

Elite factions as participants of regional strategy formation

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Annotation. The political elite as the most active, competent and influential part of society plays a key role in public process. It participates in development and adoption of strategic decisions and directs their realization, defines the directions of social development, forms defensive policy of the country, represents the country on the international scene. Elite also plays the main role in development of the certain ideology or a political trend, in formation of public opinion and in mobilization of masses for participation in political actions and movements. This article discusses the specifics of the Russian political elite, its personnel structure and features of formation.

Key words: Regional policy, political elite, the center-peripheral relations, centralization, region.

There is a set of approaches to understanding of definition of “elite” in scientific methodology. In my opinion, the most relevant for the Russian realities is the imperious or structurally functional approach assuming division of society into a class which is ruled and a class which rules. Following this concept, Robert Mikhels formulated the «Iron law of oligarchy», according to which in any social organization, whatever democratic it was, ruling oligarchical groups are inevitably allocated. Charles Mills in the work “The dominating elite” went further, having defined, in particular, that the top dominating tycoons are differentiated, and key (financial and economic, administrative, political) resources are distributed between three elite segments of the population – the highest representatives of administrative facilities, managing directors of large corporations in various branches of economy and generals of army. Adhering to functional approach, it should be noted that the Russian elite, though answers imperious criteria of this concept, but does not satisfy meritocratic ones. In other words, post holders do not correspond to them on the level of their competence, in this regard many political scientists offer an interpretation of the Russian elite as “quasi-elite” or “ersatz-elite” which mean the nomenclature form transformed in the conditions of federalism.

Regional elite is the major mediating link in realization of public policy in system of the relations “Center-regions”, and taking into account territorial and multicultural features of our country, plays a special role in implementation of strategic development. In spite of the fact that it assumes steady polyhedral cooperation between these two imperious levels, the dynamic of interaction between federal and regional elite in political space for the last 20 years speaks about the complex confrontation based on aspiration to mastering resources of the political power and a difference of views of the object and subject nature of the relations of the Center and the region. So, if in the nineties a role of regional elite in political space, formation of the strategy of development for subjects increased, being followed by the increasing concentration of legitimized authorities and resources at the disposal of subjects and institutes of regional elite while the Center was weakening control, that forced scientists to speak about “a difficult phenomenon of a regional call”, then with coming to power of Putin active process of replacement of elite groups from the political space with deprivation of their potential of influence inside regions has begun. The legislation and personnel policy became the main instruments of reformation. The package of measures, directed to centralization included:

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- Change in structure of the Federation Council (replacement of governors and heads of legislature with the appointed representatives) and formation of the State Council (unconstitutional advisory body under the president)
- Strengthening of an imperious vertical due to creation of federal districts with appointment of plenipotentiaries of the president on places
- State control over bodies of local government
- Formation of uniform legal space within the Russian Federation and reduction of legislations of subjects in compliance with federal norms
- Creation the party of power (United Russia) for strengthening party influence, control of representative bodies and free promotion of laws

The main aim which was pursued by these reforms was decrease in political and economic influence of regional elite groups.

The purposes of policy of the unification pursued by the Center though provided leaving of regional elite from public field by the end of zero years, but did not achieve desirable political controllability of regions, having created prerequisites for transition of regional political actors to penumbral sector with the saved-up material resources and creation of latent structures on the basis of network interaction, despite the present professional, branch and organizational and institutional distinctions between their various categories. The most adequate for the characteristic of intra elite communications is the concept of clan.

Most of all clan foundations were issued in regions with the remained patriarchal way – the national republics in which political image an ethnocultural factor prevails (Bashkiria, Kalmykia, Buryatia, Tuva). In spite of the fact that a clannishness in regions and federal level have system unity for regional leaders of national territories the clan principle is much closer and enduring form of the organization of the social and political relations therefore in regions this form of cooperation has found bigger scale. Stability is provided to intra clan network interactions with need of survival of actors in political space that forces them, despite a difference of interests, to accumulate the available resources and efforts, and the federal authorities' centralization policy created motivation for revanchist return of the lost autonomy.

