

Pluralism in the regional political process (by the example of the legislatures elections in Western Siberia. The late 20th - beginning of the 21st centuries)

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Abstract. Pluralism in a democratic society is a key principle of providing active political members. Its introduction into the Russian political process, of both federal and regional levels, began during a period of radical change in the system of state power and the mechanism of its formation (the 90s of the 20th century). Legislatures of the subjects of the Russian Federation became the first government, created on the basis of alternative democratic elections (1994). They presented the variety of parties, public associations and movements, which, thanks to the principle of pluralism declared their political interests. However, the modern list of political members - bearers of different ideologies - is much inferior in diversity. The study of political experience of legislatures in Western Siberia in historical retrospective reveals the role of pluralism as a condition of the transition from an emerging system to its sustainable development. The findings reflect the specifics of the Russian multi-party system within the boundaries of regional political process.

Introduction

More than twenty years have passed since the legal fixation of pluralism in Article 13 of the Russian Constitution (Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993). It encouraged the development of the Russian political competition in the establishment of regional legislatures on the basis of alternative democratic elections (1994).

Today, regional legislative (representative) bodies of state power are key members in politics. Their structure reflects the multi-party system of the regional political process. At the same time, modern ideological diversity and political self-organization of the society are significantly different from the situation at the end of the 20th century. Recently, we have not seen the appearance of new political "players" - parties, new leaders, ideological programs and political debates about power and its objectives. J. Ryan Lamare, an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois says that the role of unions in politics has been relatively well documented in terms of the effects of labor's mobilization and voter turnout efforts on behalf of candidates [1]. The researchers note that "pluralism has not become the natural state" of the Russian political system [2], but "the destructive potential of pluralism and tolerance is almost beyond the scientific attention" [3]. The declarative

nature of pluralism as a principle of political life and ideological diversity "conservation" determine the urgency of addressing this issue.

The purpose of this article is to consider the role of pluralism in the regional political processes at two historical stages: 1) formation of regional legislatures, 2) their development and stable functioning. The analysis will be based on political experience of legislatures in Western Siberia (Kemerovo, Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions).

Materials and methods

The methodological basis of the study of pluralism as a source of democratic changes in the region of Western Siberia is a comparative historical method. Based on archival documents and statistic data, we compare the political diversity in different historical periods. The first period (end of the 20th century) is the formation of regional legislatures and the second period (beginning of the 21th century) is their development and reliable functioning. The study of political experience of legislatures in Western Siberia in historical retrospective reveals the role of pluralism as a condition for the transition from an emerging system to its sustainable development.

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The source base of the study is legal documents of the federal and regional levels; unpublished documents kept in the state archives of Kemerovo, Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions; materials of the central and local periodicals; autobiographical and memoir literature; Official Website of Kemerovo, Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions legislatures.

Results and discussion

The formation of the first regional legislatures took place on the basis of decrees of President Boris Yeltsin and regulations of elections, developed in the regions. Under the new electoral system, labor collectives lost the legal right to nominate candidates. The principle of pluralism assumed participation of candidates from initiative groups of citizens, public associations and political parties. Since December, 1993, till May, 1995, elections were held in 84 regions of Russia.

On March 27, 1994, legislature elections of Kemerovo region were held. Candidates were nominated by 47 parties, movements and public organizations, which made up the diversity of the political palette of the late 20th of Kuzbas. For 35 seats in the Legislative Assembly of Kemerovo region, 149 candidates were registered, 30 deputies were elected. Deputy V. Nalyotov explained the results of the elections by the transition to socio-political formation, which resulted in "the removal of labor from the management processes. This factor deserves special attention, not by chance in the Legislative Assembly there was not a single worker or farmer, but also no one representative of the technical intelligentsia ... "[4].

Deputy corps of the first legislature of Kemerovo region consisted of representatives from different strata of society and groups of different political orientation. In its structure there was a retired person, a banker, a soldier, ten business executives, five heads of administrations. The average age of deputies was 45, the youngest of them was 26, and the oldest was 61. In the Legislative Assembly of the first convocation there were only three women.

In Novosibirsk region first elections to the regional legislature were held on March 27, 1994. The Regional Electoral Commission registered 202 candidates for 49 seats from different parties, political movements, associations and groups of voters. The most active participants in the struggle for power were the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), Association "Choice of Russia", association "Block Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukin", political movement "Democratic Russia".

Deputy corps of the first legislature of Novosibirsk region was, in fact, the men's team (only 1 woman was MP). It included 17 members of executive and representative power of the region, federal authorities, and 9 heads of enterprises. Among the deputies there were representatives of different professional fields: engineering and technical workers - 4 deputies; Education - 3; Health - 1. According to party affiliation 2

people from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (hereinafter - CPRF) and 1 - from "Choice of Russia" received deputy mandates. All the other candidates were nominated by groups of voters. As a local correspondent, A. Zharinov, noted, Regional Council of Deputies of the first convocation may be called a "non-party bloc" [5]. It should be noted that all the heads of executive authorities and former deputies were members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) before Boris Yeltsin banned it.

