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**AN OPTIMAL GOVERNMENT MODEL FOR THE CRISIS OF**  
**CLASSICAL DEMOCRACY**

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### Abstract

Currently, the number of democratic republics is largest in history. However, a number of events that took place in the 21st century – the change of political regimes after mass protests in Europe and some Arab states, along with a decrease in the electoral turnout and an increase in the level of political absenteeism (including in the countries with traditionally strong democratic traditions) have challenged the classical model of democracy. It seems that the classical model of democracy is a systemic crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an optimal model for the new phase of development of society and its democratic structure. The article provides a brief overview of theoretical concepts of democracy, as well as describes a new model of government – PES (Power of Expert Society) developed by Russian scientists from the Faculty of Philosophy and Psychology of the Dagestan State University. The PES concept focuses on decision-making. The participation of experts in the political process when forming government bodies includes an examination of election programs, an assessment of candidate; at the stage of control over the government bodies, a regular examination of their activities (political "audit") is required. The PEN concept has two versions. In the "strong" version, the expert communities are endowed with the functions of making political decisions (electing deputies, governors, mayors; dismissing). In the "weak" version, the decisions of expert communities are of a recommendatory nature, and the final decision is made by the voters.

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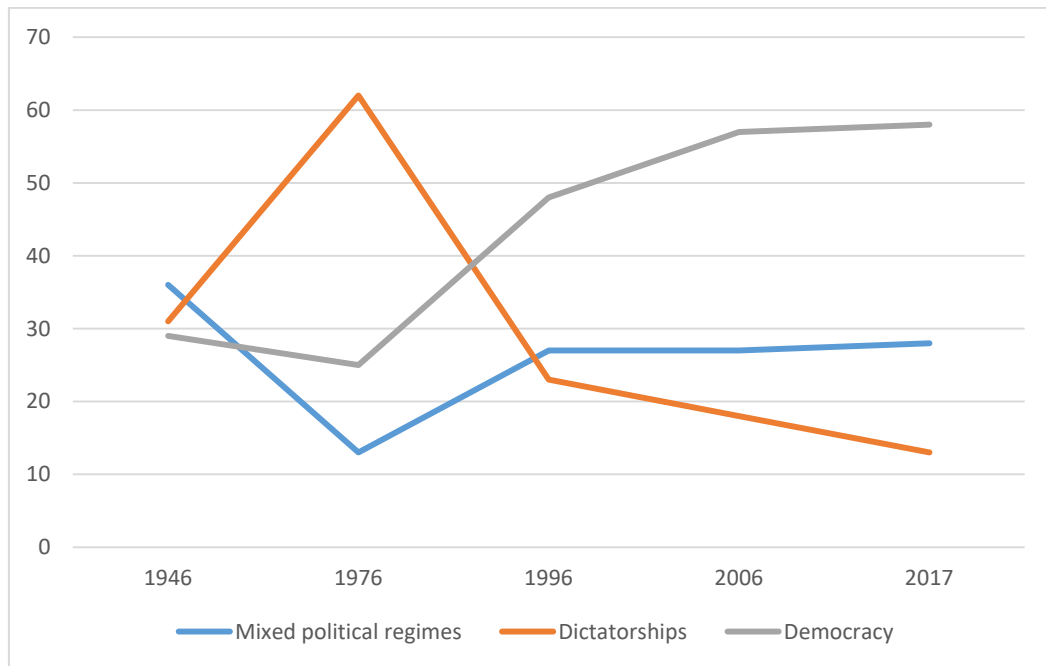


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## 1. Introduction

According to the calculations by Robert Dahl, if at the beginning of the twentieth century there were 8 democratic states (17 % of the total number of all states), by the end of the century the number of democracies increased to 86, which is 45 % of the total number of states (191 states).

The trend towards the establishment of democratic political systems continued in the 21st century. In 2017, according to the Center for Systemic Peace (2017) there were 57 % of democracies (Figure 01).



**Figure 1.** Retrospective correlation of regimes (%)

In the liberal philosophical paradigm, political systems that do not follow the liberal principles (for example, democratic systems in the USSR, China, and Libya) were excluded from the democratic ones. If we approach the issue objectively, illiberal political systems have certain features; in these countries, there are elections, constitutions (constitutional declarations), representative bodies, but a different (illiberal) philosophy is adopted, which interprets the ideals and mechanisms of democracy in a different way.

With this approach, there are even more democratic republics.

Today, the number of democracies is largest in the history of civilizations.

Currently, many different definitions of democracy as a political system have been proposed. In the most general terms, democracy means a political system in which the highest and only source of power is citizens, who have equal political rights and freedoms.

The classical model of democracy, which formed the basis of the statehood of many modern democratic states, was formed during the 17<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **2. Problem Statement**

However, a number of political events that took place in the XXI century (military actions in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya; the change of political regimes after large-scale protests in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Ukraine and a number of North African states ("color revolutions", "Arab spring"), mass protests in Belarus after the presidential elections in August 2020) brought the issue of classical democracy to the fore. It seems that the classical model of democracy is in a systemic crisis.

