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CULTURAL LEGITIMATION OF LEGAL REFORMS: THE ROLE OF LEGAL CULTURE IN THE ADAPTATION OF STATE FUNCTIONS

Abstract. Purpose. The purpose of the article is a comprehensive theoretical and legal study of the role of legal culture as a factor of cultural legitimization of legal reforms, as well as the identification of its impact on the adaptation of state functions to contemporary global challenges. The focus is on clarifying how the value-based, communicative, and behavioral aspects of legal culture ensure public support for reforms, contribute to their legitimization and integration into the national legal system, and form new guidelines in the field of public policy and state governance. **Research methods.** The methodological framework of the study is based on an integral analysis and systematization of modern theoretical and legal knowledge, which made it possible to formulate well-grounded scientific conclusions and propose practical approaches to solving the identified problems. A wide range of scientific methods was applied in the course of the study: from general scientific (analysis, synthesis) to special legal methods, including comparative-legal, normative-legal, institutional, and prognostic. This methodological toolkit ensured comprehensive coverage of the subject matter, interdisciplinary depth, and analytical completeness in the examination of the phenomenon under study. **Results.** The study established that legal culture is not only the context of the functioning of the legal system but also an active factor in adapting state functions to the dynamics of contemporary global transformations. It was revealed that cultural legitimization of legal reforms acquires key significance in the conditions of the growing role of value orientations, citizens' legal consciousness, and public trust. It has been proven that the effectiveness of state reforms largely depends on the conformity of their normative content to the established cultural codes and practices of legal behavior formed within a specific society. The research outlines the main risks of formalism, value vacuum, and communicative gap, which reduce the level of legitimacy of reforms and hinder their societal acceptance. Examples of the adaptation of state functions (humanitarian, social, regulatory) under the influence of transformations of legal culture in the context of war, European integration, and digitalization are analyzed. Emphasis is placed on the importance of civil society participation, the development of legal education, and the formation of an effective state communication policy as practical mechanisms for strengthening the cultural legitimization of legal changes. **Conclusions.** It is concluded that the cultural legitimization of legal reforms emerges as a key factor in the successful adaptation of state functions to the challenges of modernity. Legal culture, being a dynamic system of values, attitudes, and practices, not only reflects the level of maturity of the legal system but also directly influences the perception, support, or rejection of reforms within society. A stable legal order is possible only on the condition that law is legitimized not merely formally but also culturally—through dialogue with society, legal education, institutional openness, and support for democratic values. Effective implementation of legal reforms in a culturally diverse and dynamic society requires the harmonization of normative changes with the cultural codes prevailing within the community. For this reason, legal policy must integrate mechanisms of legal education, civic participation, and communication strategies as integral instruments of cultural legitimization. Such an approach not only strengthens public trust in the state but also ensures the sustainability and depth of transformations in the sphere of public authority.

Key words: legal culture, cultural legitimization, state functions, legal consciousness, normative transformation, public administration, social integration, legal communication, legal education.

1. Introduction

States face the necessity of updating their functions in accordance with new societal expectations. However, the effectiveness of such changes largely depends not only on the normative content of reforms but also on the degree of their legitimacy in the eyes of society. In this context, legal culture acquires particular significance as a factor of cultural legitimation of legal reforms. A lack of sufficient attention to the value-based and communicative dimensions of law, together with the decline in legal consciousness and trust in state institutions, makes it impossible to fully implement even formally well-designed legal innovations. The existing gap between the normative activity of the state and the cultural expectations of citizens creates risks of formalism, legal nihilism, and the blocking of reforms at the level of societal perception. This necessitates a comprehensive theoretical and legal understanding of the role of legal culture as both a precondition and a mechanism for legitimizing the functional renewal of the state.

In the scholarly literature, legal culture is viewed as one of the key factors in legitimizing legal norms, supporting reforms, and adapting state functions to environmental changes. Particular attention is paid to its structural elements—legal consciousness, value orientations, and cultural practices.

Contemporary studies focus on the role of legal culture in strengthening trust in law, overcoming formal legal order, and ensuring social integration. At the same time, the issue of cultural legitimation of legal reforms remains insufficiently explored in the context of the systemic transformation of state functions. The impact of the cultural environment on the institutional effectiveness and normative quality of reforms has also not been adequately addressed, which determines the scientific relevance of the chosen research direction.

