POLITICAL SCIENCE PERCEPTIONS OF POST-SOVIET CIVIC PARTICIPATION: RECONCILIATION STEPS OR AN ATTEMPT AT IMITATION?

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Abstract

In the study of the perceptions of post-Soviet political participation, the article substantiated the study of the issue of political participation, the theoretical bases of the analysis of political participation in the stage of democratic consolidation. We concluded that due to the transformation of the society, non-traditional participatory actions are becoming more widespread, which largely testifies to the high level of civic consciousness of the society. Political participation is an institutional mechanism for establishing a democratic state and implementing policy, studying the activities of policy actors in different manifestations of behavior. It is very important that everyone involved in social and political life has some knowledge of the culture of participation, social and psychological training. In the conditions of globalization, it is impossible to imagine the establishment of a democratic political system without the realization of citizens' rights.

Introduction

The primary purpose of the study is to make a comprehensive analysis of the concept of "political participation", to highlight the issues of post-Soviet political participation in the democratic society and to explore the peculiarities of the manifestation of the political participation. Political participation is one of the basic concepts of research in political science. Political participation is a guarantee of the formation of a democratic society and civil society. The form of expression of citizens' will is the principle of the operation of a democratic society, through which citizens participate in social and political life. Citizens' involvement in political decision-making is mainly manifested by participation in elections, but as a process of ensuring political participation in democratic societies, it does not fully reflect citizen participation.

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The patterns of post-Soviet political participation

Turning next to manifest political behaviour, the idea is to emphasise that what we refer to as actual "political participation" is quite simply all actions directed towards influencing governmental decisions and political outcomes. It is goal oriented or rational, if you will. It is observable and can be measured straightforwardly. It has to do with the wishes of ordinary citizens to influence politics and political outcomes in society, or the decisions that affect public affairs. Within the framework of a representative democracy, this is what we in our typology refer to as formal political participation. Citizens' vote in the general elections, in order to support some parties or candidates, or to make sure others will not gain too much influence.

People take part in referenda for similar reasons. To some, it may be a deliberate political act to abstain from voting in an election or a referendum, as a protest against the political order or the incumbents. Or, they may cast a blank vote in an election to demonstrate political dissatisfaction. Other types of formal political participation, on the individual level, cover what other scholars have referred to as "contact activities". Citizens may write to politicians or civil servants, in order to try to influence the political agenda or political outcomes. Also, individuals may run for office themselves, in local or national government. As for "formal" collective forms of political behaviour, the typical example would be membership: in a political party, a trade union, or any organisation with a distinct political agenda, e.g. human rights advocacy groups, peace organisation, or environmental groups (Ekman and Amnå 2012; Aleksanyan et al. 2021).

The empirical study of political participation is approximately 30 years old. The earliest studies concentrated on explaining why some people chose to vote and others did not. Gradually, inquiries into political participation looked at other behavior such as campaigning, making financial contributions, attending meetings, and so forth. Most of these somewhat broader inquiries into political participation were embedded in studies of voting behavior. As scholars came to a better understanding of political participation, their studies both broadened and deepened. Early studies of participation generally were confined to a single nation, most of them to either the United States or European countries. Over the last 15 years, relevant studies have been conducted in a large number of additional countries and many of these are forthrightly cross-national, meaning that the basic design and basic set of questions are repeated in each of several countries as part of the same project. A second important change has been in the conceptualization of political participation. Political participation no longer can be conceptualized as a unidimensional set of activities. It is now clear from studies in several countries that there are modes or styles of participation; these modes will be discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter. A third important change has occurred in the methods of analysis. Earlier studies seldom went beyond simple bivariate or "control table" interpretations of the data. The newer studies use more sophisticated analytical techniques such as multiple and partial correlations, regressions, path analysis, and causal modeling. These more sophisticated techniques make it possible to sort out in greater detail the causal influences on a dependent variable (Milbrath 1981).

Reflecting on modern manifestations of post-Soviet political participation, it can be defined as conventional – propaganda, voting, community activities, interaction with the

government officials, discussions and debates, etc., as well as widespread and widely applicable non-conventional forms of civil disobedience, protests, demonstrations and other voluntary activities. Despite extensive research on electoral turnout in developed democracies, we know relatively little about the determinants of electoral participation in (electoral) autocracies. Yet, electoral mobilization is crucial to understanding electoral authoritarian regime dynamics and democratic regression (Saikkonen 2017).

