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## ELITOGENESIS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESSES OF MODERN RUSSIA, BASED ON SOCIOLOGICAL (FIELD) RESEARCH

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**Abstract:** The object of this study is the political process in modern Russia, and its subject is the role, place and qualitative characteristics of modern Russian federal and regional elites as the driving force of socio-political processes. Proceeding from sociological (field) studies, the authors consider general perceptions of the Russian elite; systematize ideas about the dynamics of elites, assessments of its qualitative state in post-Soviet political processes. Particular attention in the article is given to measures that promote the development of inter-elite cooperation and the forms of qualitative improvement of political leadership in modern Russia. The results of panel expert surveys conducted during the preparation of the First All-Russian Congress on Elitology (2013) and the Second All-Russian Congress on Elitology (2016) are used in the work. The theoretical and methodological vectors of this study were: 1) generalization, systematic consideration and socio-political interpretation of general ideas about Russian elites and their perception by the expert community; 2) the generalization of the system of assessments of the dynamics of qualitative changes in the elite stratum and the definition of a set of measures that, according to experts, should promote the development of inter-elite interactions and the development of political leadership. Proceeding from the systematization and analysis of expert assessments and judgments, political modeling of the general socio-political trends that are manifested and developing in the modern ruling stratum is carried out. More than 900 representatives of the expert community from 26 regions of the country took part in sociological polls and interviews. The bulk of experts were scientists (up to 40%), the rest - representatives of the administrative and political circles, business, culture, education. Based on the empirical and analytical data obtained, the work confirms the reproduction of stable beliefs and the prevalence of a number of stereotyped ideas about the political and business elite. At the same time, it is shown that the public and expert still underestimate the elite capital of the current ruling stratum. The article concludes that in the political process of modern Russia there are tendencies to the isolation of elite groups, the desire to preserve power positions and commercial preferences, as well as a general reduction in the thinking activity of elite groups and individual leaders, the importance of

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national interests, national security problems and the sociocultural integrity of Russian society. At the end of the article, the authors discuss the forms, directions, and activities designed to correct negative tendencies in modern elitogenesis.

**Keywords:** power, State, national security, society, panel expert survey, political leadership, political process, political elites, transformation, elitogenesis.

## INTRODUCTION

Analysis of the materials characterizing the algorithms and driving forces of social and political processes occurring both in Russia and abroad allows us to speak about increasing interest on the part of research subjects to the study of the role of socio-political elites of different levels in shaping the ongoing social transformations.

In the Russian Federation, where the present legal institutional insufficiency is compensated by leadership-elite positioning and “manual” management, elitological analysis takes on special significance. The results of the elitological analysis will largely depend on the formulation of the research tasks, the formulation of elitological principles and the selection of methods at the theoretical level. In other words, we are talking about the author’s elitological concept. Analysis of the concepts of the regional elites of St. Petersburg and Rostov elitological schools, the M.Kh. Farukshin’s concept of ethnocratic elites, the A.E. Chirikova’s and N.I. Lapina’s concept of social-management types of interaction between elites, the O.V. Gaman-Golutvina’s concept of cultural-historical types of elites or the A.K. Magomedov’s concept of the value-based conditioning of the elites’ activities allows us to state not only the emergence of a broad social and economic context but also a rather specific characterization of the Russian political processes of the historical period under consideration (Ponedelkov & Starostin, 2016).

The results of the analysis make it possible to model a meaningful image of Russian politics, built with the help of elitology. At the same time, the final product of different elitological schools may differ in the range from recognition of the fact of the formation and maturity of the Russian elitological community to the point of refusal to groups of high (elite) power positioning in elite status (“quasi-elite”) (Baranov et. al., 2016; Mamychev & Mordovtsev, 2016).

