

Problems and prospects of technocratic model of government

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Abstract. The paper deals with technocracy as one of the ways to organize the political life of society and variants of the state system. The paper analyzes the concept of technocracy and provides an overview of the main classical concepts of technocracy. It states that the concept of technocracy does not have an unambiguous definition, but has three basic features. Classical technocracy relies on the principle of exclusivity and the ideal of aristocratic rule laid down in Plato's writings. The paper describes a new - deliberative model of technocracy, tailored on the principle of inclusiveness. Deliberative technocracy is a kind of technocracy by which political (and, in particular, state) decisions are taken based on expert opinion. Expert opinion is shaped following intellectual operations and is delineated in expert findings. Deliberative technocracy proclaims neither the power of abstract demos (mass men) nor the power of intellectual aristocracy. Deliberative technocracy brings a new force onto the political stage, otherwise referred to as experts. Thus, deliberative technocracy implies the majority rule, not the minority... but it is the rule of a qualified and competent majority.

Keywords: politics, technocracy, democracy, government, experts

1 Introduction

The term "technocracy" has ancient Greek roots and is derived from the two nouns, κράτος (*kratos*) and τέχνη (*tekhne*).

The noun κράτος means "strength", "power". There are some words that has it as a part – bureaucracy, democracy, autocracy, etc.

The noun τέχνη means "art", "craft", "profession", "skill".

Thus, the concept of technocracy is defined as the power of professionals.

One of the first researchers to use this concept was William Smith, an American engineer. In 1932, in *The Nation*, he published an article entitled Letter to the Editorial Department, in which Smith referred to a new philosophy of management (he called it technocracy) [1].

Modern literature proposes multiple definitions of the concept of technocracy.

Ernst R. Berndt defines *technocracy* as "a form of government in which the decision-maker or makers are selected based on their expertise in a given area of responsibility, particularly with regard to scientific or technical knowledge. This system explicitly contrasts with representative democracy, the notion that elected representatives should be the primary decision-makers in government though it does not necessarily imply eliminating elected representatives" [2].

The Dictionary of Philosophy, Logic and Methodology of Science provides the following definition: "Technocracy is the establishment of political power of technicians, which will ensure that society is governed not by the interest of one class or another, but by scientific knowledge applied by groups of technicians for the greater public good" [3].

There is no single definition of technocracy generally accepted in modern literature.

Centeno believed that the concept of technocracy is vague and has limited descriptive and predictive value [4].

Gunnell wrote that it was impossible to give a precise definition of technocracy [5].

Nevertheless, three basic tenets of technocracy can be derived from all technocratic concepts:

Technocratic governance is based on a scientific methodology.

The political (public) decision-making centre is made up solely of professionals, experts.

Decisions are made for benefit of society at large, rather than any class or social stratum.

In the Soviet Union, technocracy was defined as a stratum composed of the highest functionaries governing monopolistic production, while technocrats were defined as the highest bourgeois stratum [6].

This view is quite narrow and does not deliver the gist of technocracy, because there is no distinction

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between the concepts of “technocrat” and “political technologist”.

A political technologist is a professional (specialist) hired by a political authority or class to develop ways and methods for achieving corporate (class) interests. Political technologists, just like technocrats, look up to scientific methodology (for example, sociological measurement) and are master hands at their sphere. However, unlike political strategists, technocrats fulfill orders from civil society. Thus, society is considered to be a requestor for technocratic services.

Plato and his scholar Aristotle, the forerunner of the technocratic tradition in the history of European thought, wrote about a social orientation of technocratic rule.

In his treatise *The State*, Plato highlighted five types of government, one of which referred to as aristocracy is good and correct. Plato called timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny the “evil” and wrong types of government [7].

The Platonic claim is that the population of an ideal (aristocratic) state falls into three classes, each of which bears three principles: 1) the lower class is a class of craftsmen and farmers bearing a covetous principle, 2) the middle class is a class of guards bearing a sensual principle, 3) the highest class is a class of philosophers bearing a rational principle.

Representatives of each strata should be engaged solely in their own business and not interfere in the affairs of others. Plato believed that philosophers should be assigned the ruling class in a just aristocratic state.

Subject to the goals pursued by the ruling, Plato’s scholar Aristotle distinguished between right and wrong forms of government [8].

Forms of government are wrong if those in power pursue private goals.

If it is about a benefit for one ruler, it is tyranny; if it is about a group of wealthy rulers who pursue personal gains, it is oligarchy. Finally, if it is a power of the poor who are trying to satisfy their personal needs, it is a democratic form of government. Moreover, democracy can degrade into ochlocracy (a mob of people demanding to satisfy their whims), which is the case in crises.

There are three correct forms of government including monarchy (the monarch rules with absolute power over the state for the greater public good), aristocracy (strength is in the hands of a small, privileged class ruling for the common good) and polity (power of the majority, having an average income and ruling for the good of society).

