

## **POLITICAL ELITES - MODERN METHODS OF STUDYING THEORY, FUNCTIONS AND CHARACTERS**

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### **Abstract:**

In political science, "Elite" is used in a morally neutral sense. When described in the most general forms, this concept refers to a group or layer whose political-administrative qualities and functions are clearly expressed. The theory of the elite strives to balance and exclude mediocrity in the evaluation of the influence of people on power and reflects the unequal, competitive, hierarchical, and growing character of the distribution of the influence of different people on power in the sphere of the political life of society. The scientific interpretation of the concept of "political elite" is based on certain general ideas about the place and role of politics, and its directly expressed signs in society. The theory of the political elite interprets it based on giving priority to management in the social structure of the economy and society, or its equal rights and uniformity.

**Keywords:** Political elite, conceptions of the political elites, modern methods of elites, theories, and thoughts of elites history, society, political-administrative qualities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of Machiavelli's school. The concept of the Machiavelli school (Moscow, Pareto, Michels) is characterized by the following signs:

- 1) special qualities of the elite related to innate talent, the presence of the ability to educate and manage, or the desire for power;
- 2) group cohesion based on self-awareness, not only as a result of the emergence of single interests but also as a result of elite self-awareness;
- 3) recognition of the elitism of any society as a law arising from human nature;
- 4) alternation of elites in the struggle for power;
- 5) the role of elites in constructive leadership and domination in society.

The concept of Machiavelli's school has been criticized for the following reasons:

- a) overestimated the importance of psychological factors;
- b) failure to promote democracy, inability to assess public activity;
- c) not taking into account the evolution of society and reacting to the struggle for power too quickly.

Value theory of elites. Representatives of this theory (founders - V.Ropke, H. Ortega-i-Gasset, etc.) strive to adapt the elitist theory to the life of the modern state and try to combine elitism with democracy. In general, they stem from several general guidelines:

- a) elite - the most important and valuable element of the social system, which has changed its functions and value goals throughout history - the aristocracy has replaced businessmen, businessmen with managers, and intellectuals. According to some representatives of this theory at present, only the industrial and post-industrial eras will acquire real elitism, because in this period the elite is recruited not according to the signs of kinship or the amount of property, but according to work skills and qualifications, as well as intellectual ability;
- b) the elite units based on the performance of its relative functions, its unity is manifested primarily as an expression of the cooperation of individuals who care about the common welfare;
- c) the relationship between the elite and the masses does not acquire the character of domination but is manifested as management accepted based on discretion. The leadership role of the elite is similar to that of the elders guiding the younger ones;
- g) formation of the elite is not a result of the struggle for power, but a natural choice by the society of individuals with high management skills;

d) elitism is a condition of the existence of any society. It is based on the distribution of administrative and executive tasks and is based on equality of opportunities based on legality, which does not contradict democracy.

## METHODS

Theory of democratic elitism. Scientists such as S. M. Lipset, K. Manheim, and J. Sartori are representatives of this theory. They interpret democracy as the competition of various elite groups for the vote of the electorate. Karl Mannheim said that "democracy increases interests in anti-elite tendencies, but does not require the ultimate implementation of the imaginary equalization of the elite and the masses." We understand that democracy is not characterized by the absence of strata but by new methods of recruitment and a new self-awareness of the elite. In this case, the elite does not rule, but rules with the voluntary consent of the masses determined in free elections. According to this theory, a real democracy needs mass political apathy as much as it needs an elite. Because excessive political participation also threatens the stability of democracy. The elite is a necessity as a guarantee of a high-quality management structure chosen by the population. The social value of democracy depends on the quality of the elite. The ruling class is not only able to acquire qualities for management, but also to be a defender of democratic values, and to restrain emotional indolence and radicalism that sometimes occur. Theory of elite pluralism. This is often called the functional theory of elites (representatives of this theory are R. Aron, A. Bentley, R. Dahl, S. Keller, and D. Risman). Underlying this theory are the following rules:

- a) interpretation of the political elite as a functional elite. Another representative of this theory, E. Goltmann, writes: Functional elites are individuals or groups who possess special skills necessary to engage in certain leadership tasks in society. Their advantage over other members of society is that they manage important political and social processes or are influenced by them;
- b) denial of the elite as the only privileged, relatively compact group. There are many elites in society, whose influence is limited to certain spheres of activity. The pluralism of the elites is determined by the diversity of social structures and the complexity of the social division of labor. Differentiation of mutually

important social spheres between elites is more important than the mutual differentiation of the layers of elites related to one sphere;

c) the division of society into the elite and the masses is relative, conditional, and sometimes not very visible. Between them, more representative relations are prioritized than dominance or permanent management. With the help of various democratic mechanisms - elections, referendums, polls, non-governmental organizations, and media, it is possible to limit the "law of oligarchic tendencies" put forward by R. Michels and to keep the elite under the influence and control of the masses. Inter-elite competitions also provide opportunities for this;

g) in the current democracy, the elite is formed from the most competent and interested citizens. The main subject of political life is not the elite, but interest groups. The differences between the elite and the masses arose mainly from the participation of different interests in decision-making;

d) it is impermissible to talk about their social dominance, as the elite in democratic countries have been performing important social functions. The concept of elite pluralism is widely used to theoretically justify the development of modern Western democracy. But this theory sometimes idealizes reality. Studies show that the influence of different social strata on politics and power is not equal. Taking this into account, some proponents of this theory propose to single out influential strategic elites, whose opinions, decisions, and actions can lead to good results for the majority of members of the society. The left-liberal concept of elites. This theory is distinguished by its ideological opposition to pluralistic elitism (representatives are P. Birnbaum, J. Mayno, R. Miliband, M. Parenti, and F. Hunter). Among the elite theories, the unique manifesto of Charles Wright Mills appeared as a characteristic feature of this trend. It tried to prove that the administration of power in the USA is not carried out by all elites but by one ruling elite.