In its study of elites, the Rostov School for Elitology relies on expert polls, regional samples, widely uses the panel method, which allows tracking the evolution of expert and elitist images, imposing them on the evolution of socio-economic and political situations.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

On the basis of the Rostov Scientific Elite School, with the support of the Council on Political Science of the Academic Methodological Association (AMA) for Classical University Education of the Russian Federation, the Board of the National

Panel of Political Scientists of Teachers, the Faculty of Political Science of the M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Faculty of Political Science of St. Petersburg State University, the first All-Russian Elite Congress “Elitology of Russia: Current State and Prospects for Development” was held in Rostov-on-Don in October 2013. The Congress was attended by more than 200 authoritative experts: elitologists, philosophers, lawyers, representatives of state and municipal authorities, business circles and public organizations from the Russian Federation, Germany, India, Ukraine, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan.

October 2016 saw the further development of the question of the status and mechanisms of recruiting domestic elites in the materials of the Second All-Russian Elitological Congress with the international participation “Elitology and Strategies for the Development of Modern Russia”, also held in Rostov-on-Don (Mordovtsev & Mamychev, 2016).

On the eve of the Second All-Russian Elitological Congress, in July-August 2016, its organizers conducted a panel expert survey on basic positions used for more than 20 years. Individual issues were modified to reflect the current political situation. About 900 representatives of the expert community from 26 regions of the country took part in the survey. The bulk of experts were scientists (up to 40%), the rest - representatives of administrative and political circles, business, culture, education (Ponedelkov & Starostin, 2016).

The results obtained in the panel surveys of 2013 - 2016 can be classified according to the following basic positions.

## THE MAIN PART

- I. **The Russian elites:** General notes. Of primary interest is the assessment by experts of judgments about the degree of formation of the Russian (post-Soviet) elite. Therefore, the first question was formulated as follows: “In the scientific and journalistic press, it is widely believed that the modern Russian elite (primarily the ruling political, administrative and business elite), in terms of its professionalism, focus on national interests and spiritual and moral qualities is not elite. This is a quasi-elite, i.e. elite only on the status and imperious powers. What is your attitude to this position?” The answers of the experts are given in Table 1.

About 80% of the experts singled out the appraisal position of the “quasi-elite”. Thus, this position compared with the results of the expert survey of 2013 held on the eve of the First All-Russian Congress on Elitology significantly shifted in the negative direction. The position of those who do not share the opinion of “quasi-elite” was also more clearly defined (from 14.8% to 11.6% today). Probably, the experts’ opinion was influenced by the consequences of the social and economic crisis of recent years.

**TABLE 1: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TO THIS POSITION?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>	
		<i>2016</i>	<i>2013</i>
1.	Approve	26,2	62,8
2.	Approve rather than Disapprove	53,4	
3.	Disapprove rather than Approve	9,7	14,8
4.	Disapprove	1,9	
5.	I don't care	1,0	11,7
6.	I don't know	2,9	
7.	Other	7,8	

The results indicate that there is a need to make substantial adjustments to the information policy of the State, where the social and economic negativity still prevails, which both the population and experts associate with the low efficiency of decisions made by the elites and leaders.

These assessment positions are confirmed by experts' answers to the question: "What can you say, from your observations, about the dynamics of qualitative changes in modern Russian political and administrative elites?" The results are given in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: WHAT CAN YOU SAY, FROM YOUR OBSERVATIONS, ABOUT THE DYNAMICS OF QUALITATIVE CHANGES IN MODERN RUSSIAN POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ELITES?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Changed for the better	14,6
2.	Stayed the same	45,6
3.	Changed for the worse	33,0
4.	I do not know	3,0

More than 30% of experts believe that the balance of the "poles" of changes is almost 2.5 times less shifted toward deterioration. The most obvious explanation seems to be the negative dynamics of socio-economic development. But it seems that the answers to the next question prompt us that the matter is also connected with certain changes in the composition of elites, caused by a change of generations. So, an ever smaller share in elite is occupied by people who had extensive experience in administrative and political administration, as well as a certain moral core. This is indicated by the data given in Table 3, obtained when answering the question: "How do you think the top layer of the regional administration (the province, republic) was formed?"

