

Theoretical Foundations of Public Control and Its Socio-Philosophical Significance

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of public control and its socio-philosophical significance. Public control is conceptualized as an indispensable component of a democratic state governed by the rule of law, instrumental in safeguarding citizens' constitutional rights and freedoms, while promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency within state institutions. Furthermore, the study critically examines the role of public control in the formation and consolidation of civil society, its contribution to social stability, and its function as a mechanism of participatory governance, thereby highlighting its broader philosophical and normative implications for the development of democratic institutional frameworks.

Keywords: Public Control; Civil Society; Democracy; Rule of Law; Transparency; Accountability; State Governance; Participatory Governance; Social Justice; Political Philosophy; Citizen Participation; Democratic Institutions.

1. Introduction

At present, public control is of critical importance as it is aimed at protecting citizens' rights, freedoms, and lawful interests, as well as ensuring strict compliance with legal norms by state bodies and their officials, and the effective fulfillment of their responsibilities and powers. Public control is a multifaceted concept, widely applied in the fields of law, sociology, political science, and public administration. Commenting on this, the Head of our State emphasizes: "It is essential to clearly understand that public control is not merely supervision over the activities of state institutions, but also a mechanism of self-governance by society; in other words, it is one of the key factors for the development of civil society. Therefore, in the coming year, the Advisory Council for the Development of Civil Society, the Center for the Development of Civil Society, and the National Association of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations should take the lead and demonstrate initiative in establishing an effective system for implementing public control across every sector and field" [1].

Indeed, this process serves as a crucial mechanism for maintaining social stability, ensuring transparency and accountability, and promoting active citizen participation in governance. Through this, social control strengthens the society's capacity for self-governance and fosters an effective environment for dialogue between the state and civil society. Public control involves the monitoring, analysis, and, when necessary, evaluation of the activities of social institutions, state authorities, and officials by civil society or the broader public, based on the principles of the rule of law, social justice, and democracy.

1.1. Study Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To analyze the theoretical foundations of public control as a legal, social, and philosophical institution within democratic governance.

- 2) To examine the role of public control in ensuring transparency, accountability, and the protection of citizens' constitutional rights.
- 3) To explore the relationship between public control and civil society, emphasizing its contribution to social stability and participatory governance.
- 4) To compare various scholarly perspectives, including Russian, Western, and Uzbek interpretations on the mechanisms and functions of public control.
- 5) To identify the socio-philosophical implications of public control for the development of democracy and the rule of law.
- 6) To propose a conceptual definition of public control that integrates legal, ethical, and civic dimensions within modern governance systems.

2. Methodology

In this study, systematic, comparative, and analytical approaches were employed to examine the theoretical foundations and socio-philosophical significance of public control. First, the concept of “public control” was conceptually analyzed based on its various interpretations in the fields of jurisprudence, political science, sociology, and public administration. Using a comparative method, the scholarly perspectives of Russian and Western researchers, as well as Uzbek scholars, were examined to clarify the role of this institution in the development of democracy. Additionally, using the historical-philosophical method, the views of thinkers such as J.J. Rousseau and C. Montesquieu on control and social concord were analyzed as the philosophical foundations of public control.

An empirical review was conducted of Uzbek legal and regulatory documents, presidential addresses, and civil society initiatives implemented between 2016 and 2023 to contextualize the theoretical findings and assess the practical evolution of public control mechanisms in Uzbekistan. These methodological foundations made it possible to study public control not only as a legal mechanism but also as a socio-philosophical institution that fosters the development of civil society.

3. Discussion and Results

Today, the concept of “public control” embodies the fundamental and recognized principles of democracy, although legal scholars and political scientists interpret this term in various ways. According to the explanatory dictionary of socio-political terms, public control is defined as a form of control carried out within the framework of the law over the activities of state authorities and management bodies, as well as non-governmental organizations, by citizens, their associations, self-governing bodies, and other structures of civil society, including public structures within state and non-state organizations [2].

In the scientific literature, various definitions have been proposed regarding the institution of public control. In particular, the Russian scholar A.V. Sokolov, in his article titled “Mechanisms and Principles of Reporting on Authority and Administrative Activities”, expressed his views on public control, considering the exercise of public

control over the activities of state authorities as a fundamental feature of democracy [3]. Western scholars often interpret the concept of public control as a form of control carried out within a specific field. For example, the American sociologist Travis Hirschi explains this concept from the perspective of crime prevention and combating criminal behavior. According to him, public control is formed through social surveys, and this process serves to regulate negative and antisocial behaviors within society [4].

At the same time, it is important not to overlook the significant role of the state in the effective implementation of public control. Although the primary object of control is the state, if the government does not create conditions for public control while taking into account the interests of the general population, this mechanism is unlikely to produce beneficial outcomes. In some countries led by strong national leaders, the successful functioning of public control largely depends on the stance and position of the head of state. On this matter, American anthropologist Ruth Benedict wrote: “Leaving ultimate public control entirely to the people themselves cannot guarantee them a free life. Societies that perceive themselves as free and democratic, yet are led by a strong leader or monarch, share the common characteristic of guaranteeing certain freedoms that are universal for all citizens” [5].

