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The “Legitimation Trap” of Political Power in the Context of the Philosophy of Universalism of Political Existence

[„Pułapka legitymizacji” władzy politycznej w kontekście filozofii uniwersalizmu politycznego istnienia]

Streszczenie: Autorzy analizują współczesny stan sposobów legitymizacji władzy politycznej w kontekście filozofii uniwersalizmu egzystencji politycznej. Specyfika podejścia autorów polega na pojmowaniu legitymizacji jako trwałej, zinstytucjonalizowanej działalności aktorów politycznych, mającej na celu zapewnienie legitymizacji ich „roszczeń politycznych” nie tylko do realizacji żądań politycznych, ale także do zdobywania lub poszerzania władzy politycznej. Autorzy podkreślają, że w toku takich działań podmioty legitymizacji mogą wpaść w „pułapkę legitymizacji” w postaci zastępowania realnych decyzji politycznych politycznym populizmem.

Summary: The article examines the contemporary state of the ways to legitimize political power in the context of the philosophy of universalism of political existence. The peculiarity of the author’s approach lies in the understanding of legitimation as a permanent institutionalized activity of political actors to ensure the legitimacy of their “political claims” not only for the implementation of political demands, as well as for obtaining or expanding political power. It is emphasized that in the course of such activities, the subjects of legitimation can fall into the “trap of legitimation” in the form of replacement of real political decisions by political populism.

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Introduction

Legitimation of power is the provision of recognition and approval of the established order of exercising political power in society as natural, normal, correct, legal and psychologically acceptable. The degree of legitimation of power can be measured by the increasing proportion in society of those who obey the authorities not because of fear of being punished, but because of the formed beliefs in the expediency and correctness of the existing power. The strength of civil disobedience (both in active and passive forms), election results, statistical analysis of the dominant public opinion regarding the naturalness, necessity and expediency of the existing political order also demonstrate the degree of legitimation of power.

In modern conditions, the state power should have political flexibility. Each of its ill-considered steps in the form of a political or social decision is a kind of trap into which the subjects of the legitimation of political power fall. In fact, the “legitimation trap” is a dichotomy of the possible and the real in the interaction of the subjects of the legitimation of political power in conditions when political populism replaces real political actions. This “trap” is equally dangerous for both the political power and the political opposition.

Presentation of the main research

The actualization of the problem of legitimation of political power is connected with a change in worldview approaches to the analysis of this problem, criticism and departure from the classical Weberian theory of legitimation.

The development of contemporary theoretical views on the problem of legitimation of political power was significantly influenced by the work of David Beetham “The Legitimation of Power”, devoted to the study of the concepts of political legitimacy. In it, he criticized the classical Weberian definition of legitimacy and offered his own multidimensional understanding, in which legitimacy was associated, first of all, not with “belief in legitimacy”, but in the ability of rulers to support it (Beetham D., 1991).

The practical significance of legitimation of political power and the components of the political and power process (the ruling elite and the opposition) in a universal context, as well as their implementation in transformational systems, is the problem of the relationship between the legitimate and the universal. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to study the correspondence of the legitimacy of political power to the universal principles of political life.

In modern scientific discourse, legitimacy is considered rather not as a legal, but as an actual, mostly informal, state of political power. At the same time, G. Rossolillo points out that "legitimation is the realization by members of the collective that along with private interests that contradict each other in civil society, there is a common interest, and the state is the voice of this interest" (Rossolillo G., 2008., p. 126–131). As a result, the legitimation of political power becomes a way to overcome socio-political conflicts and civil confrontations.

The scientific tradition knows several basic forms of legitimation of political power, which are most fruitfully used in scientific discourse. According to Weber, political power can have three sources of legitimacy: tradition, charisma and a rational-legal basis (Weber M., 1968).

There are other typologies of legitimation of power and legitimacy as a result of these processes. French researcher J.-L. Chabot distinguishes between democratic legitimacy (according to the mechanisms of its acquisition and implementation), ideological legitimacy (has a value, ideological and political justification) and ontological legitimacy (in accordance with the cosmic orders of the universe) (Шабо Л.Ф.Ж., 1993, с. 137–143). American political scientist D. Easton considers the ideological, structural and personalistic varieties of the legitimacy of power (Истон Д., 2000, с. 319–331). There are also other types of legitimation. For example, in terms of the breadth of support of the authorities by citizens, special (on certain issues), diffuse and mixed legitimation (with a variable predominance of one type or another) are distinguished. According to the criterion of the subject of legitimation, popular (took place on the part of the population), external (on the part of foreign states) and legitimation "for themselves" (the power's confidence in their own strength) are distinguished. By completeness, the minimum and maximum legitimation are considered; by factuality, there are real and contrived legitimation, etc.