2. Principles of Cultural Legitimation of Legal Reforms

The category of cultural legitimation of law emerges as a concept that reflects the deep interconnection between legal reforms, the law-making activity of the state, and the system of values, beliefs, and symbols inherent in a particular society. Unlike formal legitimation, which relies on legal compliance with laws or procedures, cultural legitimation is based on the perception of law as just, appropriate, and morally justified within the worldview coordinates of the community. Such legitimation is not only a normative but also a profoundly axiological and socio-cultural process that encompasses the entire spectrum of interactions between the individual, society, and the state.

Legal culture, as a key component of the cultural legitimation of law, integrates elements of legal consciousness, value orientations, traditions, mental perceptions, and legal practices. It serves as a kind of filter through which society perceives and evaluates not only existing legal norms but also the processes of law-making and law enforcement. Thus, the legitimacy of law is formed not only within the boundaries of procedural compliance but also through the harmonization of legal decisions with the socio-cultural context.

Of particular importance is identifying the relationship between the level of development of legal culture and the ability of the state to implement effective legal reforms. A high level of citizens' legal consciousness contributes not only to better acceptance of norms but also to more active participation in the formation and legitimation of legal changes. Conversely, a low level of legal culture leads to ignorance, resistance, or imitative perception of legal innovations, which results in the erosion of trust in the legal system (Hrytsai, 2023).

The cultural component in the mechanisms of law-making and law enforcement is manifested in the need to take into account local traditions, symbolic practices, and moral-ethical coordinates when making legal decisions. Law devoid of cultural grounding risks becoming an instrument of external pressure rather than an internally acceptable regulatory system. For this reason, the idea of cultural adaptation of law is gaining ground in contemporary doctrine—a mechanism that allows combining the universal principles of the rule of law with the unique cultural matrices of national development.

In our view, the future of effective law lies in the combination of formal normativity with profound cultural legitimation. This means that the reformist activity of the state should be oriented not only toward compliance with international standards but also toward being culturally comprehensible and acceptable to the addressee of the law, i.e., the citizen. In this context, legal culture becomes not merely a background factor but an active instrument of legal transformation (Alexy, 2021). Legal culture, as a complex socio-cultural construct, includes a value-normative level (attitudes toward justice, human rights, and the rule of law), a cognitive level (knowledge of law, its functions, and mechanisms of operation), and a behavioral level (models of interaction with the legal system, the degree of compliance with norms, and participation in law-making processes). Each of these levels determines the extent to which society is prepared to accept new legal norms and whether it perceives them as necessary, reasonable, and just.

One of the defining mechanisms for the implementation of legal reforms is trust—both in institutions and in the content of the proposed changes. A high level of legal culture creates conditions for building such trust, as it ensures awareness of the value-based meaning of reforms and the inclusion of citizens in the process of discussion and support of law-making. Conversely, in conditions of a fragmented or conflictual legal culture, reforms may be perceived as imposed, technocratic, or repressive, which significantly complicates their implementation (Tkachuk, 2023).

The social and axiological prerequisites for supporting or rejecting reforms are directly linked to the extent to which reform initiatives correspond to the basic expectations and values of citizens. If a reform resonates with dominant notions of justice, dignity, and freedom, it has a higher chance of being accepted, even despite its complexity or unpopularity. In contrast, dissonance between the content of reforms and societal legal consciousness generates distrust, resistance, and formalism in implementation.

We argue that every profound legal transformation must be not only institutionally prepared but also culturally motivated. This means that alongside the development of the normative content of reforms, socio-communicative efforts should be made, aimed at explanation, dialogue, and involving citizens in the process of legitimizing law. In this context, legal culture is not a passive backdrop but a driving force of legal modernization, ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of legal changes (Zumbansen, 2021).

The adaptation of state functions under the influence of legal culture is one of the key vectors of the modern transformation of public authority, especially under conditions of profound social changes, cultural shifts, and global challenges. Legal culture, as a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses a system of values, legal consciousness, and practices of interaction with law, significantly influences the content, hierarchy, and methods of implementing the main functions of the state (Havryliuk, 2022). This is particularly relevant to functions such as the social, humanitarian, and regulatory, which in contemporary society are increasingly acquiring an axiological and cultural dimension.

Cultural codes are deep collective representations of dignity, solidarity, and justice that determine which state functions should be prioritized, in what manner, and with what degree of legitimacy. Thus, in societies dominated by collectivist values, the humanitarian vector of state policy prevails, while in cultures with an individualist orientation, the regulatory function acquires an autonomous, procedural

character. In the Ukrainian context, where legal culture is shaped simultaneously by European aspirations and a post-totalitarian legacy, the process of adapting state functions acquires particular complexity and ambiguity (Bakalinskyi, 2022).

