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## DELIBERATION AS A FACTOR OF RADICALIZATION OF YOUTH POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

In order to identify the causes of radical political behaviour of young people it is needed to clarify how it relates to group belonging of a young person. It becomes possible if to study political behaviour in its connection with those values, ideological beliefs, attitudes which are common to the group of one's belonging. On the basis of theoretical analysis it is determined that communication in the group, or rather deliberation (M. Steenbergen), is one of the main socio-psychological factors that affects youth political behaviour. It is concluded that the effect of deliberation is so strong due being composed of both interpersonal processes of exchanging thoughts and arguments, and internal processes of reflection based on these arguments. It is found that in those groups where young people come together around some similar vision of political issues, the phenomenon of group thinking resulting in polarization and amplification of cognitive errors occurs. It is concluded that after deliberation among like-minded others, young people became more confident about their views and deliberation fuelled greater radicalism of thoughts and behaviour.

*Key words:* political behaviour, youth, radicalization, deliberation, political actor, socio-political maturity.

*Introduction.* There are many different meanings of radicalization existing in modern scientific literature. Most of those distinctions can be represented through socio-psychological differences of beliefs, feelings, and behaviour. No doubt, it is radicalization of behaviour that is of the greatest interest and practical concern as well as radicalization of youth political behaviour is quite an evident thing at present.

C. Sunstein, P. M. Fernbach, C. McCauley, P. M. Sloman, P. W. Linville, J. S. Fishkin, Y. O. Vasylichuk, T. R. Gurr, M. Afanasiev, and other scientists have already studied some peculiarities of this problem and numerous specific features of its revealing, but still many new underlying reasons occur almost every day, and what's more – they are manifested in nearly all the spheres of life.

Perfectionism, emotional lability, and irritability are particular features to describe a random young person. Young people tend to create idols and follow them as well. Sometimes they are not skilled enough to resolve some acute issues, so that they may act quite rudely or even radically. Besides, different groups are the places, where all the important issues are discussed and deliberated. Such group deliberation may determine the way of one's behaviour, including the political one. So that there is an evident need

to study the factor of deliberation and its influence on radicalization of youth political behaviour.

In this paper we are *aimed at* studying and analyzing how deliberation in the group of young people effects radicalization of their political behaviour.

Youth is a large social group. According to E. Chekmaiev, nowadays the number of those young people, who actively manifest themselves through their belonging to some special stratum of people focused on individualism, postmodern values including the emphasis on human rights and freedom while declining respect towards authorities and Government institutions, is constantly increasing [1, p. 102]. So that young people quite often tend to make their decisions on the basis of the group-they-belong-to influence as they communicate and deliberate all the necessary questions there as well. Moreover, the quality of decisions can be expected to depend on the quality of group deliberation preceding decision-making.

According to M. Steenbergen, *deliberation* can be defined as communication based on the merits of arguments, such as the sophistication of justifications and the generalizability of some important principles [2, p. 23].

Recently, broader definitions of deliberation have been launched forward in the literature. Along with rational argumentation, J. Mansbridge notes, that these definitions include other forms of communication such as rhetoric and narratives [3, p. 72]. Despite these developments, the idea of reasoning among group members remains in the core of the concept of group deliberation. Moreover, R. E. Goodin claims, that deliberation involves both intersubjective processes of exchanging arguments and internal processes of reflection based on these arguments [4, p. 94].

One of the most basic features of deliberation lies in the inclusion of different points of view during the process of exchanging arguments. And what's more – the availability of different and sometimes even conflicting viewpoints is often treated as a necessary condition for deliberation. But what is happening in the group of like-minded young people as the grouping process often runs on the basis of common ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, etc.? However, the term “*enclave deliberation*” has been increasingly used to refer to discussion among like-minded people.

C. Sunstein addresses the problem of “group thinking” which may arise when like-minded people discuss among themselves. It may lead to group polarization and an amplification of cognitive errors. Group polarization occurs when deliberation in a group of like-minded participants reinforces the attitudes and opinions prevailing in the group at the outset [5, p. 183].

It seems quite obvious, that group thinking can also affect people's factual beliefs and their behaviour eventually.

C. Sunstein also points out that large-scale misconceptions, or "*informational cascades*" may come up in enclave deliberation because people just follow the cues provided by others in the absence of some contrary evidence [6, p. 80-95, 140-143].

