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Редакционная статья / Editorial article

In Search of Political Youth Studies as a Subfield of Political Science: Editorial Introduction

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В поисках «политологии молодежи» как субдисциплины политической науки: представляем номер

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The relevance of the topic of this issue is due to the special attention to young people in the current political environment. New generational cohorts, a specific digital Generation Z, “different” youth are entering the age of active participation in politics. There are quite a lot of them, because at the turn of the millennium, since 2000 year the birth rate began to rise in Russia. In the next election cycle of 2021–2024, they will already play their role. This requires new theoretical constructions, which are still poorly introduced until now with few exceptions [Yadova 2020]. Young people approaching their 30th anniversary have passed the stage of political re-socialization after graduating from educational institutions and starting work. Their political views differ significantly from those of previous generations, as well as those who have just joined this age group and the chances of having a significant impact on the domestic policy of the country as a politically active, fairly mass group or to join the “political class” at the local or regional level are gradually increasing.

It would seem that by now the topic of youth in the social sciences, if not completely exhausted, has been analyzed and conceptualized in exceptional detail. In the classical works of G.S. Hall, K. Groos, C. Buhler, A. Freud, W. Reich, E. Fromm, and E. Erikson, young people are characterized as a socio-psychological group. M. Mead, T. Parsons, C. Reich, T. Rozaak, and E. Spranger focused on the features of this socio-cultural group, which has a peculiar way of life, style of behavior, cultural norms, and values. The issues of political socialization of young people as an object of analysis were already raised in the studies of G. Lasswell. A little later, within the systematic approach, political socialization was studied by F. Greenstein, J. Dennis, D. Easton as the basis for the formation of political support for social movements. N. Nie and S. Verba insisted on treating the political socialization of young people as role-based training. The works of K. Mannheim, which emphasize the possibilities of organizing youth as a social base of organizations and socio-political movements, have not lost their relevance. The focus on the electoral and protest civic activity of young people is traditional.

Modern researchers pay more and more attention to the comparison of the models of political leadership of young people that are being formed in different types of political culture [Agrawal, Rook 2014; Edwards 2015; Maak, Pless, Borecká 2014]. Their attention is drawn to the features of involving young people to political processes in different political regimes [Alimi, Hirsch-Hoefl 2012; Halverson, Plecki 2015], at the local level in particular [Augsberger 2018], and in context of global economic crisis [Haddon, Loughlin, McNally 2015]. At the same time, scientists continue to rely on fairly traditional theories of *leadership as a set of traits* [Ahlquist, Levi 2011], *as a function of a group or situation* [Antonakis, House 2014]. *Foreign scholars continue to support the value theory of leadership* [Day 2014] *and the theory of leadership as effective communication* [Nye 2008], *extending them to young people as well*. At the same time, there is a demand for new versions of the theory of leadership [Allio 2012; Allio 2015] and for the growing attention to the study of the motivation of young people to participate in public and political projects in the positions of leaders [Guillén, Korotov, Mayo

2015], and also for the principles of organizing the leaders' work with young members of their movements and organizations [Aurik, Fabel, Jonk 2015; Rowold, Borgmann, Diebig 2015]. The new issue of the journal provides an opportunity to see to what extent young foreign scholars taking their first steps in academia are focused on the approaches formed by Western European and American researchers.

In this situation, the question inevitably arises about the trends in the youth studies in Russian social sciences. Even using the concept of “national scientific school”, we are very far from idea of looking for the scientific knowledge outside the mainstream of world science. At the same time, it is necessary to answer a number of acute questions that allow us to determine the place of Russian scientists' research in world science. The simplest way is to find out the frequency/rarity of publications of domestic political scientists in international journals of the first and second quartile of the Web of Science and Scopus databases, as well as the citation rates of publications of Russian authors by foreign colleagues. While generally agreeing with these indicators, we note that such an assessment does not eliminate the need to present the results of the latest research in domestic scientific journals. So, to what extent do Russian social scientists use traditional approaches and theories? We try to find out whether their impact is just to identify Russian specifics while collecting new empirical data or if we can talk about new approaches and conceptualization? This thematic issue will not give unambiguous answers, but it allows us to discover some essential principles of the work of Russian political scientists in the field of youth.

The most important feature of modern Russian political youth studies is their interdisciplinary nature: analyzing the political processes associated with this socio-demographic group, so scientists inevitably include elements of sociological, psychological and, sometimes, pedagogical knowledge in their projects. It is necessary to note three more features of the approach of Russian social scientists to the analysis of political consciousness, behavior, and the role of young people in modern politics.

First, a complex choice of methodological approach, which is noticeable even in the articles presented in this issue. With a strict internal requirement to present the most objectified data, researchers rely on a wide range of methodological approaches: from constructivist and postmodern options to a strictly determined economic conditions neo-Marxist interpretation of the causes, factors, state and trends of the existence of this socio-demographic group.

