

Theoretical analysis of the electoral processes in sociology

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Abstract. Electoral processes are undoubtedly interesting to study since such social processes can help to retrace the character and speed of social transformations, and the features of new social values. That is why one of the main tasks for electoral sociology is to study these transformations which influence the behaviour of those who take part in the electoral processes and their political choice. As a rule, the studies concerning the electoral processes contain only procedures and final results, but do not explain the theoretical notions which form a basis for the methodological foundation, its conceptual framework and the features of consciousness changed by it. Today, the scientific world has a task to conceptualize the problem used in the deep interpretation of experience, which became history, and the monitoring of current electoral events.

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Introduction

The political practice of Russian reforms showed the dependence of political processes on fundamental structural features which form the originality of Russian mentality. Contemporary political processes undergo stable transformation and constant modernization of a complex and integrative character. Various aspects of electoral processes also acquire a new meaning nowadays. These aspects are connected with socio-political and socio-economic situation in society. Electoral policy, which exerts a serious impact on electoral behavior, has also changed.

This research is urgent for several reasons. Firstly, the role and importance of electoral entities increase. They are required to take an active part in politics. Secondly, due to geographic, national and socio-cultural peculiarities, modern Russia has to study electoral processes at various levels of social environment (macro-, meso- and microenvironment). Thirdly, the electoral processes are quite contradictory. They demand scientific interpretation and practical instructions aimed at reducing the influence exerted by the negative forms of political behaviour. Fourthly, there is a necessity to develop a sociological model for studying the electoral processes with the help of which one could assess electoral entities.

Almost all academic sociologists, oriented to the electoral practice of political scientists, are interested in this field. However, the problem of studying electoral events remains unsolved.

Questions connected with studying electoral processes are considered by a number of social and humanitarian sciences. One of the first classical papers, where the author touches upon some aspects of electoral process, is a basic research "The Political

Picture of Western Europe in the Period of the Third Republic" (1913) by French political scientist, geographer and historian Andre Siegfried. Elections are analyzed there from the statistical point of view.

Later, in this scientific field, they paid much attention to public opinion and voters polling. In 1924, American researchers Charles Merriam and Harold Gosnell conducted a first research of motives which make a part of electorate deviate from elections. Another American politologist S.E. Rice worked out a technology of panel poll for voters.

Then researchers turned to the interconnections between the social status of voters and electoral behaviour, and between the influence of mass media and interpersonal communication. In 1940-50s, a great contribution into the development of these lines was made by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson [1-3] and A. Campbell [4-6]. In 1950s the formation of the set of research instruments used in contemporary political science was generally complete.

A well-known American researcher Harold Lasswell made an attempt to create a single political science oriented to social studies and meeting the requirements of practical politics. He widely used psychological methods in studying political behaviour, political propaganda and political power in general.

Another well-known politologist David Easton called the period after 1950-60s a "post-behaviorist revolution". Within the framework of this revolution, they consider the models of political processes as the systems of interconnected kinds of activity which have a joint effect on the ways of making political decisions and their implementation. They give special consideration to relations between political phenomena and external environment

explained first of all by empiric facts and their influence on the real political behavior of individuals.

G. Almond and S. Verba made a great contribution into the study of political culture in different countries [7]. They proposed a concept based on the principles of comparative analysis for macro units.

At the contemporary stage of studying electoral sociology methods, they widely use the interdisciplinary approach and borrow model developments used in other humanitarian fields. There are many foreign and Russian researches concerning this aspect. The main of them are papers by V.Y. Gelman, G.V. Golosov and E.Y. Meleshkina [8-9], D. Easton [10], D. Roberts and A. Edwards [11-13].

Today, there is a strong theoretical and applied methodological basis for modeling the determination of electoral entities behaviour. Nevertheless this problem cannot be considered as solved in compliance with the needs of sociological theory and practice. This leads to the necessity of a deeper examination of theoretical aspects connected with the analysis of electoral processes.

A great contribute to the research methods for electoral processes belongs to the papers written by N. Anokhina, Y. Baskakova, Y. Vorobyov, M. Zheltov [14] and others.

First of all because of applied needs, the electoral processes are studied very intensively in Russian sociology and political science. This is reflected in papers by V. Boykov [15], E. Tavokin [16], Zh. Toschenko [17] and others.

At the contemporary stage, there are many scientific analytical and applied researches which study electoral entities. In Russian science, the system researches were conducted by S. Zyryanov [18], O. Kryshtanovskaya [19] and other scientists. These works contain methodological concepts and enough instruments for a high-quality study of electoral processes in Russian society.

In recent years, the accumulated empiric material was theoretically interpreted, especially in institutional approach. Such intensive work in Russian science is conducted by the concepts of J. Buchanan, R. Dahl, D. Nort and M. Olson within the theory of social choice. However, both in behaviour paradigm and at its junction with institutional science, the geography of electoral culture, influence matrix and the networks in cluster approach to electoral processes was successfully developed were successfully examined.

Currently, the electoral processes are the subject for thorough research by specialists of different branches of scientific knowledge. For

instance, the papers of B. Doktorov [20], A. Lyubarev [21] and others analyze the place and role of elections in the system of democratic power and in the establishment of political institutions.

A separate line of papers directly deal with electoral behaviour and factors influencing it. The study of electoral behaviour is one of the most prospective and an urgent fields, because it is a field of practical implementation of scientific knowledge. Theoretical developments and practical experience are generalized by such western researchers as S. Black, T. Clark, F. Kotler, G. Lebon, A. Arian, T. German, S. Lipset and other.

Nowadays, the study of electoral behaviour acquires a new content. One can see how the interest to it increases due to the analysis of political processes in so called new democracies, including Russia.

At the same time, the existing theoretical models of electoral processes do not enable one to describe adequately the political processes that take place in society. This is because the low-level political institutionalization.

The analysis of program sources, documents and materials makes it possible to conclude that this question was not directly considered as a scientific problem in Russian literature.

The study of this issue is purely applied or one-sided, and the number of problems connected with the dynamics of Russian political science widens. That is why we consider very important the study of such electoral processes as institutionalization, functioning mechanism, social and cultural interactions, mutual actions of political elite, transforming parties and socio-political movements and the participation of masses in political reforms.

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