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ON THE ISSUE OF THE FUNCTIONAL THEORY OF ELITES: LOSSES AND POSSIBILITIES OF A NEW APPROACH

The article examines the prerequisites for reinterpreting the concept of "elite" at the turn of the XX–XXI centuries. The author analyzes the need to change the concept of the elite as a factor of social practice, investigates the prerequisites for a retreat from the traditions of interpreting the elite in the problem field of classical sociology. The thesis about the fruitfulness of the study of the elite in the discourse of such trends of its development as sociologization, rationalization, and subjectivation is outlined. The explanatory potential of the functional and functionalist concepts of the elites is compared.

Keywords: elite, power, meritocracy, rationalization, sociologization, subjectivation of elite criteria, values, resource of an object, charisma, "massification" of elitism criteria, "self-assignment" to the elite, elite identification.

Introduction

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the understanding of the role and importance of elites as social subjects in charge of public resources becomes extremely relevant. These resources, as well as the degree of freedom that allows making important strategic decisions, are especially important in a society characterized by global instability and uncertainty. Meanwhile, the situation is such that the bulk of publications is focused on the mechanisms of the functioning of elite groups, their reproduction, while the study of elites in the discourse of development problems remains out of focus, despite its relevance. Meanwhile, it is the functional approach that is most promising, since it allows us to consider the elite as a subject of activity in connection with the problem of development in a dynamically developing society.

The problem lies in the substantiation of the prospects of the functional approach in the study of the elites of modern Russia, – in the proof of the high explanatory potential of this approach, which makes it possible to reveal the functional capabilities of the elite in situations of development and dynamic social transformations, to consider the elite as a social subject that determines the strategic influence on the dynamics of the events taking place in society processes.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study was the works of P. Shtompka, M. Archer, D. Riesman, P. Dreitzel, G. Endruwait, which made it possible to substantiate the post-classical specificity of the dynamics of criteria for elitism (sociologization, rationalization, subjectivation), and also to consider the elite as a social subject strategic influence on the dynamics of the processes taking place in society.

Research

The concept "Elite" has been turned today into a common term in social practice, however, in the language of science, it has not yet received an unambiguous interpretation.

Etymologically, the term "elite" comes from the Latin words *elire*, *eligere*, *legere* – "to select; to choose; disassemble; sort" and came into use in France, starting from the XII century, like *elite* – "selection of the best", "chosen". The concept of "elite" originally had a conceptual similarity to the words "intelligence" and "elegance" (which meant "tasteful; sophistication; sophistication of manners").

In classical concepts, the concept of the elite was not associated with social change, the elite were seen as "models" that other members of the society had to orient themselves towards, thereby maintaining social order; the existence of the elite was not associated with vigorous activity to change the existing structures, with the acceleration or deceleration of the ongoing social processes [1, 2].

In the traditions of the sociological approach, the elite is interpreted as a social community that accepts various conceptualizations: class, clique, caste; elitist theories in sociology embody a special stratification approach, within which power becomes the dominant criterion of stratification. Sociological analysis of elites focusing on approaches such as domineering and meritocratic. At the turn of the XX–XXI centuries, the classical ideas about elites, characteristic of the epochs of stable functioning of society, stable social structure, regulated relationships between social groups, look rather limited in their explanatory capabilities, social reality has been changed, otherwise the subjective factor of social practice is presented; this necessitated a change in ideas about the elites, a departure from the traditions of classical sociology. There is a process of sociologization, rationalization (desacralization) and subjectivation of elite criteria [3, 4]. The concept of the elite is considered on the basis of a social group or a set of social groups organized and taking various forms (oligarchy, clique, "veto group") – this expresses the sociologization of the concept "elite". Rationalization in the context of Weber's ideas is a process of reducing the sphere of the mystical, which permeates many spheres of life in modern Western society. A component of this is the replacement of adherence to habitual morals and customs by systematic adaptation to considerations of interest. Rationalization can proceed due to the displacement of affective action and value-rational action in favor of a purely goal-rational one, when they no longer believe in values; the metaphysical interpretation of the elite is being replaced by its secularized interpretation.

From a metaphysical point of view, the elite correlates, is connected both urgently and latently, first of all, with the phenomenon of tradition and is the embodiment of the highest sacred responsibility for the Whole. The "genuine" elite is the bearer of values that are justified by a higher sacred origin, service to the "higher".

