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Editorial article / Редакционная статья

Political Science in Search of New Approaches: Introducing the Issue

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Abstract. The editorial board introduces the issue devoted to the problem which occurred as a result of the exhausting traditional heuristic potential of political knowledge, including concepts, theoretical and methodological approaches, and ideological emphasis. The changing traditional theoretical framework questions the legitimacy of traditional political practices, the legitimacy of institutions, goals and subjects of the political process. Based on the ideas of I. Wallerstein, we are making attempts to “feel the elephant” of political reflection on the dramatically changing political reality.

Keywords: political theory, methodology of political science, scientific approach, civilizational approach, the end of the Western-centrist linear meta-narrative

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Политическая наука в поисках новых подходов: представляю номер

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Аннотация. Редакция представляет номер, посвященный анализу проблемы исчерпания традиционного эвристического потенциала политического знания, включая понятия, теоретико-методологические подходы, идейные акценты. Политическая турбулентность стала

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катализатором изменения предметного поля политической науки и ее эпистемологических установок. Изменение традиционных теоретических рамок ставит вопрос о правомерности традиционных политических практик, легитимности институтов, целей и субъектов политического процесса. Отталкиваясь от идей И. Валлерстайна, мы предпринимаем попытки демонстрации теоретических возможностей и ограничений политической рефлексии о драматически изменяющейся политической реальности.

Ключевые слова: политическая теория, методология политической науки, научный подход, цивилизационный подход, конец западноцентристского линейного метанарратива

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Introduction

The theme of the current issue was conceived as a continuation of the academic discussion, which has been gradually gaining momentum over the past few years. We can state that the end of the era of traditional rationality, proclaimed twenty years ago by I. Wallerstein [2004] in his work “The end of the world as we know it”, predetermined the multiplicity and multidirectional nature of the search for new theoretical frameworks to interpret politics. “The question before us is, is the current moment somehow special in light of the constant competition of paradigms and their reflection in the structures of knowledge? I believe it is. But I also think that its features can be seen only by overcoming narrow specializations, going beyond the boundaries of sociology and even beyond the boundaries of the social sciences. ...Perhaps the time has come when we should all turn to the main epistemological issues to be discussed — that is, to digress from our narrow specializations in favor of problems that concern all scientists” [Wallerstein 2004: 219].

However, what affected the most the demand for scientific search were the large-scale upheavals in real politics, most often referred to as “global turbulence”. This term incorporates all structured and unstructured, conceptualized and non-conceptualized shades and nuances of the modern world, politics, reflection. Rather intuitively than rationally, the changes in the ontology and phenomenology of the socio-political continuum pose the problem of the exhausting traditional heuristic potential of political knowledge, including concepts, theoretical and methodological approaches, and ideological emphases. The changing traditional theoretical framework questions the legitimacy of traditional political practices, the legitimacy of institutions, goals and subjects of the political process.

Large cognitive and political cataclysms, which require a reflective reaction, undoubtedly challenge political science, stimulating the search for new theoretical and methodological knots. The change in the balance of power and political goal-setting in 2022 also required a change in the legitimization of new political strategies, both tactical and substantive. This led to the revision of the dominating Western-centric

linear metanarrative and a shift towards incorporating the diversity of civilizational development paths. Turning to the ideas of I. Wallerstein, one can agree with his two initial assumptions: “he first assumes that historical systems, like any others, have a limited lifespan. They have a beginning and a long period of development, but in the end, as they deviate further from equilibrium and reach a bifurcation point, an end comes. The second premise states that at such bifurcation points, minor impacts lead to large-scale changes (as opposed to periods of normal system development, when strong impacts bring limited results), and the consequences of the bifurcations themselves are inherently unpredictable” [Wallerstein 2004: 4]. Thus, today we can state: what previously only belonged to the academic discourse and the search for duty, has begun to claim the status of the real foundations of politics and an optics for worldview.

At the same time, the comprehension of politics hangs in an “intermediate” state between two discourses: the discourse of political science and the ideological discourse. The rejection of the liberal picture of the world, inscribed in the supporting structures of Modernity and Postmodernity, the deconstruction of Cartesian causality, alongside the rigid resistance of the positivist paradigm to give up its monopolistic position,¹ generate a dissonance between the imposed samples, guidelines and methods of justification, on the one hand, and empirically and theoretically fixed changes in political ontology and pragmatics, on the other. There is a variety of competing development models that multiply the political and social realities [Mchedlova 2018, 2020]. Thus, we can pose the problem of great limitations in identifying patterns, since reality is determined by the desired vision, and the reliability of knowledge is chronically insufficient.

The multiplicity of development models also captures the diversity of different ideological systems, among which there are no universal, and even more so absolutely attractive and mobilizing ones. The key characteristics of the modern theoretical political space is the absence of “Big Ideas”, universal systems as developed by F. Hegel or K. Marx, new major theoretical and methodological paradigms and ideologies that can acquire a global character. Modern political ontology is reflected in the heterogeneity and competition of ideological currents that formulate various political projects either in line with the liberal-modernist project or as an alternative to it. Political ontology is far from internal homogeneity; rather, we observe a contradictory “existential landscape”, complex and diverse junctions and bifurcation points. It is this chaotic dispersion that raises questions about the limitations and limits of political knowledge, as well as about the uncertainty and unpredictability in modern politics.

The search for a new theory has become an “obsession” for modernity, and the search for a new political theory has become the “golden El Dorado”² of the academic discourse and community of political science. In this issue, we are also joining the search for El Dorado and try to at least draw if not its outline, then the means that

¹ The dominance of the behavioral paradigm has ensured the dominance of quantitative research methodology, supported and reproduced by leading Western academic publications and journals. It was the latter that gave rise to ratings and comparisons with the model as a specific policy for managing various socio-political areas — in science and in real politics.