An indicator of the crisis of the classical model of democracy is a constant decline in the electoral turnout, an increase in the level of political absenteeism. The European Union is experiencing serious problems: if in 1979, during the first all-European elections, when the EU included only 9 states, the average voter turnout was 63 %, in 2009 it was 43 % (despite the fact that the EU includes 27 states). An analysis of the electoral turnout in elections to the European Parliament from 1979 to 2009 (Gorchakova, 2010) has shown a constant decline: 1979 – 63 %; 1984 – 61 %; 1989 – 58.5 %; 1994 – 56.8 %; 1999 – 49.4 %; 2004 – 45.5 %; 2009 – 43.08 %.

The existence of democratic procedures does not guarantee the preservation of society from extremist forces. For example, the research of 197 cases of dismantling the democratic systems in 1973-2018 conducted by Milan Svolik showed that in 88 cases the dismantling was carried out by political elites who came to power through the democratic procedures.

At the same time, Svolik emphasized that the reason is that many autocrats are very popular with citizens.

Many researchers come to the conclusion that the classical model of democracy is in a systemic crisis (Ferrajoli, 2006).

The problem of democracy is topical for Russia against the background of political processes taking place in the country in the post-Soviet period.

Thus, the search for new models in the context of the crisis of the classical model of democracy is an important and urgent task.

In modern political science, various options for solving this problem have been proposed.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of this research is an optimal model of the democratic structure of society in the context of the crisis of the classical model of democracy.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim is to analyze the problem of finding an optimal model of the democratic structure of society. There will be a brief description of a new model of government – PES (Power of Expert Networks), developed by Russian scientists from the Faculty of Philosophy and Psychology of the Dagestan State University.

## 5. Research Methods

The study was carried out using both traditional and modern methods (historical, systemic, structural-functional, and comparative).

The empirical material was composed of scientific articles, monographs, dissertations, which cover various concepts of democracy, as well as international legal acts, resolutions, memoranda, constitutional projects, etc.

## 6. Findings

A large number of scientific works have been devoted to the problem of an optimal democratic structure of modern society, various theoretical concepts and models of democracy have been created.

In the concept of participatory democracy, democracy is interpreted as the direct rule of citizens with a high participatory political culture, which is formed according to the Patman principle “learn to participate by participating”.

At the same time, participatory democracy requires “civic preparation and civic virtue for effective participation in discussions and decision-making processes” (Barber, 1995, p. 923).

Citizens are well-informed, politically active, have moved away from private interests "as far as the public sphere is divided from the private" (Barber, 1995, p. 924).

Thus, in the participatory democracy, the problem of dictatorship of the administrative elite (“tyranny of the minority”) should be resolved through the active participation of citizens in decision-making processes.

The concept of consociational democracy was developed by Leiphart.

Leiphart proceeded from the fact that modern society is a multi-component formation, consisting of certain segments, which are distinguished by linguistic, ethnic, racial, religious and other parameters (“segmental differences”).

Leiphart identified four basic dimensions of consociational democracy:

- exercise of power by a large coalition of political leaders of, which implies the creation of a coalition government with the participation of all parties representing the main strata of society;
- proportionality as the main principle of political representation, distribution of posts in the state apparatus and state budget funds;
- mutual veto or “coinciding majority” rule, acting as an additional guarantee of the vital interests of the minority, which implies a qualified majority when making a final decision (two-thirds or three-quarters of the votes);
- a high degree of autonomy of each segment in the management (Leiphart, 1997).

In the concept of pluralistic democracy (Dahl, 1971), the emphasis is on the interaction and competition of many political forces in the struggle for power, none of which can dominate (since each of them reflects only part of the interests).

A state can be considered democratic if various associations (parties, interest groups) actively participate in the political process.

Due to a variety of positions, it is impossible to achieve full agreement. Therefore, the basis of a compromise is the majority principle, while the protection of rights of minorities is also ensured.

Robert Dahl introduces the concept of polyarchy as a political order with two fundamental properties: the broad civil rights and the ability to remove officials by voting.

Polyarchy as a system can function on the basis of seven basic mechanisms:

1. regular free and fair elections.
2. the adult population has the right to participate in these elections.
3. Election of officers; the possibility of displacement of officials during the elections.
4. The right of the adult population to participate in elections as candidates
5. Freedom of expression.
6. Free access to alternative media not controlled by the government.
7. The right to create independent associations (interest groups, parties) to influence the political course of the government and to participate in the struggle for power

The pluralistic concept gives rise to a number of problems: many citizens are not members of one or another association, which means that the problem of lack of representation of the interests of broad strata of society will arise; in addition, due to the acute struggle of powerful interest groups, the political system of society can be paralyzed.

In the elite concept of democracy, society consists of the elite (the ruling minority) and the masses (the non-ruling majority). Since the masses do not have the necessary competencies and knowledge to make right decisions, they voluntarily transfer this right to a more experienced and competent elite through the election procedures.