As before and now, voting is a means of citizens to make their voices heard, but as a result of the transformation of society, non-conventional participatory actions are gradually expanding as a result of the transformation of the public's political consciousness. In this respect, let's note that elections are one of the most important principles for the formation of democratic institutions. The expected quality and amount of public participation in collective decisionmaking (especially electoral participation) is a key component of many, perhaps even most, public choice studies. That fact has motivated many of the studies of the post-1960 decline in voter turnout (Merrifield 1993).

Before we go on to evaluate post-Soviet electoral conduct in greater detail, it is worth pausing to consider what is meant by the twin concepts of electoral integrity and electoral misconduct, and how best to assess elections in these terms. At the most abstract level, electoral integrity involves some correspondence between electoral practices and norms. Electoral misconduct can then be defined as a particular type of deviation from the set of norms that comprise electoral integrity: deviations that reflect intentional efforts to manipulate elections for personal or partisan ends. It goes without saying that elections are huge logistical exercises that suffer from a wide range of difficulties in even the best functioning of democracies. In less developed democratic contexts, such flaws are often magnified by lack of experience, lack of training, lack of equipment and lack of infrastructure (Birch 2011).

In practice it is often difficult to distinguish between logistical faults and intentional manipulation, as the observer soon runs up against the problem of observational equivalence; logistical faults often have partisan consequences, and intentional manipulation can in some cases involve logistical sabotage or sins of administrative omission in addition to blatant acts of fraud (Schaffer 2008).

Within the category of electoral misconduct, we can further distinguish between the manipulation of the rules governing elections, the manipulation of voters and the manipulation of votes. The manipulation of electoral rules involves efforts to shape the legal and regulatory framework in such a way as to give one category of contestant an unfair advantage. The manipulation of voters entails measures that influence the preference-formation processes in inappropriate ways, including the dissemination of false or misleading campaign material, heavily biased media coverage, the obstruction of campaigning activities, or outright vote-buying and coercion (Birch 2009).

Voter behavior depends on a number of factors: both by the principles of suffrage and by the nature of social status, the motivation of voters and the level of political socialization and political maturity (Saikkonen 2017).

Thus, the suffrage and referendum is one of the important procedures for civilized participation in the political life and exercising democratic authority. It suggests various forms of political engagement which promote strengthening of the legitimacy of public

administration and local self-government. It is considerable, that the electoral culture is gradually becoming the primary mechanism for the realization of democratic sovereignty and the public will increasingly become aware that the means of expression of the will of the people are the elected representatives, and in the future the preservation of the legitimacy of the government will depend on the support of citizens and their trust (Scammon 1967).

In the context of globalization, it is impossible to imagine the establishment of a democratic political system without citizens' perception and realization of their rights. Every person in every field of public relations must express his beliefs and be the bearer of them. A conscious participatory process is the benchmark for the establishment of a modern society, when the state communicates directly with the citizen, and the state is accountable to them through its actions.

It should be noted that, after the collapse of communism, the intellectuals and activists became deeply disappointed with what they perceived as a decline in social and political activism, an increase in political apathy, and an atomisation of society. They spoke of the "the decline of civil society" (Babajanian 2005).

The establishment of a democratic political governance system and the implementation of a post-Soviet participatory culture is important to require the introduction of certain procedures. Such as the organization of democratic elections, the existence of legitimate power, the strengthening of culture dialogue of power and people in society. Based on the above, it should be noted that there is no country in the world where the existing government is completely legitimate for the entire population. Legitimacy can never reach the level of unanimous recognition because different groups and individuals do not equally recognize the authority of political power.

Another important factor in this regard is the provision of economic efficiency by the state, which greatly contributes to strengthening the legitimacy of the regime (Herz 1978).

Apparently, legitimacy and the ability to govern are equally important, because the crisis of legitimacy is a situation in which distrust of political institutions calls into question their existence. In addition, it should be noted that the most effective way to transition to democracy in post-Soviet political systems is "a pact agreement", in which multilateral agreements are concluded between the ruling and opposition wings of the political elite, and new rules and procedures for establishing a democratic political system are jointly developed. It is even more dangerous for A. Przeworski to turn the "elite pact" between the main players in the political field into a "cartel agreement". The latter restricts competition, imposes additional barriers to the healthy competition of other political forces that fall outside of these "cartel agreements", and distributes political power resources among their own (Przeworski 1991).