Two different mechanisms contributing to polarization when opinions in a group are biased at the outset have been identified. They are (1) social comparison and (2) persuasive arguments. The first mechanism reveals through one's tendency to behave in order to obtain social acceptance from the group and its members. When someone is very eager to be accepted, this person needs to process the information on how other people act, and adjust his (her) behaviour accordingly [7, p. 1142]. This means, that individuals may behave in different ways in order to be accepted and appreciated favorably by the group members adjusting their thoughts and behaviour in accordance with the views and ways of behaviour, which seem to dominate in the group. Social comparison may also make people emphasize their difference from others to the valued direction [7, p. 1142]. So that people may act in a different way, which is more extreme in comparison to the way at the outset.

The mechanism of persuasive arguments in a nutshell has an idea that people are convinced by the arguments dominating in the group. Consequently, if those arguments are biased in one direction, there is a high probability of a further shift to this direction. According to H. Mercier and H. Landmore, *confirmation bias* a phenomenon means that people are inclined to seek information confirming their prior beliefs and to disregard information against them [8, p. 251]. Actually, motivated reasoning refers to a variety of cognitive and affective mechanisms which lead individuals to arrive at the conclusions they want to arrive at [9]. When like-minded people are gathered in one group their individual biases in their own ideas about definite issues are not compared with those ideas and arguments, which are supported by people of different or even conflicting views [10]. So that opinions tend to be polarized as group members only consider those arguments, which are in support of their own initial points of view. Sometimes people may even take on board new arguments, which support their basic ideas.

In this article we analyze the influence of group composition and deliberation in this group between its members on the outcomes of such discussion and how it influences political behaviour of group participants. More specifically, we compare the results of deliberation in the groups of like-minded young people (aged from 18 to 35 years old) with the groups, where participants had different positions about political issues and their

views were divided (young people aged from 18 to 35 years old as well). The analysis is based on the results obtained after the carried out experiment, where young people were invited to deliberate on some urgent political issues.

Based on earlier theoretical research, we test our *hypothesis*, which is formulated as follows: deliberation in the group of like-minded young people tends to radicalize their political views and induces participants' radical political behaviour.

Generally, 56 participants took part in this experiment, where 35 participants formed the experimental group (19 men and 16 women), and another 21 participants formed the control group (12 men and 9 women). Each group was split into sub-groups of 7 participants each, so that the experiment included 5 equal experimental like-minded groups and 3 equal control mixed groups.

The topics of deliberation experiment were three political issues: (1) inefficient anti-corruption fight (only demonstrative arrests and announces in mass media), (2) unfavorable situation for young people in the labor market, and (3) financial problems in society. These are contested and debated issues in Ukraine at present. Those young people who noted their readiness to participate in the experiment were randomly assigned to like-minded groups or mixed groups.

The participants' opinions and potential ways of their political behaviour were measured before and after deliberation. After deliberation in the group participants had to note the result of their group discussion, which was supposed to be some group decision on how to resolve each of three issues through their political behaviour.

The comparisons are mainly done within- subjects (between pre-testing and post-testing), and also between-subjects testing when available.

First, we analyze judgment on the influence of treatment on opinions. According to it, polarization occurs in the group of like-minded people, whereas polarization in the mixed groups is not observable. There were four statistically significant changes out of ten in opinions among the participants in the experimental group between pre- and post-testing ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). All the three topics of deliberation were in this set, and one topic, which was very similar to the tested ones, was significantly changed as well (it was formulated as "Distrust towards representatives of state authorities"). Polarization has an obvious tendency as all the three topics had a shift towards their maximum in their mean values<sup>1</sup>: 'inefficient anti-corruption fight (only demonstrative arrests and announces in mass media)' was in-

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<sup>1</sup>The values are ranged from 1 to 4.

creased from 3,20 to 3,69; ‘unfavorable situation for young people in the labor market’ was increased from 3,80 to 3,97; and ‘financial problems in society’ was increased from 3,80 to 3,91. On the contrary, there were no statistically significant changes between pre- and post-testing of opinions in the control mixed groups, and there were no significant changes of mean values of opinions’ streaming after deliberation: ‘inefficient anti-corruption fight (only demonstrative arrests and announces in mass media)’ was changed from 2,52 to 2,58; ‘unfavorable situation for young people in the labor market’ had the same mean value in both cases; and ‘financial problems in society’ was increased a bit from 2,76 to 2,82. So that the effect of deliberation on moving group polarization forward is obvious as the level of mean values of opinions on tested issues significantly increased.

