

Bureaucratic Apparatus in Modern Russia: Features of Functioning and Ways of Optimization

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Abstract: The article analyzes Russia's socio-economic development, reveals main features of operation of bureaucratic apparatus in modern Russia and proposes measures to optimize the performance of public administration system.

Key words: Bureaucratic apparatus • Officialdom • Officials • Civil society • System of public administration • Communication channels • "Institutional trap"

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary stage of socio-economic development of Russia is characterized by the presence of deep structural problems in the system of public administration. Modern Russia faces the urgent problem, which deals not only with democratic reforms and making a civil society, but also with building an effective system of management oriented to effective solutions of urgent socio-economic problems of the society.

The management of the state is performed by a bureaucratic mechanism, which is contextually defined as the highest bureaucratic apparatus of civil and municipal employees (officials), to whom a function of performing the routine public management is assigned. Here it is necessary to point out that we associate the bureaucratic apparatus not only with the representatives of legislative and executive powers, but also with numerous employees of both judicial authorities and security agencies. Methods and forms of management of contemporary bureaucracy are being currently blamed by both the society and business structures.

At the same time, many scientists believe that bureaucracy operating as a rational management system is a necessary element of the socio-economic system [1]. The bureaucratic apparatus is necessary for both a regular performance of any political system and normal functioning of the society as well as its development. In case of the absence of this apparatus, not only is the

management of everyday social life impossible, but also the dominant political system fails to exist and operate normally [2].

The objective of this research is to reveal peculiarities of bureaucratic apparatus functioning in modern Russia for developing the mechanism, which shall optimize its functioning.

On the basis of the empiric studies, we revealed and generalized the features of bureaucratic apparatus functioning in Russia. In our opinion, the main features are the following:

- Mental and psychological feature of society's perception of the authorities. Russian citizens still perceive the authorities of any levels as something sacred, unattainable and thus being out of control and censure. The society regards officials as "celestials" who are unattainable rather than managers who are obliged to perform as social intermediaries in the process of achieving a certain level of socio-economic development. This perception has provoked a paradoxical situation. It turns out that it is not the authority which serves its people, but people who serve their authority. In this context, it is relevant to speak about "dogmatic lack of freedom" of Russian citizens. The dogma of the individual prevailing over the state was best described by the Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman: "To the free man, the

country is the collection of individuals who compose it, not something over and above them... He regards government as a means, an instrumentality, neither a grantor of favors and gifts, nor a master or God to be blindly worshiped and served" [3]. In consciousness of the Russian population, the authority possesses properties of self-sufficiency, i.e. independence from the society. Thus, according to the surveys conducted by the Levada Center, only one tenth of the respondents associated government with social protection and support of the poor [4]. The existing practice of public administration visually shows that Russian authority is not controlled by the society and all of the created mechanisms and instruments of public supervision are ineffective. Hence, the second feature of Russia's bureaucratic machine is:

- Lack of communication channels between the government and its society. It is necessary to point out that such channels formally exist (electronic government, the Internet, visiting hours for the citizens, etc.), but their functioning is practically inefficient and can't be often evaluated. Russia's authority and officials haven't got used to deferring to population's opinion. Russia lacks institutionalized traditions of government reports on its activities and intentions to its citizens and voters, according to the results of the last election to the State Duma on 4 December 2011, after which the country was overflowed with protest movements. Even after the mass political protests, Russia's bureaucratic machinery refused to establish communication on a constant basis. Despite numerous Internet resources being currently used for communication between the authority and its society, their efficiency is significantly low. According to I.M.Tyutyundzhi, the function of communication between the government and its society is at the initial stage of its development in Russia. Formally, all the channels are used for successful performance of the function, but its realization is of a formal character and the new communication channels themselves are used as tools oriented to information and content. Here imitation of communication takes place. A remote access to the state services through a single web-site of state services in Russia is practically popularized [5]. Thus, it is possible to conclude the Russian bureaucracy is guided in its operation by private interests and mercenary motives rather than public opinion and population needs;

