Ukraine have to be a major concern for the West, since Ukraine's security is critical to Europe's stability.

Ukraine, in the opinion of the authors, was supposed to return to the political agenda as a state that protects its own rights, but not moves towards the status of Russia's vassal. The article describes Russia as an undemocratic, authoritarian and self-confident nationalist country. Its mass media consistently create the image of hostile, aggressive Ukraine, a thief in Russian gas matter, which is joining the enemies of Moscow (it cannot be but mentioned the degree of hostility of Russian society to Ukraine, when according to the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee on 15/02/2009, every sixth Russian was ready for war with Ukraine, and 70% of respondents consider possible armed conflict with the country). The process of "zombification" of the former "brothers" who had recently had peaceful relationships with Ukraine was very influential. The blame lies entirely in the ruling regime of the neighboring state and contradicts the interests of Russia and its people (*Shcherbak, 2009*).

That is, Ukraine has always existed in the conditions described above, namely, as a condition for the survival of a neighboring great power. Another issue is that, over the years of independence, due to well-balanced state-economic policies, it would be possible to get rid of at least the dangerous status of a weak state, especially considering the danger of close proximity to the Russian Federation. However, the Ukrainian top leadership, instead of choosing the most advantageous path for a weak country with a dangerous neighbor, namely the tactics of "slipping a leash" (building up their own abilities, regardless of the existence of large powerful neighboring countries next to each other), has always chosen deliberately losing methods of so-called soft balancing (diplomacy or economic management of the state to counteract the threat) and blackmail (use of threats to obtain some concessions, for example in the case of gas transfer).

The good news is that the status of a weak state is not a sentence for our country. It is not static and may vary depending on the conditions and the very time. In recent years, the role of civil society has been intensified in Ukraine, and protest rallies have been caused by the dissatisfaction of the population with the absence of certain political freedoms, as well as social inequality, corruption and unemployment. That is, the population of a "weak state" with a caricature democratic facade begins to alter the embarrassing and cumbersome political system by using more or less democratic instruments to protect themselves and their rights and freedoms. Ukrainians are still in search of an alternative system of government that would preserve the identity of our culture and traditions, would

allow the nation to live decent lives, but would not restrict those rights and freedoms.

In relation to such seemingly basic concepts as the rights and freedoms of a citizen in Ukraine, the fact that in the course of the poll conducted by the "Democratic Initiatives" Fund in the autumn of 2016 on the Donbas (territories under the control of Ukraine) to endure material difficulties for the sake of rights and freedoms of people and citizens, 54% of those surveyed ranked security (79%) and freedom (66%) of the inhabitants of this region as the highest values for themselves (*Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2016*). That is, certain changes in the consciousness of the citizens have already taken place, now the direct way to consolidate society in order to withdraw the state from the position of "weak state".

### Conclusions

Therefore, it is necessary to develop new and improve existing methods of combating the threats that are responsible for the states status of weak states primarily to their own citizens and to the whole world, and the first steps in this long and extremely difficult path are seen by the authors as following: 1. Reforming the political system, namely, overcoming the trend of creating "decorative" democratic institutions and reforms for the sake of reform; 2. Economic transformation taking into account resource features of each region of the country and its potential; 3. The election of a new strategy of neighborhood with a hostile large state where the emphasis is on strengthening the economic potential of its own country; 4. Last, most importantly, to recognize a citizen as the highest value of the state not only as a sentence from the text of the Constitution, but due to an effective policy of state sustainable development (*Chechel, 2017*).

What have we gained? Was only our weapon used? No. With our craft only? No. We have succeeded in our social order, our consent and our friendship (Ivan Franko)<sup>1</sup>.

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## **КОНЦЕПЦІЯ "WEAK STATE": ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ВИТОКИ ТА ПРАКТИЧНЕ ВТІЛЕННЯ**

У сучасному світі майже одночасно в тексті стратегій національної безпеки США та Європейського Союзу називають саме *weak states* головною загрозою безпеки для усього світу. Варто зазначити щодо актуальності дослідження, що *weak states* вже досить давно є предметом досліджень західних науковців. Це стосувалося пошуку шляхів вирішення проблем у декількох сферах, зокрема пострадянський трансфер, проблеми розвитку та становлення держав Африканського континенту, дослідження питань безпеки на Близькому Сході тощо. У статті зроблено спробу виявити розбіжності у визначеннях і категоризаціях, а також проаналізувати передумови та шляхи, спрямовані на подолання слабкості держави (*weak state*), зокрема у зовнішньоекономічному та безпековому секторі. Проаналізовані основні теоретичні підходи до визначення *weak states* в зарубіжній літературі, оскільки у вітчизняних дослідженнях це питання науковцями піднімається вкрай рідко. Узагальнено загрози для міжнародної безпеки країн зі статусом *weak state*. У підсумку дослідження надано визначення та оцінку статусу *weak states* - слабких держав у різних регіонах світу та в Україні зокрема. У рамках цього дослідження було вперше запропоновано уточнення дефініцій "weak" та "failed" state, а також визначені принципи існування слабкої держави поруч з сусідньою великою державою, та чітко окреслені передумови та шляхи подолання державою, на прикладі України, своєї політико-економічної слабкості.

**Ключові слова:** *weak states; failed states; держава; Україна; демократія; стабільна влада; політичний трансферінг.*

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