These qualities set the elite apart from the masses. But the qualities inherent in the elite are also being revised on rationalized grounds. Rationalization leads to the fact that the dominance of the ethical criteria of elite is replaced by functional, free from content (value) features, for example, education and competence of social groups such as intellectuals, technocrats, managers. Finally, subjectivation means approaching the elite as a collective subject of activity. V.A. Yadov, for example, believes that in the analysis of the processes taking place in modern Russia, the activity approach begins to

acquire a dominant position; the activity-based or activist (subjective) approach clearly presents itself in the works of P. Sztompka, M. Archer, A. Giddens, P. Bourdieu. This approach is adequate for a society in the process of constant change. In line with this approach, the concept of "subject" becomes central; the subject in the activity sense is considered as a certain system or complex of certain resources. In the activity interpretation, the emphasis is shifted to different resource capabilities of the subjects, which are associated not only with the characteristics of social subjects, but also with socio-cultural factors and limitations that the subjects cannot always overcome. Analysts introduce the concept of an object resource (the potential of opportunities to act independently) and define it as a set of qualities that ensure not only the [subject's] ability to survive, but also to expand the range of self-regulation of their behavior, including influence on other subjects. Thanks to resources, the subject is able to influence the formation of social institutions, i.e. those real types of relationships that seem more beneficial to him. In an activist sense, subjects can be both individual figures and collective, group agents defending their interests. And where it is about mature subjectivity, it is about the subject's ability to change the existing social structures, and not just reproduce existing socio-cultural relations; a social subject initiates innovative processes in society by activity, a particular case of which may be a situation of stagnation, when no changes occur in the social system for some time. Social subjects that have received in a modern differentiated society more degrees of freedom and opportunities to act independently relative to the existing social structures are constantly included in the context of social processes that they are able to direct or restrain, according to V.A. Yadov [5].

The postclassical interpretation of the elite criteria is specific, and this is manifested in the following. First of all, the rationalization of the elite's criteria manifests itself quite clearly, which means a tendency to consider the elite from the standpoint of its functional efficiency, effectiveness and efficiency for society, in contrast to the interpretation of the elite as a moral (value) model that has a source in divine grace or gift; in addition, the so-called elite pluralism is emerging, a characteristic feature of which is the "crushing" of the elite.

In the 19th century, T. Carlyle (1795–1881) formulated the idea of the chosenness of those who have the qualities that allow them to carry out social changes, understand reality and act adequately, penetrate into the essence of universal processes [6. P. 329].

As for the criteria for being chosen, M. Weber considered personal charisma as the criterion for being chosen; by "charisma" M. Weber understood the extra-everyday qualities of a person (regardless of whether they are real, imaginary or hypothetical). M. Weber's charisma is the foundation of legitimate power or influence. The charismatic type of domination is based on the affective type of social action, on the emotionally colored belief in the leader's charisma. M. Weber opposes the charismatic type of domination to the traditional and the rational as something alienated from the rules, irrational. M. Weber also writes about the sociality of the phenomenon of charisma; what matters is not the objective personal qualities of a charismatic, but the opinion of his adherents, who perceive charisma as a divine gift. The function of a leader is to bring to light new values that are common to all.

The tendency to rationalize the phenomenon of the elite manifested itself in the works of J. Ortega y Gasset (1883–1915); he believed that the activation of the average

person of the crowd or "the revolt of the masses" is a distinctive feature of modern society; in mass society, the elite is distinguished by a special nobility, a sign of which is a sense of responsibility; the elite becomes the bearer of certain responsibilities in society. J. Ortega y Gasset writes about a man of the mass; a man of the masses discarded the old norms, customs, traditional values that form the basis of culture, "the essence of his life rules is to live not obeying the commandments" [7. P. 24]. He is characterized by stereotypical thinking, he is not able to generate creative ideas and new cultural patterns; in the process of "massing" the masses, they acquire patterns of behavior, habits and tastes that were previously the property of a few. Interpreting mass character as a qualitative characteristic resulting from the replication of a cultural model, J. Ortega y Gasset writes that in the 20th century, there is a degeneration of elite groups. J. Ortega y Gasset believes that it is the elites who create and renew culture, transforming with it the existing social relations; the elite develops and brings ideas to the masses, while the masses only perceive them. In "The Revolt of the Masses" it is emphasized that the conditions for the normal functioning of society are a society ruled by elites and the masses, who know their place. The man of the elite feels an inner urge to appeal to the authority or principle he serves. He does not value ready-made opinions, he values only what was previously inaccessible, what has to be obtained by effort. The people of the elite turn to the highest authority, obey it. A distinctive feature of nobility is not rights, but duties, requirements for oneself. The people of the elite are endowed with a high sense of responsibility, in contrast to the person of the masses, who does not want to reckon with an external authority or authority. He is not capable of ideological creativity, of constructive thinking, he is characterized by the dominance of rights over responsibilities.