**TABLE 3: HOW DO YOU THINK THE TOP LAYER OF THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION (THE PROVINCE, REPUBLIC) WAS FORMED?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>	
		<i>2016</i>	<i>2013</i>
1.	In the course of political struggle leaders of the new formation were selected	24,3	19,8
2.	The former nomenclature that quickly changed its former ideological affiliation is represented In this layer	42,7	37,0
3.	Cunning, unprincipled, greedy people who prioritize their personal interests came to power by intrigue	43,7	29,5
4.	There are now people in power who have many intentions, a desire to change the course ofx events, but their efforts are blocked by the highest state power and corrupt structures	15,5	24,8
5.	He upper layer of the administration was formed in a modern democratic way	5,8	15,8
6.	Those elected by voters came to the highest echelons of the administration	5,8	13,8
7.	Other	8,7	6,3

The above results correlate with the above assessments and judgments of experts on “What values and motivations underlie the power-political and managerial activities of Russia’s current ruling elite?” The results are given in Table 4.

**TABLE 4: WHAT VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS UNDERLIE THE POWER-POLITICAL AND MANAGERIAL ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA'S CURRENT RULING ELITE?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Striving to honestly serve Motherland	5,8
2.	Possession of power	55,3
3.	Access to the wealth of the country	35,0
4.	Wealth accumulation	46,6
5.	Career making, striving for high positions	54,4
6.	The desire to win the respect of the people	3,9
7.	Other	14,6

As was to be expected, expert evaluations showed nothing unusual. In fact, if a representative of an elite group does not have power, career, proprietary ambitions, then this is anomalous for such an individual and the group as a whole. Another thing is even worse: low level of a combination of personal and national-state aspirations. In other words, over the years, the formation

of an anti-state, comprador elite has been under way. The experts point out the acute danger of these trends, especially given that the demands and challenges of the socio-political situation in Russia are directly opposite. But, obviously, it is not yet possible to reverse dangerous trends.

It should also be noted that three years after the transition from the pre-crisis state of society to the modern situation, experts drew attention to a certain narrowing of the effectiveness of the mechanisms of democratic selection in the elite and the strengthening of the mechanisms of shadow selection (mutual support in the career growth of “the right people”, their priority focus on personal and group interests).

It requires an understanding of the experts’ assessment of the reliability of information sources about elites, the effectiveness of the tools used. Thus, about 40% of respondents emphasize the imperfection and inadequacy of this toolkit, and only about 9% are convinced of its sufficiency.

Experts drew attention to the identification of additional signs of belonging to this layer in addition to the widely known and applicable: status, role in decision-making, authority. The answers to this list are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	High level of professionalism	56,3
2.	Social responsibility	60,2
3.	High moral potential	49,5
4.	Other	2,9

The proposed indicators require an emphasis on the development and legitimization of these characteristics in the processes of studying elites. They do not lie on the surface and require detection, sometimes involving complex test procedures, complicating the actions of democratic institutions and mechanisms aimed at the movement and selection of a new generation of politicians, administrators, leaders, analysts, ensuring the adoption of government decisions.

The analysis of the next group of questions and answers allows us to clarify and concretize the estimates and judgments concerning, first of all, qualitative changes in the elite layer.

- II. Qualitative assessment of the dynamics of changes in elites. Priority should be given to the system-value characteristics of elites, or what their activities are aimed at: the solution of private-corporate or national problems. From the answer to these questions, ultimately, the degree of stability of the state



and its legitimacy depends. Therefore, experts' answers to the question "What are the advantages and negative characteristics of the activities of modern Russian political, administrative and regional elites?" are especially interesting. The answers are given in Table 6.

**TABLE 6: WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF MODERN RUSSIAN POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND REGIONAL ELITES?**

S.No.	Response options	%	
		2016	2013
1.	Ability to resolve conflicts, to stabilize the situation	53,4	44,5
2.	Coordination of actions of different population groups	34,0	23,5
3.	The ability to lobby the interests of the people of the region	31,1	26,8
4.	Sensitivity to the problems of the population	11,7	15,5
5.	Patronizing the development of small business	8,7	12,3
6.	Care for the development of national culture and education	5,8	13,8
7.	Other	8,7	10,3

As can be seen, the main priority positions have changed very little, if at all. There is a slight weakening of the already low-ranking position of the item "Sensitivity to the problems of the population", which moved from the penultimate to the last place. As they say: No comments.