Second, we analyze our judgment about the effect of deliberation on political behaviour. In order to study that, participants were asked about how they would resolve the above-mentioned problems through their political behaviour via noting potentially possible ways of their behaviour. There were statistically significant changes in the ways of political behaviour in order to resolve all the three political issues among the participants of the group of like-minded young people ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). And what’s more – there was one more statistically significant change in the ways of resolving another political issue, which wasn’t included in the list of topics to deliberate in the group, but still the effect of deliberation was strong enough to change this piece of study as well. This issue was formulated as “The increase of crime”, which is quite related with the tested ones. As for the mean value of the level of radicalism in the composition of political behaviour, it increased after group deliberation. The level of radicalism was recorded as follows<sup>1</sup>: ‘inefficient anti-corruption fight (only demonstrative arrests and announces in mass media)’ – increased from 1,71 to 2,06; ‘unfavorable situation for young people in the labor market’ – increased from 1,34 to 1,77, and ‘financial problems in society’ – increased from 1,43 to 1,94. Besides, statistical analysis showed, that the only statistically significant difference was between political behaviour before deliberation and group decision, and vice versa – there were no statistically significant differences between group decision and personal decision taken after group deliberation. The results demonstrate that group deliberation significantly affected political behavior in the direction of increasing the level of its radical tendency.

Unlike the experimental group, the control group didn’t show any statistically significant changes in its results, and the mean value of radica-

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<sup>1</sup> 1 pointed low level of radicalism; 2 pointed middle level of radicalism; 3 pointed high level of radicalism.

lism of participants' potential political behaviour was about the same before group deliberation and afterwards. So, the results are eloquent: group deliberation affects political behaviour in the group of like-minded young people.

Next, the results demonstrated that group pressure was stronger in the mixed groups. Its level had 2,07 points out of three maximum points, and its level in the group of like-minded people had 1,60 points out of three as well. So, the results show that it is easier to find some common group decision in the group of like-minded people as they think and deliberate towards some common aim, and there is no serious need to over-persuade other group participants, that one's decision is the best to implement.

To sum up, our hypothesis has gained support. We do trace deliberation effect, which influences political behaviour, which gets an obvious shift towards its radicalization in the group of like-minded people. So that we can claim, that group composition may be a crucial determinant of deliberative outcomes, and deliberation between like-minded people is the factor of their political behaviour's radicalization.

*Conclusions.* After group deliberation with like-minded others, young people became more confident about their views. The group became more homogeneous and deliberation significantly reduced internal diversity, and discussions by like-minded group members fueled greater radicalism of thoughts and behaviour. So that group deliberation can be treated as a factor of radicalization of youth political behaviour, and determine the way of one's political behaviour.

As the groups of young people were formed for the sake of experiment conducting, they will not interact in real life, but there is every reason to believe that the same results occur not only in experimental settings, but in many real-world situations in which young people interact.

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**Балюта В. В. Групова дискусія як чинник радикалізації політичної поведінки молоді**

Висловлено думку, що для виявлення причин радикальної політичної поведінки молоді потрібно з'ясувати, як ця поведінка співвідноситься з груповою належністю молодої людини. Запропоновано досліджувати політичну поведінку у зв'язку з тими цінностями, ідейними переконаннями, настановленнями, які домінують у групі, до якої належить молода людина. На основі теоретичного аналізу визначено, що спілкування в групі, а точніше – групове дискусювання (М. Стінберген), є одним із ключових соціально-психологічних чинників, які впливають на політичну поведінку молоді. З'ясовано, що ефективність такого впливу полягає в тому, що групове дискусювання передбачає як міжособові процеси обміну думками й аргументами, так і внутрішньоособистісні процеси рефлексії цієї інформації. Встановлено, що в групах, де молоді люди об'єднуються навколо схожого бачення політичних реалій, виникає феномен групового мислення, який веде до поляризації та ампліфікації когнітивних помилок. Зроблено висновок, що в результаті групової дискусії молоді люди зі схожими політичними поглядами стають впевненішими щодо своїх ідей, а сама дискусія підживлює радикальність їхніх думок та поведінки.

*Ключові слова:* політична поведінка, молодь, радикалізація, дискусія, політичний суб'єкт, соціально-політична зрілість.

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