Spiritual (sacred) content is leaving the elite, the latter is accompanied by a progressive "massification" of the criteria of elitism. The devaluation of the sacred meaning (rationalization) of the concept is revealed in a change in ideas about the criteria of elitism. The idea is spreading that the "genuine" elite in a mass society cannot assert itself, the elite "is losing its authority." The elite began to be called persons with a high intensity of social and psychological qualities. These qualities do not distinguish these individuals, do not oppose them to society and are not the property of a select few, but can manifest themselves in all representatives of society with varying intensity. The phenomenon of the elite has become universal, – the elite is even associated with criminal and gangster groups ("thieves' elite"). The situation suggests that the dominant emphasis in the analysis of elites is the functional necessity (utility) of the elites, which is associated with the resources of influence in the society of a new type. It should be noted that the elite in this understanding turns into an exponent of the typical qualities of a person of the masses.

Earlier V. Pareto spoke about the elite as "the aggregate of individuals who are distinguished by their effectiveness, the highest productivity, operate with high performance in any field of activity", "the elite includes the most powerful, energetic and capable, those who receive the maximum points according to the conditional index measuring the level of ability in the professional, economic or political sphere" (Cit. By [8. P. 65]).

H. Dreitzel proposes a new approach, integrating in the study of the elite the potential of value and power approaches and attributing to the elite the holders of top positions in a

group, organization or institution who have achieved [success] in the course of selection into these positions based on the (personal) desire for achievement, and who, by virtue of their positional role, have power or influence, contribute beyond their group interests to the preservation or change of social culture and directly introduce norms [they are carriers of forms], or which, on the basis of their prestige, can play the role of a model, in addition to their group, normatively defining behavior of others. It is the recognized success, according to H. Dreitzel, that speaks of elitism. And this is a consequence of rationalization: recognition of elite qualities by various social strata, regardless of how they are achieved; social status is the result of individual aspirations, talent, and productive knowledge. The elite is the upper class that has concentrated the leading functions; H. Dreitzel believed that this professional group clearly manifested elite leadership functions; the elite considers the most important function to be "leadership of the people" [9].

Modern interpretations relativize the concept of the elite, freeing it from the sacred meaning, and are based on the recognition of many micro-elites in various spheres of public life.

The rationalized interpretation of the elite was also vividly embodied in the ideas of the theorist of post-industrialism D. Bell, as well as J. Galbraith, who put forward the idea of the domination of "technostructure": the elite is a group of professionals who convert their special knowledge into domination both in the field of economy and in all areas of culture. The scientist-researcher comes to the fore, and the socio-cultural position of certain groups becomes decisive in the social structure of post-industrial society, moreover, in post-industrial society, D. Bell believed, technical qualification becomes the basis, and education becomes a way of access to power. In this respect, the most successful is the elite group of scientists. The intellectuals with the greatest cultural capital and the culture of critical discourse come to power.

An important tendency that speaks of the formation of a new interpretation of the concept of the elite is the "subjectivation" of elites in the so-called theories of functional elites [10, 11]. In the literature, the processes of "subjectivation" of elites are interpreted as having the following vectors: the elite is investigated in the context of the problem of social development, the probabilistic nature of the subjective choice of alternative solutions is investigated, and the criteria of elitism themselves are associated with the concepts of process, alternatives and possibilities; in the study of the elite, the emphasis is on the resource potential of the subject.

The functional theory postulates a connection between the elite and non-elite groups, this connection "blurs" the boundaries between the elite and other groups, "intermediate" subjects arise, individuals relatively easily enter the ranks of decision-makers (depending on the nature of the decision, whether this is the decision of these people directly).

In the postclassical theories of the elite, the traditional criteria of the elite are subject to rethinking: a stable social position in the structure of society, organization and cohesion of the elite group; the system of traditional criteria itself has been supplemented. For example, W. Mühlmann sees a social community in the elite, which is distinguished not only by the objective position in society, which is based on their own election. The author introduces the criterion of self-identification: self-assessment of one's own personal properties and potencies as an active subject (as they are presented to an individual in his own self-consciousness and in the perception of others).

The elite arises because its members see themselves as an elite, feel their superiority; know they are a select few. An elite can only be formed if it is a group that must fulfill a special mission or has a distinctive quality. In this case, a sense of spiritual superiority and a sense of transformative sociopolitical mission is aroused – a "messianic" feeling shared by a generation of leaders after they have taken their place (position) in the service. The feeling of belonging to the elite, self-identification with the elite influences the choice of the subject of the strategy of his behavior, aimed at the implementation of the social "mission" [12].

