

## THEORETICAL SOURCES OF THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL ELITE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT:

This article analyzes the theoretical sources of the concept of political elite with the help of various scientific views. Consequently, from a scientific point of view, various ideas and doctrines characteristic of the political elite, widely spread in the history of political science, were studied. In particular, this study provides detailed and comprehensive definitions of the phenomenon of "political elite" in the interpretation of scientists, indicating the main characteristics of elites. In addition, the article considers a number of scientific views on the fact that the science of "elitology" is a special scientific direction that studies the social stratum that exercises political control, and identifies elitist-specific qualities that form factors for ensuring the stability of society. In political science, the issue of the relationship between elitism and democracy, which is the subject of numerous discussions, is clarified, scientific-theoretical and scientific-practical conclusions have been made.

### I. INTRODUCTION:

The laws of governance show that different political actors have different influences on political processes. Because for objective reasons, the political activity of citizens will not be the same. In addition, there will always be inequality in the political hierarchy, since the degree of their proximity to political power, the ability to make strategic decisions, and the ability to influence social change differ from each other. Individual citizens and social groups, as a rule, do not

participate in political life directly on a daily, permanent, professional basis. This is done by a separate layer of people called the political elite.

Classical theories about elites appeared in the late XIX-early XX century. In elite theories, equality in society is denied, it is read that the influence of citizens on the state is unequal, power is distributed unevenly and political life is built on a competitive basis. The emergence of elite theories is associated with the names of Gaetano Mosca, Wilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels. However, it is worth noting that the history of early ideas about political elites goes back to ancient times. During the decline of the tribal and tribal system, ideas arose about the division of society into higher and lower classes, the nobility and the common people. In the works of Confucius, Plato, Machiavelli, Charlemagne, Nietzsche, these ideas received a logical justification. However, such elitist views needed serious scientific analysis.

## II. METHOD:

The article uses chronological and systematic periodic data, comparative and quantitative methods. More than ten scientific papers on the topic are used to explain "Theoretical sources of the concept of the political elite: a comparative analysis". In addition, the researcher used different materials to collect data related to the study.

## III. DISCUSSION:

In the works of the Italian sociologist, political scientist Professor Gaetano Mosca, the political elite was studied as a special object of scientific research. Mosca tried to prove that any society inevitably breaks up into two groups that are unequal in social status and role. In his work "The ruling class", he writes: "In every society-from a moderately developed and newly civilized society to a more powerful and enlightened society-there are two classes: the ruling class and the managed class. The former are always few in number, perform all political functions, concentrate power in their own hands, and enjoy established privileges. The second class is numerous and is governed by the first, providing it with the material means necessary for the existence of a political organism [1.187]".

G. Mosca conducted an in-depth analysis of the process of formation of the political elite and its specifics. According to him, an important criterion for belonging to the political elite is the ability to lead another team, that is, organizational talent. In his opinion, the elite differs from the mass in such its qualities that these qualities require its material, spiritual and mental superiority over the rest of society. "In other words," says R. T. Mukhaev, "Representatives of the ruling minority acquire qualities that are deeply valued in the society in which they live" [2.258]. However, although this layer, in your opinion, is more manageable than others, not all of its representatives have high efficiency and special talent in this regard.

Mosca notes that the transition from one historical era to another changes the composition, structure of the ruling class, the requirements for its members. But this class will always be available. It also defines the historical process[3.28-29]. Thus, the task of political science is to study the conditions of existence of the political class, the preservation of power in its hands, its interaction with the masses.

"What is the best form of political Union?When asked "Whether this is a form that allows the political elite to develop, remain under control and follow the principle of personal responsibility," Mosca replies[4.212]: "It is a form that allows the political elite to develop, be under control and follow the principle of personal responsibility." In his opinion, the power of the elite depends on the extent to which the qualities of its members meet the needs of the era. The ruling minority is included in the political elite in different ways, but in a certain period the main criterion should be the desired ability to political management. The Italian sociologist E. Alberto argued that for Mosca, the political class is not a brute dominant force over the masses, but "an organized minority with moral superiority over the passive majority"[5.9], and therefore its power is "justified". Consequently, they are dominated by spiritual and moral values. The elite team

guarantees spiritual and moral security, a quiet lifestyle. Taking into account this commitment, emphasizing the solidarity of the ruling class and their high place in society, Mosca calls them a political class.