Based on the research of the classical political thinker J.J. Rousseau, control between the state and society can only be carried out on the basis of mutual agreement. According to him, “a form of social unity must be found in society that is capable of limiting and protecting the person and property of each member, through which every individual who joins the public is subject only to themselves and remains as free as before. This is the primary function of the social contract” [6].

Political scientist A.S. Panarin, in his works, emphasized that the control of governmental actions has long held a crucial place in societal development, noting that scholars have stressed: “There is nothing more dangerous than power without supervision, which relies not on the law but on the threat of force” [7]. Furthermore, according to Russian scholar V.O. Luchin, “a society’s ability to establish control over power is a hallmark of civil society. Only control that has a legal form can make authorities subordinate to the law, and only under the conditions of a civil society can the state be “subject to the law” and attain the status of a “rule-of-law state” [8].

In explaining the content and essence of public control over state bodies, S.M. Zubarev emphasizes, drawing on Aristotle’s views, that the supervision of leaders by the people is a crucial factor for political stability and state development. He also notes the interpretation of the state by French philosopher Montesquieu as a structure based on mutual cooperation among citizens, the government, and officials. According to Montesquieu, the state cannot exist without a governmental system, and laws provide citizens with the means to oversee and control governmental activities [9].

In V.E. Chirkin’s work “State Administration”, the supervision of the state is understood as “a general, cumulative activity carried out through various methods in the process of performing any specific task within the field of state administration” [10]. According to D.N. Bakhrah, control is also an important form of feedback in social governance systems, through which state bodies obtain information about the actual situation in the country and the implementation of decisions [11].

In their scholarly works, Russian researchers V. Goncharov and L. Kovaleva highlighted several distinctive features of public control:

first, public control manifests by aligning the interests and needs of society members with the collective social will, influencing society or its specific institutions;

second, it is recognized as a primary mechanism for balancing the interests among various social groups and preventing conflicts between these interests;

third, it serves as a method for directing and coordinating public opinions and aspirations toward a unified approach in addressing critical social issues;

fourth, public control ensures compliance with social norms, identifies violations, and performs functions ranging from criticism to the implementation of compulsory measures;

fifth, this form of control constitutes an integral part of social life and is regarded as one of the essential institutions inherent to any social system [12].

Uzbek political scientists and legal scholars have also interpreted the concept of public control from various perspectives. In particular, B.I. Ismoilov emphasizes that public control refers to the control exercised by civil society institutions, as well as by the citizens of Uzbekistan and their associations, over the activities of state authorities and administrative bodies [13].

Similarly, according to R. Hakimov's approach, public control is considered one of the integral characteristics of a strong civil society. He argues that this control entails the continuous monitoring by civil society institutions and the broader public of the activities of state authorities, administrative bodies, and their officials to ensure compliance with the law [14].

According to Y.Y. Ollamov, public control is a systematic activity carried out by civil society institutions aimed at monitoring the compliance of state authorities and their officials with normative-legal standards, and correcting identified legal violations through appeals to the relevant state bodies [15].

Based on the aforementioned considerations, we have formulated the following definition of public control: "Public control is a nationwide activity of civil society institutions that reliably protect the interests of the people and exercise lawful control over the activities of state authorities, functioning as a "mirror of the people".

In a society where such a system of control is established, the following opportunities arise:

first, a direction for comprehensive societal reform emerges, enabling the creation of decent living conditions for citizens, positioning the country among democratically advanced states, and fostering an open civil society, thereby ensuring sustainable social change;

second, the broader public not only participates in the development and implementation of laws but also acquires the right to exercise direct social control over these processes;

third, the real effectiveness of the legislative acts being developed in societal life is ensured. This, in turn, lays the groundwork for mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their implementation. Without practical public control over

state authorities, the principles of popular sovereignty, democracy, citizens' right to participate in governance, and transparency remain merely theoretical [16].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, public control constitutes a fundamental pillar of popular sovereignty. It is not merely control over the activities of state institutions but also a mechanism of societal self-governance, in other words, a crucial factor in the development of civil society. Public control can be understood as social monitoring carried out by authorized civil society institutions to ensure legality in the activities of state authorities, representing a form of civic control over government. In other words, public control is a systematic activity carried out by citizens and authorized institutions of civil society, aimed at ensuring that the activities of state governance bodies comply with legal and regulatory standards, and at addressing any violations of the law either by appealing to the relevant state authorities or by relying on public opinion.

5. Future Suggestions

1. Strengthening the legal framework governing public control through the adoption of comprehensive legislation that defines its mechanisms, scope, and procedures more precisely.
2. Expanding civic education programs to raise public awareness about citizens' rights and their role in exercising control over state institutions.
3. Enhancing institutional cooperation between government bodies and civil society organizations to ensure transparency and shared accountability.
4. Integrating digital technologies such as e-governance platforms and online monitoring tools to facilitate public participation and feedback in real time.
5. Encouraging academic research and interdisciplinary dialogue on public control to develop innovative models suited to evolving democratic contexts.
6. Promoting international collaboration and comparative studies to adapt best global practices of civic oversight to national governance systems.

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The author declares that he/she has no competing interests related to this work.

Consent for publication

The author declares that he/she consented to the publication of this study.

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Author's independent contribution.

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