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BETWEEN POLITICAL APATHY AND POLITICAL PASSIVITY. THE CASE OF MODERN RUSSIAN SOCIETY

ABSTRACT

It is safest to remain agnostic as to whether the Russian society is completely active or passive. What counts in favour of the former view is the high voter turnout, whereas a low level of involvement in political life should make us rather incline towards the latter. The research focuses on determining the extent of activity/passivity of the Russian society in the years 2000–2012. The results of the analysis revealed a degree of participation of the Russian citizens in the electoral decision-making process and their involvement in political life. It constituted an answer to the question: to what extent Russian legislation allows society to participate in the political life, by estimating a political activity index ($W^{ap(ap)}$). Additionally, the political activity correlate index ($W^{ap(k)}$) was checked, which enables us to correct the obtained result on the basis of legal provisions according to the real dimension of the Russian political activity.

Keywords: political absenteeism, political apathy, social anomie, civic passivity, Russian society

1. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to characterize the essence of the Russian society. On the one hand, we could witness a high voter turnout during presidential and parliamentary elections, but, on the other – a low involvement of citizens in political life. Government policy against opposition parties

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had a clear influence on citizens' membership in political groups. Here we can mention difficulties in proposing and registering candidates in elections, as well as excessive legal restrictions and unequal treatment with respect to conducting an election campaign. The research aimed at analyzing the political activity of the Russian society, i.e. where citizens of the modern Russia can be placed on the spectrum from extreme passivity to high activity. The results of this analysis allow us to determine the level of political apathy and political activity of the society. The research covers the years 2000–2012, with the starting point being the victory of Vladimir Putin in presidential election. In turn, the year 2012 marks the end of second presidential term of V. Putin and one term as prime minister of the Russian Federation, and begins the next term of his presidency after the amendment to the Constitution of Russia Federation of 2008 (changes entered into force on May 7, 2012), which extended the terms of the president from 4 to 6 years.

2. THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL APATHY

Researchers studying the passivity of society use various categories, i.a. political abstention, political alienation or political apathy. On the one hand, it seems right to use these terms interchangeably and treat them as unambiguous categories. On the other – it should be emphasized that political apathy manifested in the passivity of society is treated as dysfunction of democracy (DeLuca, 1995; Szczegółka, 2013a, pp. 173–186). Considering abstention, we are facing to some extent a “dissonance” since abstention should be understood as non-participation of society in voting. Political apathy is a clear feature of authoritarian regimes, where the election process is usually characterized by high turnout. In the case of democratic regimes, public participation in elections is a tool for the legitimacy of power. In turn, alienation is associated with decoupling from the political reality. In our opinion, the concept of political apathy is much broader and can include both political abstention and political alienation; that is why using these categories interchangeably is not justified (Lubecki, & Detailed, 2007, pp. 74–92).

The reflections on political apathy of Charles W. Mills and David Riesman are based on the research on American society. They point out that decreased involvement of society in public life is associated with the increase in a sense of disappointment, a sense of the loss of influence, lack of interest and distance to those in power (Mills, 2011). Meanwhile, Krzysztof Korzeniowski maintains that low efficiency and a way of functioning of a new government in the state, in common with high expectations of the society, can lead to the situation in which a boycott of political life presents a following evolution of the public feelings: disappointment – frustration – alienation – apathy (Korzeniowski, 1999, P. 74). Therefore, a given sequence shows a precedence of political apathy over alienation, abstention or passivity. The absence of extensive and intensive political mobilization is a specific example of a lack of interest in political life, which can to a great extent contribute to the alienation, discouragement and, consequently, to the political apathy (Prokop, 2016, pp. 152-153).

Krystyna Skarżyńska analyzed a relationship between political activity and political passivity. She emphasized that political activity can be understood as any form of individual involvement aimed to influence the decisions of the authorities such as behavior towards political parties and/or political position as well as a kind of emotional involvement coupled with the raised interest in political issues (Skarżyńska, 2002). In the current research, we conceive of both political activity and political participation in terms of the definition put

forward by K. Skarżyńska, assuming at the same time that political activity is a much broader concept. It seems to be right to consider the perception of activity in the context of civic participation. Meanwhile, without interest and involvement in political affairs, the mere fact of political participation does not determine the functioning of a democratic state. In this case, we recognize participation as a constitutive feature of the democracy.