“Democracy means that the people have the opportunity to accept or not accept those people who should govern them” (Schumpeter, 1995, p. 62).

A number of provisions of the elite theory of democracy are presented in the work by Day and Ziegler “Democracy for the Elite. An Introduction to American Politics” (Dai & Ziegler, 1984).

- the minority distributes material values, and the majority does not determine the state policy;
- elites are formed mainly from representatives of the highest socio-economic stratum of society;
- the transition to the elite should be slow and lengthy to maintain the stability and avoid radicalism;
- the elites are united in their basic values of the social system and preserve the system itself;
- state policy reflects dominant interests of the elite;
- the ruling elites are subject to a weak influence from the indifferent part of citizens (Baranov, 2007).

The emergence of the concept of deliberative democracy was associated with an attempt to overcome the crisis of the representative system (Zolo, 2010).

In the concept of deliberative democracy, the procedure for making political decisions is based on the active participation of citizens (deliberation) in a rational public dialogue (discourse), in which a rational public position is developed. According to Habermas (2001), “in the association of free and equal citizens, everyone should be able to understand himself as the authors of those laws, the connection with whom each citizen feels” (p. 72).

Habermas (1996) also emphasized that "... the discursive or deliberative model replaces the contractual model: the legal community constitutes on the basis of discursively achieved agreements".

The difference between deliberation and debates lies in the fact that in debates opponents defend their positions, and deliberation presupposes the enrichment of a person's position, the willingness to correct a point of view after being acquainted with alternative views. The goal is not the victory of one individual over another one, but the development of a true position.

The concept of deliberative democracy was further developed in the works by Gutmann Dryzek (2002); (Gutmann & Thompson, 1998).

In addition to these concepts of democracy, there are some others: the concepts of legal democracy, techno-democracy, information democracy, delegative democracy, the system theory of democracy, the theory of agonistic democracy, etc. A detailed analysis of the concepts of democracy is presented in the works by (Held, 2014; Grachev & Madatov, 2004).

Currently, on the basis of the Dagestan State University, a new model of government is being developed. The emphasis is on the mechanisms for forming government bodies and controlling their activities. The concept of democracy is inextricably linked with the concept of an expert community. Therefore, one of the key conditions for a new democracy is stable expert communities (ES).

The PES concept assumes the activation of the expert potential of society and participation of experts organized in ES by thematic criteria (ES in economics and finance, ES in science and education, etc.) in the political process (examination of pre-election programs, assessment of candidates, control over government bodies (expert audit).

The PES concept has two versions.

In the "strong" version, civil society represented by citizens with the right to vote grants to the ES the exclusive right to form government bodies and the right of regular expert control over their activities through the development and improvement of criteria and assessment methods (expert assessment method, expert analysis, "brainstorming", expert reviews, etc.), which should be enshrined in the Constitution.

In the "weak" version, civil society concludes a contract (agreement) with the ES to conduct an objective examination of electoral programs, assess the political and intellectual potential of candidates, whose are broadcast in the media and become a reference point for voters on the eve of voting. Regular expert control over the activities of government bodies are the basis for dismissal decisions (through electronic voting). However, the final decision remains with the civil society.

Thus, in accordance with the "weak" PES version, the ES decisions are of a recommendatory, and in accordance with the "strong" version, all decisions are made by the ES.

The PES concept of public administration is required for civil society to improve the quality of choice in a situation of massive use of political technologies, administrative resources, as well as to exercise effective and full control over the activities of the government bodies, since the citizens are not able to do it themselves. In addition, when creating reports, officials and deputies resort to political advertising tools.

The PES concept changes the scheme – ESs are intermediaries between civil society (people as the only and supreme source of power) and the state.

At the same time, experts also belong to civil society (since they can take part in activities of associations, parties, the media, elections). But since citizens cannot have competencies in all areas, specialization creates the basis for ESs.

For example, experts in science and education can conduct an examination of that part of election programs that relates to science and education, assess the potential of relevant candidates (for example, a candidate for the ministers of science and education), conduct regular examinations of state policy in science and education, etc.

The "weak" version can work in societies with both liberal and socialist democratic systems, modernizing them by improving the quality of decisions made.

The proposed concept is being developed taking into account technical achievements of modern society, using the resources of "electronic democracy", network technologies (personal electronic offices of experts, voters, candidates, etc.).

Special computer expert systems will play an auxiliary role in examining election programs, reports of government bodies, etc.

## 7. Conclusion

The problem of finding an optimal model of the democratic structure of society in the context of the crisis of classical democracy is one of the central problems in political science and political philosophy. Political scientists and philosophers have proposed various options for its solution. Each concept focuses on different points: within the pluralistic concept – on the pluralism of the political space; in the elite concept, the primary role is assigned to the elite; in the concept of deliberative democracy – to a rational dialogue, etc.

In the PES concept, the emphasis is placed on the expert potential of society (a kind of “expert noosphere”), the active participation of experts in the political process. Experts are the driving force of development of democracy.

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