

POLITICAL LIFE OF SOCIETY AS ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONS

Kvasha Alexander Pavlovich

PhD (Political)

Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy

Donbass State Engineering Academy

(Kramatorsk-Ternopil)

Naumatulov Bogdan Sergeevich

Student gr. PL. 20

Donbass State Engineering Academy

(Kramatorsk-Ternopil)

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***Abstract.** The article examines the concept of political life as the activities and relations of political subjects related to the expression and realization of social interests of classes and social groups of society as a whole. The author claims that the emphasis in defining political life should not be on the organization of political power or decision-making, but on the expression and realization of public interests. The work highlights the importance of understanding politics as a tool for expressing and realizing public interests, and not as a means of fighting for power. The article emphasizes the role of state bodies, political parties and interest groups as mechanisms of expression and implementation of public interests. It is also emphasized the importance of expressing the interests of social and not only political subjects, including classes and social groups, in the political process. At the end of the article, the importance of understanding politics as a means of expressing the social interests of classes and social groups of society is emphasized.*

***Keywords:** political life, political subjects, political activity, politics, political power*

Formulation of the problem. The concept of "political life of society" is widely used in political science today. It is featured in many of our political science textbooks and is used in Western textbooks. However, until now, it has not acquired a categorical status. At best, it is used as including a set of political phenomena, such as political institutions, political relations, political consciousness, etc. This use of the concept has the right to exist, but it is, in fact, not operationalist, not instrumental. But here we have a question about the nature and content of the very political activity of the political itself, the reasons for its emergence and existence. This issue is poorly developed in modern political science. The variety of definitions of political activity (the dispute mostly revolves around the concept of politician, although it is about political activity, the content of the category of politician is still undefined) are related to the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon itself, and, apparently, in this regard, any approach is legitimate. But here it is the aspect that is important, the emphasis that stands out in the phenomenon, because a lot depends on it in the understanding of political life.

To give a brief definition of the concept of "political life of society" is a difficult task, but it is possible, in particular, due to a chain of interconnected concepts that express its main content. The starting point among these concepts should be the concept of activity.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The relevance of the issue of analyzing the political life of society and its components has gained increasing attention in recent years in scientific research and publications. The latest developments in the field of theoretical and

comparative political science on this subject demonstrate the significance of the problem and the continuous development of this sphere. For example, in terms of the essential aspect, T. Vynnyk, O. Chernenko, N. Synchenko, N. Frolova, A. Voronov, and O. Sitnik examined the specifics of social relations in the context of political life. The concept of political life as the activities and relationships of political actors associated with the expression and realization of the social interests of classes and social groups in society was studied by V. Zubchenko, I. Sergieieva, and M. Borovik.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the nature of political life as the expression and realization of social interests and relations between political actors.

Many researchers, perhaps even the majority, associate political activity with the structure of political power and the provision of conditions for its functioning. This approach to political activity was laid down by M. Machiavelli. In the 19th century, it found its development in the concepts of K. Marx and M. Weber, and in the 20th century, it essentially became a classic. If we look at the real political life of the 19th and 20th centuries, we will find much evidence of this approach. And if we look at the political life of post-Soviet countries, it seemingly provides full confirmation of this view of the essence of politics. For nearly two decades, the struggle of various political forces for power, its structure, forms, and methods of implementation has not ceased in practically all post-Soviet states. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize the limitations and narrowness of such an understanding of political activity. At best, this understanding of political activity is suitable for characterizing the activities of professional politicians, though even in this sense, it suffers from far from innocent narrowness [1].

The emergence of politics and political activity has social roots and is linked to the social stratification of society, primarily due to economic stratification, resulting in the emergence of groups with different and even directly opposing interests in society. Even if we do not support Hobbes with his notion of the "war of all against all," or Rousseau and Marx with their teachings on class struggle, but rather take moderate and liberal positions like Locke, then we must recognize that the emergence of the state as the highest and mature form of politics is inextricably linked to social stratification, the inevitability of interest conflicts, and the need to harmonize them to maintain societal unity. Since achieving complete consensus in the struggle of interests is often impossible in many cases, the need arises for a particular form of power - political power - and a specific type of activity associated with expressing and implementing the interests of social groups - political activity. Now, power takes on a new quality and new significance [2].

Social governance is always linked to power because, in any case, social governance is directly connected to the coordination and regulation of people's interests. Its object is people, social subjects endowed with consciousness and will. That's why it is inseparable from power; social governance and power are intertwined, defining each other. Social governance is the realization of power, its "materialization." However, managing a socially homogeneous society is different from managing a society divided into classes and social groups. In both cases, the formulation and implementation of governance decisions are related to power. But in the first case, power relies on authority, while in the second case, it requires coercive force [3, p. 186].

