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“SOVEREIGN PUBLIC POLICY” IN “SOVEREIGN RUSSIAN DEMOCRACY”: INSTITUTIONAL FEATURES

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the principles, directions and vectors of Russian public policy in the context of “sovereign democracy”. The traditional, both objective and subjective, determinants of the level and dynamics of public policy were identified, its “sovereign character” was considered as restrictive and controllable, taking into account the quality of relations between the government and society. The study problem of the paper is institutional properties of public policy within the general problematization of democracy due to the fact that the will of the state is not an indispensable imperative, but adjusted by the will of citizens, who gradually become subjects of public policy. The study of public policy is carried out using general theoretical and methodological scientific approaches that systematize the democratic process. The institutional features of public policy were summarized and conditions for its long-term consolidation in Russia were identified. Despite the fact that public policy is often instituted “from above” in the restrictive context of sovereign democracy, there is a landmark result of Russian democracy; post-transit sovereign democratization contributes to an increase in civic and political activity of the population.

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Keywords: Public policy, social-class determinism, sovereign democracy, institutional properties, restrictive policy.



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1. Introduction

The principles of the modern democratic process, as well as its techniques and technologies are being implemented in complex transformational conditions: the changing role of the state, society and the individual; updated vertical and horizontal elevators; rejection of traditional forms of life organization; turbulence of policies and management structures; changing family-generational roles and gender statuses; competition and conflicts of identities, etc.

These transformations manifest themselves everywhere against the background of the collapse of the old world structure and significant shifts in world geopolitical architecture. There are contradictions within the European Union, complications between the leading subjects of international relations (USA, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, China, France, Japan), internal political crises and conflicts (Georgia, Libya, Syria, Ukraine), intercontinental migration (from Africa and Asia to Europe), contradictions and conflicts of state and regional political and administrative systems.

Crisis precedents bring the problem of methodological and organizational support of the democratic and post-democratic process to the forefront of political science discourse (Crouch, 2010). Its problematic, subject-actor, factor-trigger field is extremely wide (Habermas, 1985). One of the backbones of democracy is public policy. Reliable abstract-theoretical and practical-subject research of public policy is the most important niche of political science.

2. Problem Statement

The problem is institutional properties of public policy within the general problematization of democracy due to the fact that the will of the state is not an indispensable imperative, but adjusted by the will of citizens, who gradually become subjects of public policy. Therefore, it is important to study functions, properties, techniques and technologies of public policy, the content of the notion in scientific, public, informational and political management discourse (Almond & Verba, 1992). This corresponds to the needs of political knowledge and political reality, political processes, institutions and technologies, which are extremely diverse. In this regard, properties of public policy are problematized in terms of its creativity. On the one hand, public policy is instituted as an objectively-immanent and universal phenomenon of democracy. On the other hand, public policy is instituted as a subjective and local product of activities of specific political actors in a certain political time and space.

3. Research Questions

The public policy should be studied in terms of its institutional (essential structurally-systemic) properties.

The publicity (openness) of political transformations of the modern world order. Many processes got out of administrative-bureaucratic and even military-political control. Socio-political movements are chaotic and found expression in the indignation of political systems, the collapse of states and political regimes, conflicts and hybrid wars, in economic sanctions, political upheavals, changing regimes, large-scale migration trends, the collapse of the old world order; formation of terrorist syndicates, pseudo-states, pseudo-elites, etc. In this regard, the degree of publicity is updated.

The differentiation (sovereignty) of the democratic process in different countries. Democracy foresees and demonstrates increasing openness and publicity. Politics ceases to be a prerogative of the government, and becomes a product of activities of society and citizens. The subjects of politics are the state, political parties and the political elite and socio-political movements, public associations, individual citizens. However, in different countries, these processes are differentiated, and politics is a public process. Sovereign democracy in the Russian Federation determines the sovereign Russian public policy.