Thus, we can say that technocratic rule is possible only in the countries that have a proper and good state system, whether it is the Aristotelian monarchy, aristocracy and polity, or the Platonic aristocracy, like the power of the sage.

In the 20th century, technocratic views were further developed in the writings of American engineers, economists and sociologists William Smith, Thorstein Bunde Veblen, John Kenneth Galbraith, James Burnham and others.

For T. Veblen, the leading force in a technocratic society (which is a society of a “new order” era) is technicians or engineering and technical intellectuals [9].

In his publications, J. Galbraith places “technostructure” at the heart of a technocratic society, which is a vast hierarchical organization (from ordinary engineers to directors) composed of carriers of technical expertise. Galbraith calls them bearers of the collective mind and collective decisions [10].

The American philosopher, sociologist and economist James Burnham emphasized that humanity is in transition from a capitalist society to a managerial society.

The social dominance of managers in a managerial society will rest with managers, whose power will be grounded on an economic framework having at its core state ownership of the main factors of production [11].

In the second half of the 20th century, technocracy developed in the concepts of post-industrial (information) society.

The American sociologist John Stewart Bell believed that rapid scientific and technological progress would eventually end up with information and knowledge production becoming the mainspring behind the post-industrial economy.

This means that a new class of intellectuals will dominate in the post-industrial society. Classical concepts of technocracy are based on the principle of exclusivity.

Exclusivity (from Latin: *exclusivus*) is synonymous with elitism.

The Dictionary by Efremova defines exclusivity as belonging to or provided exclusively to a single person [12].

The principle of exclusivity incorporated in the organization of governance means that few people participate in governing the state. First of all, it is a small group of people – professionals who form the authorities and govern the state. Philosophers (like in the Platonic ideas), technicians, engineers, managers, members of the technostructure (like in the classical ideas of technocracy of the 20th century) may get the nod.

The idea of aristocratic government (the power of professional aristocrats) originates in Platonic concepts by which philosophers are the highest class in an ideal and just state.

Alfred Whitehead argued that all post-Platonic European philosophy is mere notes in the margins of Plato’s texts. This is true, at least partially, when it comes to technocratic tradition. Indeed, many European technocratic theorists were in one way or another influenced by Platonic technocratic ideas.

The problem, though, is that the principle of exclusivity and the ideal of aristocratic rule, which are the backbone of the Platonic conception, contradict The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21 of which states that every citizen is entitled to participate in government.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in particular, and the International Bill of Human Rights in general, are the greatest achievement in human history.

They protect citizens from arbitrariness and violence, prevent military conflicts, and overcome political crises.

The Russian philosopher and scientist Mair Makhaev developed a new model of technocratic government, which, instead of the principle of exclusivity and the ideal of aristocratic rule, proposes the principle of inclusiveness. It is referred to as deliberative technocracy.

The paper will give a brief overview of deliberative technocracy.

The paper aims to allow a deeper examination of the concept of deliberative technocracy.

2 Materials and Methods

The study was carried out using both traditional and modern methods – systematic, structural-functional and comparative. The modeling method is also used.

3 Results and Discussion

Instead of the principle of exclusivity, deliberative technocracy relies on the principle of inclusiveness.

The principle of inclusiveness is a principle of organizing public administration that allows all citizens to be involved in forming government bodies and monitoring their activities, regardless of whether they are part of a community of intellectuals, scientists or engineers.

Competency is deemed to be the main criteria for participation in setting up public authorities and managing the state machinery.

The term “competency” is found to be in the same synonymic row with such words as “awareness”, “knowledge”, “information”, “preparedness”, “highly competent”, “literacy”. The antonym to the word “competence” is the word “ignorance”.

The New Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts provides a fairly clear definition of competency: “Unlike competence that is commonly viewed as some expertise, abilities, skills acquired in the course of training and forming the contents of such training, competency involves properties, personal qualities determining abilities of an individual to perform activities based on the knowledge acquired and skills and abilities formed” [13].

Competency is a key concept that gave impetus to the formation and development of the technocratic tradition.

Thus, Plato believed that in a fair state “... each single person should do one of the things required by the state, and, moreover, just the thing he is most capable of based on his innate gifts” [14].

Representatives of all three classes (craftsmen, farmers, guards and philosophers) should be occupied exclusively with their own businesses and not interfere in the affairs of others.

If we articulate this Platonic idea within the idea of competency, we get the following alignment: 1) each person is qualified in their sphere: guards are qualified for protection and defense, craftsmen and farmers – for production of public goods and trade, philosophers – for

knowledge of eternally existing being; 2) no one should interfere in other people’s competences: i.e. craftsmen and farmers should not deal with defense affairs, guards should not trade, and all together they should not rule the state. It is the prerogative of philosophers alone to govern the state, as only philosophers possess the virtue of wisdom, which prevails in a fair state; philosophers know how to govern the state properly... Plato is convinced that philosophers must be the ruling class in a fair state.