Considering political apathy in terms of the lack of political participation or low participation (i.e. involvement in political life), it is appropriate to analyze particular factors which demotivate society to participate in direct and indirect forms of democracy (Każmierczak, 2011, p. 85). Electoral participation is a *sine qua non* condition for democracy. Robert Dahl stated that in the classical sense it means that we can either talk about participation or a lack of it (Dahl, 1995, p. 316). Political participation in the case of elections is a manifestation of democracy only when the individual taking part in voting believes that he has a real impact on the shape of state power. Elections represent a mechanism enabling political participation of the society. However, participation in elections should be treated as a milestone of political participation, which is conducive to stimulating the formation and structuring of the civil society. Therefore, participation in elections is a tool encouraging other forms of participation (Szczegół, 2013b, pp. 49–60; Mider, 2013, pp. 12–30).

Political apathy is to some extent a rational way of mass behavior, which arises as a result of the individuals' conviction that their voice means nothing. Jean Baudrillard studies a relationship between political participation and political regime. In his opinion, democracy comes down to shaping a set of rules aimed at legitimizing a bourgeois power. Thus, the phenomenon of apathy reveals a refusal of participation of the mass of people, who legitimize power through voting, which becomes a proof of the unlawfulness of the bourgeois power (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 23).

Krzysztof Korzeniowski, considering the concept of political alienation, emphasizes the importance of distinction between modern alienation and classical alienation presented by Karl Marx. According to K. Marx, alienation comes to defining the specific, objective attitude of the man towards the objective world. This world, as a creation of man, became alien and dominating towards him, and caused a loss of individual's essence and then his enslavement. Modern perception of alienation means loneliness and helplessness of man in the world surrounding him. By translating this type of approach into political realities, it is possible to define alienation as a low level of political involvement due to the awareness of the impossibility of influencing its course. Another significant difference between alienation according to K. Marx and alienation observed nowadays is explained by K. Korzeniowski, who states that in case of the former – a person does not recognize his alienation, because once alienation has been recognized, it transforms into dealienation. Considering a modern perception of this phenomenon, society consciously shapes its passive attitudes towards politics (Korzeniowski, 1993, pp. 158–159).

Ada W. Finifter distinguished two elements of political alienation. The concept was identified by the category of passiveness treated as a lack of willingness to understand political phenomena in common with unreadiness to take part in political life, mainly due to the lack of confidence in its effectiveness. The second element can be described as "perceived anomie", which is associated with a conviction concerning deviation from generally accepted norms in the political environment (Finifter, 1970, pp. 389–410). Stephen Long analyzes political alienation by using the concept of passiveness, dissatisfaction, cynicism, alienation and helplessness (Long, 1976, pp. 267–268). In this case, S. Long presents the behavior of society in

relation to the ruling elite that largely reveals a reaction to its helplessness. Political apathy means the indifference of the part of citizens to political activities such as elections, participation in shaping public opinion and civic responsibilities (Nnenna, 2013).

While analyzing political activity and passivity, Oksana Kuleba distinguishes the following forms: apathy, loyalty, negativism, citizens' participation and organized form of activity. Apathy is treated as a state in which a person does not participate in events and political life, and neither is he interested in generally recognized national values. Loyalty is a manifestation of the interest of an individual in politics, e.g. through participation in the elections and socio-political initiatives. Negativism boils down to the absence of approval of the authorities' actions by various forms of protest. This form includes belonging to the opposition, while the extreme manifestation of negativism is reflected in terrorism, which is an unlawful form of political participation. Public participation provides compulsory participation in elections, discussions, public assessment of leaders and functioning of the state authorities. Organized form of activity is considered to be the most advanced form of political activity and includes i.a. participation in political parties (Kuleba, 2010, pp. 67–68).

Political activity of citizens can be regarded as a tool increasing the effectiveness of functioning of the political system under the conditions of institutional mechanisms and legal rules. However, a significant increase in public activity may also have a negative impact on the functioning of the state, e.g. a much larger number of political and social groups may cause the increase in the number of protests, strikes, and the increase of democracy, and thus disturb the state order (compare: Michalak, 2013, p. 340).