Institutional properties of public policy in modern Russia. The Russian Federation continues its post-transit democratization. In the process of combining public and private spheres, the initiative and organization of society becomes more intensive, and the bureaucracy partially weakens, and public policy develops. However, its properties are determined by properties of democracy in the Russian Federation. The sovereignty of democracy is determined by Russian historical, cultural, political, socio-economic traditions and realities. The institutional properties of sovereign public policy in the sovereign democracy of the Russian Federation are being updated.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the article is to identify institutional properties of sovereign public policy in the sovereign democracy of Russia. The establishment of public policy is promising for Russia which is in a state of post-transit sovereign democratization. At the same time, both the advantages and difficulties of determining, shaping, subjectivizing public policy, as well as the complexity of its sovereign Russian representation are emphasized.

5. Research Methods

The study of public policy is carried out using general theoretical and methodological scientific approaches that systematize the democratic process (Sungurov, 2017). It is advisable to base the political analysis on socio-stratum, socio-political determinism. It allows us to trace the basic foundations, cause and effect, structural determinants of public policy, as well as the objective and subjective factors of its initial institution (Smorgunov, 2018).

The broad content of public policy, as well as the wide register of its forms, methods and technologies, encourages the use of basic and related theories and concepts of political knowledge: the theory of "open systems", the theory of "political flows", the theory of "competing defensive coalitions", the theory of "institutional rational choice", the theory of political networks, the theory of political decision-making, etc.

The political analysis is based on the concepts of institutionalism and neoinstitutionalism (North, 1997) in identifying institutional properties of public policy. It is advisable to identify institutional properties of Russian public policy.

6. Findings

Public policy is a space of intersection of interests of authorities (management, organization, administration) and civil society (self-government, self-organization, initiative). Habermas (1990) defined

public policy as a space of interaction between the state and society, government and citizens. Moreover, public policy is not only a space for intersecting interests of the state and civil society. It is also a space for resolving contradictions and conflicts through agreements, consensus and compromises (Peregudov, 2006). However, the agreements are the result of the conventional conciliation activities of entities.

In any democracy – classical, direct, representative, plebiscite, deliberative, parliamentary – there are elements of public policy. Its essential and functional properties were identified by Sapano (2009), differentiating the concepts “politics” and “policy”.

In public policy, there are many actors. Their number is increasing in accordance with the expansion of democratization (Giddens, 1984). The nomenclature of actions of these actors is also increasing:

a) government actions, i.e. actions of public authorities, leaders, high-level officials. Their publicity is ensured by many resources (formal and factual). First of all, this is a position, a post in the system of state power, experience and professionalism;

b) actions of public activists, political and social leaders, including informal ones. Their publicity is ensured by their role in the local community, as well as by public authority, charisma, and charm. The personal qualities of informal leaders – authority, political will, determination, integrity, responsibility – are extremely important.

Public policy is determined by the separation of powers, competitiveness of the court, the absence of obligatory state ideology, a multi-party system, and the absence of censorship. Public policy is also based on the values of human and civil rights and freedoms, regardless of gender, national and religious, social and professional affiliation (Shapiro, 1992).

In each country, public policy has its own institutional properties determined by their own circumstances, factors, and triggers. Historical-cultural, socio-economic, political-administrative, social-self-governing realities inherent in a state (or a conglomerate of states) form institutional properties of public policy.

The concept “sovereign democracy” was introduced into the ideological and political discourse in 2005-2006 (Surkov, 2006a). It should be rethought. The statement about “sovereign democracy in Russia” and “special values of sovereign democracy in Russia”, “the special role of Moscow in the democratization of global space and the entire planet” (Surkov, 2006b, para. 9) can be found in a number of political and political science discussions (Kuzmin, 2006; Tretyakov, 2005). Although the concept “sovereign democracy” causes mixed reactions, including critical ones, it contains a resource for identifying institutional properties of public policy.

The formulation of the problem of sovereign public policy is justified, since democracy has pronounced state and regional features. General properties of public policy can be typified for the countries of Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union republics.

