

# The influence of elites on the choice of the vector of development of the region

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the issues of typology of regional elites in connection with their influence on the choice of models of political, state and socio-economic development of regions. The author singles out and describes the types of the regional elite (conservative, radical, progressive and colonial), proposes a methodical approach to classify representatives of the regional elite as a certain type based on their financial and property characteristics. For groups of regional elites, behavioral vectors (matrix of vectors) and targets (matrix of goals) are systematized, a scheme for the correlation of the «matrix of goals» (the goal of the elite in the region, an attractive system of power, attitude to the center, the landmark of the concept of change) and the «matrix of vectors» (planning horizon, migration mobility, negotiability, escalation of violence) in the format of a “compass of elite behavior” (shows guidelines for socio-political development under the dominance of certain types of regional elite). The idea of developing «maps of spheres of influence and interests» of various elite groups has been put forward (it allows for the formalization of resources, motives and intentions, the creation of logical and mathematical models of the behavior of elite groups, monitoring and forecasting systems). The necessity of creating platforms for dialogue between groups of regional elites on the main guidelines for spatial development is substantiated.

**Keywords:** regional development, regional elites, public power, compass of elite behavior, matrices of goals and vectors of elites, state policy of regional development

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# Introduction

During the past decade, the Russian Federation has been forming the regulatory framework for the implementation of state regional policy, strategic management of regional development, and organization of public authorities<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time, an analysis of the implementation of regional development strategies<sup>2</sup> shows that from 2006 to the present, not a single subject of the Russian Federation has been able to fully realise what was planned. One of the reasons for the low efficiency of the implementation of regional plans and strategies is that strategic planning documents remain only a declaration of intent and do not have broad public support, mainly from the regional elites. When preparing documents, it was not taken into account to find a balance of interests of the elites as well as the formation of a broad social contract on the main goals and priorities of development. This determines the importance of conducting scientific research in the field of influence of regional elites on the processes of social and socio-economic development in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. These problems are actualized in the upcoming centralization of public power<sup>3</sup>, which violates the established balance of influence of regional elites.

## Materials and methods

The study is based on the methodology of system analysis, structural analysis, expert assessments, and other general scientific methods of cognition. The information base of the study was the work of Russian scientists on the study of public relations in the regions of the North Caucasus and Siberia, documents of federal executive authorities, as well as statistical data characterizing the economic, demographic and migration state of the regions, the property status of groups of regional elites.

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1 Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated January 16, 2017, N. 13 "Fundamentals of the State policy of Regional Development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025", dated 04/25/2019, N. 193 "On evaluating the effectiveness of the activities of senior officials (heads of Supreme Executive bodies of State Power) of the Subjects of the Russian Federation and the activities of executive authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation", dated May 7, 2018, N. 204 "On National Goals and Strategic Objectives of the Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2024", Federal Law N. 172-FZ of 28.06.2014 (as amended on 03.07.2016) "On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation".

2 The analysis was carried out by the author on the basis of open sources and documents of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

3 The provisions of Federal Law No. 414-FZ of December 21, 2021 "On General Principles of the Organization of Public Power in the Subjects of the Russian Federation" come into force from June 1, 2022 and from January 1, 2023.

## Results

Throughout the history of the development of the Russian state, the regional elite to varying degrees influenced the adoption of key management decisions for the development of regions. In cases where the region had its own traditions of statehood (for example, the former Russian *veche* republics of the North-West, independent feudal formations in the Caucasus and Siberia), the number and quality of regional elite groups was higher. In the newly formed regions (mainly in the Soviet period), the independence and influence of the regional elite was minimal.

During the collapse of the Russian Empire, regions with more consolidated and stronger regional elite (Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states) managed to achieve separation of territories and independence. During the collapse of the USSR, these processes manifested themselves at the level of the Union republics, and the tendencies towards sovereignization, to one degree or another, manifested themselves at the level of some subjects of the Russian Federation (for example, the Chechen Republic, Republic of Tatarstan), and in the post-Soviet space they led to the emergence of a number of isolated regions (the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics).