The study of political apathy using the category of political participation cannot be based solely on the analysis of election results. The shape of participation is also influenced by choice alternatives, including the decision not to participate in them (Marsh, O'Toole, & Jones, 2007, pp. 11-12). Therefore, political apathy should be defined as a lack of public involvement in the political life, expressed by the low level of participation in the various forms of political activity (elections, referendums, electoral initiatives), resulting from the conviction concerning the impossibility of influencing the decision-making processes and from a visible decline in trust to the state institutions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis for the research of political apathy is the analysis of the opposite category of political activity by virtue of studying legal provisions regulating political participation of the society and the dimension of its implementation. The conclusions were made according to the following considerations: does the legislation in Russia promote an activity of the society and to what extent the provisions, guaranteeing the participation of society in political life, reflect the real state of its involvement.

3.1. POLITICAL ACTIVITY INDEX – W^{AP}

The study of political activity index mainly required an analysis of the legislation ensuring political participation. However, such analysis of the legal provisions allow for examining the political activity in the legal context – $W^{ap(ap)}$, but not the evaluation of the actual state of involvement of the society.

With the aim to calculate political activity index we will use the following formula:

$$W^{ap(ap)} = Z_1 + Z_2 + \dots + Z_n, \quad [1]$$

where:

Z_1 – the possibility of forming and acting in various types of political associations (freedom of association);

Z_2 – the possibility of participating in parliamentary and presidential elections (active and passive suffrage);

Z_3 – the possibility of organizing and conducting a referendum and of starting a legislative initiative.

If the implementation of the particular variable in the state legislation is completely ensured, we get the result – “1.” Meanwhile, if the legislation does not provide a necessary regulation or introduces mechanisms limiting the implementation of the variable, the result is “0.” Considering the situation when the legislation partially ensures an implementation of the variable – the result is “0,5”, because it is difficult to clearly determine whether the condition is met or maybe it is not guaranteed.

The next study focuses on the implementation of the legal provisions. Even if the above-mentioned possibilities are ensured in the provisions of the Russian legislation, we cannot translate the given result into the dimension of actual implementation of political activity. Therefore, it seems to be appropriate to correct the abovementioned coefficients by using correlation variables (Della Porta, & Kreating, 2008, pp. 253–254). The indicator is defined as a political activity index (a correlate index) – $W^{ak(k)}$ and determined by analyzing the mechanisms reflecting the dimension of the actual implementation of political activity in the society.

Verification of the variable Z_1 (how the possibility of forming and acting in various types of political associations is ensured) is examined by the evaluation of X_1 (the number of new groups) and X_2 (the participation of citizens in political parties or other forms of associations). The possibility of forming and acting in various political associations is ensured to a significant extent if what is observed is a formation of new groups in the state with the participation of the society therein. This possibility is partly ensured if any of the aforementioned variables is not fully realized or the establishment of new groups and/or the participation of the society in them have a decreasing trend during the examined period. In turn, the realization of a given opportunity is not ensured or it is ensured to a negligible extent if the number of new groups is insignificant and the participation of the society in official forms of the political associations reflects low level of activity.

Considering the variable Z_2 (the extent to which the possibility of participation in parliamentary and presidential elections is ensured), the verification is carried out by assessing X_3 – voter turnout in the parliamentary/presidential elections and X_4 – participation of political groups in the elections. Ensuring the possibility of participation in elections should be regarded as implemented to a significant extent if the voter turnout reflects a large statistical result of over 50 percent and political groups actively participate in the election process (Panicz, 2011, pp. 107–108, 111). The possibility of participation in elections is partly performed if the voter turnout does not reflect large involvement of the society in the election process (the

result is at the level of 25–50 percent). However, it should be noted that such a result does not imply citizens' apathy. On the other hand, in such case the possibility of participation of the political groups is partly shaken due to the restrictions on the implementation of pluralism. This translates into how the legislation regulating the election process results in the number of participants therein. The implementation of a given possibility should be considered as insignificant or guaranteed to a small extent if the voter turnout is low (it means below 25 percent), while only few groups participate in the election process (Lipset, 1998, pp. 231–232).

