

Power as a Social Phenomenon: The Nature and Importance in the Construction of the All-Russian Identity

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: Governance as a social phenomenon is a fundamental, in a certain sense “eternal”, problem of social and philosophical thought, growing interest of which in the scientific community naturally falls on turning points in social development. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** We used the systematic and comprehensive approach that involves the use of cultural, dialectical, ontological methods, as well as methods of historicism and objectivity. **Findings:** The essence of power as a social phenomenon consists in the social nature of its rationality outward-oriented to a special organization of the environment on the basis of the objectives of the nearest and distant future. The essence of power as a social phenomenon is shown outwardly in the organization of the external environment of achieving a particular result which is determined by it as a target at a certain historical period, based on the interests of the state. The value of power as a social phenomenon in the construction of all-Russian national identity consists in the purposeful use of practices of power at the all-national level, comprising the whole society vertical, where the ultimate goal is consolidation of society. The value of power as a social phenomenon in the construction of all-Russian national identity appears as a fundamental principle of serving simultaneously in several guises: both as a triggering, and as an organizing and guiding principle, directing the energy of the person, group and society as a whole. **Applications/Improvements:** The successful implementation of the construction of the power of all-Russian national identity will allow simultaneously solving several interrelated problems from the solution of which largely depends the future of Russia: the humanization of interpersonal relations, creating a favorable adaptation climate in the country, consolidation of society.

Keywords: Construction, Identity, Power, Supremacy, Social Phenomenon

1. Introduction

Governance as a social phenomenon is a fundamental, in a certain sense “eternal”, problem of social and philosophical thought, growing interest of which in the scientific community naturally falls on turning points in social development, because exactly then a real threat of destabilization mechanism of social control appears.

There is no doubt that the power essentially is not a

natural phenomenon but a human one. In accordance, the existence of power presupposes the existence of a society in which acceptable ways of behavior and existing ways of encouraging the approved behavior and punishing the disapproved behavior are recognized at any level (taboos, laws). In addition, the very existence of society requires that individuals constituting its totality, underwent together not only biological, but also socio-historical evolution. That is power, in principle, can be formed

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only in a world limited by time structure and placed in a specific context, the specificity of which is determined by geopolitical, socio-political and socio-cultural factors that affect the particular manifestations of power both outside and inside the society the management of which it provides.

At the present stage of world development the investigation of power as a social phenomenon is one of the priorities in the social philosophy. It is explained by primarily by two factors. First, by the collapse of outdated power structures intensifying against the background of globalization processes and actively maturing necessity of forming a new relationship of power / submission. Secondly, by the fact that the social changes in the 20-21st centuries have led to a fundamental change of paradigm fundamentals in the philosophy.

2. Literature Review and Research Methodology

Power as a social phenomenon in the context of its unconscious, deep, emotional and volitional foundations is traditionally considered in the social aspects of the two major power aspects – the command and the execution.

On this basis, classification systems of power were initially constructed: Aristotle, assuming that the power is used for a good cause of all or some people, distinguished regular and irregular forms of power; Polybius taught that any power (monarchical, aristocratic, democratic) inevitably degenerates due to congenital inclination of people to abuse power; Cicero professes approximately the same approach, highlighting three main types of power: perfect (*perfecta*), best (*optima*), tolerable (*tolerabilis*). At the same time, both Polybius and Cicero saw a panacea for the decline of power in a mixed form of power, since at this power is evenly distributed among the main elements of social organization.

That is there are two basic understandings of power in the Greco-Roman philosophy: power as domination of the individual over himself/herself and power as the basis of state structure. The first interpretation is typical to all ancient philosophers, as a fundamental principle of culture. It is represented most closely in views of Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca¹⁻³. Christianity brought the theocratic idea of power to the main position (Augustine, Tertullian,^{4,5} through the substantiation of earthly power as created by God. However, at the turn of the Middle

Agas and Modern Times N. Machiavelli⁶ desacralized the ideas of power having conceptualized an idea of the state as the only decent and authorized source and power holder highlighting policy as an autonomous sphere and separating it from morality and religion.