The determinants of this situation are more important. They are viewed when the experts rank the factors that make up the managerial effectiveness of the elites when answering the question: "Please state the factors that reduce the effectiveness of the actions of the representatives of the regional political and administrative elite" listed in Table 7.

**TABLE 7: PLEASE STATE THE FACTORS THAT REDUCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ACTIONS OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REGIONAL POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ELITE**

S.No.	Response options	%	
		2016	2013
1.	Corruption	64,1	57,5
2.	Bureaucratization of government bodies	51,5	35,8
3.	Separation of power from the people	50,5	47,5
4.	Low professionalism of employees and executives	33,0	28,5
5.	Weak financial and material resources	22,3	27,8
6.	Lack of proper information support	20,4	8,5

The study leaders “circumcised” about a dozen less significant positions. But on the whole, the cluster of negative destructive factors has practically not changed in three years. We can briefly express the direction of the actions of these factors: the bureaucratic system is working for itself. And it does not seem possible to acquire any positive changes in it yet because the mechanisms of elite formation have developed and consolidated. This is confirmed by the experts’ answers to the question: What is the effectiveness of elite formation mechanisms in your region? The answers are given in Table 8.

**TABLE 8: WHAT IS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ELITE FORMATION MECHANISMS IN YOUR REGION?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	High	39,8
2.	Medium	30,1
3.	Low	16,5
4.	The existing system forms an elite of extremely low professional-personal quality	5,8
5.	Difficult to answer	3,9

A little less than half of the experts indicated the low effectiveness of the elite formation mechanisms in the region, although almost 40 percent rated it satisfactorily. What reduces this effectiveness? Priority factors contributing to the consolidation of politicians and managers in elite positions. One can get the idea by looking at the answers to the question: “What factors determine the strength of staying in the political-administrative elite of the regional (local) level?” The options for replicating the descending of the priority elections are given in Table 9.

**TABLE 9: WHAT FACTORS DETERMINE THE STRENGTH OF STAYING IN THE POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE ELITE OF THE REGIONAL (LOCAL) LEVEL?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>	
		<i>2016</i>	<i>2013</i>
1.	Ability to maintain informal relationships with the right people	62,1	27,5
2.	Loyalty to the political regime	61,2	35,5
3.	Wealth, money	35,9	22,3
4.	Professionalism	19,4	34,0
5.	Social origin	8,7	0,0
6.	Nationality	6,8	2,8
7.	Prestigious education	6,8	0,0
8.	Ability to identify, express and protect people’s interests	6,8	42,5
9.	Other	0,0	0,0

A number of positions in the questionnaires of 2013 are not written out compared to 2016, however, it is clear that such a position as “the ability to protect people's interests,” “professionalism,” has been sharply weakened over the past three years. At the same time, the importance of orientation to the authorities and “their” people has grown significantly. It is extremely difficult to reverse the effect of these priorities. However, experts believe that there are measures of this kind. This is evidenced by the answers to the question: “What measures would you propose to improve the qualitative characteristics of the current ruling Russian elite?”, the answers given in Table 10.

**TABLE 10: WHAT MEASURES WOULD YOU PROPOSE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT RULING RUSSIAN ELITE?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Toughening of personal demand for poor performance of official duties	58,3
2.	Corruption Cleansing	49,5
3.	De-bureaucratization of the state administration apparatus	36,9
4.	Cardinal improvement of the system of professional retraining and advanced training of personnel of state and municipal management	26,2
5.	What else?	1,9

However, currently, experts are not very appreciative of efforts to combat corruption, the introduction of codes of ethics in practice, etc. But they hope that this can be helped by the strengthening of patriotic focus and orientation to the interests of national security (these positions have been selected by experts as the most priority in predicting changes in the value-ideological positions of the Russian ruling elites).

- III. Measures that promote the development of inter-elite interactions and the qualitative improvement of political leadership in modern Russia. Assessing the significance of inter-elite interactions, one can point out the narrowing of the level of significance of interactions with intellectual elites and cultural elites in the framework of modern Russian political practice. Experts emphasize the need to expand the spectrum of these interactions. This is evidenced by the answers to the question: “Could you briefly describe the role of other elites (intellectual, informational, meritocracy, etc.), except for political and business elites, in the socio-political process of modern Russia?”, answers are given in Table 11.

