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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL ELITE AND DEMOCRACY

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Abstract. The concept of political elite and democracy, their theoretical foundations, relevance to the political activity of citizens, the level of their proximity to political power, the ability to make strategic decisions and to influence social changes in the society, and the inequality in political hierarchy, the term political elite are discussed in the article. It also describes the analysis of political science as a ruling part of the elite community, and the author analyzes the basics of researches carried out in this sphere. The controversy about the existence of elite theories, the impact of the people on the state, the unequal distribution of power in a society, and the fact that political life is built on the basis of competition constitute an evidence of the relevance of the article.

Keywords: political activity; political life; social changes; political inequality; division of the power; ruling class; political hierarchy.

As the reality shows, different subjects of politics have different effects on political processes. This is because of the fact that political activity of citizens is not the same for some objective reasons. Moreover, because of their relatedness to political power, the ability to make strategic decisions and the ability to influence social changes, there always exists inequality in the political hierarchy. Individual citizens and social groups are usually not directly involved in political life, regularly, on a professional basis. A part of society, so-called political elite, is usually engaged in this process.

The word "elite" is derived from Latin word "eligere" (to choose) and French "elite" ("chosen"), and means "the best", "excellent", "selected" and "chosen". This word is used in two ways in daily life. In the first sense, this term is used to refer to the object with the highest quality characteristics, and which is distinguished by its striking peculiarities; in the second meaning it is used to refer to a group that is a minority in a society and whose specific qualities are directly involved in managing the society. In political science it is interpreted as a ruling part of the community. In this respect, the political elite is a relatively independent group of individuals with a certain intellectual potential and has unique psychological and political quali-

ties and participates directly in the decision-making process.

Classical theories about political elites appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In elitist theories the equality in a society is denied, and it denotes unequal influence of people to the state, unequal distribution of power, the political life being built on the basis of competition. The emergence of elitist theories is related to the names of Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, and Robert Michels. However, it should be noted that the history of the first political elite ideas goes back to ancient times. Until the time of the tribal system's collapse, the views emerged on the division of society into the upper and lower levels, the nobles and the simple people. These ideas were logically grounded in the works of Confucius, Plato, Machiavelli, Carlyle, and Nietzsche. However, such elitist views needed a serious scientific analysis.

Political elite was discussed as a subject of separate research in the works of Gaetano Mosca – Italian sociologist, doctor of political sciences. Mosca tried to prove that any society is usually divided into two groups, which are not equal in terms of social status and role in political life of a society. He writes in his book "The Ruling Class": "In every society, from a society with moderate to advanced and from just a civilized society

to strong and enlightened societies, there is a class of managers and people who are managed. The first is always in a small number; it performs all political functions, collects power in its own hands, and uses certain benefits. The second is larger in number, and is the managed by the first one and provides the material that is needed for a political organism to survive" [4, p. 187].

G. Moska deeply analyzed the formation of the political elite and its peculiarities. According to him, the most important criterion for belonging to the political elite is the ability to manage the other team, i.e. organizational skills. He writes that, the political elite is characterized by its distinctive qualities that requires it to have material, spiritual, and intellectual superiority over the rest of a society. "In other words", – writes Mukhaev R. T., "the representatives of the ruling minority will have deeply valued qualities in a society they live" [5, p. 258]. However, according to him, even though this layer is capable of governing others, not all of its members have a high level of talent for this activity.

According to Moska, during the period of transition from one historical period to another, the composition, structure, and demands put forward to the members of the ruling class change. But this class will always exist. Moreover, this class will define the historical process [2, p. 28]. Therefore, the task of political science is to investigate the functioning of the political class, the terms of preserving the power of the government, the study of the conditions of interaction with the public.