- Lack of mechanisms of public control over the authorities. This peculiarity of the Russian bureaucratic apparatus is a direct consequence of the fact that in Russian practice there is no dialogue between the government and its people. At the present moment, the Russian society cannot effectively influence the socio-economic processes occurring in the country. The bureaucratic apparatus (authority) is uncontrolled, hence being unchangeable or uncorrectable. Contemporary Russia lacks instruments of influence on the officials. The cancellation of the elections of governors and mayors directly confirms this situation. The unwanted and inefficient manager (as far as not only public opinion but also the basic macroeconomic indexes of the territory development are concerned) can hold a high position in the structure of the officialdom because of the latent (lobbying) reasons. The existing pseudo-mechanisms of public control over the authority (declaration of incomes of the officials and their families, electronic Government of the Russian Federation, the instruments of social networks, etc.) are discredited by the public, having shown their absolute inefficiency;
- Corruption-oriented operation of Russian officials. It is worth saying we are not trying to tar all of the state employees with no exceptions but the events proves that a huge percentage of the state officials strain their official powers for their personal gains. This is also proved by numerous sociological researches conducted by both international organizations and domestic analysts. Thus, according to the estimation of Transparency International, the Russian Federation ranked 133rd in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). "Due to the CPI, Russia received a score of 28 of 100, thus ranking 133rd with Comoros, Guyana, Honduras, Iran and Kazakhstan. The rating doesn't register an effect of the last anticorruption campaign beginning with the arrest in Oboronservis – the data had been collected long before this" [6].

M.L. Alpidovskaya believes the bureaucracy is a link of the public economic relation chain. One of the integral features of its main activity must be an intermediation in realizing economic interests efficiently from private (personified) interests up to the state and national ones. However, contemporary situation witnesses a rupture in the system of economic interests in favor of personal ones. Thereafter, she mentions that personal interests of

bureaucracy are directly connected with its rent-oriented behavior, i.e. a search (extortion) of bureaucratic rent, which is formed and appropriated by officials considering the functions of state authority and management as their own private and personified profits. This is resulted in logical and fair conclusion that public service in Russia is a prestigious form of entrepreneurial activity rather than service devoted to the country and its society as a whole [7];

- Low qualification of the majority of officials. Low professional qualification of Russian officials becomes evident in incompetent administrative decisions taken by them at all levels of power. Moreover, the paradox of Russian bureaucratic apparatus is obvious in the fact that being under strict observance of formal requirements to competitors on replacement of minor, senior and leading positions of the state civil service, the main and highest positions don't always meet these requirements. If taking vacant higher positions in the Russian bureaucracy hierarchy, a great respect is paid to formal and informal relations in the structure of state authority rather than to professional quality of a public officer. This provokes curious situations when an officer responsible for some sphere of service isn't a specialist in this area and don't attract new specialists and experts to the process of making management decisions. A low qualification level of the majority of the Russian officials - as far as senior positions of state service are concerned – leads to a low operating efficiency of bureaucratic machine. A particular indignation of the society is caused by a low professional qualification of the power sector of bureaucracy (military officials, personnel of the bodies of internal affairs and federal security services, etc.).

According to the just remark of M.L.Alpidovskaya, from the point of view of economic theory, bureaucracy is defined as a non-market organization, which is financed on subsidizing funds contrary to those financed through the sales of its products in the market» [8]. Thus, a conclusion can be made that the bureaucratic apparatus of any state is not involved in the creation of added values in the real sector of the economy. In other words, the bureaucracy does not pursue the objective of deriving profit from their activities (except the wages of public employees). With due regard of all these facts, the

bureaucratic apparatus can be attributed to a social institute. However, here occurs a logical question: Why does the social institute have such privileges? Why is the salary of a doctor of higher category much less than the salary of a regional official at the Ministry (Committee) of Public Health? This social inequality is evident particularly in a comparison of the income level of the officials and employees of the social economic sector. This leads to a social stratification of the society that naturally affects not only the socio-economic situation but also the system of national security. According to one of the conclusions of the report.

