

THE ELITES AND THE MASSES IN 2016

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Abstract

The dichotomy elite / non-elite has determined the segmentation of the Romanian population in groups centered on competence, talent and excellence - at the qualitatively (positive) pole - on the one hand and vanity, fight for power, incompetence - at the opposite pole of the quality - on the other hand. The discrepancy between the two categories has led to the necessity of studying the causes that sustain each cluster.

The separation of popular elite mass is an unquestionable cause of a form of aversion from the masses against the elite. Based on this harmful and so-called democratic attitude, the elite has become a suspect notion, with a pronounced negative connotation, marked by doubts.

Considering the socio-political events occurring at global level, but especially in Europe in years 2015-2016, feels definitely a need for a ruling class with high moral character, coming from among the meritocratic elite.

Keywords: *dichotomy elite/non-elite, competence, excellence, preeminence, fox elites, lions elites.*

1. Introduction

We consider that any discussion of elite-elites implies above all a more complete understanding of this notion.

That respectively concept may be understood by reference to the two dimensions:

- the first dimension relate on the inherent upper characteristics owned by one thing, action or person which is appreciated in an activity as best objects or individuals whose performance is considered above average at the class or group to which they belong;
- the second dimension relate to a social group and its members, who succeed to make use of the powers acquired through various means, to administer and manage the structures of society; these social groups which have monopolized in one way or another authority and power, they exerted these, through various forms of domination (economic, social, political, cultural, ideological, etc.).¹

The inheritance of social positions as basic of the preeminence, the favorable circumstances as factors that give rise to foxes elites and lions elites alike, external factors they are the main causes that led to the monopolization of power and authority in the host societies of the elites.

We have to do with two aspects from which we can start an analysis of the emergence and evolution of elites in society:

- the qualitative aspect, based on the axiological size; this is manifested in the spiritual plan and he presents the elites as social categories who supporting and promoting values (Edward Shils).

- the quantitative aspect, with important results so „the elite who occupy the command posts may be seen as the possessors of power and wealth and celebrity; they may be seen as members of the upper stratum of a capitalistic society. They also may be defined, in term of psychological and moral criteria, as certain kinds of selected individuals.,²

In trying to explain the elitist phenomenon, it was certainly referred to the weight of each of the two aspects, qualitatively and quantitatively. On this occasion it was analyzed the emergence and evolution of the elite in society (Pareto, Mills, Mosca, Michels).

2. Content

The dichotomy elite/non elite has determined the segmentation of the Romanian population in groups centered on competence, talent and excellence - to the qualitative pole - on the one hand and vanity, chasing after power and incompetent, completed in certain circumstances given by preeminence – to the opposite qualitative pole - on the other side.

Gradually, these poles of society were removed from each other, leaving room between them to an educational vacuum. It is the reason why the citizens who get in responsible positions (to family, friends or community), are forced to choose to head to the pole of the power elite, in pursuit of solving social problems. This happens either from a personal level or at the community level.

The strength available to each elitist pole varies depending on its nature.

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¹ <http://www.revistadesociologie.ro/nr1-2-2008>, p. 164.

² *Ibidem*, p. 167.

The assimilated elite of a social class gathers around it citizens ranked by the influence available from the social and political power. From this point of view, we find the population divided into two layers: the lower nonelitist, different from elite and the upper - the elite, namely the governmental elite³.

It is necessary here to clarify the two meanings of the elite term:

- the first meaning refers to the specific of the membership group of the people that make up the elite (they are recognized as representative to the group);

- the second meaning refers to the ability of people to hold the first place in a given set, so we stop talking about a specific group.

In each case, the reference is made to a certain category of individuals restricted from some points of view. It is situated in a different position, in a way opposite to those who do not belong and which constitutes the social mass, the masses, the great mass, etc. This is the simplest plan of social delimitation: the elites and the masses.

The two elite categories are in opposition or juxtaposition report. In both cases, filling a place in the elite is determined theoretically by excellence.

In practice though, the reality compels us to recognize that the first ranked is not always related with the excellence.

This doesn't mean that the excellence and the preeminence are permanently excluded each other.

If we are dealing with the meritocratic criteria, it is clear that includes that we equally accept the pre-eminence and excellence, both portraying the best in a field or another of social life.

