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**NEW TRENDS IN THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF**  
**RUSSIANS IN THE DIGITALIZATION CONTEXT**

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### Abstract

In this article, the authors address the problem of the formation of the political consciousness of the population at the present stage of the development of social relations. This stage marks the launch of a new electoral cycle in Russia, which begins with elections to the lower house of the Russian parliament, is accompanied by elections of regional and local elites and ends with the elections of the President of the Russian Federation. Researchers come to the conclusion that the emerging problems in the discrepancy between the ideas of the elites and society about basic political processes and phenomena such as “democracy”, “legitimacy”, as well as different assessments of requests for the communicative component of politics stem from several reasons. First, there was a difference in the positions taken by the declared subjects in the political process. Second, they choose different methods of shaping their political agenda. The article examines the methods of promoting information in the field of policy. It is concluded that the usual scheme of information flow from power structures as the main subject of political interactions to society as an object of influence is outdated. Power is no longer conceived of as a single subject of political influence. In the political process, other subjects also actively showed themselves: an individual, international associations, etc. It becomes a subject of study. The authors have formed a pool of problems that the formation of a new political consciousness is facing, as well as possible mechanisms for their solution.

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*Keywords:* Information technology, political process, political consciousness, power, subjects of politics



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## 1. Introduction

New trends in the political consciousness of the population are caused by several processes. First, the situation with the spread of Covid-19 has exacerbated the problems that were ripening before. The circumstances underlined the importance of discussing them at a new stage in the development of socio-political relations in Russia.

Secondly, the launch of the next electoral cycle in our country, which is characterized by elections to the lower house of the Russian parliament, as well as a number of important elections in the constituent entities of the federation, ending in 2024 with the presidential elections, significantly increases interest in technologies for shaping public opinion. This process today is fundamentally different in its methods, which are used by different subjects of politics, since, as reality shows, the formation of public consciousness has been transferred to the information sphere. Of course, the researchers noted that this trend was set several decades ago (Votchel et al., 2019). However, if until recently everyone was just talking about the institution of the mass media, which played a decisive role in the political process, today we are already talking about the transformation of this institution itself and the departure from traditional mass media into the online space. This formulation of the problem in modern political science has yet to be comprehended by the entire scientific community.

## 2. Problem Statement

In modern conditions, a new understanding of the stated problem lies in the fact that there are some tendencies that significantly affect the formation of the political consciousness of Russians in modern conditions. These tendencies can be formed according to different “groups” on different grounds. We are trying to present our own classification.

The first problem facing the formation of the public consciousness of Russians today can be formulated as a certain gap between the worldview of the elite and society. A few years ago (Delyagin, 2008), researchers argued that “the elite of society looks at democracy as a process. The problem is how the very concept of democracy is formed in the era of globalization. Today, this trend continues to develop: “the borders of sovereign states are gradually eroding, and elites are largely creating “apparent” democracy, while the population needs meaningful effective democracy, perceived not as a process, but as a result.

The second problem is the new composition of the political consciousness formation subjects. The ideas about democracy and other important institutions that ensure its functioning (such as, for example, the institution of elections) are formed in modern conditions not only by the elite, but also by the mass public consciousness. However, today the elite and the public conscience operate in different information fields: the elite prefers official communication channels, while society goes into the blogging sphere. This “imbalance” is noticeable today in all areas, and the problem of the formation of political consciousness through new mechanisms makes it especially urgent.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of our research is new trends in the formation of the political consciousness of Russians. These trends can be viewed from at least two perspectives. Let us explain. The first position is meaningful: the demand for a new understanding of democracy and legitimacy is felt in society.

The second understanding is the technologies for the formation of political consciousness. We have entered the information age, and the formation of political consciousness through information technology is the subject of deep comprehensive interdisciplinary research, which is just beginning in Russian science and is far from being reflected by scientists who study political life in theory and practice. At the same time, it is important to note that the practice of forming political consciousness through information technologies through online platforms today provides such a rich and diverse material for research (from local and regional to federal levels; from individual and group to collective) that this, perhaps, demands development of new methodological mechanisms for both the systematization of this material and approaches to its study.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of our research is to study new trends in the formation of the political consciousness of Russians, namely: to make out the gap between the ideas of the elite and society about the political process; identify different tools for shaping the information behavior of Russians; consider the problems that exist today in the interpretation of the concept of “democracy”, as well as develop recommendations, in accordance with which it is possible to adequately assess the views of different subjects of politics in relation to modern political reality. Our ultimate goal is to draw a conclusion about how all these trends and features shape the political consciousness of Russians at the present stage of the development of socio-political relations.

### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of the research is the principles of system-structural and structural-functional analysis generally accepted in the social sciences. This helps the authors to structure data about the modern political process and its subjects at the present stage of social development. Also, these methods allow adjusting the concepts of democracy, legitimacy and information technology.

The authors also use the method of concrete historical analysis, which allows singling out the directions of changes in modern society, which has a token influence on the formation of the political consciousness of Russians.

The work also uses the categories of classical logic, the cognitive capabilities of comparative and dialectical methods, the combination of which made it possible to highlight general and specific features in the views of researchers and practitioners on the formation of public consciousness in the field of politics at the present stage of development of political and social relations. The toolkit of sociological science was applied, without which, according to the authors, an objective and convincing study of the

declared processes is impossible: document analysis, content analysis, method of participatory observation.

