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Leadership and Elite Projection of Regional Political Processes in Russia (Following the Panel Sociological Studies)

ABSTRACT

The submitted research is devoted to estimation requirements to a leadership component of political management in modern Russia generated as realized by experts and in popular consciousness. This paper presents and analyzes experts and public opinion poll findings in several regions of Russia. Following the results of survey the leadership and elite configuration, in the Russia of our modern age represented by a triad “President – Heads of territorial entities of the Russian Federation – municipal authorities”, is described. Analysis of desirable and available leadership style of representatives of the Russian establishment of different levels, criteria of selection of political leaders have been performed; stability of the modern Russian elite, its key positive and negative features in the eyes of expert community and in popular consciousness have been evaluated.

Timeliness of this research is arising from changes in foreign policy status of Russia, extension of its political and economic clout, increase of its significance in the international stage. These positive trends not least result from leadership skills of the leader of the State and his team officials both at national and at regional levels. And the contest for the support or discrediting of the country’s leadership starting under these circumstances requires a thorough valuation of actual position of the leader and his environment in the context of the resource of their authority. Based on the research data, authors of the research note a linkage between rates of leadership and elite skills of Leader of the State and efficiency of political management.

Key words: *leadership and elite configuration, elite, president, effective political management.*

Our research, devoted to the problem of political elitology, concentrates on representation of the elite element and its role in political management. However, in recent years in political and management practice, and in perceptions of the most politically exposed national elite and sub-elite groups, despite of the contrasts of their ideological positions, and in interaction of Russia with other subjects at global community level, a demand for strong leadership representation of the Russian Federation came to light. Sources of oppositely directed inquiries and evaluations are attributed both to stabilization of domestic Russian political situation and to aggravation of competition with the West and other regions of the world and to growing struggle for “tugging” of Russia as Euro-Asian state in one or another camp. Extension of political and economic clout of Russia in the context of growing instability in the world turns to be a struggle for “any global political joker” which is able essentially changes the distribution of powers in the global stand-off. Russia not yet took the position of prominent global player who is laying a claim to be an independent center of power. But its weight is already sufficient for to make considerable changes in specific weight of existing centers of global forces. And the crucial role in these processes belongs now to Putin V.V., President of Russia, who currently gained a political prestige both in international relations and in domestic policy, and has the richest experience of political management as compared to all other leaders of the leading twenty states of the world. That is why a struggle for his support and for his discrediting launched both at the domestic level and in the global policy. The high-profile leader speaks in the capacity of consolidated and concentrated political will center. Taking into consideration these circumstances, the President of the Russian Federation considerably expanded requirements and inquiries to the leadership component of political management in the modern Russia.

That is why it is so important to estimate how the modern expert and popular consciousness take these requirements. As regards the political figure of Putin V.V., the events which took place in Ukraine in spring-autumn of 2014 demonstrated the growing consolidated support of mass and elite elements (as confirmed by public opinion polls and by results of voting on political-motivated decisions taken collectively).

This is evidenced by results of our experts and public opinion polls (see Table 1). It fixates the leadership and elite configuration which is responsible for stability of situation in the country, the region, at the local level. *Fe facto* this is a triad: “President of the Russian Federation — Heads of territorial entities of the Russian Federation — municipal authorities”:

Table 1

Which of The Following Public Authorities, Institutions and Officials, in Your Opinion, Can More Effective Influence Over Stabilization of Social and Economic and Political Situation in Your Region (You May Specify 3-4 Options)? (%, According to Experts Data)

1.	President of the Russian Federation	79,6
2.	Federation Council	4,98
3.	State Duma	12,94
4.	Security Council	3,48
5.	Prosecution Office	17,91
6.	Court	5,47
7.	FSB (Federal Security Service)	16,42
8.	MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs)	8,46
9.	Army	3,98
10.	Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Southern Federal District	4,48
11.	Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation	6,47
12.	Institute of Plenipotentiary on Human Rights in the Russian Federation	1,49
13.	Migratory Service	1,49
14.	Heads of territorial entities of the Russian Federation	61,19
15.	Legislative authorities of territorial entities of the Russian Federation	15,92
16.	Municipal authorities	29,35
17.	Public organizations	6,47
18.	Political parties	11,44
19.	Trade unions	0,5
20.	Religious associations	2,49
21.	Mass Media entities	14,93
22.	Others	1,99

As regards positions taken by sub-elite elements they are a little bit discrepant; they are identifying both official and oppositional views and approaches to actual political problems.