In this regard, it is important to understand how the regional elites see the future (of their own and the region), in what ways it is possible to consolidate the elites to implement a positive development direction.

In this article, the object of research is the regional elites of the constitutional subject of the Russian Federation, and the research subject is their influence on the processes of socio-economic and social development of the regions.

Theoretical and methodological issues of the study of elites have been sufficiently examined in domestic and foreign literature, including the works of Wilfred Pareto [15, 18, 19], Robert Michels [17], Gaetano Mosca [11], G.K.Ashina [1], O.V.Gaman-Golutvina [2, 3], O.V.Kryshtanovskaya [8, 9], V.M.Ochirova [14] and others. In contrast to the Marxist-Leninist model of class struggle, elitology considers the struggle of elites as the engine of social development. In the competitive struggle of elites, the choice of a political model of management is manifested, but regional elites are more limited in their freedom to choose the form of government, make managerial decisions, and distribute budgetary and other resources.

The elite are commonly understood as the highest social groups in the system of social hierarchy, which ensure integration and perform managerial functions in the socio-political system [1:230]. In this regard, the elite are the most prominent representatives of a part of society, people with authority, public influence and political will. In our opinion, it is not chosenness (a high place in the social hierarchy) that characterizes the elite, but its activity and influence on socio-political and economic processes.

Looking at representatives of the regional elite from the standpoint of the spatial hierarchy (Figure 1), we can distinguish several areas (leaders of public administration, business and public opinion) and levels (federal, regional, municipal). It should be noted that when the level of location of a representative of the elite changes (for example, when

the head of a municipal subject passes to the regional government or a regional official heads the territorial branch of the federal executive body), his system of goals and values, views on the development of the territory may change.

The regional elite are a broader social stratum than current politicians and heads of government. It includes some representatives of business, religious figures, scientists, athletes, cultural figures, doctors, writers, journalists, bloggers, etc. Although these people do not have direct channels of influence on decision-making, their opinion is perceived by the authorities and society. The authorities are trying to integrate such leaders of business and public opinion by including them in various public and expert structures. This measure is not always aimed to organize “platforms for dialogue on development issues”. In most cases, it is the way of containment and neutralization of the protest activity of the leaders.

From the standpoint of the goals and values of the regional elite groups, we distinguish four types: conservative, radical, progressive, and colonial elites (Table 1).

The conservative elite were mainly formed on the basis of the bureaucracy of the Soviet period and came to power in the 90s. It is aimed at retaining power, property and sources of income (including shadow and corrupt ones). Representatives of this group (conservatives) are not interested in the dynamic development of the region; it is more convenient for them to receive money in the form of subsidies, compensations, etc. Dynamic development disrupts the balance of interests, brings in new players, and stimulates the redistribution of spheres of influence and property. Therefore, stagnation with low activity and low economic growth is more comfortable for the conservative elite. Conservatives try to transfer posts and power to their children or people from their clan, so the principles of democracy and free change of power are contrary to their interests. Since the power, money and property of the conservatives are concentrated mainly in the region of residence, they are more attached to the region than other groups, and they are reluctant to leave for another region for permanent residence. They are loyal to the federal center (or any other state), whether their needs are financed and the federal center does not interfere in “local peculiarities of the distribution of power.” Conservatives are in the middle in terms of the level of passionarity activity<sup>4</sup>, mostly “harmonics” with a small number of “passionaries” (first generation) and “subpassionaries” (degenerate second and subsequent generations). The conservative elite dominates in most Russian regions.

The radical elite (radicals)<sup>5</sup> is represented by an ambitious group that, for various reasons, could not get enough power, income and property. This group is aimed at the destruction of the existing system of power and the redistribution of property, and is ready to support the use of force to seize power and resolve conflicts. Radicals often deny the existing world order; speculate on violations of social justice, using demagogic slogans of a religious, national, populist orientation. For the conservatives the basis of power is traditions (adats), that is the achieved balance of agreements, the radicals respect only the power backed up by

<sup>4</sup> The source of terminology: Gumilev L.N. *Ethnogenesis and the biosphere of the Earth*. Leningrad, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> It is described in more detail in the article: Chernyshov M.M. *Red and black. Draft*. 2007;34 veche August 24. Available: <https://chernovik.net/content/ekonomika/krasnoe-i-chyorno>.