This is the so-called criterion of self-assignment to the elite. Not all elitologists consider it sufficiently "subjective" and representative to identify the elite. For example, G. Endruweit believes: this criterion can be important if the elite doubts about the significance of their own achievements and successes. This is possible due to social changes. In this case, self-esteem acquires the meaning of a new basis for self-assertion of the old elite, which wants to continue its changed elite role at least in consciousness. Nevertheless, the self-assignment criterion is appropriate to use in relation to influential persons in Russia. Their social role in the context of social transformations is significantly changing and rethought on new ("elite") foundations in the absence of traditions of elite identification.

A. Swann, J. Manor, A. Quinn, A. Reiss give today a generalized interpretation: elites, by definition, are people who control a larger share of the material, symbolic and political resources of society than another stratum of society. They occupy the highest positions in the hierarchy of status and power; elite - those people who occupy the highest positions of power, control most of the property and have the highest prestige. Recognizing the coexistence of numerous, unrelated, and often at some points contradicting each other, ideas about elites, G. Endruweit in his functional theory tries to present a "single" theory of the elite, integrating the conceptual provisions of a number of theories in the context of postclassical vision.

In the work "Elite und Entwicklung: Theorie und Empirie zum Einfluss von Eliten auf Entwicklungsprozesse" [13] G. Endruweit raises the problems concerning the essence of elite views and empirical aspects of elitist theories, offering a "post-classical" vision of the elitist problematics: G. Endruweit considers elites in close connection with the problem of development. The author believes that "development" is "a social process that occurs through some changes in the elements of the social structure, in which the real changes themselves are considered in relation to objective possibilities" [13. P. 10]. He believes: the vector of social changes, determined by the elites, is not initially set for all societies, but is constructed through the interaction of various actors within a particular elite; the general tendency of development is the choice by the elite of the optimal path of development for society, which presupposes overcoming "stagnant" processes. In the conceptual interpretation of G. Endruweit, the elite is viewed as a social subject, while the criteria for belonging to the elite are changeable and are largely determined by sociocultural discourse: a sign of "elite" in pre-industrial societies was stratification-genetic indicators (social origin), in countries experiencing the processes of "lagging" modernization is compliance with Western standards (Western education, standard and lifestyle, anti-traditional values – in the United States, such a sign is professionalism and competence). G. Endruweit focuses on the functional theory of the elite, interpreting the elite as a social subject whose members decisively influ-

ence the characteristics of social processes and, as a result, surpass other members of the social system. G. Endruweit believes that the concept of the functional elite differs from the functionalist concept (here the elite is considered from the point of view of its contribution to the preservation of the social system). The difference is manifested in the fact that the "social process" in the above-mentioned situation encompasses not only a certain course of events that regularly occurs in a given system, but also something designated as "development". A decisive feature of a functional elite is the distribution of influence on strategic decisions in society.

Such an approach is focused on the definition of M. Weber's power: power means any possibility, fixed by social relations, to insist on one's own, even in the presence of resistance, regardless of how this possibility is expressed. The exercise of power occurs with the help of social actions in relation to the objects to which it is directed, which entails their change and modification; the social activity of the elite is considered in relation to non-elite groups; the elite is determined by its function in the social process; the value and significance of the elite does not lie in itself, but in its function for society: it directs a process that is already going in a certain direction. The functional elite may include those who have influence but do not formally hold high positions. The functional elite, according to G. Endruweit, is not a layer located "between the non-elite below and another non-elite above," and this interferes with its empirical identification.

Within the functional concept of elites, the development of the theory of the elite for various types of societies and regions becomes important. D. Marvick notes that the functional approach facilitates the analysis of history and modernity, providing the "idiom of comparison", but its weakness is that it is too deterministic, since overestimates the causal relationship between social needs and the formation of an elite corresponding to them [14].

Conclusion

At the turn of the XX–XXI centuries, a functional interpretation permeates all the concepts of the elite, formulated in relation to various types of societies developing in incompatible cultural spaces. Although the lack of the concept of a functional elite is obvious: from the point of view of this approach, it is impossible to say directly about the internal structure of the elite. The advantage is that this concept allows one to determine the missing characteristics of the elite through role analysis, studies of behavioral motivations, this concept of the elite, regardless of the internal characteristics of a particular elite.

The functional theory defines elites as individuals who have a strategic influence on social processes. The elite is formed adequately to the changing social conditions, the criteria of elitism are flexible.

Note that the use of the functional concept of the elite in the discourse of the social process makes it possible to dynamically consider the elite, to study the phenomenon of elite circulation occurring against the background of increased vertical mobility in modern societies, to study not only the change in the personal composition of the elite, but the change in the principles of elite organization (appointment to office by election, competition for co-optation).

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