But how can be defined requirements of public and expert opinions to leaders of any other level? We attempted to find any answer this question when holding an opinion poll shortly before holding our scientific conference “Leader, elite, region”. The complete data are specified in our research note. As regards the most material items, the following is noteworthy.

First of all in evaluation of experts there is no any common conflict between “hearts of the matter” and “due”; for the purpose of our item it concerns evaluation of real style of relationships among regional leaders and business groups and other significant elite groups, and the desirable type of such relations. According to almost half of experts, in real interactions a partner style dominates that produces a normal environment of interaction avoiding conflict situations.

The second rank position belongs to the patronage style. In either event about ¼ experts observe it. As a result, we can say that representatives of other groups of the elite alliance almost always have a chance to come to any agreement, to make settlement with leaders of managerial and political elite.

As regards any conflicting, repressive approach, it is a rare occurrence (8–9 %, according to experts). However, in opinion of 13 % of experts, corrupt practices are showing up in relationships with business elite. Certainly, this news is by no means palatable, but these cases cannot be referred to repressive approach as well.

As regards “due”, most of experts call for development democratic principles in the course of interaction among administrative leaders and other elite groups (53–54 % of respondents) as well. About 28 % of experts appeal to authoritarian principles as to priority. But the following is noteworthy: according to experts, reliance on legal system, justice and adherence to patriotic values (more than 45 %) are “desirable” in any political leader’s operations.

As regards care of the poor, no experts see here a great problem (13, 4 %). To a lesser degree a confessional problems (13, 4%) or secular values (12 %), as significant in formation prestige of the political leader, orientation is maintaining. The leader’s orientation towards progress, innovations which are allowing moving Russia and its regions up to any new heights, causing to consider and to respect Russia in the world (about 37 %) obtained the maximum support.

Statements concerning qualitative characteristics of modern regional leaders caused caution attitude. Only 30 % of experts believe that they are adequately educated. The other believe that these characteristics are insufficient (16,4 %), or there should be a permanent job for to increase their competencies (49,2 %).

Professional advices concerning criteria for selection political leaders are well-defined. The leadership here belongs to selection of the ablest persons, not to those who aspire to this sphere, and to development of all measures relating to preparation, education and administrative socialization of leaders.

As regards evaluations and opinions concerning management and political elite, their detailed characteristic we submitted on 1st All-Russia Elitological Congress, it may be noted that at the level of 2014 there were no any significant changes in these evaluations. Nevertheless, it is worth to submit the updated version of these evaluations in more expanded panel series of sociological samplings in 2007-2014.

First of all it is necessary to emphasize a contradiction coming to the front: in spite of the fact that that according to experts in 2014 evaluations of leadership style and due requirements to it are of partner and democratic nature, the real configuration of power, oriented on the leader, is authoritarian one. This is evidenced by answers to the question: “Whom do you think the power in your region actually belongs?” (see Table 2).

As regards the democratic component of government agencies elected by the population (regional legislative meeting, regional offices of parties), according to the population and experts, they are taking a back seat. As to evaluation of the near-term perspectives in interaction among elite against each other and the population, there is still a hope of the population that ruling elite will pay a close heed to its demands and wishes (about 42 % of respondents are hoping for it, and this is the first rank position). And answers to the question: “What are the main requirements the elite should meet?” support this opinion. The evaluations of the first rank graded by the population are stated in tetrad: “Competence – Education – Rectitude – Patriotism”. And the population grants to competence (professional behaviour) a notable specific weight (about two thirds of respondents).

Table 2
Whom do You Think the Power in Your Region Actually Belongs
(Please, Give no More Than 3 Ready Answers)?