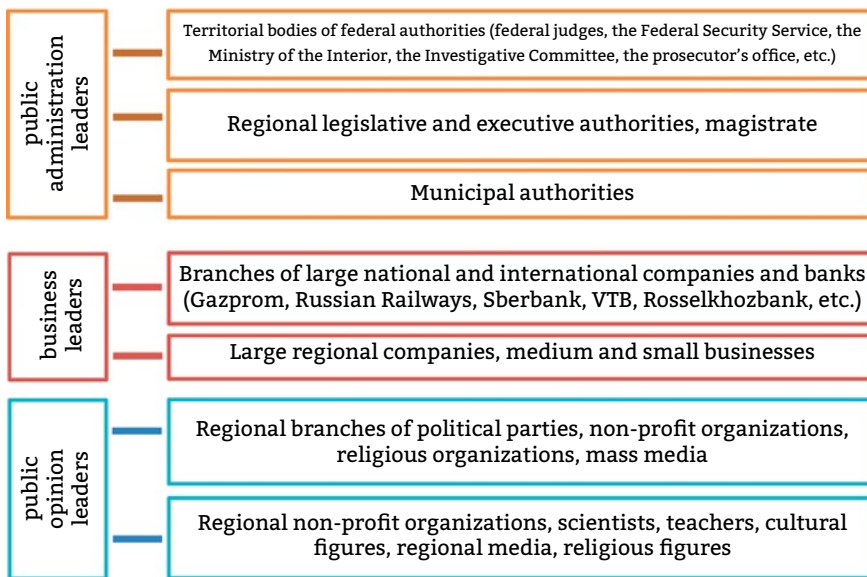
real force. Radicals are mostly passionaries, they seek to activate the subpassionary part of society, to consolidate those who are normally loyal to the authorities to protest and support their interests. Their goal is revolution. The radicals are striving for the sovereignization of the region, up to the formation of a separate state, in order to remove external control and factors that prevent the seizure of power and the redistribution of property. Since the radicals basically do not have access to the resources allocated by the federal center to the region, subsidies do not restrain their ambitions. Economic growth rates are secondary for this group, which is ready to solve the problems of its own well-being at the expense of other groups of the population.

**Table 1.** Targets of groups of regional elites («matrix of goals»)

Characteristics of the elite	Type of elite			
	Conservative	Radical	Progressive	Colonial
The goal of the elite in the region	Retention of power and property	Seizure of power and redistribution of property	Increasing the efficiency of government and the value of property	Retention of power, seizure of property, execution of instructions of the central government
System of power attractive for the elite	An authoritarian system with a hereditary form of transfer of power	An authoritarian system with a forceful form of transfer of power	A democratic system with a competitive form of transfer of power	An authoritarian system with an administrative and legal form of transfer of power
The attitude to the federal center of the elite	Isolation of the region in exchange for loyalty to the center	Isolation of the region up to separation from the center	Inclusion of the region in the open space of the global world	Maximum loyalty to the center, even to the detriment of the interests of the region
Guidelines in the concept of change	Stagnation	Revolution	Modernization	Evolution

Compiled: based on the author’s empirical research, surveys and expert assessments

The progressive elite (progressors) are most often represented by the educated, intellectual part of society. Many of the representatives of this group have strategic and project thinking, are able to create a new business (including in the information and science-intensive areas), and are not afraid to attract outside investors to it. They are most dependent on the state of public institutions, vulnerable to pressure from the conservative authorities of and to forceful influence from the radicals. They do not have sufficient access to the resources of power; they have not inherited significant property. Progressors are interested in increasing the efficiency of government, high rates of economic growth, developed public institutions, in which their business assets can be capitalized in the exchange trading system or by integrating into large companies. They are interested in the region as a part of the

**Figure 1.** The structure of the regional elite from the standpoint of the spatial hierarchy

global economy and support the country's integration into supranational associations. They are quite mobile, being insufficiently demanded in the region or under the influence of a negative external environment, they can move to a permanent place of residence in another region or country. Progressors are able to compete in the political and economic spheres; therefore they gravitate towards democratic forms of government. They are interested in the modernization of government and society, which would create comfortable conditions for life and business. In terms of the level of passionary activity, progressors (like conservatives) are mostly "harmonics", but the level of "passionaries" in this group is significant.