The elite separation of the mass represents an indisputable cause to a form of aversion from the masses towards the elite. In this context, elites and especially *the elitism*⁴ are loaded with negative connotations. Logic, the elitism serves to favor and select the elite. But we should not neglect one important aspect: this is done at the expense of the majority. This kind of aversion is sociologically normal. It is the result of lack of concordance between social equality promoted by democratic societies and by the specific detachment of the elite masses.

It's no secret that *the social leveling logic* born from a misunderstanding of opportunity equality in democracy was built in social consciousness as the great wall of China. As he marks the pedestrian path in the heart of China, so social equality is designed monotonous and constant. This equality which takes the form of social leveling, is closely guarded by solidarity. In this context we can say that solidarity appears as a guard defending democratic society of remarkable inequality against its destabilization.

Based on this harmful attitudes and so called democratic the elite has become a suspect notion, with a pronounced negative connotation, marked by doubts.

The parallel elite- elites involves an analysis of the ratio between the "elite of the nation" and "elites who govern us." The relationship between singular and plural in the elite-elites case involves the relationship between pre-eminence and excellence.

Regarding the singular "elite" the reference system is the "ruling elite - governmental".

The plural of "elites" is aimed at small groups typical to different fields, in which case the excellence constitutes the basis.

Elite -the leading elite

With the insistence of the masses to fight for equality in democracy (that social leveling that actually wants in this form until each individual feels the need to rise above the imaginary democratic threshold) appeared a relationship between the concepts of *ruling elite*, *ruling class*, *elite-social class*.

Once published this construction elite social class, it was inevitable the appointment of governors as social class.

From here, the parallel elite-nonelite, which is exactly the difference between the elite - as a superior group, and the masses - as the nonelite, emerged as segregation between upper-lower. So it came to an overlap period with the *elite phrase government class (ruling class)*.

No matter how much they would dislike the elite term, elitism, it appears in all societies as a necessary evil, referring, of course, to the elite ruling class. There is nothing new in the fact that this class is based on the *preeminence* and especially on the ability of individuals to stand out and to hold functions, which gives them advantages. Precisely these advantages represent the quintessence of the discontent of the masses, the primary reason for which everything that has tangent with the elite, elitism, is in disgrace, though this is not a purely objective attitude of the masses.

The sociologists have shown that in human history there are some constants that dominate the elites. These constants have evolved, but basically they act with force of law. Is the case of "*bronze law of oligarchy*". This law is based on self-governance masses. However it has proved that in terms of mechanical and ethnic the self-government of the masses remains a matter purely theoretical. The fact that it takes the responsibilities to be delegated to an enable minority because of the inability of the masses to participate *in corpore* in managing and regulating social issues compel them to trust that

³ Jacques Coenen Huther, *Sociologia elitelor*, Ed. Polirom, Iasi, 2007, p. 19.

⁴ The concept who support the decisive role of the elite in the historical movement and in management of the society.

minority (governmental elite). The minority, in return, automatically detaches gradually from the community that it organizes and leads. At baseline, the leader is the one who serves the masses. In time the organization grows quantitatively, and then to quality diversify, engaging relationships between members. Qualitative diversification is materialized by increasing of the organizational complexity. Those who are in close proximity to the leader separates increasingly more from the ruled ones and end up forming the oligarchic group. This group will be increasingly less controlled by the ruled ones and the oligarchic members will create a circle of their own, with strict rules, the group becoming - in terms of maintaining capacity in function – exclusivist.

In one way or another, this scheme is characteristic of every form of social organization.

We can talk in this context about a form of violence that is vested with legitimacy. So we are dealing with a legitimate violence, that exactly the ruling elite legalize it soon it gets power. We are in the situation of monopoly of legitimate violence, the recognized weberian notion.

Last but not least, it should be noted that the oligarchy exists in all social orders, even if it is not officially recognized. The higher the group comes to power is quantitatively increased and gets organization, the more it emphasizes its stratification. Here appears by default the ranking. The ranking can not work (and with it, neither the organization) than by differentiation of the organs and the amplifier of functions. Any established solid organization, whether it's about a democratic state or a league of proletarian resistance, is eminently a favorable ground for differentiation of organs and functions⁵.