Although the theory of the political class in Mosca has had a strong influence on the development of elite ideas, it has been criticized because of the absolutization of the political factor and the lack of attention to the economy. However this approach does not quite correspond to reality in modern pluralistic societies, it is worth noting that the theory of "political class" has found its expression in many totalitarian states. After all, in these states, the economy and other spheres of public life were subordinated to politics. There was a class similar to the "political class" that Mosca described – a bureaucratic nomenclature. In totalitarian states, those who are part of the political nomenclature, those who are close to power and governance, gain both economic and social dominance as the "ruling class".

Approximately the same time as Mosca, but independently of him, the Italian sociologist and economist Wilfredo Pareto also developed the theory of the political elite. In his work "Treatise on general sociology", published in 1916, he analyzed the nature, composition and functions of the political elite. He also, like Mosca, proceeds from the following opinion: the world has always been ruled and ruled by a select minority, the so-called elite. Those who belong to the elite are distinguished by their psychological (innate) and social (acquired as a result of upbringing and education) characteristics. In his treatise on General sociology, he writes: "Whether some theorists like it or not, human society is not the same, and people are different physically, spiritually, and mentally [6.238]". In his opinion, a group of people who are distinguished by effective activities and high productivity in a particular area is elite.

Pareto associates the inevitability of the division of society into the masses and the elite with the uneven personal, physical and mental abilities of individuals. In his opinion, persons with relatively great influence and wealth constitute the highest class of society-the elite. Pareto classifies the types of elites and divides them into commercial and industrial elite, political, military, and religious elite. As you can see, the scientist broadly interprets the elite. However, in Pareto, one can also see narrower interpretations of the elite. At the same time, the part of the elite that plays a decisive role in politics – the ruling elite-is singled out. Therefore, not all members of the elite are part of the ruling elite, some of them are not the ruling elite. Thus, according to Pareto, the social structure of society looks like this: "The upper layer is the elite; this layer, in turn, is divided into the ruling and non-dominant parts, and the lower layer is divided into the masses [7.31-32]".

While the ruling elite takes a direct or indirect (but effective) part in governance, the non-ruling elite or counter-elite make up people with the qualities inherent in the elite. But they are deprived of the right to govern because of their social status and the various barriers that exist for the lower strata of society. The Pareto ruling elite includes people who hold the highest positions related to the civil service. These are "Ministers, senators, deputies, heads of departments in ministries, chairmen of appeal courts, generals, and colonels [8.240]".

V. Pareto argues that internal cohesion, scrupulousness, constant struggle to maintain its dominance is features inherent in the ruling elite. The progress of society, in his opinion, occurs as a result of the periodic exchange of places of two main types of elites: "foxes" and "lions". "Foxes" are agile leaders who use "soft" management methods: negotiations, concessions, politeness, flattery and persuasion. The "lions," on the other hand, are tough and determined leaders who pursue conservative policies and rely mostly on power. Consequently comparing the views of V. Pareto, G. Mosca absolutizes the influence of political factors on the activities of the political elite, while Pareto explains the change of elites to a greater extent by psychological factors.

Robert Michels also made a huge contribution to the development of the theory of the political elite. He explores the social mechanisms that generate elitism in society. In his early writings, Michels read that "Only direct, democracy can be true democracy, whereas direct democracy breeds oligarchy [10.297]". Oligarchy is considered by him as an inevitable way of life of large social structures. In the interpretation of the causes of elitism R. Michels although he stands

in solidarity with Mosca, he emphasizes his organizational skills. In his opinion, the very organizational structures of society serve to strengthen elitism, increase the status of the layer of managers. R. Michels concludes that the structure of society requires elitism, and the existence of elites is the rule of law [11.58-59].