The colonial elite (colonizers, "Varangians") are dualistic: on the one hand, its representatives live in the region and work here (mainly in the territorial subdivisions of federal authorities, branches of national and international companies); on the other hand, they may perceive it as a temporary place. There are cases when representatives of the colonial elite, thinking about the permanent place of residence of their family (for example, in the capital), move to another category of the regional elite, changing their behavioral model. Sometimes, representatives of the colonial elite plan to leave for permanent residence abroad, non-thinking their country as a place of self-identification until the end of their active work. This is the most mobile type of regional elites (often owns property in other regions and countries). Most often, they do not associate themselves with the development of the region (since the period of their stay in the region is less than the minimum economic cycle), they follow the instructions of the federal center, their goal is to retain power, seize property (for further resale) and control financial flows (for obtaining a corruption margin), and for this it is necessary to follow the instructions of the central government or the head offices of companies, sometimes even to the detriment of the interests of the region (often

this position leads to environmental and man-made disasters<sup>6</sup>). In the economy they are supporters of evolution, without abrupt changes and upheavals, in politics – of authoritarian system with an administrative-legal form of transfer of power.

The colonial elite can be both destructive (temporary workers aimed at getting rich as soon as possible and moving to more comfortable regions for living) and constructive (professionals, bearers of a higher managerial culture).

The analysis made it possible to correlate the types of regional elites with the vectors of spatial development (Table 2). The conservative elite is the least inclined to escalate violence in order to achieve its goals, is the least mobile (because it is bound by property and business interests in the region), has an average level of ability to negotiate, and is not inclined to make long-term plans (more than 1–2 years). The radical elite easily escalate violence, use protests to achieve their own goals, do not make complex plans for the future (they live in the present and often do not understand the need to develop long-term and strategic plans), are not prone to migration (although some of the most radical representatives can mobilize and move, for example, emigrate to ISIS<sup>7</sup>). Radicals find it difficult to negotiate with other groups, often do it only under the forceful or legal influence of the state system<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 2.** Behavioral vectors of regional elite groups («vector matrix»)

Тип вектора	Type of elite			
	Conservative	Radical	Progressive	Colonial
Planning	(2) Short Term	(1) Minimal (current planning)	(4) Long-term	(3) Medium-term
Migration mobility	(1) Low	(2) Middle	(3) High	(4) High maximum
Ability to contract	(2) Middle	(1) Low	(4) Very high	(3) High
Escalation of violence	(1) Low	(4) Very high	(3) Высокая	(2) Middle

Compiled: based on the author’s empirical research, surveys and expert assessments

Representatives of the progressive type are the most negotiable of all regional elites, for the most part they understand and support the creation of long-term (more than 10 years) plans for territorial development, at the same time they are ready to support

6 For example, the environmental disaster in Norilsk in 2020. See: Catastrophe every day. KuzPress: Novokuznetsk Information and Analytical website. Available: <https://kuzpress.ru/ecology/07-06-2020/75352.html>.

7 An unrecognized quasi-state with a Sharia form of government located on the territory of Syria and Iraq. ISIS is banned by the court on the territory of the Russian Federation.

8 For example, in order to localize the activity of the Salafi community in Dagestan, the law “On the prohibition of Wahhabi and other extremist activities on the Territory of the Republic of Dagestan” (N.15 of September 22, 1999) was adopted, was operated a system of “preventive accounting” (supervision) and restrictions on the movement of community members.



protest actions (including ideologically motivated violence<sup>9</sup>). Since progressors are more competitive in the global world, not being able to fully realize themselves in the region, they can relatively easily move to another region or country.