## THEORIES AND FACTS

Left-liberal elitism (also called critical elitism) has its characteristics:

1) the sign that constitutes the main elite is not high individual qualities, but having commanding positions, occupying management positions. The ruling elite, Mills believes, consists of people who occupy high positions, who are allowed to stand above the environment of ordinary people, and who make

decisions with large consequences. This is because they give orders to the important hierarchical institutions and organizations of modern society and manage them. They occupy strategic management positions in the social system that provides them with influential tools, power, wealth, and prestige. The fact that these elites occupy important areas of management of situations in the economy, politics, military and other fields provides them with power and determines their belonging to the top elite. Interpreting the elite as consisting of people with such special qualities distinguishes left-liberal theory from other conceptions;

2) not limited to the political elite who directly make state decisions, the elite includes various sectors of the ruling elite and is integrated into a group - it includes corporations, high-ranking civil servants, and army officers. They are supported by intellectuals well-established within the existing system. The factor of elite compaction is not only the common interest of the groups that make up it, the privileged status, and the social system that provides it, but also social statuses, educational and cultural levels, interests, lifestyle, personal and kinship ties, and spiritual aspects. is mutual proximity to each other. A complex hierarchical relationship prevails within the ruling elite. While Mills sharply criticizes the ruling elite in the United States and exposes the connections of politicians with large property owners, he is not a supporter of the Marxian class approach that interprets the elite as representatives of monopolistic capital interests;

3) deep differences between the elite and the masses. It is possible to enter the elite only when talented people from among the people occupy high positions in the social hierarchy. The influence of the masses on the elite through elections and other democratic mechanisms is very limited. As a result of influence with the help of mechanisms of tricks (manipulation) developed concerning money, knowledge, and consciousness, the ruling elite control the masses without any control;

4) recruitment of the elite is carried out mainly based on acceptance of its socio-political values at the expense of its environment. Important selection criteria include influence resources, as well as professional qualities and conformist social attitudes;

5) ensuring the rule of the ruling elite is manifested as its function of holding the main power in society. The same function is subordinated to solving management tasks. Mills denies that the elitism of society is inevitable, consistently criticizing it from a democratic point of view. Supporters of the left-liberal theory of elites deny direct relations between the economic elite and the political elite. Ralph Miliband suggests that the main influences are not determined by the big owners. In Western political science, these left-liberal theories, especially the closedness of the ruling elite and its non-openness to big business, have been sharply criticized. Technocratic theory of elites.

In the second half of the 20th century, the unprecedented acceleration of scientific and technical development encouraged a significant increase in the political influence of subjects about the creators of science and technology. This situation prompted the formation of the technocratic theory of elites (representatives - K. Boulding, A. Burley, L. Eppley, etc.). The main source in this direction was J. Burnham's book "Revolution of Managers". The author put forward the idea that the society in an industrially developed country should be managed by a new social category - the class of managers, he included managers among the top category of management. According to Burnham's concept, competent and professional managers appear as the elite. Later, the theory of technological elitism was developed in the works of D. Bell, J. Galbraith, G. Kahn, and others. According to them, in the post-industrial countries, an internally cohesive elite consisting of high-level administrators, scientists, and engineers, who have a technosphere - their way of life, and common corporate values - came to power. D. Bell analyzed the structure of post-industrial society and distinguished three layers in it: the elite of professional managers and scientists, the middle-engineer-technical staff, and the lower-intellectual labor proletariat, technicians of various fields. His classifications served as a kind of boundary line between the elite and the masses, focusing on defining the elite by their level of talent and education.

Functions of political elites. The political elite performs many functions in society and state bodies. But among them, the main functions are as follows:

- study and analysis of the interests of different social groups;
- the subordination of the interests of various social units;
- the expression of interests in political ways and goals;

- development of political ideology (program, doctrine, constitution, laws, etc.);
- creation of a mechanism for embodying political goals;
- appointing personnel of administrative bodies;
- creation of institutions of the political system and making amendments to them;
- promotion of political leaders.

Recruiting elites. Recruitment of the elites is important for the effective, useful, and efficient performance of their functions for society. Currently, there are two main systems for recruiting elites: guild and entrepreneur systems. Although these systems are rare in pure and true form, the demand for them is gradually increasing. Elite Recruitment Guild System Features:

- a closed system, selection for higher positions is taken from the lower layers of the elite, and they slowly and gradually rise to the top;
- the high level of the selection process, the large number of stages of purification (partisanship, age, work experience, education, classification, etc.) in the official requirements for holding a position;
- the relatively closed and small size of the selection system (high-ranking persons conducting the selection). Usually, it includes only the member of the highest body, even the first leader;
- the tendency to repeat pre-existing leadership characteristics. Signs of an entrepreneurial system of recruiting elites:
- an open system, a representative of any group can apply for a leadership position;
- there will be fewer official requirements and institutionalized cleaning stages in the selection process;
- the scope of the election is wide, and all voters can participate in it;
- highly competitive nature of the competition, strong mutual competition in obtaining a high position;
- individuality is of primary importance (a bright personality, important personal qualities, the ability to gain the support of the general public, the ability to attract it, and the ability to come up with interesting proposals and programs).

## CONCLUSION

In this way, the elitism of the political system of society has become the reality of the present time. The political and legal culture of a person who has deeply

assimilated the theory and practice of the political elite in the perception of society or its management is expressed at a high level. In the process of the transition to the current civil society, the maturity of the political consciousness of citizens is one of the guarantees of the effective completion of the reforms.

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