A distinctive feature of political power is its legitimate right to exert physical force. Only its decisions have mandatory force for society as a whole. All other forms of power are ultimately defined within the bounds of political power. Therefore, all the most important interests of social groups need to find recognition and confirmation in the decisions of political power to be realized on a societal scale. In the context of power, its structure, and its decisions, acquire special significance and value. Participation in power is prestigious, and a person who holds power gains

a special status. However, the primary value of power is not in this. Even for those directly exercising power, its value lies in its ability to serve the realization of all life-important interests [3, p. 190].

Interests are the stimulus and driving force of any activity. Naturally, every form of human activity is determined by its interests, i.e., interests that govern the functioning of that sphere of life. The situation is somewhat different in the political sphere of social life. The political sphere is the area in which everything integrates, generalizes, and transforms into social action, including the economy, everyday life, social issues, and culture. With the emergence of political power, all vital problems of society and interests that constitute its social groups must take on a political form and find their confirmation in the decisions of political power to be realized. On the other hand, as a separate, independent sphere of social life, it has its own interests. As a result, political activity is motivated by two types of interests. First, there are economic, social, cultural, and so on interests that, to be realized in political society, must take on a political form and be formulated as political demands (aggregated) and find their reflection in the actions of political power [3, p. 191].

Secondly, there are political interests related primarily to the organization of political power, the determination of its form, the relationships between different types of power (legislative, executive, judicial), the determination of the state system, methods of exercising power, the role of political parties in the political system, and so on. Of course, it is not possible to sharply distinguish these two types of political interests because even when political activity is directly aimed at political power, and its participants are supposedly driven by purely political interests (struggle for democracy, freedom of speech, and so on), it essentially concerns the conditions for exercising power, its use for the realization of their "non-political" interests. Power here is not the end but a means that needs to be perfected to more effectively achieve socially significant goals. Talcott Parsons rightly compares the function of power to the function of money: neither power nor money has value in and of themselves, but at the same time, power, like money, is a general value since it serves as a means to satisfy socially significant interests and achieve socially significant goals. Furthermore, as Max Weber pointed out, even professional politicians mostly live "on" politics, not "for" politics. Moreover, it is worth noting that if professional politicians who live "for" politics predominate, such a society is unlikely to be more just and viable because these people would either be economically well-off or ideologically driven individuals, lacking the ability to correctly understand socially significant interests and goals. However, this does not automatically mean that the predominance of politicians who live "on" politics ensures democracy and social justice. Moreover, as the historical experience of political life shows, the second danger is more widespread [4, p. 201].

Why and how is this possible? This is primarily related to the nature of political activity and the characteristics of the subject of this activity. Political activity is representative, an activity "on behalf of and by delegation." The interests of the subject of political activity and the interests of the social forces it represents, according to Bourdieu, are inherently symbolic and not one and the same. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the complexity and hierarchy of the structure of the subject of political activity. In our political science, typically, subjects of politics include classes, social groups, interest groups, parties, government bodies, political elites, and individuals. However, it is often forgotten to mention that these are not equal, not equally empowered political subjects. Classes and social groups, in general, are concepts of sociology rather than political science. A person's belonging to a specific class or social group is determined by objective factors such as ethnicity, demographics, economics, and more. Subjective identification plays a minimal if any, role here. The interests of classes and social groups are also objective in content, shaped by

their social position [4, p. 205].

Classes and social groups become subjects of political life when they become conscious of their interests, realizing that their realization is connected to the activities of political power. They transform, according to Karl Marx, from a "class in itself" to a "class for itself" or, as Alfred Bentley suggests, into interest groups. However, even in this case, classes and social groups only become episodic participants in political life, becoming most prominent in crisis situations or when dealing with issues directly affecting their interests. It should be noted that the concept of interest groups is also applied to economic, professional, religious, governmental, and other groups, organizations, and institutions that seek to pursue their interests through state authority. However, they too are episodic participants in political life and act sporadically on the political stage to achieve their usually "non-political" interests through state power [4, p. 207].

For the normal functioning of political life and society as a whole, modern, highly functional societies require constant specific, professional political subjects. In a civilized society, these subjects are political parties and political state bodies. Political parties hold a special place in this regard.

The modern political process is inconceivable without political parties. Alongside political state institutions, political parties are the only political organizations created specifically for political activity. Classes and social groups only gain a continuous influence on the political process when they establish parties that express and defend their interests [5, p. 64].

Many political scientists consider political elites and personalities as independent political actors. The proponents of elitist concepts place special emphasis on these subjects. Without delving into a debate about the formation and qualitative characteristics of political elites, it should be noted that the influence of political elites on the political process has always been significant and, one could even say, decisive.