Secondly, when studying young people, like perhaps no other group, it is necessary to use empirical methods such as focus groups, massive surveys and in-depth interviews. The Pushkin's phrase “Hello, a young, unfamiliar tribe!”, oddly enough, is an important indication for building research design in social science. The illusion that scientists know and understand generations a priori is instantly shattered when it comes to real field survey. To obtain the most reliable data, it is very important to use the principle of triangulation and a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis.

Third, there is an unavoidable need for scientists to choose the interpretation of young people as a subject, agent or object of influence of political actors. Such a choice is most often caused by the quite pragmatic request of the political elite to scholars to find effective technologies for forming the political consciousness and controlled models of political behavior of new generations. Leaving aside the moral aspects of such expectations of the political class, we simply note that most domestic researchers point to the limited effectiveness of the use of political communication technologies to form the desired results of political socialization and re-socialization.

Throughout the recent history of Russia, the lack of public consensus in society regarding the image of the future has not created the need for a clear youth policy. It existed on the periphery of public administration and was interpreted residually. Its institutional design in the system of political institutions of the Russian Federation was also peripheral: in some periods the bodies responsible for youth matters attained independence, but most of the time they were integrated into one of federal ministries (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Sports). There, their functionality was reduced to develop low-budget programs for patriotic education, perceived quite narrowly. In the theoretical literature, there is little research on this topic, except for individual works [Tartzan 2010].

It must be recognized that the social dynamics of modern Russia is slowed down, social lifts barely work, inequality is increasing, elites tend to lock in their stratum. In these circumstances, young people are increasingly pessimistic about the future and appears ready to protest. This happens not only in Russia. In this regard, a member of the editorial board of our journal, prof. *Piotr Dutkiewicz (Carleton University)*, asked Russian President Vladimir Putin at a meeting of the Valdai Discussion club in 2020 about the prospects for the future for young people in Russia and the global world. He noted that more than half of young people in the West believe that they will have poorer quality of life than the current generation. In response, Vladimir Putin promised to pursue a policy aimed at creating social lifts for young people¹. There is an understanding of the problem at the highest political level, but at the level of the executive branch, the protest potential of young people is the only thing that really concerns. There is a gap between the understanding that young people need to be worked with, and the development and implementation of specific tools for this work. Thus, the long-discussed and finally adopted Federal Law No. 489 “On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation” in late December of 2020 largely reflects the current picture – the law is of a framework nature, according to the lawmaker. A number of Russian social scientists gave their negative assessment (in an open letter). They argue that existing law is declarative

¹ Valdai Discussion Club Meeting Video. Retrieved October 22, 2020, from <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64261/videos>

and unsystematic, it contradicts the current legislation and does not solve the problems facing the state².

Thus, the modern politics is not yet close to solving problems of young people. The same is true for political science. Whereas the Russian scientific school of youth sociology has reached maturity [Zubok, Chuprov 2020, Chuprov 2019, Chernysh 2017], including the RUDN School of Sociology [Narbut, Trotsuk 2012, Puzanova, Larina 2019], “political science of youth/ political youth studies” as a subdiscipline does not exist neither in international nor in national science: there are no relevant research committees neither in the International Political Science Association IPSA³, nor in the RPSA⁴. However, there is a large scientific capacity for the formation of “political science of youth”, associated with the work of scientific schools from Moscow [Selezneva 2020], St. Petersburg: St. Peterburg State University [Popova 2015, Lagutin, Negrov 2019] and HSE’s Centre for Youth Studies [Omelchenko 2020], Krasnodar [Samarkina, Morozova, Miroshnichenko 2018], Altai Krai [Shashkova, Aseev, Aseeva, Kazantsev 2019]. For this very reason the thematic volume is dedicated to youth in politics must have included these authors.

The perception of young being mainly as an object of political influence dominates in the Russian literature and much less attention is devoted to young people as an independent political actor, the formats of their political and civic activity. This volume attempts to bridge this gap to some extent. The high level of the materials is particularly confirmed by the fact that some of them were included in the plenary session of the Annual All-Russian Scientific Conference of the Russian Association of Political Science dedicated to “Political representation and the public sector: transformational challenges and prospects” held on November 27–28 2020, in Moscow. The guest editor of this issue, *Olga V. Popova* (St. Petersburg State University), made a report on “Technologies of online political mobilization of Russian Youth”, and our author *Yaroslava Yu. Shashkova* (Altai State University) presented a study on “Political values and Attitudes of students in Siberia and the Far East”.

In the first thematic block “Youth in online politics”, the authors focus on the structure of information consumption of young people and online technologies of political communication. The article by *Evgeniy O. Negrov* (St. Petersburg State University) is devoted to the study of models of virtual protest behavior and features of online mobilization of young people and the specifics of their identity and algorithms of political behavior. *Sergey V. Volodenkov* (Lomonosov Moscow State

² Young people do not need such a law. Scientists asked the president to postpone consideration of the relevant law. Retrieved December 23, 2020, from <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4626801> (In Russian).