The last variable Z_3 (the extent to which the possibility of organizing and conducting a referendum and of starting a legislative initiative is ensured) is carried out by assessing X_5 – organization of the referendum and X_6 – the possibility of starting a legislative initiative. The possibility of organizing and conducting a referendum should be regarded as ensured to a significant extent if important issues related to the functioning of the state are consulted with the society on the referendum and an opportunity to start a legislative initiative by the society is ensured. The possibility is partly provided if a referendum is held only for some aspects related to the functioning of the state and the possibility of legislative initiative is implemented sporadically. The possibility is not ensured or it is ensured to a negligible extent if, despite the existence of the institution of referendum, authorities rarely refer to it and civic legislative initiative is not taken.

Therefore, the score “1” introduces ensuring the implementation of the variables to a large extent (it confirms effectiveness of legal provisions and their implementation), while the score “0” shows that legislation does not guarantee the implementation of a given variable. The implementation of the variable is partially ensured (score of 0,5) if it is difficult to determine whether the regulations have been completed or not. Consequently, the index obtained on the basis of legislation analyzing can be corrected by using correlation variables. The political activity index (correlate index) is calculated as an average value according to the equation:

$$W^{ap(k)} = (X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4 + X_5 + X_6) / n, \quad [2]$$

where “ X ” is a result obtained for each of the operationalization questions, and “ n ” is the number of variables.

Particular attention should be paid to the situation when the $W^{ap(k)}$ has a score “0” or “1.” In case of “1” – obtained results of correlation confirm the results of legislation analysis. Doubts will arise when the result is “0.” This will mean that correlate index will not correct the result obtained on the basis of legislation analysis. However, it will confirm that under certain guarantees of the implementation of a given rule in a given country, it is violated. The final result of the political activity index (W^{ap}) is calculated as follows: $W^{ap} = W^{ap(ap)} \times W^{ap(k)}$.

3.2. THE INDEX VALUE

If all variables that operationalize political activity are completely implemented, the value of index is $W^{ap} = (2,0 - 3,0)$. Then we can state that the implementation of the principle of political activity reflects the level of democratic regime. The result ranging within $2,0$ and $3,0$ shows the case when some variables are implemented partially ($Z = 0,5$). Therefore, index reflects the implementation of the principle of power alternation at the level of unconsolidated democracy. In case of $W^{ap} = (0 - 1,0)$ we can state that level of implementation of the

principle of political activity is low or even absent. It reflects the apathy of society as a basic feature of authoritarianism.

If legislation ensures a participation in various political groups, but does not translate it into the formation of groups (and participation of society in them) or the participation in the election process – we can say that political activity is not fully implemented – $W^{ap} = (1, 1 - 1, 9)$. In such a situation there are visible manifestations of apathy, which determines the implementation of a given feature within combination of democratic and authoritarian regimes, i.e. it takes the form of hybrid regimes.

The use of scale makes it possible to determine the degree of political activity in Russia. Three possibilities for its implementation are considered: a) the level of democratic regime (reflecting the participation of the society in the various forms of political activity); b) low level of political activity, which is associated with the emergence of political apathy typical of authoritarian regimes, and c) hybridity of a given feature expressed by occasional political activity with elements of political apathy.

4. POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIETY

Political activity of Russian society in 2000–2012 is measured by using the following equation: $W^{ap} = W^{ap(ap)} \times W^{ap(k)}$. Firstly, two variables of the political activity index in the legal aspect are examined. It lets us evaluate the level of implementation of political activity of the Russian society on the basis of the Russian legislation. Then, the political activity correlate index is checked, which enables us to correct the obtained result on the basis of legal provisions according to the real dimension of the Russian political activity.

4.1. THE POSSIBILITY OF FORMING AND ACTING IN VARIOUS TYPES OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS – Z_1

We focus on analyzing the provisions related to the implementation of the possibility of forming and acting in political associations by Russian citizens. Therefore, it appears appropriate to recall the key provisions of the Russian Federation in this matter: the Federal Law on Political Parties No. 95–FZ of June 21, 2001 and the Federal Law on Public Associations No. 82–FZ of May 19, 1995. The provisions of the Russian Basic Law in relation to various types of citizens' associations ensure the equality before the law and the prohibition on the associations which are contrary to the Russian legislation. With regard to the political public associations, the Constitution draws attention to the recognition of political pluralism and multiparty system.