3. The Role of Legal Culture in the Adaptation of State Functions

Legal culture serves not only as a recipient but also as an active shaper of the functional orientations of the state. It is through society's awareness of rights and duties, the significance of public authority, and the principles of legal interaction that expectations toward the state are formed, which it must take into account in its functional strategy. New functions, such as communicative, service, and integrative ones, emerge in response to the social demand for the state not merely as an authority, but as a partner that shares community values.

Striking examples of culturally conditioned adaptation of state functions can be observed in Ukraine over the past decade. In the context of war, the humanitarian function of the state has acquired not only priority importance but also new content, understood as activity aimed at preserving human dignity, protecting vulnerable groups, and consolidating the nation (Levchenko, 2022). The European integration course, in turn, requires the harmonization of legal values, particularly in the aspects of the rule of law, inclusiveness, and gender equality, which transforms the regulatory function of the state. Digitalization, as a global civilizational shift, has posed the task of updating the functional toolkit, specifically the development of e-governance, strengthening transparency and accountability of authorities, and the formation of citizens' digital rights.

Thus, legal culture appears not merely as a background, but as a driving force of the state's functional renewal. Its content, structure, and dynamics determine not only the scope and forms of the implementation of functions but also their legitimacy, sustainability, and compliance with social expectations. As a scholar, I am convinced that without taking the cultural dimension into account, state functionality will inevitably remain formal, detached from the real needs of society (Hurenko, 2022).

The challenges of cultural legitimation of legal reforms represent one of the least studied, yet critically important, areas in contemporary legal scholarship. First of all, it is necessary to indicate the threat of formalism in law-making, when normative changes are produced without proper consideration of the axiological and socio-cultural context. This approach leads

to the emergence of a “value vacuum,” in which law loses its ability to act not only as a regulator but also as a bearer of social identity. Legal acts devoid of cultural rootedness often remain declarative and ineffective in real legal life (Magen, Morlino, 2020).

The second challenge is the gap between elite and mass legal culture. While professional legal elites may orient themselves toward high legal standards, liberal-democratic values, and unified European approaches, a significant part of the population may remain within the frameworks of traditionalism, legal nihilism, or paternalistic perceptions of authority. This imbalance prevents the full acceptance of reforms by society, reduces trust in law, and creates risks of legitimacy collapse when legal innovations encounter passive or active resistance (Sen, 2020).

The third challenge is, above all, the institutional weakness in ensuring the cultural integration of reforms. State institutions often lack a systemic vision of a cultural strategy to accompany legal changes: mechanisms of legal enlightenment, public participation in law-making processes, and the adaptation of legal practices to regional and mental specificities are missing. As a result, law is “imported” without proper translation into the language of values, which makes it alien to citizens.

Recognition of these challenges provides grounds for the conclusion that the cultural legitimization of reforms requires not only legal and political, but above all, anthropological and communicative solutions. Without fostering a profound legal dialogue between the state and society, and without working with citizens’ legal consciousness, values, and perceptions, any reform risks remaining outside the sphere of legitimate acceptance. Here, legal culture emerges not as an external factor but as a constitutive condition of the viability of the legal order (Dorsen, Rosenfeld, Sajó, Baer, 2021).

Practical mechanisms of cultural legitimization of legal reforms constitute a necessary link between formal law-making and the actual recognition of law as a legitimate regulator of social life. One of the key instruments in this process is legal education and upbringing, aimed at developing critical legal thinking, respect for law, and understanding of its axiological nature (Vitman, 2023). Effective legal socialization requires the integration not only of knowledge about law but also of skills to discern justice, responsibility, and legality within specific legal practices. In this context, it is particularly important to strengthen the role of legal education at all levels—from school-level legal awareness to professional training of experts in legal support of reforms.

The state’s communication policy regarding legal reforms is also critically important. Without institutionally secured legal dialogue, reforms risk being perceived as imposed “from above” and losing cultural legitimacy. The state must develop mechanisms of transparent, inclusive, and adaptive communication with citizens concerning the substance and purpose of changes. Communication should not be propagandistic but explanatory, employing culturally relevant meanings and models of lawful behavior, particularly through educational platforms, social media, and public consultations.

Finally, an important factor is the involvement of civil society in the process of shaping and implementing reforms. The legitimacy of modern law is impossible without the participation of those whom it is designed to regulate. Participation tools such as public discussions, legal forums, expert councils, and e-governance must be transformed from formality into a real mechanism of cultural recognition of the legal order. Such participation fosters not only legal awareness but also a sense of shared responsibility for changes within the state (Sajo, 2021).