The colonial elite are the most mobile (due to their historical attachment to other regions or involvement in the career system of large national and international companies, authorities), they tend to plan their activities (most often for the 3–7 years terms of rotation of personnel in companies and in government), are ready to negotiate with other influential groups (due to the instability of their own positions in the region), but at the same time they support power decisions against local elite groups.

To identify specific representatives of elite groups, we propose to use their typical financial and property characteristics. For example, conservatives tend to own large land plots located in the region (including agricultural purposes), own residential and commercial buildings (for rent), prestigious apartments and houses for their own residence, prestigious vehicles for personal consumption, large deposits in federal and regional banks (including foreign exchange), they are characterized by a very low bank debt load.

Progressors usually own production assets in the region, have business interests in other regions, own securities (included in the federal and international exchange listing), actively use loans for business development, have their own housing and transport. Radicals most often own small businesses in a sector of the economy dependent on market conditions, have their own vehicles and rented housing, and have a high level of consumer debt. The colonizers may have various highly liquid assets in the region, use rented or service housing and vehicles in the region (and most often have good housing in other regions and abroad), keep most of their ruble savings outside the region or in large federal banks (they may have foreign currency savings abroad, including offshore and cryptocurrencies). Determining the finances and property of conservative and colonial elite groups can be difficult because property and other assets can be registered with relatives and trustees, and financial investments are placed in anonymous accounts.

Such a financial and property portrait of the elites can become the basis for the development of a “map of spheres of influence and interests” of various elite groups for the region (this is a promising area for further research).

Schematic representation of behavioral vectors and targets of regional elites (Figure 2) made it possible to draw up a kind of “compass” of elite behavior. The four main points show the guidelines for socio-political development under the dominance of one or another type of regional elite<sup>10</sup>. Four quadruple points show options for preferential development under the dominance of two negotiable groups of elites. The antagonism of colonial and radical, conservative and progressive groups of elites is shown. The growth of the influence

9 The historical example of public support from the progressive intelligentsia of Vera Zasulich (acquitted by the jury for the attempted murder of St. Petersburg mayor F.F. Trepov) is indicative. In 2010, the Constitutional Court of Russia deprived those accused of terrorism of the right to a jury trial due to the high (about 40%) number of acquittals.

10 In its pure form, the landmarks of the main points are quite rare in the modern world: anarchy (Somalia in the 90s), meritocracy (Singapore), colonialism (Gibraltar), monarchy (Saudi Arabia). This makes it necessary to find a compromise between groups of elites.



of the progressive and radical elite in Russia at the end of the XIX – beginning of the XXth century led to the February and October revolutions, the occurrence of the USSR. In the 1930s in Germany, Spain and Italy, the cooperation of the conservative and radical elites brought the National Socialists to power. When the colonial elite managed to strike a balance with the interests of local conservatives, colonial empires were created (which were subsequently destroyed under the influence of the growing influence of radical elites).

In this regard, the scientific task to substantiate the principles and constructive approaches to the formation of platforms for the dialogue of regional elites and develop the elements of a social contract on issues of regional development is relevant. Such experience took place in Russia at the regional<sup>11</sup> and municipal levels<sup>12</sup>.

At the same time, the goal is not to guarantee the participation in the dialogue of all (or even the majority) representatives of each of the regional elites. Far from all politicians, heads of government bodies, scientists, cultural and religion figures are leaders and activists of the dialogue about the region development<sup>13</sup>. It is important to ensure the representation of all elite groups, which will make it possible to develop balanced basic fundamental decisions to make concrete agreements.