	Population		Experts			
	2007	2013	2007	2009	2013	2014
1. To legislature authorities of the territorial entity of the Russian Federation (republic, area, region)	20,65	22,25	12,08	8,12	2,50	25,4
2. To certain political parties and public organizations	13,05	10,25	3,34	8,57	1,25	9,45
3. To the Head of the territorial entity of the Russian Federation (president of the republic, head of area, region)	60,86	49,25	34,96	22,32	63,75	73,13
4. To the former nomenclature	5,64	8,25	3,34	6,65	3,75	4,98
5. To the representative of the Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy in the territorial entity of the Russian Federation	19,63	10,75	7,20	7,10	13,75	9,45
6. To heads of large government enterprises and their lobby	14,88	18,75	4,63	7,44	16,25	15,42
7. To corrupted part of management personnel	30,46	25,00	13,11	10,37	33,75	18,91
8. To rich people, businessmen, industrialists, bankers	26,54	24,25	12,34	10,94	31,25	1,99
9. To mafia, criminal world	13,24	15,25	5,91	5,98	20,00	26,87
10. To anybody else	1,33	0	1,80	1,01	-	1,99
11. Cannot say	3,99	3,5	1,29	0,34	1,25	-

As well as in their answers to the previous question, citizens would like to see orientation of the elite on social justice and consideration for different social groups (the third rank position). At the same time “Practicality, pragmatism” and “Justice” have got a low level of preferences – just over 9% and 4% respectively (for reference see Table 3). And 23% of respondents dropped a hint of doubt that political responsibility is present in the regional elite.

Table 3
What are The Main Requirements the Elite Should Meet?
(Specify 3-4 Qualities)

	Population		Experts			
	2007	2013	2007	2009	2013	2014
1. Professionalism, competence	64,28	66,00	21,91	22,45	88,75	86,07
2. Rectitude	32,59	29,00	11,32	9,27	50,00	45,27
3. Education, erudition	37,71	37,50	10,74	10,80	28,75	26,37
4. Considerable and various managerial experience, including experience of political work and work in Soviet times	23,11	19,75	8,82	7,51	25,00	26,87
5. Patriotism, statesmanlike approach to the matter, great power state hood	28,75	31,25	8,97	9,35	38,75	30,85
6. Democratism	9,80	10,00	2,79	5,44	13,75	5,47
7. Practicality, pragmatism	12,16	10,75	3,82	3,14	8,75	5,97
8. Well-connected with the West	4,16	3,25	0,15	1,46	1,25	
9. Ability to take in consideration and co-ordinate interests of various social groups	27,27	31,75	8,24	7,20	26,25	32,84
10. Justice	31,43	27,75	7,06	5,82	3,75	10,95
11. High level of internal culture	24,65	13,00	6,32	4,75	22,50	-
12. Touch with the people	20,81	29,00	7,06	5,52	11,25	17,41
13. Political will	3,65	3,75	2,35	1,92	8,75	14,93
14. Other	0,51	0	0,44	0,23	0	-

Regardless of numerous rhetorical passes and efforts of mass media, the public opinion adequately covers both real power positions in the elite community and high-priority demand for qualitative structure and effective performance of elite.

And there are several validations of this conclusion. In particular, of about half of respondents are shearing the opinion that the federal and the regional elite not exactly meet the requirements and criteria for the elite group.

Response to the question concerning stability of the modern Russian elite is specific as well. The maximum specific weight belongs to evaluations fixing certain instability of elite. This is the opinion of more than 38% of citizens. As regards more definitive evaluations (either – “stable”, or – “unstable”), they are comparable: about fifth part of respondents believes so (for comparison see Table 4).

Table 4
What do You Think, Whether Position of the Modern Russian Elite is Stable?