As we note, citizens' involvement in political processes is mainly manifested by electoral participation. In the modernization phase of the systems, the traditional models gain great importance by introducing new forms of political participation. In particular, civil disobedience, protests, rallies, and other voluntary actions are widespread and currently applicable to political participation. In addition, citizens are also involved in various civic initiatives aimed at addressing social, public and other issues that may later become political projects. In addition, it should be noted that involvement of people in

political processes is not unambiguous. So, J. Ekman and E. Emna notes that part of the society is actively involved in political life, they are most interested in the processes taking place in politics, and the rest of the society is not particularly interested in political events. Some have neither active nor passive participation ("neutral" participation) in political life (Talò and Mannarini 2015). It should be noted that, it is not always possible that even the political activism of members of society, mass or non-mass participation in pre-election, electoral and post-election processes can provide effective guarantees for democracy. They can endanger not only democracy, but also civil society, the rule of law, the constitution, everything that guarantees the protection of human rights and freedoms.

Institutionalization of post-Soviet participation

In the modern era of post-Soviet participatory actions, network participation also has its place, without which the participatory process cannot function fully. With the advent of the late 20th century, the advent of new networking and communication technologies marked the beginning of the information age. In the current information age, the application of network technologies not only allows for easier and faster implementation of certain actions, but also contributes to the increase of citizens' accessibility. In addition, it provides for the principles of publicity and accountability of various public and non-governmental organizations, which is one of the key factors in the manifestation of civil society and civil participation.

The full interaction of civil society institutions with other actors in post-Soviet social-political system gradually leads to institutionalization of participation. That is to say, each of the institutes, in collaboration with other elements of the social system, provides special qualities of a civilized civil society through which it will be possible to build civil participation mechanisms on realistic basis.

If the post-Soviet political system is more open and competitive, and therefore its institutional environment is more open to participation, more skilled political actors enter the political platform and exercise effective governance. Within such political systems, the government works effectively. People's interests and needs are met and the quality of public services is increasing. Interestingly, the important role that political participation plays in the transformation of social systems. Even in countries with difficult conditions, effective democratic governance can be achieved if broader and more open opportunities are provided for public participation. However, strengthening and enhancing political participation is not for all countries and not for all situations. Societies with different conditions and national particularities must choose solutions and strategies that are appropriate to their political culture. Only then they will be able to form and establish democratic institutions and strengthen competitiveness (Parvin 2018). Thus, the socialization of society comes as a result of changes and the impact of democratic regimes. According to G. Almond: "Political socialization not only gives us an idea of the structure of political culture and subsystems in society, but also reveals the process of socialization in society where certain qualities and elements are retained or changed" (Almond 2015).

One of the most important criteria for the effectiveness of post-Soviet public policy is to conduct personnel resources policies based on high professional competence and skills. As mentioned by E. Chestopal, in order to stabilize and develop the public-political system, it needs to be replenished with new personnel.

The rejuvenation of the post-Soviet political elite in the government indicates that the recruitment model of the political elite has changed, in line with the democratic governance system. But at the same time, the new young staff, without going through the normal process of political socialization, presents a certain risk in terms of political decision-making. That is to say, without sufficient experience and skills, they not only can influence the decision-making of the political system, but also gradually bring legitimacy to crisis. It is therefore necessary to replenish the system with state-minded individuals who rank the public interest above the individual, as well as to assign responsible and high positions to those who have passed a certain stage of political socialization. One of the important issues of successfully implementing the democratization process and bringing it to the consolidation stage is the involvement of youth in public relations. Political participation of youth is a necessary precondition for socialization in a democratic society, which presents the youth engagement, as well as the peculiarities of enrollment as a key issue for post-Soviet political participation. It justifies that youth involvement is a necessary condition for institutional development of the democratization process in public relations. In the context of youth development, it is necessary to improve youth's quality of life, to increase the level of their involvement in the social and political life, and to ensure their employment and implementation of programs aimed at solving various problems.