² Metaphor has become the same cognitive tool as epistemological schemes and classical conceptual tools.

open the road to it. Nonetheless, according to G. Hegel, “history of the world is not the theatre of happiness” [Hegel 1935: 45]. The thematic scatter of the presented articles³ is not accidental: each of them places either the path to a new theory or the path to human happiness at the center of their theoretical search.

The issue opens by a block of theoretical articles of rather philosophical background, outlining the framework for the search for new approaches. *Dmitry G. Evstafiev*, professor of *HSE University* and *RUDN University*, together with his colleague from *HSE University* *Lubov A. Tsyganova*, consider the prospects of competing models of development and regional localization in post-postmodern age. *Sergey A. Rebrov* from *Sociological Institute — Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology*, St. Petersburg, turns to political theology, which becomes more and more popular and interprets various forms of religious and political relationships. Such political structuring and legitimation are becoming in demand for a significant part of humanity, which is confirmed by P. Berger’s thesis about the “desecularization of the world” [Berger 1999]. The problem of justice, which is the most acute, has a wide variety of facets and shades: it was justice that became the catalyst for the emerging new world order, but its positive connotations began to be associated with destructive forms of politics. *Ekaterina P. Shanchenko* (*MEMO, MGIMO, Sechenov University*) explores the theory of just war and shows how the academia uses this theory widely for the interpretation of modernity, and what are the links between this theory and the problem of global hegemony. *Valery I. Kovalenko* and *Vladimir A. Sobolev* from *Lomonosov Moscow State University* close up the chapter with an article on the concepts of social development, reconstructing the approaches of the Soviet and Russian classic of political science Alexander M. Kovalev, his interpretations of the categories “power” and “politics”, the laws of politics and political activity, as well as a number of basic concepts of political science.

The chapter devoted to the study of political phenomena and strategies of modern politics opens with an article by *Andrey A. Degtyarev* from *MGIMO University* on the positioning of the GR discipline at the overlapping fields of applied political science, sociology of communications and corporate management, of political and non-political spheres. Here we are faced with an inversion of politics and economics, general and particular issues, which exists not as a dichotomy, but as a continuum. *Vasily K. Belozеров*, professor of *Moscow State Linguistic University*, aims to bring terminological clarity and define the concept of political strategy comparing it with concept, doctrine, strategy, foundations of state policy, and, in particular, to show the relationship with the concept of military strategy. Sociologist from *HSE University*, *Evgeni A. Varshaver*, also deals with categories, classifications and taxonomies, regarding the problems of ethnicity and integration of migrants. He bases his arguments on constructivist methodology. *HSE University* is also presented by professor *Yuliy A. Nisnevich*, who explains the general model of neo-authoritarian rule replacing political competition with political administration on the example of a number of political regimes in Asia and Latin

³ The position of the authors of the articles may not coincide with the position of the editors and expresses only the opinions and views of the authors.

America. Younger scholar from the same university, *Konstantin V. Zhigadlo*, outlines the actualization of the ideological spectrum in the field of unconventional politics, as well as the formation of a number of new social movements in Russia. In this regard, the issues of Left-Right divide and the semantic content of this concept itself become relevant again in modern Russian politics.

The constant scope of our journal, and indeed of the entire school of political science of the RUDN University is the socio-cultural foundations of politics. This chapter opens with an article by *Maria M. Mchedlova* and *Oleg A. Bukin* from RUDN University about the political conceptualization of the Russian civilization and the pros and cons. Seemingly unresolvable due to ideological differences, the topic is a reflection of the current crisis of the dominant linear political narratives. The article by *Leyli R. Rustamova* and *Daria G. Ivanova* from MGIMO University is devoted to the conceptualization and operationalization of the concepts of political science, which served until recently as journalistic metaphors. The researchers turn to the concept of ‘cancel culture’, applying it in an international political context somewhat unusual for this metaphor. They are trying to determine cancel culture as a tool for managing socio-political phenomena that can be used for foreign policy purposes. The axiological and political foundations of domestic Russian politics, their historical roots and evolutionary development are in the focus of scholars *Olga E. Sorokopudova* and *Denis V. Mironov* from Lomonosov Moscow State University. They reconstruct such basic values as ‘freedom’, ‘truth’ and ‘justice’, which have retained their significance throughout the history of Russia, but have been transformed in modern public ideological and political discourse.

This issue ends with our journal’s traditional column devoted to the study of political attitudes and political behavior of the Russian youth. *Olga V. Popova* and *Nikolai V. Grishin* from St. Petersburg State University together with *Sergei I. Suslov* from INION RAS use statistical analysis of the data they collected to study various models of politicization of the mass consciousness of the youth and factors influencing it. Their young colleagues *Sofia K. Kalashnikova* and *Irina I. Andriiv*, who also represent St. Petersburg State University and INION RAS, consider the positive migration balance in the region as an indicator of successful youth policy. They evaluate the efforts of the regional governments in the field of support and development of youth opportunities, comparing various indices for this.

Such a dispersed problematic field of the presented issue undoubtedly reflects the diversity of the search for new theoretical coordinates in political science. There is a clear rejection of cruel linearity and a shift towards recognizing the equal position of the political development paths and incorporating problems and plots that have not previously been included in the subject field of political science. The latter outline the facets of a possible political theory. The editorial board of the issue does not claim to have the only correct view, sincerely hoping for further discussion and feedbacks.

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