Another aspect that needs to be said on this occasion is that between the classical doctrine of democracy and social behavior of the ruling elites but also populations (exactly the empirical reality of regimes considered to be democratic), there is a gap that we can't neglect. The delegation of powers of leadership, organization and planning of community life by the masses (to obtain their own welfare and happiness) by elites is absolutely normal. This leads directly to the control levers (tools and methods) for controlling the social life of communities. On this occasion it is necessary to fulfill a condition: the elites in possession (holding) of the control to give an account of the receiving power, specifically to justify every action than what they invested with this capability (voter).

Such a normality can not be recovered in all cases of existence and action of elites. The reason is that the process of devolution of power is not met at all kinds of elites.

In the human history, depending on the type of society, the elites have been selected in accordance with certain criteria, which over time have been classified as principles:

- in the aristocratic society we have to do with the principle of kinship; based on this principle are selected and recognized the elites; thus, they become specific elite of the aristocratic society;

- in the bourgeois societies, the principle on which are selected the elites is that of property or richness; these elites become emblematic, representative, for the bourgeois society;

- in case of societies who are classified as democratic societies, we have, at least theoretically, declarative, selected and recognized elites on the basis of performance or merit; therefore the meritocracy becomes a marker of democracy.

In empirical plan is necessary to mention that in a modern democratic society, the elites selection process undergoes reconstruction. This is achieved by combining the three principles.

This matter is explained in detail by Karl Mannheim⁶ in mid-twentieth century: he examines the impact of social reconstruction over the individual and society as a result of human evolution.

From the mixing of the principles of selection of elites, results a domination of the performance criterion. On this occasion we relate to intellectual elites. The major objective of the intellectual elites is the imposing and maintaining the social balance. The essential condition for achieving this is to overcome the categorical interests. It is a fact that the elites of the different fields have specific interests: economists will focus on economic activity, which it considers as the most important; lawyers will grant exclusive legal issues and legal importance, etc. Equally important is the interest of the elites belonging to different interest groups and here enroll the political elites here and governmental. Speaking of intellectual elites, we can say that there is necessary capacity to excess the categorical interests. This constitute on the other hand in the duty of these elites to society.

Also, the power elite it is based on institutional positions and decisional capacities.

It's about „those political, economic and military circles, who in a complex set of cross clans they share the decisions of national importance”⁷. We are witnessing of a certain intersection of ruling circles.

This became possible through a process of psycho-social homogeneity. This homogeneity boils down to the idea that whatever their sector of activity or area of competence, the individuals in leadership position have the same social origin and the same

⁵ Michels, Robert, *Les Partis politiques, Essai sur le tendance oligarchique des démocraties*, Paris, 1971, p. 33.

⁶ Mannheim Karl, 1940, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, Londra, p.90.

⁷ Mills, C. Wright, *L'élite au pouvoir*, Éditions Agone, Paris, 2012, p. 41.

level of education. The result of the psychosocial homogeneity process it was materialized in what we might call similar lifestyle. A similar lifestyle has as main effect facilitating the social contacts. This leads directly to the awareness of the existence a situation which is based on a particular type of solidarity. It's about social class solidarity.

She acts as an effect of social class consciousness.

In its turn the social class consciousness does not manifest itself nowhere stronger than circles of the power elite.

In the postmodern period we encounter a elitist category that is formed through filters as: material resources, power relationship, information, increased capacity to obedience, etc. It is about the *foxes elites*. In this case, the struggle for acknowledgement manifests itself surreptitiously, resort to opportunism, cunning, manipulation, blackmail, etc., to the detriment of honest struggle based on competence, honesty, fair play, which would lead to the formation of the *lions elites*. In Romania, the contemporary political elites undoubtedly are part into the category of *foxes elites*. They have the ability to be transmitted themselves in the future with a exponentially force, which is given by their own diversification.

A social system, the more complex, the more contain regimes or elites competing for power. That is why we can say that any large system is not fully democratized. Such a system encourages competition between social privileged categories. This is achieved through by the winners capacity and trough they impose their values. On this occasion, one can see that the privileged social segment have a clear index of identity.

Using this index will occupy a dominant position in all fields of social life. This aspect can be observed both with regard to the power elite and also in concerning the elite of notoriety.