The possibility of joining and forming political parties derives from the definition of the political party in the Federal Law (hereinafter: FL) on Political Parties, which is defined as a public association created for the participation of the Russian Federation citizens in the political life of society through the participation in elections and referendums (Art. 3 (1), No. 95–FZ). The FL on Political Parties and the FL on Public Associations contain the provisions that declare a right to form associations on a voluntary basis in order to protect the common interests of citizens and to achieve common goals. The FL on Political Parties confers the right to form voluntary political parties in accordance with their beliefs (Art. 3, No. 82–FZ; Art. 2 and Art. 8, No. 95–FZ). It also defines the requirements that a political party should

meet. Attention should be paid to the provision regarding the requirement to create regional branches in more than half of the subjects of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, one should take heed of the fact that the provisions indicate the minimum number of members of the political party, that has been changed frequently. It is also noteworthy that the specified minimum number seems to be relatively large. In 2001 the FL determined this number at the level of 10 thousand members, while based on the amendments in 2012 it was reduced to 40,000 citizens. During the last 5 years, the required number of party members ranged from 10,000 up to 50,000, so this trend has not led to the mobilization of the society with respect to their participation in political groups. Members of political parties and the citizens' association may be citizens of the Russian Federation who has reached the age of 18 (Art. 19, No. 82–FZ, Art. 23(2), No. 95–FZ).

In the context of examined issues, it is appropriate to indicate the provisions ensuring the right of political parties: to participate in decision-making process of the state government bodies and local governments; to participate in elections and referendums; to establish local and regional branches; to organize and hold meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches, pickets and other public event; to use state and municipal media on an equal basis (Art. 26, No. 95–FZ). What is additionally worth noting is a legal basis for registration and funding of the political parties. In addition to the required documents specified in the FL on Political Parties, these associations should pay a registration fee. Political parties are entitled to receive funds from the federal budget in case if these parties participated in previous elections and had not lesser than 3 percent of electors' votes (Art. 33, No. 95–FZ).

4.2. THE POSSIBILITY OF PARTICIPATING IN PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS – Z₂

Considering the political activity, particular attention should be paid to the legal regulations related to the electoral participation, i.e. the right to vote and to be elected. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation the right to vote is conferred upon every citizen who has attained the age of 18. In turn, the right to be elected in presidential elections is conferred upon the citizens of the Russian Federation over 35 years and residing in the territory of the state for the last 10 years; while in case of elections to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the right to be elected is held by citizens who have attained the age of 21 (Art. 81, par. 1; Art. 97, par. 1, the Constitution of the Russian Federation). Further considerations on the implementation of the examined possibility require an analysis of the provisions related to the electoral regulations in the context of candidacy registration and submission. According to the FL on the Election of Deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation No. 175–FZ of December 20, 2002, the registration of candidates starts 30 days after an officially published announcement of the elections. In turn, in the FL No. 51–FZ of May 18, 2005 it is stated that the submission of candidates takes place not earlier than 10 days and not later than 30 days after a published announcement of the elections (Articles 38–40, No. 175–FZ; Articles 36, No. 51–FZ). Both regulations specify the deadline for candidate registration – not earlier than 75 days and not later than 45 days before the voting day (Art. 45, Art. 46, No 175–FZ; Art. 42, par. 4, No. 51–FZ). When registering a candidate in a single-mandate electoral district is required to make an advance payment of 15 percent of its electoral fund. The advance payment is returned to those who obtained a result of 2 percent of the number of voters and those who participated in the distribution of deputy seats

(in case of the candidate in a single-mandate electoral district). The groups participating in the distribution of seats as well as those who obtained not less than 4 percent of the number of voters can expect a return of payment (Art. 71 (1–2), No. 175–FZ; Art. 66, No. 51–FZ). In 2009, the provision concerning the requirement to make an advance payment during the registration of parties in elections was removed. This requirement has been replaced by the obligation to collect signatures.

Another issue requiring attention concerns provisions regarding the collection of signatures and paying the registration fee. In case of the FL of December 20, 2002, the candidate is required to collect signatures in support of his candidacy in the single-mandate electoral district. A support should be expressed by at least 1 percent of voters. When candidates are nominated by parties in a multi-mandate electoral district, the number of signatures should be not less than 200 thousand; but among them – not more than 14 thousand signatures of voters residing in any single entity of the Russian Federation. (Art. 42, par. 1–2; Art. 43, par. 1–3, No. 175–FZ).