However, it would be a delusion to claim that the Russian power following the results of the 16th anniversary of government of Putin was transformed to strictly vertical structure. The Russian federal authority is a conglomerate of clans and groups which also compete with each other for resources. Putin's role in system does not change is a role of the arbitrator and moderator whose word in conflict situations remains decisive so far. Redistribution of imperious resources in favor of the Center and paternalistic style of development and realization of regional strategy has led to preservation of personnel structure of the highest political and administrative groups, diffusion of the social and financial and economic capital (merging of political and business elite groups) and isolation of a turn of resources in a top of elite layers, the most approximate to the president.

Such isolation pushed experts in the field of GR technologies to compare the existing informal network structure of decision-making to the Soviet nomenclature system of the Politburo. According to the data of the communication holding "Minchenko consulting" which is engaged in monitoring of dynamics of processes in political elite in this near President's circle there are officials (a special envoy for transportation and the environment Sergei Ivanov, the first deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia Vyacheslav Volodin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Minister of Defence Sergey Shoygu, Mayor of Moscow Sergey Sobyenin), heads of state corporations (Chief executive officer of «Ростех» Sergey Chemezov and the President of «Роснефть» Igor Sechin), large businessmen (Arkady Rotenberg, Yury Kovalchuk and Gennady Timchenko). These players participate in development of scenarios of development of the branches supervised by them and they are the centers of gravity for a number of nomenclature and business players.

Specifics of members of the Politburo:

- They never gather for the general meetings
- Their formal status not always corresponds to real influence at decision-making
- Existence of elite groups which can conditionally be divided on “power”, “political”, “technical” and “enterprise”, whose candidates are constantly conflicting among themselves for influence in the Politburo and proposing their candidates in its structure

The clan of the head of Rosneft and the actual curator of fuel and energy sector of all country Igor Sechin most often admits to the most influential one. The western media do not hesitate to allocate him with such titles as “grey eminence of Putin”, “head of clan of security officers (siloviki)”, “leader of the party of the Russian hawks”, “right hand of Putin”, etc. Being an authorized representative of Putin, Sechin at the same time keeps influence both on intelligence agencies and on oil and power blocks of Russia.

The example of collision of groups in the Politburo is the conflict between one of the leaders of regional elite Ramzan Kadyrov and the leader of the elite group of security officers Igor Sechin. The Governor of Chechnya got into open conflict with «Rosneft» because of dissatisfaction with its activity in the republic. It is connected with the fact that since the time of Ahmad Kadyrov, Moscow tightens a question of transfer to Grozny of the right for development and export of oil, and also the right to all tax assignments from this branch. Kadyrov’s anger fell periodically upon the head of Rosneft which has the exclusive right to develop the Chechen oil. The fact that experts call Sechin the informal “head of clan of security officers” in the Russian political elite explains his recent conflict with Ramzan Kadyrov. The Russian security officers had expressed open discontent with excessive, as they consider, independence of the Governor of Chechnya for a long time. And Sechin’s control of oil branch of Russia does his long unwillingness to develop the Chechen oil branch even more clear. On June 24, 2015 at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum the agreement between Chechnya and the Rosneft company was signed. Experts regarded this event as warming of the relations between the head of Rosneft Igor Sechin and the Governor of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov.

Summing up the result of the aforesaid, it would be desirable to notice that such phenomenon as political clans, despite its latent nature, is not a sign of imperfection of political system. In any political structure, especially in one as complex as the state itself, key decisions are made by a small group of persons to whom the majority delegates the appropriate authority. The main task of society is to provide the strong control system by means of creation of independent civil institutes, monitoring of electoral processes, formation of a public discourse through political parties and so on. Otherwise, a top of the power will concentrate resources and come off society by using the powers delegated to it in its own corporate interests.

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