**TABLE 11: COULD YOU BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF OTHER ELITES (INTELLECTUAL, INFORMATIONAL, MERITOCRACY, ETC.), EXCEPT FOR POLITICAL AND BUSINESS ELITES, IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL PROCESS OF MODERN RUSSIA?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Positive	2,9
2.	Positive rather than Negative	57,3
3.	Negative rather than Positive	16,5
4.	Negative	4,9
5.	Difficult to answer	13,6

The position of approval in assessing the role of these interactions prevails, in the proportion of 3:1. Experts also believe that the forces that are interested in resolving crisis situations require significant support. This is evidenced by the answers to the question: "What forces do you think deserve support first of all in the context of the country's withdrawal from the crisis?", listed in Table 12, which presents a sample of the most topical positions.

**TABLE 12: WHAT FORCES DO YOU THINK DESERVE SUPPORT FIRST OF ALL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COUNTRY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CRISIS?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Small business	42,7
2.	Strong personalities	41,7
3.	The President of the country	36,9
4.	Academics, teachers	35,9
5.	Medium Business	32,0
6.	Patriotic movements	26,2

The position "President of the country" somewhat falls out of this series. However, behind this, there is a certain anxiety of the expert community, connected with the growing attacks on V.V. Putin not only on the part of global forces but also from their partners within the country. The experts quite negatively pointed to the danger of factors of shadow interethnic interactions of oppositional-destructive orientation, answering the question: "In Russia, there has always been a significant proportion of latent-shadow relationships among the ruling elite stratum. Therefore, many qualitative changes in the system of Russian power in the perestroika and post-perestroika years of the late 20th century proved unexpected and tragic for our society. What is, in your opinion, the probability of such cardinal transformations in the coming years?" Answers are given in Table 13.

**TABLE 13: WHAT IS, IN YOUR OPINION, THE PROBABILITY OF SUCH CARDINAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE COMING YEARS?**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Response options</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Such changes are possible, but their probability is low	43,7
2.	“Fifty-fifty” probability	22,3
3.	Cardinal changes are possible and their probability is high	16,5
4.	Cardinal changes are inevitable and their probability is very high	7,8
5.	The probability is practically zero	4,9
6.	Difficult to answer	1,0

The opinions of experts show that their alarming expectations and political optimism are in the 1:1 proportion. That includes a number of elite and non-elite participants in the current political process in Russia the President of the country as both an arbiter, and a guarantor of the stability of the political system.

## CONCLUSION

1. The expert poll of 2016 showed stability in the prevalence of a number of stereotyped ideas, primarily about the political and business elite. Both public and expert opinion still poorly assess the elite capital of the current ruling stratum, although they do pay tribute to those qualities due to which this layer is positioned as elite: aggression, political ambition, focus on power and career, avoidance of following the national interests and aspirations of the population, ability to manipulate people, etc. This really is a complex of qualities, without which a victory in a political struggle is unlikely. However, there is an increasing desire of the current elite to isolate themselves and preserve their positions of power and received commercial preferences, and less and less they seem oriented towards solving national problems and national security problems. One can talk about the fixation of the quite pronounced systemic symptoms of the oligarchization of the elite, the propensity to introduce democratic means of advancement into power.
2. The natural question: what to do with this situation, when civil society, the electorate cannot influence the corrupt bureaucratized elite? Experts do not give a clear answer to this question. On the one hand, they welcome the efforts of the President of Russia aimed at cleaning up the elite by administrative and political measures and require greater perseverance and consistency; on the other hand, they appeal to legal and cultural-educational tools that are called upon to cultivate the necessary aspirations of the elite. The question of changing the “rules of the game” in the current socio-

political situation in Russia is now ripe. However, there are still plenty of options for changing these “rules of the game”, they are alternative and carry significant risks that have already repeatedly taken place in the Russian reality of the 20th century.

We are clearly at a fork in the road, besides, we are being pushed by aggressive circles of the globalist community, pursuing their own interests, which are clearly divergent from our national interests.

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