According to the FL on the Election of Deputies of May 18, 2005, political parties which have reached the electoral threshold in previous parliamentary elections are exempted from the obligation to collect signatures of support. In other cases, a political party that keeps collecting signatures of voters shall collect at least 150 thousand signatures and in case of the next convocations such a political party shall collect at least 120 thousand signatures with no more than 5 thousand signatures per entity of the Russian Federation (Art. 39, No. 51–FZ).

4.3. THE POSSIBILITY OF ORGANIZING AND CONDUCTING A REFERENDUM AND TO START A LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE – Z₃

According to the Basic Law of the Russian Federation, the right of legislative initiative is held by: the President of the Russian Federation, members of the Federation Council, deputies of the State Duma, the Federal Government, entities of the Russian Federation having legislative power as well as the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Supreme Arbitration Court within their competence (Art. 104, par. 1, the Constitution of the Russian Federation). The Basic Law does not provide a legislative initiative of the citizens. The Constitution regulates referendum provisions in a very general way, recognizing that it is one of the forms of supreme direct expression of the power of the people (Art. 3, par. 3, the Constitution of the Russian Federation). The president has a power to announce a referendum in accordance with the procedure established by federal constitutional law (Art. 84, par. 1, the Constitution of the Russian Federation). The Constitution distinguishes between a national referendum aimed at adoption of a Constitution of the Russian Federation and local referendums falling under the competence of local self-government.

The process of organizing and conducting national referendum is regulated in detail by Federal Constitutional Law (hereinafter: FCL) (FL No. 124–FZ; FL No. 67–FZ, FCL No. 2–FKZ, FCL No. 5–FKZ). In particular, issues that cannot be discussed at referendum are identified, such as: a change of status of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation; whether to shorten or extend a presidential and parliament terms or to hold early elections of the President of the Russian Federation and the State Duma; to adopt changes to the state budget; whether to adopt changes to federal taxes and fees. A referendum cannot be held under the conditions of a state of emergency or martial law, as well as during the last year of the presidential term or during the election campaign preceding the presidential and

parliamentary elections (Art. 5 and Art. 7, No. 5–FKZ). The initiative to conduct a referendum is held by citizens of the Russian Federation who attained the age of 18 and have the right to vote. The number of citizens should be not less than 2 million people, including no more than 50 thousand citizens from any constituent entity of the Russian Federation (Art. 14, par. 1, No. 5–FKZ).

It is worth noting that the FCL of the Russian Federation about referendum of the Russian Federation of June 28, 2004 provides a stringent control on the organization of the referendum. This applies to the multi-level registration of the initiative groups and the introduction of strict deadlines for meeting specific requirements. In turn, according to the FL No. 67-FZ of June 12, 2002 “On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens of the Russian Federation to Participate in a Referendum,” organization of a referendum in the election year is prohibited. The application of this type of provisions may be guided by concerns regarding the possibility of calling a referendum by the only significant opposition group – the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Therefore, on the one hand, the legislation of the Russian Federation is the basis for shaping the political activity of the society, while on the other, it introduces provisions that do not implement the principle of equal treatment of all entities or significantly limit the emergence of the new ones. The legislative process omitted the right to public legislative initiative. The possibility of calling a referendum, which is an exclusive power of a president himself, creates a warning regarding its treating as a form of consultation with the society, because it can be used only in the case when the president deems it appropriate.

5. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The analysis of the legal legislation regulating the implementation of the abovementioned possibilities let us state that while considering the possibility of forming and acting in various types of political associations, one should take heed of a certain dualism: on the one hand, a lot of provisions promoting equality of all entities contain such that largely discourage society from political activity, i.a. regarding the relatively high number of members required to form parties and the requirement to create regional branches in more than half of the subjects of the Russian Federation. Therefore, a possibility can be treated as partially guaranteed with a score – “0,5.” The possibility of participation in parliamentary and presidential elections is also guaranteed, but not completely. Federal Law introduces a range of privileges for entities that have obtained a certain level of support in previous elections, such as exemption from the obligation to make an advance payment during the registration of parties in elections and to collect signatures of support. Consequently, the implementation of a given possibility is neither fully ensured, merely with a score – “0,5.” The last variable introduces the possibility of organizing and conducting a referendum and the right to legislative initiative. Russian legislation ensures citizens a possibility of participating in all kinds of referendums and the possibility of initiating a referendum. Meanwhile, the Basic Law does not provide an opportunity for citizens to start a legislative initiative, that is why the score is “0,5”.