In the attempt to study their formation, manifestations and evolution, it must start from the selection criteria of elites, or more precisely to each elite that interests us. These selection criteria lead us inevitably to the need hierarchy to the of elites. But the selection criteria are flawed, and this is unquestionably because of the formation of the foxes elites, far more numerous today than the lions elites. In other words, elites of notoriety that would normally be at the top of the pyramid are shadowed, and what it is stated are pseudo-elites of notoriety. Of great importance is that these *pseudo-elites* have moral legitimacy, by the fact that they are accepted by the public opinion like models. Of course, here the undeniable merit belongs to the audiovisual media, who it fulfills its public education function, appealing to the size of notoriety. Of course, it is

much easier to capture public attention by abnormal, deviant, offering shocks than promoting positive aspects of social life.

The restructuring of traditional elites

The growing influence of audiovisual media is the most important element that led to the overthrow of traditional values stairs on the selection and promotion of elites. The social change both in political plan, especially economic, the cultural transformations, the grassroots sports amplitude, were presented amplified, by manipulative power of the media, which led to the new values scales. As a result of these actions, have appeared new elite, whose selection criterion is limited to notoriety. In this case we are talking about elite of notoriety. They require techniques that are more or less of counterculture. They require by techniques which belong more or less of *counterculture*.

The counterculture is the process where models, values, axiologic hierarchies are dislocated, in purpose to counterfeiting the relief of a culture and of manipulation of consciences in accordance with the ordered of spiritual aggression processes⁸.

We can see the effort to block social evolution to the original meaning and also its deviation by means of counterculture. It works in order to minimize, or even moving in the pejorative section of values, attitudes and aspirations, that is considered normal in a society.

This process manifests itself differently from one culture to another, but, globally presents itself as a general trend, a action-oriented to overthrow desirable values of any society. Thus were labeled and stigmatized philosophical and theological works, inventions and innovations have been overshadowed by such that the benefits that could be obtained from them and which might contribute massively to progress, almost no are not publicly known.

Also, the idea of using alternative textbooks distorting for historical truths and identity size are part of the neokominternist program of counterculture⁹.

Definitely there are other ways of transmission and manifestation of methods and techniques used in the process who is included in the concept of counterculture. However, of the reference remain media, the most powerful way of transmitting information to the masses. We can brings into discussion literature, art, different cultural events that promote traditional values, authentic identity for each social culture, but how the masses are connected to information remains the strongest TV, press, radio. Of these, the TV is the instrument which transmits behavioral patterns, values etc. with the greatest degree of success. This instrument, emitter,

⁸ <http://www.etnosfera.ro/pdf/2009/4/01.pdf>

⁹ *Ibidem*.

terminal, indispensable object, is the most accessible, the most widespread among the masses, so is the middle that attempts the imposition of pseudo-values, ultimately of the notoriety elites. The exponents of this concept are individuals known to the public. What characterizes them is the fact that they succeed without notable efforts to solve personal problems. These problems are related to material wealth - illegal actions such as thefts of public funds, illegal trafficking, marriages of interest, obtaining positions in the state apparatus by illicit ways or related to physical beauty - cosmetic surgery, starvation, etc.

The notoriety promoted in the detriment of excellence, leads to a derisory dimension, hence the moral decay of the individual person and more, to macro-level, of the peoples. The values that is based on the notoriety elites are in fact non-values. The effort of replacing the traditional values of each culture and ultimately the social culture at large, determine categorically the overthrow of the axiological pyramid. The changing the place of the excellence elites - meritocracy, with the place of the notoriety elites, leads inevitably to the spoilage of national identity. We find a strong engaging member force regarding the repose of the Romanian national popular mind, by strong attempts to divert the national interest by the real issues to those of gossip, subculture. We have mentioned here only in passing some anti-cultural

issues in Romania. In the future we will analyze extensively this issue.

3. Conclusions

After the above mentioned, we think that the parallel of elite-elites will remain a subject of analysis. The fact that the masses are eager for knowledge means that excellence has a future.

Of course, the ways located outside the fight with the unknown, non-meritocratic methods will proliferate. But the most important fact remains that the masses need intelligence, professionalism and morality. Preeminence can not substitute all this, than in certain situations. These situations are limited. They do not solve the social need for knowledge of the masses.

On the other hand we need to mention that excellence remains a dream for people, no matter if it is doubled or not by the meritocratic side. This is the reason owing to which we assist and we will also assist in the future, at the unequal competition between the exponents of excellence and those of preeminence.

Nevertheless, each of us, individually or all alike we wait and we need a result based on merit.

Meritocracy is in shadow, but its power exists there like a point of light in the dark.

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