Similar events took place in Tomsk region. At the time of the election campaign there were registered parties, movements and blocs: the regional organization of the Democratic Party of Russia, the regional branch of the People's Patriotic Party, movement "Choice of Russia", block "for labor and justice," which united candidates of CPRF, the Russian Communist Workers' Party (RCWP) and Tomsk regional association "Trud", and others. For 21 seats in the legislature, 78 candidates were registered. Deputy corps of the first legislature of Tomsk region of the first convocation consisted of 19 people [6]. Among them there were: 2 representatives of the electoral bloc "For labor and justice," one person from the Council of the trade unions Federation of Tomsk region, 3 members of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the remaining were non-party. We may note an interesting detail: in new legislature there was not a single representative from workers and peasants. As in the neighboring areas, one-third of the new structure has already had experience of parliamentary work. From 1994 to 2001 in Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions legislature was re-elected twice. In Kemerovo region, elections were held three times. The reason for this was hard confrontation between the executive and legislative branches of power in the region that affected the duration of the regional parliament. In all three areas under consideration elections were held, as in most regions of Russia, according to the majority system. The competition between the candidates was real because of the current multi-party system and the absence of rigid instructions from the federal government about the personal staff of local parliaments.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the development of a multiparty system as a component of political pluralism was influenced by the changes in the Russian legislation. In 2001, Federal Law of the Russian Federation № 95-FL "On political parties" was passed [7]. According to this law all previously created parties had to be registered. The parties were prescribed as the only form of public association, which has the right to nominate their own candidates for deputies and for other elective offices in the organs of state power. The law established a single national status of a political party. Coming into effect has led to the elimination of regional and interregional political public associations.

In 2009, Federal Law of the Russian Federation № 75-FL "On Amendments to the Federal Law", "On political parties" was passed in connection with the phased reduction in the minimum number of members [8]. And on April 2, 2012, Federal Law of the Russian Federation N 28-FL "On Amendments to the Federal Law", "On political parties" came into effect. It greatly

simplified the procedure for the establishment and registration of political parties. The minimum size of the organization reduced dozens-fold - now it is enough to have 500 registered members to apply for registration of the party to the Ministry of Justice [9]. In this regard, the number of parties wishing to participate in the political process, started to grow. This is evidenced by statistics of the electoral process.

In Kemerovo region the recent elections to the Council of People's Deputies of the fourth convocation were held on September 8, 2013. In contrast to the election campaign of 2008, people of Kemerovo elected 46 deputies, in 2008 there were 36 out of 400 candidates. The number of parties that nominated their candidates in 2013 had a fivefold increase and comprised 20 political associations. Following the elections, the Regional Council consisted of 44 deputies from "United Russia", one MP from "LDPR," one MP from "Fair Russia" [10].

In Tomsk region the last elections in the legislature were held on December 4, 2011. 106 candidates claimed for 42 deputy seats, including 7 parties and associations. Among them, the " Liberal Democratic Party", the "Communist Party", "United Russia", "Fair Russia", "Right Cause", "Patriots of Russia", "Yabloko". The Parliament included the representatives of four parties, "Liberal Democratic" – 4 MP, "Communist Party" - 5, "United Russia" – 9, "Fair Russia" - 3 MP. Only four of seven parties went into the regional parliament by a single election district. The other three did not overcome the required 5-percent barrier. It is interesting that in 2007 from party lists for Duma deputies of 5 political parties the following representatives were elected: "United Russia", "Union of Right Forces," "Communist Party", "the Liberal Democratic Party", "Fair Russia: Motherland / Pensioners / Life". On the basis of party affiliation five respective factions were formulated in Duma. In 2011, the ideology of the right-wing Liberals represented the party "Right Cause", which failed to get into the legislature.

In Novosibirsk region the last elections in the legislature of the sixth convocation were held on September 13, 2015. The Parliament was entered by the representatives of four parties per single election district: "Liberal Democratic", "Communist Party", "United Russia", "Fair Russia". The candidates from the parties "Yabloko", "Civil Platform" and "Patriots of Russia" could not achieve the required number of votes. These elections demonstrated the strong position of the winning parties in the political process. According to the vote of October 10, 2010, the elections showed the best dynamics. At that time, the "Fair Russia" was on the first place, and then came the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and "United Russia".

Thus, we can see that the membership of legislatures (legislative bodies of the regions of Western Siberia) reflects the multi-party system of the regional political process that has been formed for the last 20 years. According to the local election legislation, equal conditions for all candidates, regardless of their social status and party affiliation, were formally created everywhere. The elections were open and had an alternative character. The election results show the

confidence of voters to the so-called "parliamentary four": "United Russia", "Communist Party", "Liberal Democratic ", "Fair Russia". These parties, statistically, are the most stable players of the political process, taking part in all authorities' election campaigns.

Conclusion

In the study, it was found that the implementation of the principle of political pluralism in the late 20 - early 21 centuries, contributed to the formation and establishment of the regional legislatures. They are radically different from the Soviet representative bodies of territories and regions. The main difference is that the Soviets of People's Deputies, functioned until 1993, only legislated at the federal and republican levels. At the same time, the Party Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had always had the "last word" in the political decision-making. In practice, the Soviets acted as an instrument of legitimation, approving what has already been decided by the party. Now, with the change of the political system of the state and the adoption of the new Constitution, the new legislative (representative) power has a real opportunity to legislate at the level of entities of the Russian Federation.