Considering legal aspect, the calculation of the political activity index is as follows:

$$W^{ap(ap)} = Z_1 + Z_2 + Z_3 \quad [4]$$

$$W^{ap(ap)} = 0,5 + 0,5 + 0,5 \quad [5]$$

Consequently, $W^{ap(ap)}$ equals 1,5. In this case we cannot speak of the implementation of political activity at the level of democratic state. The next part of the research concerns the real dimension of the implementation of political activity (correlates).

X_1 – the number of new associations. According to the changes in Russian legislation, until 2012, what is observed is a significant reduction in the number of political groups, rather than its increase through the creation of new ones. This is largely influenced by the amendment to the provisions of the FL on Political Parties regarding the increase in the minimum number of members of a political association. There is no available information on official websites about how many new groups were created. It is difficult to find the information regarding the number of registered associations in particular years because only the latest data are available. In this case, one must resort to the information from secondary sources. The verification of the possibility concerning the participation in political associations is determined on the basis of the number of registered groups in particular years. At the beginning of 2000, there were 48 political parties registered in the Russian Federation (139 parties were registered a year earlier). In 2001, the FL on Political Parties specified the minimum number of 10 000 members of the political party, which contributed to the reduction in the number of registered entities (to 40 parties) in 2001–2002. In 2003, 44 parties were registered, while in 2003 – 43 and in 2005 – 46 parties. According to the amendment to the provisions of the FL on Political Parties in 2004, the required number of party members significantly increased – to 50,000. So, when provisions entered into force, it resulted in a significant reduction of political parties. In 2006, 16 of 32 registered parties did not meet the requirements. In 2007, the number of registered political associations amounted to 19, in 2008 – 15, and in the years 2009–2011 only 7 parties (The Foundation for Civil Society Development).

The next changes in a required number of party members at the level of 500 people in 2012 caused a significant increase in the number of political associations – over one year, 43 new parties were registered (then in 2013 – 19, 2014 – 6, 2015 – 2 parties). Currently, the number of registered entities amounts 77. It is also noteworthy that in most cases, the said new parties are actually only *nominally* new, as they are *in fact* formed on the basis of already existing groups. In 2007, among 19 groups only 4 were actually new – the “Civilian Power”, the “Patriots of Russia”, the “Fair Russia” and the “Party of Social Justice.” Actually, the only new party on the Russian political scene only the “Civilian Power”. Among seven parties registered in 2011, the “Right Cause” can be considered as a new one, although it is also not a completely new party because it was founded as a merger of three parties participating in the parliamentary elections in 2007 – “Civilian Power”, “Union of Right Forces”, and “Democratic Party of Russia” (Meleshevich, 2007, pp. 150-160).

X_2 – participation of citizens in civic and political associations, which represents the scenario in which that legal provisions significantly limit a given possibility. According to the study of Levada Centr (Nekhaychuk), only 3–4 percent participates as members in the voluntary social organizations, while another 3 percent – engaged but are not members of

the organizations. There are about 350,000 organizations registered in Russia, while only 38 percent of them actually function.

The politicization of civic organizations is noticeable to a large extent. The research of the Civil Society Monitoring shows that 10 percent of citizens declared their membership in third sector organizations in 2009, while in 2010 – 8 percent of citizens (CSCSNS). Considering the extent of satisfaction related to the possibility of participation in political life: 12 percent of respondents declared a full satisfaction, 21 percent – are rather satisfied, 25 percent – are rather dissatisfied, 14 percent are absolutely dissatisfied and 28 percent remained undecided. In turn, the answer to the question about the willingness to participate in political life at least at the level of the city looked as follows: 7 percent answered “definitely yes” in 2008 and 5 percent in 2010; “probably yes” – 21 percent in 2008 and 2010; “probably not” – 30 percent in 2008 and 28 percent in 2010; “definitely not” – 33 percent and 34 percent respectively; and 9 percent remained undecided in 2008, while 13 percent in 2010 (Levada Centr, 2010). The results reveal depoliticisation of the society because the desire to participate in political life is declared by less than 30 percent of the citizens while over 60 percent – are not interested in such issues. Roman Bäcker points out that a lack of interest in politics and low level of political activity translates into a high level of political apathy, confirming the existence of an authoritarian regime according to the definition of J.J. Linz (Bäcker 2014, pp. 219–220).