There are also opinions that there is an "Iron law of oligarchy" in society which belongs to Michels. He expressed these thoughts in his book "Political parties concerning in an essay on oligarchic tendencies in democracy (1911). According to the "The iron law of oligarchy", an indispensable sign of the progress of society is the structure of large organizations, which, of course, leads to the concentration of the management of society in the hands of a minority (oligarchization) and the formation of an elite. Nevertheless, not all of its members can participate in the management of such a large organization. In order for their activities to be effective, a division of tasks and specialization is required. This, in turn, leads to the separation of the governing body and the apparatus. This apparatus gradually, but inevitably, begins to get out of the control of ordinary members, alienate them and subordinate politics to its own interests, taking care, first of all, to preserve its privileged position. The rank - and-file members of the organization, however, are insufficiently qualified, slow and careless in their daily political activities. As a result, any organization, even the most democratic, is governed by an oligarchic, elite group. Since such influential groups are interested in maintaining their privileged position, they come into contact with each other, enter into a dialogue, intertwine, and begin to forget about the interests of the people.

Proceeding from the operation of the "Iron law of oligarchy", R. Michels was pessimistic about the possibilities of democracy and the democratic nature of the social-democratic parties, and distrusted them. In particular, "in these parties, power is concentrated in the hands of a narrow circle of people who occupy places at the top of the party hierarchy. After all, the need to manage the party requires the creation of a party apparatus consisting of people who are masters of their craft, as a result of which power will inevitably be concentrated in their hands,[12.36-37] he says.

R. Michels emphasizes that the representatives of the party elected to the Parliament change their social status and become members of the ruling elite. Thus, he emphasizes that the leaders of the masses, as soon as they become part of the elite, begin to protect its interests and strive to maintain their privileged position.

In the scientific works of G. Mosca, V. Pareto, R. Michels, a detailed and comprehensive definition of the phenomenon of "political elite" is given, its main features are indicated. Therefore, these scientists were recognized as the founders of a special scientific direction, which is the science of elitology – the study of the social stratum that exercises political control. G. Mosca who developed the alphabet of elitist teaching. V. Pareto and R. Michels ' Theories were generalized and recognized as belonging to the Machiavellian school. Despite the fact that this school unites the first generation of social scientists, their theories have not lost their relevance at the present time. They are united by the following features:

- "The qualities of the elite depend on innate talent and upbringing, and these qualities are manifested in the ability of the elite to govern or in its struggle for power;
- Group solidarity in the elite depends not only on the commonality of professions and interests, but also on the perception of the elite consciousness of itself as a separate layer capable of governing society;
- Recognition of the elitism of any society means recognition of the inevitability of its division into a dominant, creative, privileged minority and a passive, non-creative majority. This division stems from the nature of society and man. Although the personal composition of the elite is changing, its dominant position in relation to the masses remains unchanged in its essence. For example, tribal leaders, monarchs, people's Commissars, party secretaries, Ministers, and presidents have changed periodically throughout history, but the relationship of dominance-subordination between them and the people has always been maintained.
- Formation and renewal of the elite in the course of the struggle for power. Many people aspire to a high position that gives them great privileges, but no one wants to voluntarily vacate

their position and career. Therefore, a hidden and Frank struggle for a place in the elite is inevitable. - The practical, useful, controlling and dominant role of the elite in society. The elite performs (though not always effectively) the necessary managerial function for the social system [13.112]"

The elite theories of the Machiavellian school have been criticized for exaggerating the importance of psychological factors, undemocratic character, and insufficient assessment of the activity and abilities of the masses. This criticism was justified in many ways. Over time, proponents of elitism began to develop existing theories and adapt them to new social conditions. These attempts led to the emergence of a new generation of elitist theories. The rapid technological and technical revolution in the world, creating equal opportunities for education of the masses, the growth of living standards of the population in many countries, the establishment of effective mechanisms to ensure the rights and freedoms of the individual, the increasing role of the media could not affect the activities of political elites. Under the influence of all these factors, the distribution of political roles and tasks in the political elite has changed, the worldview of elite representatives has changed, and the resources that ensure their power have changed. The above-mentioned processes have given rise to a large number of modern approaches applied to the study of political elites.