When asked, "Which form of political organization is the best?" Moska answered: "The form, which allows the political elite to development, being controlled and guided by the principle of personal responsibility" [1, p. 9]. According to him, the quality of the ruling political elite depends on how well its members fit the needs of the time. The ruling minority can become a part of the political elite in various ways, but at any period any of the needed qualities of political elite are to be

the main criterion in this process. As the Italian sociologist E. Alberton notes, for Moska political class is not a brutal power over a society, but rather a "a minority with ethical superiority over passive majority" [1, p. 9] and that's why its authority is "justified". Hence, moral and spiritual values are dominant for them. The political elite should guarantee spiritual and moral safety and a life in peace for its members. Taking into consideration the duty of political elite members, the solidarity of the ruling circle and their high place in a society, Moska calls them a political class.

Although Moska's political class theory has had a strong impact on the development of ideas on political elite, it has been criticized for its political absoluteness and lack of attention to the economy. Although this approach is incompatible with the reality of modern pluralistic societies, it should be noted that the theory of "political class" was reflected in many totalitarian states. In these countries, the economy and other areas of social life were made to be dependent from the policy. There emerged bureaucracy nomenclature, which is alike to the "political class" described by Moska. In the totalitarian countries, political and administrative bureaucrats, who are close to power and governance, have economical and social domination as a "ruling class".

Approximately alongside with Moska, but independently from him, the Italian sociologist and economist, Vilfredo Pareto, also developed the theory of political elite. In his "Tractate on the theory of General Sociology", written in 1916, he analyzed the nature, structure and function of political elite. He also writes as given below, following the idea of Moska: The world is always ruled by a chosen minority, which is called as the political elite. Elite members are characterized by their particular psychological (natural) and social (acquired by education and training) qualities. In his "Tractate on the theory of General Sociology", he writes: "No matter whether some theorists like this or not, the

human society is not the same, and people are physically, spiritually, and mentally different from each other" [5, p. 238]. According to him, a group of people, distinguished by their high efficiency and high performance indicators in a particular area, make up the political elite.

Pareto relates the society's division into the political elite and the mass with the inequality in personal, physical, and mental abilities of individuals. According to him, people with relatively more influence and wealth make up upper level of the society – political elite. Pareto classifies elite and divides it into a trade and industrial elite, political, military, and religious elite. As it is seen, the scientist broadly interpreted the term elite. However, Pareto has a narrow interpretation of the term elite. At the same time, the elite, which plays an important role in politics is separated from other forms of elite. It means that, not all members of the elite are part of the ruling elite; some of them constitute a group, which is not the ruling one. Thus, according to Pareto, the social structure of a society is as follows: "the upper layer – the elite; this layer, in turn, is subdivided into dominant and non dominant parts; the bottom layer is the public" [2, p. 31].

If the ruling elite takes part in the direct or indirect (but effective) administration, a non dominant elite consists of people with the features that are peculiar to the elite. However, they are deprived of the right to manage because of their own social status and various barriers that exist for the lower layers of a society. Pareto adds civil servants, who hold senior positions to the ruling elite. These are "ministers, senators, deputies, heads of departments at ministries, chairmen of appeals courts, generals, and colonels" [5, p. 240].

V. Pareto argues that internal solidarity and ongoing struggle for the sake sovereignty are the peculiar features of the ruling elite. The development of society, as he believes, takes place as a result of occurrence of two main types of elites: "foxes" and "lions".

"Foxes" are skillful leaders who use such "soft" methods of governance as negotiation, compromise, politeness, flattery, and persuasion. The "lions" are tough and persistent leaders, who pursue a conservative policy and rely heavily on force [2, p. 33]. When we compare the views of G. Moska and V. Pareto, then we find out that Pareto explains the change of elites with more psychological factors, while Moska thinks that the influence of political factors is crucial one.

Robert Michel has made a great contribution to the development of the theory of political elite. It investigates social mechanisms that create the community's elitism. In his early works, he states that "only direct democracy can be a true democracy, and that immediate democracy directly leads to oligarchy" [5, p. 297]. He views the oligarchy as an inevitable lifestyle of large social structures. Although R. Michel is in the same opinion with G. Moska, he emphasizes the organizational abilities, while commenting on the reasons for elitism. In his opinion, the organizational structure of a society serves itself to strengthen the political elite and to strengthen the position of the ruling class. R. Michel concludes that the structure of a society requires the existence of a political elite and that its existence is a regularity.