³ Complete list of IPSA Research Committees. Retrieved December 23, 2020, from <https://www.ipsa.org/research-committees/rclist>

⁴ Complete list of RPSA Research Committees. Retrieved December 23, 2020, from https://rapn.ru/in.php?to=research_bodies

University), *Sergey Yu. Belokonev and Anastasia A. Suslova (Financial University)* study the structure of information consumption of young people, which is radically different from the traditional one. The scientists conducted a study among political science students in an academic and research Laboratory of Internet Projects and Research of the Department of Political Science and mass communications of the Financial University. They identified the effects of “digital information overload” that stimulates development and consolidation of the so called “clip consciousness” (fragmented thinking) effect due to the transition of young people from offline to online. In the theoretical article by *Nikolay V. Grishin (St. Petersburg State University)* under the title “Reinforcement Theory” and the Study of the Influence of Internet Technologies on Political Participation of Modern Youth”, an analysis of the heuristicity of the “reinforcement theory” and “mobilization theory” is proposed. The author believes that the “reinforcement theory” retains its significance for the study of political leadership among Russian youth, as well as the activities of radical youth organizations. *Kirill I. Nagornyak (Vernadsky Crimean Federal University)* complements the theory with practice and saturates it with empirical cases, using Google Trends and Telegram Analytics to study the activity of opposition Telegram channels during the last year’s protests in Belarus. The author describes these protests as a “network revolution” with the use of Internet resources for the mobilization, communication and coordination of protesters. Researchers *Anna I. Abalyan and Aref Bijan (St. Petersburg State University)* observe propaganda tools and mechanisms of radical Islamist ideas among youth audience on the Internet. Among the reasons for their huge effectiveness, the authors see technology of creation of an extensive and multi-tool media structure consisting of numerous funds and agencies.

The next chapter deals with the value orientations and patriotic education of young people in Russia. A group of scientists of the *Altai University* within the large research project explored ideas about patriotism of schoolkids of Siberia (*Tatiana A. Aseeva, Yaroslava Yu. Shashkova*) and the programs of Patriotic education in the region (*Sergey Y. Aseev, Dmitriy A. Kachusov*). The study identified a growing number of young people who do not share patriotic values and who have critical outlook of patriotic education programs. They share a local (not general civic) identity, and do not define themselves as patriots. This is a political reality that must be taken into account and needs urgent work, not only in Siberia, but also at the national level. *Oleg V. Lagutin (St. Petersburg State University)*, in his empirical study, identifies groups of young people stratified by value orientations, the specific relations between the state and civil society, and other factors. This kind of classification can make youth policy more diversified and targeted, and therefore more effective.

In the chapter devoted to the social and political capital of young people, *Anna V. Shentyakova (St. Petersburg State University)* examines the context of a modern metropolis to assess and identify the protest potential of residents of large cities in Russia based on the materials of an empirical study. *Godfred Abrokwa (RUDN University)* and *Emmanuel Donkor (Charles University)* dedicated their

review article to the changes that have taken place in the lives of young people since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe. The problems of economic inequality, the loss of cultural identity, the change in electoral models and the transformation of political systems pose new challenges to the younger generation. The opportunities for educational migration, which served as a bridge to overcome global inequality and a transnational social lift, have collapsed due to the pandemic, and the consequences of this are yet to be assessed.

The final chapter concentrates on the regional dimension of the topic “Youth in politics”. Based on the results of qualitative research among the youth of the Krasnodar region, *Irina V. Samarkina and Igor S. Bashmakov (Kuban State University)* examine the local identity of urban youth and identify its main components in the system of social identities of young people on the example of large and medium-sized cities of the region. An article by *Alexander D. Pilipenko (Lomonosov Moscow State University)* is also devoted to this region. The sphere of his research interest and practical work includes youth public associations. Through the survey, the author identified the increasing influence of youth public associations on socio-political processes, personnel policy, the activation of youth activities, the volunteer movement, the articulation of the young people’s interests as a special social group of the population. Siberia is the second main case of this issue. *Sergey Yu. Aseev and Yaroslava Yu. Shashkova (Altai State University)* studied the experience of building political careers of young leaders in the regions of South-West Siberia and concluded that the capacity of career lifts for young people in the regional political process is weak.

No doubt, the topics and approaches outlined here do not exhaust the general topics of “youth and politics”, “youth in politics”, “youth policy” and other dimensions of research area. The discussion on the legislative framework of youth policy and its institutional design continues. New formats and channels of work with young people will certainly appear in the upcoming electoral cycle. Scientists have yet to provide a clearer, theoretically and empirically based answer to the question of whether the increasing political activity of young people on the Internet leads to an increase or decrease in political activity in real offline life.

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