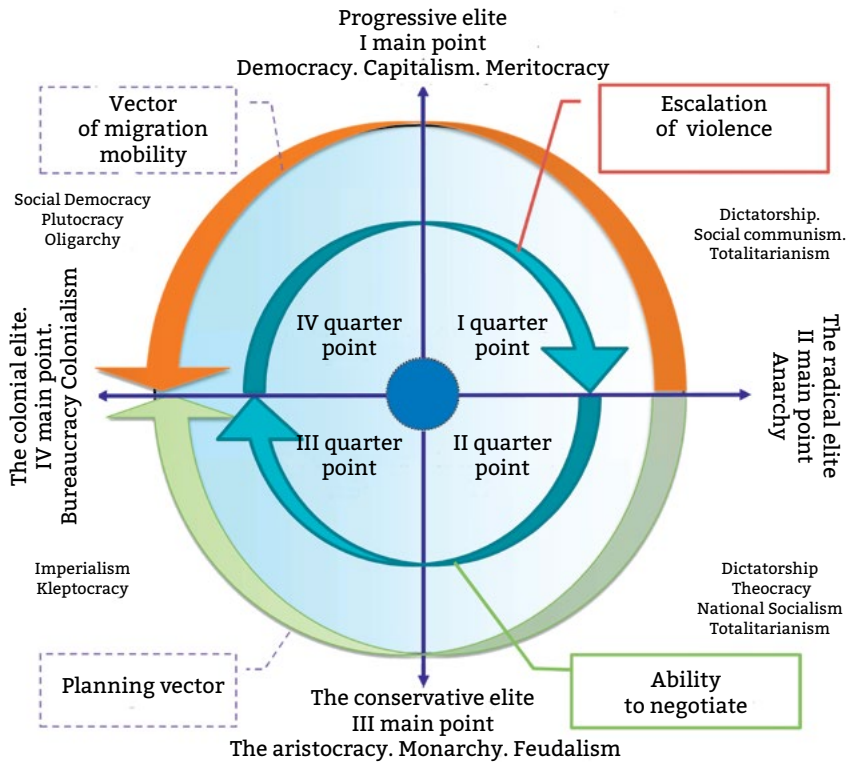
## Conclusions

The studies show that the existing approaches to determining the groups of the regional elite and their structure need to be improved, taking into account the attitude of the elite to the process of developing and implementing strategies and long-term plans for the development of regions. We have identified and described four types of regional elite: conservative, radical, progressive and colonial. The financial and property portrait of the elites, the “matrices” of the goals of the elite groups are shown, the “compass of the behavior of the elites” is compiled. The idea of developing a “map of spheres of influence and interests” of the elites is outlined.

11 For example, the Congress of the Peoples of Dagestan in 2010 became a positive experience in organizing a dialogue between regional elites on acute development problems (intra-confessional reconciliation of Islamic communities of Tariqa and Salafists, the land issue, preservation of national languages and culture). Source: III Congress of the Peoples of Dagestan. Source: III Congress of the peoples of Dagestan. Peoples of Dagestan. 2011. № 1. Available: [http://www.narodidagestana.ru/vipusk/7/stat/iii\\_sezd\\_narodov\\_dagestana](http://www.narodidagestana.ru/vipusk/7/stat/iii_sezd_narodov_dagestana).

12 At the municipal level, it was possible to unite more than 3.5 thousand scientists, experts, businessmen, and civil servants in the process of developing a Strategy for the development of the city of Samara until 2025 on the site of the «living strategy». For 2 years, there was a process of intra-city discussion of the desired future. This experience of developing a «soft renewal strategy» was included in the UNESCO report at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (October 17-20, 2016, Quito, Ecuador). Source: Samara Integrated Development Strategy until 2025. Available: <https://www.samadm.ru/docs/strategiya-2025/>.

13 Unlike most authors who consider only the political elite, we distinguish business and public opinion leaders who do not participate in political processes, but have a powerful influence on the position of a significant part of society. For example, such was the spiritual leader of the Muslims of Dagestan, the Islamic theologian and Sufi Sheikh Said Afandi Chirkey, who was killed in a terrorist attack in 2012.

**Figure 2.** Scheme of correlation of behavioral vectors and targets of the main types of regional elites (“compass of elites”)

Preparing documents on the development of the region for a long period of time, implementing the state policy of regional development, federal and regional authorities should form real platforms for dialogue between groups of the regional elite on key development issues, should develop elements of a “social contract”, mechanisms for elite participation in the implementation of development strategies and monitoring compliance with the contract.

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## Contribution of the authors

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