The causal, factorial justification of institutional properties of public policy is relevant. The Russian Federation demonstrates sovereign projections of democratic transit and Russian practices of post-transit democratization (Volkov & Goncharov, 2015). The cornerstone slogans are as follows: a) the traditional slogan about the civilizational scale of Russia; b) the innovative slogan about sovereign democracy in Russia.

Russian public policy is instituted in the regulatory and organizational conditions created by the state – laws, political doctrines, government programs and targeted specialized structures. The institutional features of Russian public policy are due to the inherent components of the democratic process and subjective imperatives of political leaders of the Russian Federation. In its ordinary sense, public policy in the Russian Federation is a donor and a recipient of innovative forms of political life, political culture of the population. It contributes to the differentiation of forms of political participation (Degtyarev, 1998).

Public policy has symptomatic contradictions: firstly, between the conservative and protective course of the President and the liberal course of the Government; secondly, between the authoritarianism of public servants and the collectivism of society; thirdly, between the bureaucracy of officials and voluntary initiatives of citizens. The corruption of officials, weakness of the parties, and organizational inaudibility of the party elite are detrimental to the public policy. No less damage to public policy is caused by passive citizens who are indifferent to self-government forms.

The managerial and administrative resource ensures openness of power, activation of public life, structuring of public opinion, and public dialogue (Almond & Verba, 1989). With the assistance of government structures, initiative groups, non-governmental and non-profit associations, voluntary communities increase the number of their members.

Declaring the sovereignty of public policy in the sovereign democracy of the Russian Federation, let us identify its institutional properties.

1) State-administrative determination of Russian public policy.

In accordance with the Russian tradition of relations between the state and society, it is the state that acts as a dominant subject of public policy and determines the degree of publicity using laws and political doctrines. The Russian state links the breadth and depth of the public policy space with international and national security. Early research theses can be applied to modern Russian public policy. For example, in 1951, the American Political Science Association defined public policy as “politics produced by government officials and authorities and affecting a significant number of people”, “certain actions of government bodies as part of the process of development, adoption and implementation of the state course” (Anderson, 2008, p. 11), “important actions committed by the government” (Edwards & Sharkansky, 1981, p. 36).

These definitions nominate only the first component of public policy – products and results of activities of public servants, officials. In the early 1950s, the second component of public policy – products and results of the activities of public activists and associations – was not obvious. However, in the countries of old European democracy, the second component of public policy was produced by civil society and develops taking into account conditions, resources, challenges and risks of our time (Hall, 1992). In the Russian Federation, in the first quarter of the XXI century, a characteristic institutional feature of public policy is its state determinism. It is the state that creates conditions for citizens to take part in public life and politics and determines rules and formats of this participation.

Moreover, the initiatives of Russian citizens are often concentrated around the priorities of the state, among which territorial integrity, military-political power, and independence from the world community stand out. In society, statist (and often defense) patriotism is extremely strong, which

corresponds to the Russian tradition of respect and reverence (as well as sacralization) of the state, supreme power and ruler (tsar, emperor, general secretary).

2) The imperative-organizational imperative of Russian public policy.

The Russian government forms the legal basis of public policy in the relevant laws, and creates a system of relevant institutions, structures, organizations (Darendorf, 1993). The Russian authorities use such modern political and organizational technologies as outsourcing and subsidiarity. The state supports coaching technologies, crowdfunding platforms, volunteer services, citizen opinion exchange groups, municipal grants, government orders, etc.

The Russian government also initiates a vertical-horizontal network of public (non-governmental, non-commercial) associations (the “third sector”). High-level officials directly initiate the creation of special subjects of public policy, such as the All-Russian Popular Front, the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, public councils. These councils have public advisory functions and are public platforms for interaction between government and society. Public councils have a diverse profile, a different level and a different status, which depends on the status of their founder, and are collective subjects of public policy. By the initiative of the authorities, numerous civil, socio-political, voluntary forums, youth forums are held.

3) The subjective-power catalysis of public policy.