From O. Höffe's point of view, "recently, a "Copernican revolution" has been taking place in political legitimation. According to it, the public authority that makes the decision is legitimate not out of its own grace or on the basis of socially transcendental authority. Legitimation is a conse-

quence of the universal ability to give consent, which, in turn, is available to all concerned” (Гьофе О., 2003, с. 74–79).

The legitimation of political power is directly related to the interests of people who are more often aware of them, but sometimes these interests have an unconscious nature. It is based on the belief of people that their material and spiritual benefits depend on the preservation and maintenance of a stable operating order in society, the belief that the existing regime, ensuring the effective activities of the state, expresses and protects their interests. Such ideas arise not on the basis of legal norms, but are related to the material, social, political, spiritual conditions of social life, with the individual and social psyche of people and their communities. The legitimacy of state power is reflected in its support by the population, it can be expressed by thoughts, feelings, actions. It is reflected in the results of voting at elections of various authorities, in the results of referendums, mass demonstrations of people who approve (or not) government measures, in their readiness for mobilization and mass protests in defense of power in the event of external threats or attempts at a coup d'état (coup).

Therefore, the most important goal of any power seeking to consolidate its position is to achieve legitimacy. However, often not real measures, but populist promises are used for this. A kind of “political trap” is created in the form of the impossibility or unwillingness of political power to be legitimized for all subjects of social relations. Since the needs and aspirations of citizens from different social strata of the population are not the same, and due to limited resources and other problems, the state power cannot fully satisfy the interests of all members of society, it satisfies the interests of the majority (democratic countries with a powerful middle class), minorities (authoritarian elitist regimes) or in general is only able to partially fulfill the structure of social demands. Therefore, the legitimation of state power, with some exceptions, cannot be comprehensive.

The legitimacy of political power can be natural (the interests of the population and the content of the activities of the ruling power coincide) and artificial (degradation of the activities of social and political actors, total disregard for the requirements of legality and the growth of a welfare mentality among the population). Such relations force the government to constantly “balance” politically. To improve the political situation, it is necessary to change the format of relations to ensure legitimate cooperation between society and the power.

Legitimate political power should be based on the unity of the fundamental goals and directions of the socio-political activity of the state, all its bodies, which is due to the need for coordinated management and interaction with civil society (Горбань А., 2011). Therefore, the legitimacy of

state power is enhanced by such a universal feature as social cohesion arising from the single nature of the dominant and prevailing political groups and public associations in society, their capabilities in relation to civil society (Горбань А., 2011). At the same time, the idea of organizational and legal unity of state power does not exclude the legitimate principle of separation of powers, and its correct understanding and application is important. The French political scientist M. Duverger offers his scheme, arguing that the real division exists not between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities, but between the ruling party and the opposition (Дюверже, 2000, с. 53). The ideologist of pluralistic democracy, American political scientist A. Lijphart insists not on the division of the branches of power in the state, but on the distribution of political “roles-functions” (Лейпхарт А., Вайсман К., 1996, с. 112–116).

Thus, in order to achieve legitimacy in society, it is not enough for the political power of the state to take formal precedence. The use of “legitimate coercion” and the presence of a professional management apparatus make it possible or show the need to use the law and all social norms to regulate social relations in order to obtain social recognition, legitimation by the majority of the population.

It should be noted that an important element of any civil society that weakens the contemporary state is the financial elite, which has the resources to exercise economic power. Already in antiquity, the topic of oligarchy as a “special ruling elite” of the socio-political structure and a form of government exercised by this “special legitimate state” was widely represented in philosophical treatises.

Oligarchy is sharply criticized by Plato, he highlights its main shortcomings and notes that “this is a system based on property qualifications: the rich are in power there, and the poor do not participate in government” (Платон, 1971, с. 363). As a result, according to Plato, the oligarchic state inevitably comes to a sad ending (decent people go bankrupt and become poor). The main attractive (and also often criticized) feature in this Platonic coherent and logically connected picture of political life is the idea of social justice.

At the core of Aristotle’s political project, on the contrary, there is a “spirit of profit”, which denies social justice (Аристотель, 1983, с. 375–644).

Evaluating the political ideas of ancient thinkers, it should be noted that they have outlined a political project that claims to be universal. Ancient Greek philosophers actually discovered a number of universal laws describing the process of socio-political self-organization of society through the emergence of hierarchies and vertical mobility, which is based on the hereditary struggle for the distribution of “vital benefits” (including through lob-

bying for political preferences). In doing so, the oligarchy turns not just into an influential political force, but into a weighty legitimate component of political power.