Ideas on the "oligarchy's iron law" in a society also belong to R. Michel. He writes this idea in his work – "Political Parties. An outline on the oligarchic trends in democracy" (1911). According to the "oligarchy's iron law", an indispensable sign of the development of a society is the formation of large organizations, which at the same time, undoubtedly, leads to the formation of oligarchy and the formation of political elite in a society not. This is because, not all members of the governing bodies can participate in managing such large organizations. In order to make their activities be effective, distribution of responsibilities and specialization are required. This, in turn, leads to the separation of the controlling body. This body gradually, but inevitably, goes out of control of ordinary

members, alienates them, and subordinates politics to their own interests and first of all begins to care about preserving its privileged position. Simple members of the organization are not usually sufficiently qualified, become weak, and begin to neglect their daily political activities. As a result, even the most democratic organization is headed by an oligarchic, elite group. These influential groups are interested in communication, getting engaged with each other and forget the interests of the people in order to maintain their privileged position [3, p. 58–59].

Based on the Oligarchy's iron law, R. Michel expressed pessimistic views on the potential of democracy and the democratic nature of the social democratic parties, and looked at them with uncertainty. For instance, he writes: "In these parties, the power is concentrated in the hands of people, who are at the top of hierarchy and make up narrow part of the party. Because the need for party management requires the organization of a group of people, who are professionals of their work, and inevitably the power is gathered in their hands" [2, p. 36].

R. Michel points out, that the party members elected as members of the parliament change their social status and become a member of the ruling elite. In this way, he emphasizes that public leaders will begin to defend the interests of the ruling elite and seek to maintain their privileged position when they become a part of it.

In the scientific works of G. Moska, V. Pareto and R. Michel, the term "political elite" was described in detail and comprehensively, and its basic features were demonstrated. Therefore, these scientists have been recognized as the founders of a special scientific course – elitist science, which studies the social class that carries out the political management. The theories of G. Moska, V. Pareto and R. Michel, who developed the alphabet of elitism, were generalized and recognized as belonging to the Machiavellian school. Although this school united the first generation of representatives of elitist theory,

their theories have not yet faded actuality up to present time. The following features unite these theories:

- "Characteristics peculiar to the elite are inherent in talent and upbringing of people and are manifested in the elite's ability to control or struggle for the political power;

- Group solidarity in the political elite is based not only on common profession and interests, but also on the perception, that the elitist mind is itself a capable ruling layer of a society;

- Recognizing the elitism of any society means recognizing its inevitable division into a dominant, creative, privileged minority and a passive, non-creative majority. Such a division is based on the nature of a society and a person. Although the personality of the elite varies, its dominant position on the mass is unchangeable. For example, throughout history, tribal leaders, monarchs, community commissars, party secretaries, ministers, and presidents have changed from time to time, but the governing-dependant relationship between them and the people has always been maintained.

- Formation and renewal of the elite in the struggle for power. Many people strive to gain higher position, which gives them great privileges, but nobody wants to voluntarily release his/her position or rank. Therefore, it is inevitable that there will be a hidden and open struggle for the elite.

- Elite's practically useful, managing and dominant role in a society. Elite fulfills the management function required for the social system (although not always effective) [6, p. 112].

The elitist theories of the Machiavellian school had been criticized because of the exaggeration of the significance of psychological factors, non-democratic nature, and inadequate assessment of the public's capacity and abilities. This criticism was grounded in many ways. Over time, supporters of elitism have developed theories and adapted them to new social conditions. These attempts led to

the emergence of a new generation of elitist theories.

The rise of the scientific and technical and technological revolution in the world, creation of equal opportunities for the education of the public, increasing the living standards of people in many countries of the world, creating effective mechanisms for ensuring the rights and freedom of individuals, and the role of the media have influenced the work of political elites. Due to these factors, the distribution of political roles and responsibilities in the political elite has been changed, the outlook of the elite, and the resources that provide their power have also been changed. The aforementioned processes

have brought many contemporary approaches to the study of political elites.

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