Thus, the legitimization of legal reforms in the cultural dimension cannot be reduced to purely legal or administrative procedures. It presupposes the continuous rooting of law in social values, symbols, and practices, which makes legal culture not merely a condition but an active factor of the transformation of the legal order (Burdiak, 2023).

4. Conclusions

It is concluded that the cultural legitimization of legal reforms emerges as a key factor in the successful adaptation of state functions to contemporary challenges. Legal culture, as a dynamic system of values, attitudes, and practices, not only reflects the maturity of the legal system but also directly influences the perception, support, or rejection of reforms by society. A stable legal order is possible only if law is legitimized not merely formally but also culturally—through dialogue with society, legal education, institutional transparency, and support for democratic values.

The effective implementation of legal reforms in a culturally diverse and dynamic society requires harmonizing normative changes with the prevailing cultural codes. Therefore, legal policy must integrate mechanisms of legal education, civic participation, and communication strategy as integral instruments of cultural legitimization. Such an approach not only enhances public trust in the state but also ensures the sustainability and depth of transformations within the sphere of public governance.

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КУЛЬТУРНА ЛЕГІТИМАЦІЯ ПРАВОВИХ РЕФОРМ: РОЛЬ ПРАВОВОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ В АДАПТАЦІЇ ДЕРЖАВНИХ ФУНКЦІЙ

Анотація. Метою статті є всебічне теоретико-правове дослідження ролі правової культури як чинника культурної легітимації правових реформ, а також виявлення її впливу на адаптацію функцій держави до сучасних глобальних викликів. У центрі уваги – з'ясування того, яким чином ціннісні, комунікативні та поведінкові аспекти правової культури забезпечують суспільну підтримку реформ, сприяють їх легітимації та інтеграції в національну правову систему, а також формують нові орієнтири у сфері публічної політики та державного управління. **Методи.** Методологічна основа дослідження побудована на цілісному аналізі та систематизації сучасного теоретико-правового знання, що дозволило сформулювати виважені наукові висновки і запропонувати практичні підходи до вирішення поставлених проблем. У ході дослідження було застосовано широкий спектр методів наукового пізнання: від загальнонаукових (аналізу, синтезу) до спеціально-юридичних, зокрема порівняльно-правового, нормативно-правового, інституціонального та прогностичного. Такий методичний арсенал забезпечив комплексне охоплення тематики, міждисциплінарну глибину та аналітичну повноту розгляду досліджуваного явища. **Результати.** У результаті проведеного дослідження встановлено, що правова культура є не лише контекстом функціонування правової системи, а й активним чинником адаптації функцій держави до динаміки сучасних глобальних трансформацій. Виявлено, що культурна легітимація правових реформ набуває ключового значення в умовах зростання ролі ціннісних орієнтацій, правосвідомості громадян і суспільної довіри. Доведено, що ефективність державних реформ значною мірою залежить від відповідності їх нормативного змісту усталеним культурним кодам і практикам правової поведінки, що сформувалися в конкретному суспільстві. У дослідженні окреслено основні ризики формалізму, ціннісного вакууму та комунікативного розриву, що знижують рівень легітимності реформ і блокують їхнє сприйняття суспільством. Проаналізовано приклади адаптації функцій держави (гуманітарної, соціаль-

ної, регулятивної) під впливом трансформацій правової культури в умовах війни, євроінтеграції, цифровізації. Наголошено на важливості участі громадянського суспільства, розвитку правової освіти, формування дієвої комунікаційної політики держави як практичних механізмів підвищення культурної легітимності правових змін. **Висновки.** Зроблено висновок, що культурна легітимація правових реформ постає як ключовий фактор успішної адаптації державних функцій до викликів сучасності. Правова культура, будучи динамічною системою цінностей, установок і практик, не лише відображає рівень зрілості правової системи, але й безпосередньо впливає на сприйняття, підтримку або відторгнення реформ у суспільстві. Стійкий правопорядок можливий лише за умови, що право легітимізується не лише формально, а й культурно через діалог із суспільством, правове виховання, інституційну відкритість і підтримку демократичних цінностей. Ефективна реалізація правових реформ у культурно розмаїтому та динамічному соціумі потребує гармонізації нормативних змін з культурними кодами, що панують у суспільстві. Саме тому правова політика повинна інтегрувати механізми правової освіти, громадянської участі й комунікаційної стратегії як складові інструменти культурної легітимації. Такий підхід не лише посилює довіру до держави, а й забезпечує сталість і глибину трансформацій у сфері публічної влади.

Ключові слова: правова культура, культурна легітимація, функції держави, правосвідомість, нормативна трансформація, публічне управління, соціальна інтеграція, правова комунікація, правове виховання.

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