It should be emphasized that, with the exception of short periods of society functioning under conditions of rapid rotation of elites (during anarchy or revolution), closed elite circles usually come to power. They preserve their privileged position, strive to redistribute public and political benefits and resources in their favor, and, accordingly, create all kinds of socio-political filters and obstacles to improving the status of new actors. A striking manifestation of the process of preserving the social status of the ruling elites was the creation of dynastic political clans, such as “the Kennedy clan”, “the Clinton clan”, and “the Bush clan”, within the American political system. In their structure and effect, they are very similar to the royal and aristocratic families of the times of absolutism. Such political groups “have great resources for victory in the conditions of universalized political institutions, and the results ... are deliberately conditioned by the position of competing groups in civil society” (Пшеворский А., 2000, с. 29).

This state of affairs actually turns civil society into a source of legitimation for contemporary political practices, behind which the interests of the ruling establishment really stand. At the same time, such a position makes the legitimacy of liberal democracies very vulnerable, since it requires that the practice of the functioning of these regimes really demonstrate high efficiency in solving the problems facing society, an orientation towards achieving the common good and respect for the opinion and interests of individual citizens, and most importantly, demonstrating its universality in space and time. Otherwise, liberal democracy can face the destiny of its predecessors: monarchy, fascism or communism, which, having achieved significant results in self-assertion, began to accumulate internal contradictions, lose efficiency and get rid of the social base of support and trust. The reasons for delegitimization can be the contradictions between the universal values prevailing in society and the selfish interests of the ruling elite. Such reasons can also be considered to be the contradictions between the idea of democracy and socio-political practice, which is manifested in attempts to solve problems by force, pressure on the media. The reasons for delegitimization include the growth of bureaucratization and corruption; nationalism and ethnic separatism in multinational states; ruling elite’s loss of faith in the legitimacy of its power (the emergence of acute social contradictions within the ruling elite, the clash of different branches of power).

The experience of construction of socialism in the USSR and a number of other countries has become a clear example of the universality of the

principle of conservation of social statuses and oligarchization of representatives of the ruling political elites. At first, relying on the principle of revolutionary, radical democratic legitimacy, the new political elite was able to defeat its political opponents, come to power and stay in it, successfully introducing the mirage project of building a "just society" (the right of everyone who works to participate in government and fair distribution of public goods) into the masses. However, later, the ruling elite, driven by the instinct of existential egoism, began to separate rapidly, purging its ranks from representatives of the "new social lower classes". According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, in order to ensure the political invulnerability of the highest political elite in the USSR, a unique "multi-circuit cascade" of the organization of state power was established:

1) State power in the country formally belonged to hierarchically organized, elected Soviets, although in fact they were only a "political façade" behind which a real sovereign – the Communist Party – was hiding.

2) The party elite within the ruling party itself, using the principle of "democratic centralism", was able to separate from the "party masses" and practically not depend on its moods and interests.

3) To ensure international recognition of the ambitions of the Soviet ruling elites, the most important administrative function was assigned to the army, and to stabilize the internal political situation by forcibly reducing the role of the political opposition – to the state security organs (Бжезинский З., 1989).

Thus, the evolution of Soviet society demonstrated the universal nature of the process of political formation of the elite, its conservation and oligarchization, regardless of socio-political formations. The Soviet political elite was "not averse to renouncing honor and name, truth and morality – so as not to fall out of the class of rulers, to stay in the hierarchical circle, therefore, having come to power, it made a "political degeneration": revolutionaries – reactionaries – conservatives" (Джилас М., 1992, с. 249).

The political stratification of society, regardless of the political structure, as P. Sorokin noted, "in the event of a catastrophe or a great coup, it often resembles the shape of a flat trapezoid, without upper echelons, without recognized authorities and their hierarchy". The situation emerges in which everyone is trying to command, and no one wants to obey. However, this situation is extremely unstable. Within a short time, authority appears, an old or new hierarchy of groups is established, and the destroyed "political pyramid" is reproduced again. On the other hand, if the stratification becomes too high and too prominent, its upper layers, or the top, sooner or later are cut off "by revolution, war, murder, by overthrowing the monarch or oligarchs, by means of new peaceful laws". But their result is

universal – the alignment of a too high and too unstable political organization” (Сорокин П., 1992, с. 261–263).

Most contemporary political elites do not have social and political recognition and approval. They did not become the voice of the universal needs of people for freedom of speech, the expansion of social rights and the struggle for civil rights. That is, we can state their pseudo-legitimacy, which is created due to the manipulation of the consciousness of the masses, the background of increased social frustration, a number of promises that are never fully implemented, but endlessly replace each other. Meanwhile, the reason for the “decline in the quality” of political elites has universal nature, and ways of solving the problem should be sought in the selection and education of future political leaders.