The state government needs to create conditions for young people's self-realization and their active involvement in public processes. An active, educated, and engaged youth is a nation's greatest asset. Young people around the world should be encouraged to contribute their energy, idealism, and insights to their communities' growth and progress. Youths also play a critical role in developing civil society, and in broader sense, in ensuring the foundations of democracy. Democracy, at its best, is an open dialogue. By actively engaging in their communities, young people play a pivotal role in the articulation and development of the policies, means and structures, and actions implemented by their schools, civic leaders, and governments (Birch 2011; Aleksanyan 2019).

It should be noted that consolidated democracy is a prerequisite for a modern society. The importance and significance of participatory culture is highlighted by the key role in the effectiveness of the process of democratization and strengthening of democratic political management system. It is necessary to begin by saying a few words about three minimal conditions that must obtain before there can be any possibility of speaking of democratic consolidation.

First, in a modern polity, free and authoritative elections cannot be held, winners cannot exercise the monopoly of legitimate force, and citizens cannot effectively have their rights protected by a rule of law unless a state exists.

Second, democracy cannot be thought of as consolidated until a democratic transition has been brought to completion. A necessary but by no means sufficient condition for the completion of a democratic transition is the holding of free and contested elections

(on the basis of broadly inclusive voter eligibility) that meet the seven institutional requirements for elections in a polyarchy that Robert A. Dahl has set forth. Such elections are not sufficient, however, to complete a democratic transition. In many cases (e.g., Chile as of 1996) in which free and contested elections have been held, the government resulting from elections like these lacks the de jure as well as de facto power to determine policy in many significant areas because the executive, legislative, and judicial powers are still decisively constrained by an interlocking set of "reserve domains", military "prerogatives" or "authoritarian enclaves".

Third, no regime should be called a democracy unless its rulers govern democratically. If freely elected executives (no matter what the magnitude of their majority) infringe the constitution, violate the rights of individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature, and thus fail to rule within the bounds of a state of law, their regimes are not democracies (Linz and Stepan 1996; Bell 2011, 630).

It'd be noted, that public participation in politics is broadly considered to be a defining element of democratic citizenship. Unless citizens participate in the deliberation of public policy, and their choices structure government action, then democratic processes are meaningless. Often this presumes participation in free and fair elections that select government officials, but the range of political participation can be, and should be, much broader. Thus, the norm of political participation should be an essential element of democratic citizenship (Dalton 2008).

Thus, people's participation in political life has been of a huge interest since the beginning of civilization. It should be noted, that individual participation in political life supports the formation of the civil characteristics and creates conditions for a person to feel a full citizen of the country. Post-Soviet political participation (non-participation) is an important factor of an individual's political socialization and the development of political activity. That is why in modern conditions the problem of political participation has become one of the central issues in the implementation of practical politics.

Conclusion and discussion

- The issue of post-Soviet political participation has argued that the institutionalization of participation is a prerequisite for the democratization of the political system. In the context of globalization, the process of political decision-making requires the formation of a participatory culture that meets the standards of democracy and promotes the realization of democratic sovereignty. Therefore, a conscious participatory process is the benchmark for the establishment of a modern society, when the citizen of the state becomes the direct voice of the problems in the society and the state is accountable to him with its actions.

- In the modernization phase of the systems, the traditional models gain great importance by introducing new forms of political participation. In particular, civil disobedience, protests, rallies and other voluntary actions require skills and resources from citizens. We have concluded that due to the transformation of the society, non-conventional participatory activities are increasingly spreading,

largely attesting to the high level of civic consciousness of the society. Post-Soviet political participation is an institutional mechanism for establishing a democratic state and implementing policy, studying the activities of policy actors in different manifestations of behavior.

- Citizens are also involved in various civic initiatives aimed at social, public and other issues. Whereas, these support actions may further lead to the active participation of citizens in public and political life, and many of them turn into political projects.
- In a post-Soviet democratic society, where the principles and laws are predominant, it is important for every citizen to be convinced, that he carries and transmits them. It is more important to use the weighted will of each participant without pressure from others. In this regard, by excluding elements of political absenteeism from social and political life, we also reduce the dominant apathy, alienating citizens from the political life of society, which leads them to frustration and distrust to political institutions and power.

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