In modern philosophy the emphasis moves to the power understanding as one of the consequences of people's sovereignty, but at that the state remained the power holder as an independent structure to which sovereignty is delegated, and the main form of exercise of power appears violence which the state has the full right to commit as a mouthpiece of the people's will, but citizens also remain eligible for the violence against the state in the form of rebellion.^{7,8}

Later this position was developed by I. Kant⁹ in the theory of law-bound state and by G. Hegel¹⁰ in whose opinion the state has a monopoly on power and, as a consequence, the right to the use of violence. In the future, the concept of "power" is closely associated with the concept of "freedom" (Nietzsche, Weber, R. Dahl)¹¹⁻¹³, who believed that the power, first of all, is the opportunity to make others do what they would not want to do on their own. However, it was T. Parsons¹⁴ who shifted the focus from the suppression of the will of others to the possibility to dispose the resources with the help of which goals can be achieved. The point of view of R. Aron¹⁵ and B. Russell is consonant with that of T. Parsons who defined power as the capacity to establish relationships with those whose views and desires coincide with and achieving results initially desired.

In modern theories of social control two main approaches to the study of power prevail: rationalist (V.G. Afanasyev, J. Fröhnd, G.V. Shchekin)¹⁶⁻¹⁸ and irrationalist in the framework of which, in the context of Nietzsche's intuition about the rootedness of power, power and power relations are derived from the language translating it (the language) from the category of a neutral means of communication to the primary level of coercion and "legitimizing" the hierarchically established order of dominant relations at the linguistic level (R. Barthes)¹⁹. There are even more radical interpretations of power as a byproduct of the "production of desires" in the works by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari.²⁰

In today's scientific space at the new qualitative level, the emphasis in the study of power is shifted again to the study of its nature and structure (R. I. Zekrist, O. N. Tynyanova)^{21,22} and measurement of power (V.P. Kapets)²³. In addition, there is a completely new perspective in the

study of power: problems of power in changed conditions as a result of informatization and globalization processes (power in the information society – A.A. Tikhonov²⁴, power in the context of globalization – R.I. Zekrist,²⁵ the concept of power in the transition society – S.P. Narykova²⁶).

3. Main Results

Power in the Russian society in the terms of the globalized world determines, to a certain extent, the angle of its research – the definition of the nature and significance in the construction of all-Russian national identity.

As for the essence of power, most of researchers tend to see it in the striving for power or submission, depending on the natural inclination of the individual, treating it as an innate inclination of human nature as everyone in one form or another, either seek power, or submission.

Power as a social phenomenon has such distinctive features as: “coercion-submission” relationships which operationalize positive and negative sanctions of power serving as one of the acquired in sociogenesis mechanism of behavior regulation.

In case of exploring the power as a social phenomenon, it is rather the problem of focus, determination or target of power which comes to the fore. That is in fact the center shifts from natural to social, from irrational to rational, from the inclination to a specially organized environment. Basically, roughly speaking it is what K. Popper had in mind when he wrote: “And often thoughts about power pass into the plane of “how to limit the power?”. “However, if we look at the political theory somewhat differently, we find that, assuming, as if the question “Who should rule?” is the principle one, we do not solve any fundamental problems, and we just avoid them.... and that it is not easy at all to get the government to the generosity and wisdom of which we can unconditionally rely. If we agree with this, then we will have to answer the question: “How should we organize political institutions ...?”²⁷

Whereas actually “the organization of political institutions” or, in modern parlance, the construction of social reality in modern Russian society, especially aimed at the reconstruction of all-Russian national identity is very difficult. This is primarily due to the fact that the 1998 crisis revealing the lack of legitimate forms of embodiment of values in the system of effective political institutions and a new crisis of the early twenty-first century provoked the

value consolidation inside elite groups and resuscitation of paternalistic value orientations at the social level of the individual space. But as all the same differences in value systems are in the basis of opposing political groups of power, and in the masses paternalistic ideas transformed into a form radically different from the classical paternalism – quasi-authoritarianism (combination of rigid state control over the economy with political rights) connecting mutually exclusive values (personal freedoms, political democracy on the one hand, and the unity of command of state power as a guarantor of order in society – on the other), then the value system of a modern Russian society is characterized by the simultaneous presence of differentiating (“accomplishment”, “professionalism”, “dignity”, “hard work”, “human rights”) and integrating (“family”, “security”, “freedom”, “spirituality”, “humanism”) values in it.

Whereas the separation in the modern Russian society according to the value orientation is largely determined by such objective social indicators as a way of life, education, income, proximity to social benefits, social security.

A trend of gradual replacement of positive standards (work hard, mutual aid, confidence in the future) to the negative ones (the consumption quality, self-centeredness, national and social tensions) seems to be common also to all social groups, which together can serve as one of the indicator of substitution of the image of a favorable social environment to the image of aggressive and hostile social environment at the level of mass consciousness where the only possible form of behavior capable of ensuring survival, but not life can be a parasitic behavior.