The most important catalyst for public policy in sovereign Russian democracy are actions of the President of the Russian Federation. The rating of the President remains the same. The President makes a significant contribution to expanding the space of public policy by taking part in Russian and international public events: the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, the 2018 World Cup in Russian cities, WorldSkills 2019 in Kazan, economic and socio-political forums, international meetings, youth forums, the annual messages of the President to the Federal Assembly, and the annual public press conferences.

The openness, accessibility of the President and the democratic style of his interaction with citizens do not affect the high level of his political will, authoritarianism, determination and an uncompromising attitude in defending positions of the Russian Federation. The majority of Russian citizens link stability, development prospects and sovereignty with Putin’s activities.

Public policy is intensified during electoral cycles (the President and deputies of the State Duma in 2011–2012, 2017–2019) and registration of candidates to regional and municipal authorities (for example, on September 8, 2019). There are subjective “manual” political technologies which affect the formation of civic and political activities of the population and the electoral choice of voters. Personal qualities rather than program and institutional settings of candidates are decisive for the political choice of citizens.

4) Social orientation of public policy in the Russian Federation.

The public self-organization of citizens aims at solving social problems: living conditions, housing and roads, housing affordability, quality of housing and communal services, employment and social benefits, availability of prompt medical care, assistance to children, disabled people, veterans, etc.

The social program of civic activity aims to improve low quality of the social sphere, eliminate shortcomings in activities of federal and local governments which do not perform their responsibilities. Public associations do not have a political agenda, they are indifferent to political issues even at the municipal level.

7. Conclusion

The establishment of public policy “from above” is successful and occurs according to the state political and administrative algorithm, which is built in accordance with the conservative-protective doctrine of power and administration and meets general parameters of Russia's sovereign democracy.

Public policy contributes to the reduction of managerial risks and identification of actual goals of project management; humanization of managerial service management and bringing it closer to the needs of citizens; prevention and exposure of corruption, bribery; ensuring legitimate conditions for public discussion and challenging of the public activities in order to achieve vital goals.

Public policy is the most important tool for the denationalization of public life, expression of interests of citizens and protection of their rights and interests. Public policy is an antagonist of excessive administration, corruption, abuse of power.

However, the determinants of public policy in the Russian Federation are both an objective complex of sovereign democracy and a subjective volitional set of actions by public managers.

At the present stage, the principles, framework, format, vectors, techniques and technologies of public policy are determined by the state and public figures which determines the sovereign nature of public policy: limitation, controllability and transparency of traditions of the Russian public and socio-political relations.

At the same time, the factors of limitation and controllability of public policy are as follows:

- verticalization, centralization and further subjectivity of the top authorities in the context of “manual” rather than institutional management;
- weakness (if not absence) of inter-party competition and the actual leveling of the program differentiation of parliamentary parties while strengthening positions of the "party of power" – "United Russia";
- lack of systemic opposition and relevant organizations and leaders that meet the social order and interests of citizens with public recognition;
- distrust of citizens in government and administration in connection with manifestations of bureaucracy, unprofessionalism, selfish use of official position, corruption;
- strengthening the legal and organizational state control over civil association to prevent possible external interference in the domestic political situation;
- narrowness of public initiatives, civic self-organization and self-government;
- priority of state interests over social ones;
- economic dependence of citizens on the state.

At the same time, public policy even if it is instituted “from above” in the restrictive context of sovereign democracy, is a landmark result of Russian democracy; post-transit sovereign democratization contributes to an increase in civic and political activity of the population.

Recommendations

To ensure the further expansion of the public policy space in the context of sovereign democracy of the Russian Federation,

- the state should differentiate interests and roles of social-stratum groups, political groups, associations and parties;
- the correlation of private and public interests for joint management and self-government activities of the state and citizens in solving specific problems, improving living standards is required;
- it is necessary to expand possibilities of public discussion and contest decisions of authorities by civil society;
- the rotation of power, personalities, the multi-party system and the competition of political elites are required;
- subjects of public policy should enjoy reliable "public power", genuine public authority;
- it is necessary to de-bureaucratize federal subjects of public policy at the federal level.

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