Political leaders occupy a special place in political life. The realm of politics is an area where the role of an individual, through their influence, shapes and defines the content of the political process, much like an artist's role in the field of art. The significance of the personal element in the political life of countries with unstable or unstable political systems is especially great. In such conditions, as our own experience and the global experience show, political leaders occupying high positions in the political hierarchy have a decisive impact on the government's political course, the content, and forms of the entire political life of society [5, p. 67].

Interest groups, parties, and political bodies of the state, political elites, and political leaders are not equal subjects of political life. They form a hierarchical structure, with interest groups at the base and political leaders at the top. This entire pyramid is designed to express and seek to implement the interests of social forces in society through political power. However, each of these political subjects has its own interests that differ from the interests of social subjects and may modify or even replace them. Moreover, the higher a subject is in the hierarchical pyramid of political subjects, the more factors influence their interests, and the more likely it is that their interests will differ from those of the social forces they represent [5, p. 68].

Overall, the contemporary political elite in Ukraine seems to be more competent for themselves rather than for the citizens. Few would argue with this conclusion. The political struggle in Ukraine more resembles a battle between oligarchic clans for power rather than a free competition of different political forces that offer society their development programs and solutions to crises.

In their political activities, representatives of the business sector are primarily guided by their own economic interests, with little concern for issues related to the structure of state power,

and when they do, it is only when it is directly related to their business interests. In general, the fact that the political activity of Ukrainian political actors is aimed at solving socio-economic problems should be welcomed. However, the problem lies in the fact that it is about the personal economic problems of the elite, not the socio-economic problems of society [6, p. 178].

An essential aspect of understanding the nature and content of political activity is determining its product. It should be noted that our political science pays no attention to this aspect, even though it is of utmost importance for the study of political life.

Two groups of phenomena can be identified as products of political activity: symbolic products and organizational goods. Slogans and demands, programs and ideologies, laws and decrees, ideals and goals - all of these are symbolic products of political activity and cannot be otherwise. The concretization of political demands and goals is not only undesirable but also harmful, as it limits the political maneuver, which is always determined by a specific situation. Furthermore, long-term societal forecasts are generally quite dangerous due to their unreliability and can seriously damage the image of a political actor [7, p. 231].

The symbolic activity is only one aspect, one moment of political activity. Another crucial aspect of political activity is organizational work. No matter how appealing slogans and calls, declarations and programs, decrees and laws may be, organizational work is necessary to implement them in practice. It is this work that materializes symbolic activity, allowing one to see for themselves the strength or weakness of collective subjects of political activity. Organizational political activity can be divided into three main directions: internal organizational activity (activity related to organizing collective political subjects), activity related to organizing the electorate, and activity related to organizing political power and implementing political decisions [7, p. 232].

The political activity of actors is closely linked to social and political relations. The complexity of delineating political relations, their distinction from political activity, and the fact that political activity itself constitutes a political attitude. Indeed, social relations are the connection between people, social subjects endowed with will and consciousness. Therefore, for example, a person's material productive activity is not a social attitude, as it is directed towards transforming nature. The object of this activity is the material of nature, which has either directly or indirectly incorporated human labor. The essence of the matter changes as a result. It occurs within social and economic relations, but it is not in itself an attitude. The expression "the relationship between humans and nature" is metaphorical and nothing more. There is a connection between humans and nature, an organic connection, but not social relations. This connection is only mediated by social and economic relations in its form. Social connection becomes an attitude when people endowed with will and consciousness are at both ends. In other words, social relations can only exist between people, not between people and nature or other products of human activity. Political activity is precisely the connection between people, political actors. However, this does not imply the identity of political activity and political relations. Organizational political activity links activity and political relations because it is the activity aimed at forming relations. But even in this case, political activity and political relations are not identical [8, p. 322].

Conclusions. Therefore, political life is the activity and relationships of political subjects associated with the expression and realization of the social (in the broadest sense of the word) interests of classes and social groups, and society as a whole through political power.

There are two important points in this definition. Firstly, when defining the content of political life, the emphasis is not on it being the activity related to the organization of political power, the making of public decisions, or the management of society's affairs, although all these aspects are present in political activity and are of great importance. The emphasis is on the activity

involving the expression and realization of the interests of social subjects. Secondly, it concerns the expression of the interests of classes, social groups, and society as a whole, in other words, the expression of social interests, not just political subjects. This principle holds true not only when it comes to political interests in form but also when dealing with political interests themselves. Politics serves, has served, and will continue to serve a functional, rather than self-sufficient role in society.

Unfortunately, in the political life of practically all states, the interests of social subjects are often replaced by the interests of political subjects. This is particularly characteristic of the political life of post-Soviet states, including Ukraine. Consequently, the essence of politics itself is distorted, and political life is transformed into a closed arena of competition and struggle among political elites and leaders for power as a means of realizing their own interests.

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