The situation is also complicated, to a certain extent, by the fact that new value orientations of relations with the power have been formed at the social level of individual space in modern Russian society, – the interpretation of power as hypocritical and concerning only of ensuring its own well-being. It is illustrated, in particular, by the fact that at the polls the vast majority choose the most pragmatic objectives of the country’s development from the possible ones: restoring order in the country, improving the quality of life. The spiritual and moral revival of society is usually tended to be “forgotten”. However, this rather evidence not about the integration of Western values into the Russian society, but about nostalgia for lost social and political gains of the Soviet regime and the absence of complete adaptation to changing socio-cultural and socio-political conditions.

But here it is important to point out that the process of adaptation is a necessary condition to ensure that the person could feel safe and effectively interact with others at social and interpersonal levels.

Furthermore, it is the process of adaptation of the individual in particular and society in general (simultaneously understood both as a process and as a result of the interaction process of a person or group relating to the harmonization of expectations with a changing environment, where the harmonization of expectations gives the person a chance to a more or less happy life, and the society possibility of the transition to a qualitatively new level) that reflects the perception (positive/negative) of ongoing events.

Thus, adaptation can be considered as one of the ways that is almost universal, in order to introduce the individual/group in the new social systems and institutions, overcoming the critical situations and crises, as well as a special case – the construction of all-Russian national identity.

This universality of adaptive favorable climate is explained by the fact that any social personality type, including two major aspects – psychological and social – is aimed at the assimilation of values and beliefs closing him/her with the social environment through the acquisition of the expected algorithms of behavior and establishing mutually beneficial relationships with others. That is adaptation, including the implementation of socially approved algorithms justifying social expectations at the social level; assimilation and translation of values and norms regardless of the depth of their separation – at the interpersonal level; achieving a harmonious balance between the personal system of values and public attitudes and expectations – at the intrapersonal level, in consequence leads to a balance of internal forces in the society and establishing, if not friendly, then outwardly decent relations between different social strata.

4. Discussion

Specificity of exercise of power in the space of the personality of the modern Russian society is determined by the political rule form – democracy. The social dimension of individual space in modern Russian society is characterized by the formation of such social expectations in the “person – society – person” system: observance of rights and freedoms of the individual, safety, security through the introduction of value system,

the basic elements of which are the values of “freedom”, “private property”, “personal space”, “independence”, which allows the power to achieve desired goals through the formation of the conformal behavior image acclaimed by the power/society – achieving personal well-being associated with social success – created on the model of the life of millionaires.

In this context, the construction of all-Russian national identity will perform several important functions. First it is regulatory. Second it is status indicator. Third it is normative or unconditional. Fourth it is worldview or conditional.

Regulatory function sets and interprets norms and values for the individual that exist in the society in which it is included through the conditioning of a certain type of behavior.

Status function makes understanding of the individual/group place in the social structure of society, social status, as well as the standard of social roles, according to the given status.

Normative function establishes the rules to be guided by in choosing the type of behavior during the life of the individual in society. It is unconditional because of the fact that no matter how a person relates to these values, he/she must, if he/she wants to be accepted in society to adhere to them.

Worldview function is conditional, because the integration of socially approved norms and attitudes into the person’s worldview subsequently defining his/her attitudes, values, ideals, goals can occur only in terms of coincidence, adopting standards of groups by the individual at a deep level.

5. Conclusions

Thus, based on the analysis of the stated problem – identifying the nature and value of power as a social phenomenon in the construction of all-Russian national identity – we came to the following conclusions.

The essence of power as a social phenomenon consists in the social nature of its rationality outward-oriented to a special organization of the environment on the basis of the objectives of the nearest and distant future.

The essence of power as a social phenomenon is shown outwardly in the organization of the external environment of achieving a particular result which is determined by it as a target at a certain historical period, based on the interests of the state.

The value of power as a social phenomenon in the construction of all-Russian national identity consists in the purposeful use of practices of power at the all-national level, comprising the whole society vertical, where the ultimate goal is consolidation of society.

The value of power as a social phenomenon in the construction of all-Russian national identity appears as a fundamental principle of serving simultaneously in several guises: both as a triggering, and as an organizing and guiding principle, directing the energy of the person, group and society as a whole.

In general, the successful implementation of the construction of the power of all-Russian national identity will allow simultaneously solving several interrelated problems from the solution of which largely depends the future of Russia: the humanization of interpersonal relations, creating a favorable adaptation climate in the country, consolidation of society.

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