Since the moment of its inception, the ruling power makes the “first universal step” – begins the struggle for its legitimization. It seeks to obtain consent from citizens, so that they are led by exactly those and exactly the way the government itself seeks to govern. Moreover, this legitimization must be achieved as soon as possible to ensure the viability of this government. Of course, agreement can be reached by violence or threats, but this method is universal for seizing power, however, it is ineffective for its long-term exercise. The need for a short-term legitimization forms the need and lays the foundations for the tradition of political manipulation, that is, the subordination of consciousness, activity, a set of political sympathies and antipathies of society, control by the state power and the possibility of changing and adjusting them at a time necessary for power. Manipulators can be political groups, individual political figures and the state as a whole.

It should be noted that in contemporary socially and politically heterogeneous civil society, unanimity and unity of actions of all its constituent groups is impossible (Горбань О., 2019, с. 64–74). Therefore, a special political force arises – the opposition, which does not agree with this course of events and conducts activities aimed at replacing the official political course. The opposition can be legal (acts in accordance with the laws of a given country) and illegal (exists in an illegal position). It should be noted that the presence of a legal, legitimate opposition is evidence of democratic relations in society and the state. Another thing is how the existing government allows the legal opposition to manifest itself – with or without violation of laws.

Political opposition in democratic and non-democratic societies differs significantly in its political role in adjusting the country’s political course.

In a non-democratic society, the political opposition quite widely covers various manifestations of dissatisfaction with state policy and is a certain

alternative force that tries to democratize society through a competitive political struggle with the authorities. "The opposition in a non-democratic system should, first of all, undermine the legitimization of the regime and oppose it with a democratic alternative, initiate and spread protests, organize strikes, publish and distribute illegal press, establish secret universities, etc." (Stepan A., 1990, p. 44–46). At the same time, responsibility for the implementation of the policy of "subordination of the minority to the majority", which often leads to the political decision-making in favor of one part of society, limiting another part of it, is transferred to various state structures. Usually, this may result in a decrease in the level of legitimacy of the authorities and an increase in absenteeism.

The role of the opposition in a democratic society is different. This is the main way to obtain fundamental socio-political concessions from power structures, an important determinant of political transformations. At the same time, it is appropriate to narrow the category of "opposition" as the main way of expressing dissatisfaction with the existing socio-political state to the institution of political parties as the main potential subjects of opposition to the authorities.

Political stability is expressed in the possibility of a legal transfer of political power and is the result of a complex combination of political institutions, traditions of respect for the opposition, mutual tolerance of politicians with different political views. As J. Beshler writes, "the first serious test of stability is the first victory of the opposition in the elections" (Бешлер Ж., 1994, с.114). Transparent and free elections with the participation of the opposition legitimize the power, while remaining a source of alternative politics, creating favorable conditions for inter-party competition. The presence of a real parliamentary opposition is an important sign of effective competition within the party system and an additional mechanism of checks and balances in the functioning of the branches of government. The legitimation of the political opposition contributes to the transfer of the opposition's actions from the plane of ill-natured criticism to the plane of constructive criticism, legally based activity.

Thus, a balanced bilateral dialogue between the opposition and government bodies (regardless of the political structure of society) is characterized by universal political tendencies aimed at a joint search for effective ways to solve the most actual problems of the socio-political development of the country as a whole. And the legitimation of the opposition can accelerate the transition to a new dialogue philosophy of state power, based on the principles of democracy, alternativeness and civil consent. It can be argued that the existing system of preserving and reproducing the legitimacy of the state coincides with the ideology of sustainable development, preserv-

ing the prevailing universal pattern of power organization. To improve the situation, it is necessary to change the format of relations that ensure legitimate cooperation between society and power.

Conclusions

Summarizing the above, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The problem of legitimacy has a long tradition in political and philosophical thought. The notable feature of the author's approach is that legitimacy is interpreted as a permanent institutionalized activity of political actors (political elite and political opposition) to ensure the legitimacy of their "political claims" not only for the implementation of political demands, but also for obtaining or expanding political power.

The politically fragmented perspective of reflecting the multifaceted correlation of the "legitimate" and "universal" indicates that the political elite as a socio-political phenomenon has a universal nature. If it loses power, it only happens for a short period and only as a result of political force majeure circumstances (social upheavals, war, civil strife). At the same time, it is reproduced quickly enough (from the non-oligarchic strata of the population) under any regime.

Legal political opposition, adhering to the legislation, moral norms and rules of a particular country, increases the effectiveness of society's solidarity with the state, contributes to the construction of universal long-term relations between political actors and social forces. The legitimizing components of the political and power process, represented by the ruling elites and the political opposition, are a kind of universal indicator of the effectiveness of the country's political course.

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