Speaking about human society, its management, the ruling class, the problem of mechanism will always remain relevant. Therefore, the elite and Alitalia are constantly evolving. In this context, the proponents of the elitist approach continued the tradition of analyzing the elite as a cohesive group exercising power.

J. Bernheim, in his work "The managers 'revolution", argued that radical changes had taken place in the political class, and called them revolutions. He attributed these changes to the emergence of the managerial elite (managers). Since the privileges of different sections of the population are different, the basis of Brenheim's views is the fact that in order to satisfy them, managers who are capable of skillful management must prevail [14.171]. In his opinion, the basis of the political domination of the ruling elite is knowledge, professionalism and not property or the ability to allocate resources.

Consequently, it is significant to note that the founder of the theory of "Post-industrial society" D. Bell puts forward similar ideas in his book "post-industrial society in perspective". It is erudition and professional competence that allow the elite to contribute to the development of society. Bell particularly emphasizes the growing importance of knowledge holders in an informative society.

Within the framework of the institutional approach, the elite are treated as a group of statuses and strategic roles. R. Mills in his work "The ruling elite "included in the elite" people who hold high positions in society [15.4]". Since power in modern society is institutionalized, the people who lead these social institutions constitute the power elite. "What make up the elite are not great individual qualities, but the presence of commanding positions, leading actions." [16.154]. "The ruling elite," Mills writes, "consists of people who hold positions that allow them to transcend the environment of ordinary people and make decisions with great results and specific goals [17.24]"

In practice, political leadership, corporate leaders, and military commanders make important policy decisions. Therefore, Mills believes that a relationship based on unity, cooperation and dialogue has been established between these three institutions of power. The scientist explains this attitude precisely by the greater interest of the military, political and economic departments in ensuring the development of society. Thanks to his research, R. Mills concludes: "The elite consists not only of a ruling group formed on the basis of free elections, but also includes an oligarchy consisting of people appointed by the President [18.173]". When approaching the elite from the point of view of prestige, it is assumed that its status is evaluated by other groups of society, that is, the prestige of the elite is determined by others. At the same time, it is taken into account that those who are managed can give an objective assessment of the power structures. In his report "On the leading class of Italy", it is precisely on this approach supported by J. Meino. In his opinion, the elite is characterized by a high degree of group cohesion. After all, personal, informal ties between

representatives of the ruling class will be strong. This group, when exercising power, tries to maintain its acceptable image among other groups of society.

The French political scientist R. J. Schwarzenberg in his work "Absolute right" describes the modern elite as an aristocratic "caste". This caste itself represents the "triangle of power"[19,173]. This triangle will consist of politicians, senior administration and business circles. The scientist believes that these people control the government, form the government and run the state, head large corporations and banks. However, the political elite is not considered an influential force just because it is able to make important decisions, concentrating strategic resources in its hands. The high reputation of members of the elite, the creation of a good name also increases its influence.

The increase in the types of human activity, the increase in the privileges of individuals and groups has led to a more complex structure of power. At present, the elite has ceased to be a holistic structure and consists of groups that cooperate with each other and compete with each other. Theories of elite pluralism reflect this reality.

In his work "The management process", A. Bentley characterizes politics as the interaction of interested groups. This process is dominated by strong groups, and weak groups submit and submit to themselves. Bentley believes that the governing institutions (Constitution, Congress, President, courts) represent the interests of "formal groups". To formal groups, that is, elites, the scientist refers legislative, Executive, administrative, judicial and legal institutions, the army and the police. These institutions serve to ensure political stability by resolving conflicts between individual groups.