	Population		Experts		
	2007	2013	2007	2009	2014
1. I think, yes	19,69	21,75	14,58	18,27	36,5
2. In particular cases it is stable, in particular cases – not	40,35	38,00	45,31	44,67	3,6
3. Rather unstable	19,88	15,75	25,52	20,81	14,5
4. Elite has got various possibilities for ensuring stability	19,82	22,00	13,02	14,21	11,5
5. Other	0,26	2,50	1,57	2,03	1,5

When evaluating positive characteristics of elite, made by the population, there is a paradox which comes under notice: most highly the population rates ability of elite “to manage” the situation on the ground, rather than its prevention, prevention of its occurrence. So, the majority of respondents (over 44 %) emphasized “the ability to settle conflicts, to stabilize situation”. But “understanding the problems of the population” (13,7 %), skills in “fostering development of local business” (12,2%) took the back seats in rating (for comparison see Table 5). It appears that such gradation of advantages results from non-completed rebound with its confrontational and competitive background, great necessity of “fire measures” but not normal activity of elite.

Ranging of answers to a “mirror-like” question about weaknesses of elite, in general, confirms the above. And, by the way, these answers contain much less paradoxes.

The three main weaknesses noted by the population are permanent over the last years: “Corruptness – Inadequate professional behaviour – Selection of management proceeding from family and friendly ties”. The first place took the answer “ignoring inquiries and interests of the population” (over 58 %). This steady ranging of answers in fact designates initial “birth-primal trauma” of post-Soviet elite which formed not on principles of a meritocracy but in savage struggle for redistribution of government property and power. And under these circumstances no support of the society needed. Moreover, the post-Soviet elite used their best efforts for to isolate society from “great redistribution”. We cannot but hope that in the short term there will be conditions that elite of absolutely different quality will be in demand, and respondents denotes it in their answers to the questions of the next problem and topical unit.

Table 5
What Advantages and Positive Characteristics are in Activity of Modern Political Regional Elite (Please, Give no More Than 3 Answers)?

	Population		Experts			
	2007	2013	2007	2009	2013	2014
1. Ability to settle conflicts, to stabilize situation	48,57	44,50	23,72	22,65	37,50	59,7
2. Coordination of actions of various groups of the population	25,61	26,75	15,31	18,45	27,50	–
3. Ability to lobby interests of the population of the region	27,52	23,50	15,05	16,41	18,75	37,31
4. Understanding the problems of the population	25,02	13,75	8,67	11,07	5,00	28,86
5. Fostering development of local business	23,99	12,25	13,27	18,45	42,50	27,86
6. Care of national culture and education development	30,02	15,50	18,62	8,91	18,75	16,92
7. Other	4,19	10,25	5,36	4,07	3,75	9,45

In the measures proposed for improvement structure and efficiency of activity of modern Russian elite we would like to note answers of respondents to the question: “How, in your opinion, the highest group of the administrative management of your region has been created?” The position we mentioned above is reflected here. The first rank position/ more or less, is of specified nature – “This group includes the former nomenclature which substituted the former ideological identification” (37 %), – like, “ideological double dealers”. The second place is – “Trough intrigues sly persons, men of no principle and harpy who put self-first, took over the government” (29, 5 %). The third place is – “Currently in power are peoples who have lots of plant, want to change the course of events, but their efforts are blocked by the highest governmental authorities and by corrupted structures” (24, 7 %). However, the

proposed ready answers do not fix the special features of such leaders, and this give a chance to respondent to hide his/her position behind this “uncertainty” (for comparison see Table 6).

As regards evaluation of power of mechanisms which traditionally refer to meritocratic and democratic, which application results in selection of more qualified (competent) and not corrupted politicians and officials, only just over 15% of the population indicate their influence on formation of modern Russian political and administrative elite.

What should be done for to improve qualitative structure of elite? Respondents specify mechanisms of recruitment policy and cultural and educational factors: a) competitive selection on the grounds of professional behaviour and competence (50, 5%); b) advanced educational level (41, 2%); c) clever recruitment policy under the control of the center (32%).

Table 6

How, in Your Opinion, the Highest Group of the Administrative Management of the Region (Area, Republic) has Been Created (Please, Give no More Than 3 Ready Answers)?