The novelty in the political practice of the transition period revealed that the formation of regional parliaments took place according to the normative legal acts of entities themselves taking into account regional specifics. As a result, this led to the diversity in the electoral process, structure, size and forms of functioning of the regional legislatures. Researchers unanimously claim that political pluralism as a principle of social and political development is based on the simultaneous existence of various independent political phenomena [2], [11,12]. In the regional political process, pluralism was fully manifested in the electoral marathon of the new state authorities - the legislatures. Dynamism of the regional political process was set by an alternative choice with all their classic rules of the registration of candidates of different political forces, electoral propaganda, the creation of the electoral system, etc.

The transition to the new system of political relations in the neighboring regions of Western Siberia (Kemerovo, Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions) passed with struggle. We identified two historical stages: 1) formation of regional legislatures (late 20th century), 2) their development and sustainable operation (beginning of the 21st century). The basis of the separation is the following criterion - the position of the regional legislature as the functional subject of political power.

The first stage was the period of the provincial legislature of the first two convocations of Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions (1994-1997 and 1997-2001). In Kemerovo region, it was the work of the Legislative Assembly of the first two convocations (1994-1996, 1997-1999) and the regional Council of People's Deputies of the first convocation in the period from 1999 to 2001. Over the years, the optimal structure of the legislature and the apparatus for enhanced support for parliamentary work were established. The first phase

contributed to understanding of the characteristics of parliamentary activity and the deputy self-determination. Regional legislatures, acting under the Charter of the region gained their own political space and the status of a competent authority subject. The second stage has no finish date, because today the regional legislatures are developing steadily and operate within the rules of the political process established by the state.

Comparing the results of electoral processes of two stages, we can identify strengths and weaknesses of elections as a legitimating mechanism of political power. The advantages are the following facts: real competition between candidates in a multi-party system, the absence of stringent guidelines from the federal government over the alleged personnel of local parliaments, as well as the fact that candidates could be nominated now by the initiative groups, political parties, public associations, and even be self-nominated.

However, the election results cannot adequately reflect the political preferences of the population, because in Kemerovo, Novosibirsk and Tomsk regions voting turnout ranged from 28% to 42%. At the same time, it should be noted that all election commissions used their administrative resources completely. Analysis of election campaigns in the regional parliaments identified manipulations in the electoral process. These are setting deadlines for the election, districts divisions, affecting the number of deputies, the support of deputies from the "preferred list." M. Chiru indicates that what matters most for the degree of campaign individualization in a complex setting with three electoral channels and multiple candidacies is the lowest electoral tier in which the candidate runs, irrespective of her/his electoral security [13].

Analysis of the personal staff of legislatures indicates that the majority of deputies are people who have finances to conduct the election campaign by means of administrative resources. In general, they are managers of large enterprises and heads of local administrations. In fact, we can see that professional corporate structure of legislatures was formed. It defined the basic directions of legislative activity.

In the regional legislatures MPs from the so-called "parliamentary four" are represented: "United Russia", "CPRF", "LDPR", "Fair Russia". A comparative analysis of the electoral process shows a negative trend in the development of political pluralism. Therefore, at the first stage, during the formation of regional legislatures (late 20th century), the candidates from 47 parties, movements and non-governmental organizations (Kemerovo region) took part in the elections. At the second stage, during the development and stability of the legislatures (the beginning of the 21st century), no more than 20 political parties and associations were involved. It is hard not to agree with G.S.Selikhov, who states that "political pluralism in the conditions of the Russian party system development is a simulation, formal," apex-government "and therefore limited" [14].

Thus, the analysis of the regional political process shows that there become fewer centers of political power. Choice of ideological concepts and programs is limited by the parties of the federal level. Political

subjects that reflect the interests of the local context and social activities are not represented in regional legislatures. By comparing the levels of support for different parties in each region with their respective political platforms, it is found that four major divisions are shaping the electoral geography: religion, ethnicity, regional economic prosperity, and previous state association [15]. Election based on ethnicity has a very negative impact on the sustainability of democracy and decentralization [16].

We conclude that political pluralism, as an opportunity to express the interests of social subjects in the framework of democratic debate and the search for compromise solutions, clearly manifested itself during the formation of regional legislatures (late 20th century). At the present stage we observe "the preservation" of political pluralism, and as a result, decrease of the citizens' interest in the activities of political associations. This is evidenced by the turnout during the elections; in this regard, some researchers speak about "sleeping" voters [17]. Political pluralism is a reflection of the prevailing political culture of the society. Perhaps during the period of political process stabilization, "crystallization" in the political environment takes place. In this regard, "parliamentary four" is an indicator of the level of political pluralism, coupled with the development of a multiparty system in Russia. Changes in the laws and regulations that govern the questions of the election and party systems in the Russian political process could have a serious effect on its further development.

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