"Level and Way of Living of Russian People in 1989-2009" prepared by the Higher School of Economics (HSE), for the last twenty years of the reforms the most wealthy Russians have become two times as rich and the most poor people have turned to be one and a half times as poor. Now the level of inequality in Russia is higher than in all the countries of the European Union and the countries participating in the OECD and is comparable with the indicators of Turkey and Mexico. 18.5 million Russians or 13.1% of the total population of the country still remain below the poverty line [9].

Under the current system of state management, a progressive economic development is impossible in Russia. Considerable resources (primarily financial ones) are channeled for maintenance of the bureaucratic apparatus rather than for development of production. For example, according to the budgetary list of Volgograd in the year of 2012, there were 1.8 billion rubles allocated for the support of officials, compared to only 1.5 billion rubles allocated for the development of the real economic sector and 1.2 billion rubles allocated for the system of public health [10]. And is it possible to talk about the economic development if the officials cost much more, than the development of the regional economy...

In this situation, we think that it would be desirable to cardinaly change a vector of the state management development at all levels of power. In particular, we propose:

- Real reduction of civil officials. The reduction must be carried out through elimination of some structures, which don't fit the concept of strategic development of the country. Liquidation of inefficient structural units should take place both at the regional (municipal) and federal levels. The structure of modern Russian bureaucratic machine should be optimized proceeding from the

goals of socio-economic development of the country. The actual reduction of bureaucratic structures will contribute to the release of financial resources, which can be used for the development of economy and social sphere;

- Optimization of administrative structures. For instance, the Federation Council of the RF. The way this institute operates nowadays is viewed as entirely ineffective and doesn't meet the objectives that are defined by the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The public is absolutely non-informed about the activities of the higher legislative body of the country. Under monopolization of executive power of the country, the functions of the Federation Council are reduced to the technical voting and to the approval of laws and decrees of the President of the Russian Federation; these significantly reduce its political importance in the eyes of public. At the same time, this body is fully funded by the Federal budget. Instead of maintaining social stability in the society, we finance inefficient body of the state power. Why should we maintain the body which does not bring any profit? There is no answer yet;
- Optimization of labor remuneration of the officials. The level of incomes of the officials of all the ranks must be dependent on the average level of wages in the country. The level of wages of the officials in the region should not exceed the average level of wages of workers of the social sphere. In this case, the officials will be a stimulus for the development of the socio-economic potential of the territories. The transition to the piecework earning method of remuneration for higher officials in the Russian Federation seems to be quite appropriate. An essential condition for increasing the salary of the officials should be specific macroeconomic and social indicators achieved in the supervised areas;
- Cancellation of a number of privileges for some categories of civil and municipal servants. It is not quite clear how to explain the desire to further stimulation of the officials of security agencies and power structures (free travel to the place of vacation, easing of credits, etc.), while the social sphere is subsidized on leftovers. According to the Constitution, Russia is a social state rather than a military junta;
- Development of a criterion system of performance efficiency of officials at all levels. The logical continuation of the previous measure is to develop a comprehensive system evaluating the efficiency of

the officials, which should fully reflect a degree of efficiency of the official duty performance of public servants at all levels of power. Moreover, such a system for evaluating the performance of senior officials has already been developed. One should hope that it will display real indicators affecting the level of socio-economic development of the supervised industry or direction and will not come to a formal set of meaningless indicators;

- Strengthening of responsibility for dishonest execution of duties of the higher officials in the territory of the Russian Federation and municipalities. And as a continuation of the above measures herein, it seems expedient to strengthen the responsibility of the officials, seniors in particular, for the low professional level. In case the senior official does not cope with his duties, he should be dismissed from his office with immediate deprivation of the state rank and the right to hold the executive position within a definite term, up to the life dismissal from the civil service. This measure will strengthen the responsibility of the seniors for the sphere of activity and reduce the percentage of «accidental people» in the structure of public administration.

Thus, we can confidently say that the existing system of state administration (bureaucracy) in modern Russia is an «institutional trap», retarding and slowing down a progressive socio-economic development of the country. Here we need radical reforms for decentralizing the management structure. Reforms are of need in all structural spheres, from the judicial sector up to the social one. However, the existing level of competition of the political elites shows we fail to hope for an evolutionary way of development of this country.

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