#### IV. RESULTS:

A number of authors try to identify and classify control groups in the structure of elites. Such groups are distinguished in terms of their sphere of influence and resources used. For example, R. V. Aron writes in his work that: "Social class, political class, ruling class": "It is wrong to think that modern societies are governed by one ruling class. Nevertheless in these societies, different leadership categories compete [20.176]". In addition to the political elite, which consists of professional politicians and decision-makers, R. Aron identifies five more leading categories: holders of "spiritual power" that affects the way of thinking and beliefs of people (he includes religious scribes, writers, scientists, party ideologues); the second leading category consists of military and police leaders; the third group – leaders of "collective labor", owners or managers of means of production; the fourth – "leaders of the masses" (leaders of trade unions and political parties). Senior officials who hold "administrative power" are placed at the bottom of the list of leadership groups[21.176].

Despite the different interpretations of individual issues, it is possible to identify common features that are characteristic of both classical and modern elite theories. They all read the inevitable division of society into elite and masses, due to the natural inflexibility of individuals, recognizes the elite driving force in technological and social progress, emphasized the inevitability of the domination of one group in society and the subordination of other groups, emphasizes the legitimacy of the ruling minority, suggests the passivity of the masses.

Consequently, in all the theories mentioned above, the inevitable existence of an elite in any society rises to the level of legality. However, the discussion of scientists who oppose elitist theories to democratic ones is not yet over. Such scholars raise the question of whether democracy does not deny the recognition of the elitism of society. Proponents of elitist theory, however, cannot easily answer this question.

Some supporters of the elitist theory, criticizing democracy, try to justify the need for a strong and independent government that carries out qualified and effective management of society. Another group of political scientists tries to combine the principles of elitism with the principles of democracy. They sought to adapt democratic theories to an elitist power structure, creating compromise doctrines such as "oligarchic democracy" or "democratic elitism".

As soon as elitism was formed as a political doctrine, it began to be criticized by democrats. In Particular, T. Botgomor argues that "elitist theories are nothing more than an attempt to revive

the old ideas of social hierarchy and establish barriers to the development of democracy [22.170]." The contradiction between elitism and the theories of democracy is manifested in the following: first, elitism proceeds from the idea of inequality of people, of the difference in their abilities, potential and desire to participate in politics, democracy proclaims the political, legal equality of people; secondly, the basis of elitism is the recognition of the legitimacy of the power of the dominant minority, while the basic principle of democracy is the recognition of the will of the people as a source of power.

Proponents of the elite theory argue that it is not necessary to understand the idea of "democracy is the rule of the people." They read that the implementation of popular governance, especially in large countries, is impossible "from a technical point of view", and therefore believe that the people should give the elite the necessary powers for political governance. Another idea of elitism is that people are not aware of politics, do not have enough knowledge and information to carry out political management, so if they are engaged in management, they can harm themselves and society. Proponents of the elitist theory believe that democracy may be the most preferred form of effective government of the elite, approved and supported by the people.

The question of the relationship between elitism and democracy has been repeatedly discussed at international sociological and political science conferences. At the IV international sociological Congress, the Italian political scientist N. Bobbio made a report "The theory of the concept of the political class in the tradition of democratic authors in Italy". In his speech, he G. Mosca, P. Gobetti and G. Dorso's followers achieved a fusion of elitism with democracy, he believes. He argues that in a democracy, classes can only dominate if they consistently and regularly alternate. Bobbio concluded his report with the following statement: "The theory of the political class, in the course of its development, has passed from the hands of the enemies of democracy to the hands of its friends [24.193]."

However, it is too early to draw conclusions about the complete fusion of elitist and democratic doctrines. One of the prominent figures in the theory of democratic elitism is the American political scientist P. Bachrach believes that from a normative point of view, there is a fundamental, essential difference between democratic and elitist theories. If the natural basis of democracy is the people, "democratic elitism" relies on democratically oriented elite. At the same time, elites are responsible not only for preserving democracy, but also for protecting democratic values and curbing the anti-democratic aspirations inherent in the masses.