## 6. Findings

So, as we noted above, today there is a large gap in the formation of the ideas of the elites and society about political processes. This gap is largely due to the fact that, as many researchers note (Balynskaya & Volkov, 2019; Khazin, 2016), the elite in democratic societies, in contrast to the authoritarian and totalitarian elite, is largely blurred and fragmented. It is a division into local, regional, federal groupings, often united by interests other than ideological ones, going beyond even its party predilections.

The elite in a democratic society is replaceable, and this is the basis of democratic governance. Since the elite is limited by term of election, it is focused on the effectiveness of governance, and it perceives itself as a representative of the traditional power of the state. However, as trends show, many interstate and supranational structures in the form of transnational corporations, international public, religious and political organizations, as well as global media blur the idea of traditional power structures as a monolithic subject of political governance. Therefore, today one of the main sources of influence of power structures on society is the communication component, and not the administrative one. This is the fundamental difference between the understanding of democracy and all political life on the part of the elite and on the part of the population.

Some political scientists, categorically disposed, characterize today's public consciousness very negatively: "... there is only a completely drugged, drunken, narcotized by the propaganda media and fooled dying population that barely makes ends meet" (Petukhov, 2012, p. 11). We will not dispute this point of view; we will only note that even a disunited population today finds effective channels for communication and formation of its position on political life.

The elite form their communication through traditional communication channels, using the official mass media. In this respect, its communication resembles a retransmission of her own idea of political life, a kind of report on the actions taken.

This approach does not satisfy the public's request for communication. As a result, society goes into the blogging sphere, and it is there that it forms its idea of the political world. In this space, non-professional and semi-professional bloggers today have more influence than the official, traditional mass media. It is also important to remember that unfilled information gaps in political consciousness necessarily strive to be filled by some other subject of political relations. While researchers in the field of political PR not so long ago said that there is such a technique as silence in the formation of a political agenda, today this method is definitely a thing of the past: any information vacuum is filled with information presented to public opinion in time. Moreover, such information does not necessarily gets filtered for truthfulness, reliability, objectivity, etc. In this regard, the authorities can noticeably lose in the information war (Balynskaya, 2019; Petukhov, 2012).

It is also important to recall the theory of the political system, proposed some time ago by D. Easton, where the importance of evaluating information at the "input" allows the political elite to develop adequate political decisions at the "output" and translate the demands of the population into support

(Shkurko et al., 2020). As practice shows, underestimation of the information component and the communicative aspect in the formation of the political consciousness of Russians can turn into an inadequate assessment of the phenomena themselves at the "entrance" to the political system. That is why today, in the era of information technologies, in our opinion, in terms of the formation of the political consciousness of Russians, the following problems have clearly emerged before the political elite.

The first is to legitimize the institution of elections. Possible ways to solve this problem lie in the formation of a system of public observation (which today is already traced in Russian politics). One of the options is a system of large-scale mass education (especially of the younger generation, inclined to political nihilism) in the basics of political behavior based on cooperation and tolerance.

Also, in our opinion, widespread use of information technologies is possible. Thus, ubiquitous video surveillance, which should cover polling stations by 100%, can help to increase the legitimacy of the electoral institution. It is this mechanism that will make it possible not only to observe the elections in real time, but also to make sure that the institution of public observers and election commissions operate strictly in accordance with the law. In this regard, the mass training of observers, as well as members of election commissions, is acquiring its completeness and will contribute to the formation of trust on the part of the population.

Another solution could be a new understanding of democracy and the formation of its value in the minds of Russians. As researchers say, we "need not formal, but meaningful democracy, understood not as a set of different means at different stages of development of society, but as an achievement of a result" (Delyagin, 2008, p. 24). This understanding of democracy, accurate and measurable, can be formed today by Russian political strategists and political scientists. This requires support from the state in this area, its formation in the form of public lectures, courses on various platforms, including online ones (Limarev et al., 2020).

We also want to highlight one more direction, which, without a doubt, is far from new for Russian political life, but very relevant. We are talking about the formation of the principles of the state's information policy. At the same time, we are talking not only about the substantive principles, which are sufficiently spelled out in our legislation, and where their basis is pluralism, publicity, multi-party system, etc. This is, first of all, about information technologies, which provide this direction of development of political thought. Thus, the blogosphere, into which almost the entire population has gone today, requires a comprehensive understanding and study. This sphere of functioning of political information differs significantly from the official sources of information used by the authorities in terms of its interactivity, anonymity, speed of dissemination of opinions and facts. That is why this mechanism should be reflected in the formation of a position of power in relation not only to informing the population, but also in terms of building communication with them.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, we can formulate some generalizing points that, in our opinion, are capable of forming a new political consciousness of Russians today. First, it is necessary to admit to all subjects of politics that the subject of politics itself has gone far beyond the usual scheme, where power was thought of as a

subject of political interactions, the society was as an object, while the media are perceived as a channel, a means of transferring power will from subject to object (Balynskaya, 2019).

Today, the composition of the subjects of the political process is completely different. It includes not only the authorities, but also individuals, their groups, associations, which often go beyond the state. In this regard, it is necessary to investigate another important aspect: the subjects of politics are shifting from the state of “action policy” into the state of “information policy”, that is, into the information sphere, where informational action can be considered a political action. That is why the information policy of the state should take a priority place on the political agenda.

The next point is that it is necessary to revise the basic conceptual and categorical apparatus in relation to many phenomena of political life: the legitimacy of elections, a new understanding of democracy, new functions of the political elite. This will make it possible to effectively shape the political consciousness of Russians in modern informational conditions.

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