	Population		Experts			
	2007	2013	2007	2009	2013	2014
1. In the course of political struggle a selection of leaders of new formation took place	38,40	19,75	29,7	19,15	18,75	30,85
2. In this group there is the former nomenclature which quickly which substituted the former ideological identification	29,53	37,00	16,97	25,48	56,25	31,34
3. Trough intrigues sly persons, men of no principle and harpy who put self-first, took over the government	40,61	29,50	18,79	21,06	41,25	17,91
4. Currently in power are peoples who have lots of plant, want to change the course of events, but their efforts are blocked by the highest governmental authorities and by corrupted structures	26,47	24,75	10,00	13,99	21,25	15,92
5. The highest group of administration has been created by a modern democratic way	18,45	15,75	12,12	12,37	5,00	22,39
6. In the highest branches of administration there are persons elected by voters	18,51	13,75	10,30	6,33	0	14,43
7. Other	1,24	6,25	2,12	1,62	3,75	11,44

However citizens clearly understand that desirable changes would not take place immediately. Answering the question: “What factors in the near future will define durability of time in regional office?” they demonstrated a pretty realistic pragmatic approach: a) ability to express and to protect interests of the population – 42,2%; b) loyalty to political regime – 35,5 %; c) professional behaviour – 34 %; d) ability to maintain informal relations with people of influence from the Center (27,5 %) (for comparison see Table 7).

As regards opinions and evaluations of experts and inhabitants of different regions of the country, in this research, with the help of our partners we had the opportunity to poll experts and citizens from Republic of Adygea, Republic Dagestan, Komi, Chechen Republic, Altai Territory, Krasnodar Territory, Stavropol Territory, Kaliningrad Region, Kurgan Region, Ryazan Region, Chelyabinsk Region and Chita Region. Comparison of their opinions on the most significant items of the questionnaire suggests that the main trends are holding in all regions of the Russian Federation as observed. It appears that these tendencies will be observed all over the Russian province.

Table 7

What Factors in the Near Future Will Define Durability of Time in Regional Office? (Please Give no More Than 3 Ready Answer)?

	Population		Experts			
	2007	2013	2007	2009	2013	2014
1. Loyalty to political regime	27,95	35,50	21,00	23,34	63,75	48,76
2. Ability to express and to protect interests of the population (region of the territorial entity)	26,05	42,25	17,05	12,63	11,25	38,81
3. Ability to maintain informal relations with people of influence in the territorial entity of the Russian Federation	29,03	27,50	17,46	10,39	51,25	37,81
4. Wealth, money	46,76	22,25	12,89	11,46	25,00	7,96
5. Leadership skills, assertiveness	-	15,75	9,98	8,03	10,00	27,36
6. Professional behaviour	44,76	34,00	15,80	9,42	13,75	34,33
7. Nationality	10,86	2,75	2,70	3,96	7,50	1,99
8. Communication with the criminal world	-	5,75	2,08	2,03	2,50	1
9. Other	0,95	2,50	1,04	0,21	1,25	3,98

Summarizing up, following the data of evaluations made by experts and the population, we can see a linkage between leadership and elite elements of effective political management (see Table 8). As the experts noted when answering the question:

Table 8
**What Factors do you Consider of Most Importance
to Contributing Towards the Efficiency of the Power on Regional Level?**
(Please, Give no More Than 3-4 Ready Answers)

1.	Availability of strong leader	65,67
2.	High caliber team	63,68
3.	Well organized system of recruitment policy	29,85
4.	Supply of financial and material resources	44,28
5.	Alignment of laws and regulations	18,91
6.	Robust monitoring system for enforcement the decisions made	31,84
7.	System for motivation the decisions performers	10,95
8.	Highly intellectual staff of experts and advisers, helping to prepare decisions	8,96
9.	Availability of reputable lobbyists and connections in the Center	10,95
10.	Efficient estimate of information impact on voters, population	1,49
11.	The power support by big business	6,97
12.	Availability of constructive opposition	10,95
13.	Good mutual understanding and mutual support of authorities	17,91
14.	Or something (please, write)	1

We would like to add the time element (for the leader with the elite team have enough time for to fulfill the conceived) and a good luck as well.