It should be noted that in the combination of both theories, the principle of democracy associated with the power of the people suffers. But P. Bachrach thinks otherwise. In his opinion, the interaction of elitist and democratic theories is a vivid embodiment of dialectics: if at first the aristocratic theories of power were criticized by the theorists of democracy, then later the theories of democracy were criticized by the elitists. "Truth", however, is in the middle and is associated with the theory of "democratic elitism" [25.15], formed by the fusion of the theories of elitism and democracy. The problem of the role of the political elite in a democratic society is of particular importance. After all, the fate of the masses will largely depend on the quality of the elite's activities. Italian political scientist L. Cavallas believes that the elite should be democratically oriented, because "it is the elite that educates the people in the spirit of democracy, creates democratic political institutions, develops people's skills to obtain information, makes independent and at the same time responsible decisions [26.183]." Therefore, it is worth linking all hope not with the Amateur activity of the masses, but with good and qualified elite activities. After all, while the politics of States are theoretically based on democracy, the original reality can be better understood in terms of elitist theory.

## V. CONCLUSION:

Thus, the process of analyzing elite theories served as the basis for the following conclusions:

first, today's realities indicate the inevitability of the division of society into the masses and the elite in all states, including in democratic political systems;

second, although democracy literally denies the elite, in fact, democracy can be a form of effective government of the elite, approved and supported by the people, in the most preferred form;

third, during elections, the masses are given the opportunity to choose among competing elites;

fourth, the democratic political system assumes that the elite has a minimal power, is a means to efficiently and effectively manage the state, serve the interests of the people;

fifth, in a democracy, in the relations of "elite-masses" the elite are obliged to stimulate their activity without suppressing the desires of the masses, because the active participation of people in policy not only ensures that the interests of the masses in the government decision-making, but also serves as a means of implementing the creativity and skills of people;

sixth, it is the political elite that bears responsibility, responsibility for the survival of democracy in the country, its future fate, the level of development of democratic values; seventh, it is advisable to use democratic mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of the political elite, improve the quality of its work. Based on the potential and experience of the development of elite theories, it can be argued that the political elite is, first of all, a social group specializing in the management of society and the state. Persons belonging to the political elite are professionally engaged in the management of power, the state, parties and other political institutions. In this regard, the political elite determine the directions and mechanisms of development of the state. So, the political elite is a layer of society that concentrates state power in its hands and performs the function of governing the country. The political elite will consist mainly of highly professional politicians. These are civil servants who have received professional training in the development and implementation of the program and strategy for the development of society. In order to emphasize the special importance of the political elite, such terms as "political leadership", "system administrators", "decision-making center", "Central link of the political system" are sometimes applied to it.

Structurally, the political elite consist of leaders elected by the population and administrators appointed to office. Monarchs, presidents, prime ministers, ministers, heads of legislative and Executive instances, deputies, members of the supremecourt, heads of local authorities, representatives of the highest diplomatic corps make up the political elite of modern states.

A number of scientists have noted that the political elite as a separate, specific group is inherent in internal group solidarity. At the same time, they are united by their focus on one goal. This feature, inherent in the elite, J. Mizel appropriately expressed through the formula "three S": group conditionality (group consciousness), coherence (community), conspiracy (common aspirations)[27.4]. The place in this stratum is determined by the desire to occupy a certain position, to receive material and spiritual benefits. Consequently, the elite will be interested in maintaining their privileged position. The main majority in the elite seeks to occupy a high position, which gives great privileges, but no one wants to voluntarily give up their position and career. Therefore, it is inevitable that the political elite will have a clear or hidden competition for a place in the elite, both inside and outside it. This prompts us to focus on the question of the mechanisms of formation of the political elite, the systems of selection to it. After all, an effective solution to this issue would help to get decent and wise people in the management team and improve the system of selection of managers.

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