In Veblen’s conception, the most competent (and hence the most progressive social group) are technicians, the engineering and technical elite.

Galbraith united competent people within a technostucture being perceived as a vast hierarchical organization (from ordinary engineers to directors) composed of bearers of technical knowledge. The members of the technostucture are the bearers of collective knowledge and collective decisions.

In his publications, Burnham relates managers, purposefully geared to integrate new technologies and inventions into production, to the carriers of competency.

In the conception of deliberative technocracy, the bearers of competence are expert groups (communities).

Deliberative technocracy is a model of technocracy whereby expert opinion is the basis for making political (and, in particular, state) decisions. An expert opinion is molded based on inspection and is conveyed through relevant (expert) reviews.

The role of inspection is important because the modern world, on the one hand, makes our daily lives simpler through rapid technological advancement and availability of information, but, on the other hand, huge flows of information and high speeds with which these flows change and affect our lives, make it very difficult.

The authors of The Atlas of Russian Think Tanks articulated this problem quite clearly: “... how to surf these changes and gain reliable knowledge about the world around us, which has suddenly become so incomprehensible and unpredictable? Over the past centuries, science has been ready to present this knowledge to humanity. At first, it was able to find tools for discovering the world around, and then it got close to the most challenging task – to study the society and the man as such. Now all these objects of study are changing at a high speed, mutually influencing each other: humanity is able to change the world around up to its complete transformation and even destruction, society and man, under the influence of technological and other changes, seem ready to lose many traditional features. Exploring these complex changes requires new tools and approaches that are at the interface of mature branches of knowledge and familiar forms of research activities, at the nexus of theory and practice, when the knowledge acquired should be immediately implemented into the technological, economic or social processes (Atlas of Russian Think Tanks) [15].

A new tool can be what is called “think-tank” in the USA – idea factories, brain banks, analytical centers.

In the conception of deliberative technocracy, expert communities (or expert factories) serve as “think-tanks”.

M. Makhaev, a theorist of deliberative technocracy, in his book *Paragraphs on New Technocracy: Deliberative Model and its Foundations* outlined the main theses of the conception of deliberative technocracy:

1. Society is politically underpinned by the values that prevail.

2. Values govern a person's behavior, arrange their worldview, and shape their attitude to reality.

3. Only fundamental changes in value attitudes alter the social superstructure, including in production relations.

4. Values are embodied in a conceptual system within which a person thinks and acts.

The conceptual structure is naturally metaphorical.

It is the structure of conceptual system by which we can determine the originality of value attitudes. In other words, the conceptual system encodes societal values.

5. The metaphor "politics is war" is rooted in modern homo politicus. It forces to think about politics in terms of war and business. It shapes an appropriate political culture in which politics is a resource that yields dividends desired. This resource must be conquered at any cost: to get rid of a competitor, to gain the support from ignorant mobs, to attract big investors.

This political culture brings the value of confrontation to the forefront and relegates intellectual values to the background. All this inevitably brings about the dictatorship of the oligarchy.

6. Values can change over time. A new conceptual system becomes a reflection of value shifts, and new root metaphors begin to control our consciousness.

7. A root metaphor promoted by next generation technocratic society is "politics is certification". Power gives way to intelligence; struggle is replaced by selection; the best are selected and the best selects – excellent experts, master hands at their sphere.

8. Whereas in democracies the authorities are formed by universal, secret, direct voting for candidates and political parties or by appointments, in a technocratic state it is solely based on selection results provided by experts.

The supreme sovereign will of the people is said to reside in expert-analytical activity, a new form of "people's will". It gives impetus to the development of legislative, executive and judicial branches of state power at all levels.

9. Classical and new (deliberative) technocracies vary in emphasis.

Classical technocracy overemphasizes technicians, sees scientific knowledge and scientific and technological progress as a cure-all and does not pay due attention to the value factor.

Deliberative technocracy tends to seek a balance between technism and humanism, scientific knowledge and value aspects of social life, shows a cautious attitude towards scientific and technological progress [16].

A philosophical basis of deliberative technocracy is analytic philosophy. The strength of analytic philosophy lies in the fact that it does not imply a dogmatic view of the world nor does it provide ready-made recipes for solving problems. Analytic philosophy provides a

methodology, rather than an image of the world, gives a set of tools, rather than a ready-made construction. Analytic philosophy is a critical philosophy: even methodology as such can be the object of its critical studies.

4 Conclusion

All in all, the paper outlined the deliberative conception of technocracy by providing the definition of deliberative technocracy and its basic principle (the principle of inclusiveness of technocratic government).

The society of the future is a technocratic society.

Daniel Bell is absolutely right when he asserts that "in the society of the future, howsoever defined, the scientist, professional, specialist and technocrat will play a predominant role in the political life of society" [17]. A post-industrial phase of human development will certainly create conditions for the victory of technocracy.

Technocracy will arrive just like a beautiful summer does after a long winter.

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