X_3 – participation of citizens in election process by taking into account a voter turnout during parliamentary and presidential elections (Treisman, 2011, pp. 590–609). The voter turnout during presidential election was 68,64 percent in 2000; 64,38 percent in 2004; 69 percent in 2008; 65,34 percent in 2012. However, in case of elections to the State Duma the voter turnout was 55,75 percent in 2003; 63,71 percent in 2007; 60,2 percent in 2011. Despite constant stability in public participation in the elections, a special attention should be paid to various types of administrative resources and falsifications of election results (Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation).

X_4 – participation in political associations. There were 23 political parties taking part in the parliamentary election in 2003, 11 parties in 2007 and only 7 in 2011 (Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation). The results show the actual situation related to the implementation of electoral legislation in the shape of political activity carried out by the participation of political parties in elections. They confirm that Russian legislation adversely affects the implementation of the right to be elected.

X_5 – a referendum should reflect a mechanism of consultations between the society and authorities on public affairs. A referendum in Russia was organized twice at the local level in the years 2000–2012. In comparison, the referendums in ninetieth were conducted for legitimizing the power of state authorities during the process of political transformations, e.g. the referendum in April 25, 1993 and in December 12, 1993 regarding constitutional foundations of the state.

X_6 – Russian legislative process omitted the right to public legislative initiative.

The study of the abovementioned six indicators allows us to calculate the political activity correlate index as follows:

$$W^{ap(k)} = (X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4 + X_5 + X_6) / n \quad [6]$$

The analysis of conditions relating to public political activity brings about the following results:

1. the possibility of forming new groups, in particular opposition ones, is insignificant [$X_1 = 0$];
2. despite strict provisions regarding the participation of the society in political and social groups, society undertakes a given type of activity [$X_2 = 0,5$];
3. the society participates in parliamentary and presidential elections, but results of elections and voter turnout are manipulated (it is proved by the analysis of the election process during the study regarding the implementation of the principle of alternation of power) [$X_3 = 0,5$];
4. political groups insufficiently participate in the election process, which is confirmed by legislative conditions [$X_4 = 0,5$];
5. referendum, as actually conducted, does not reflect a stipulated mechanism of consultations between the society and authorities on public affairs; yet, granted, it was neither used as a tool to legalize undemocratic behavior of the authorities [$X_5 = 0,5$];
6. the society does not have a right to start a legislative initiative [$X_6 = 0$].

$$W^{ap(k)} = 0 + 0,5 + 0,5 + 0,5 + 0,5 + 0/6 = 0,33 (0,3) \quad [7]$$

$$(W^{ap}) = W^{ap(ap)} \times W^{ap(k)} \quad [8]$$

$$(W^{ap}) = 1,5 \times 0,3 = 0,45 (0,5) \quad [9]$$

The result ($W^{ap} = 0,5$) indicates that political activity in Russian society is not implemented at the level of democratic regime. Despite some social attempts at sparking political activity, many particular manifestations thereof are severely limited with a wide array of mechanisms exercised on the part of the state.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Political apathy is a complex phenomenon and its study requires in-depth analysis of the society as well as its economic and cultural conditions. In order to avoid potential mistakes in the analysis of political apathy of the Russian society, we have used the opposite category of political activity. Therefore, it became possible to operationalize a concept of political activity without providing a sociological research. Thus, we analyzed the legislation which is the basis for implementation of political activity in the Russian society. Simultaneously, we introduced political activity of the Russian society in its real dimension. Results of the study confirmed the proposed hypothesis – Russian society, in the years 2000–2012, was characterized by political apathy and at the same time by low and limited activity. It proved undemocratic mechanisms which actually operate in the state.

The fact of insufficient implementation of political activity is also proved by estimated index ($W^{ap} = 0,5$). Consequently, it should be conceived of in terms of the opposite feature of political apathy, because even at the level of legislation we can find particular provisions aimed at limiting a given activity of the society, which largely translates into the real

dimension of its implementation. The low level of political activity reflects a political apathy of the Russian society, which was formed as a result of rigorous legal regulations preventing and discouraging from the participation in all forms of political activity.

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