

SOME REMARKS CONCERNING THE DISCUSSION ON THE BEGINNINGS OF THE RUSSIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Abstract

The aim of the sketch is to present some chosen voices in the discussion on the traditions of Russian political science. Statements and concepts presented in the article are not contradictory. However, they highlight different aspects of the past Russian reflection on socio-political matters. To some extent they allow to see the plurality of opinions on the moments which are being perceived as the most important points of reference by the contemporary political scientists in Russia. In the light of presented approaches it is easy to see that exchange of ideas on the discussed issue is becoming more and more relevant last years.

Key words: beginnings of contemporary Russian political science, specificity of Russian political science, identity of Russian political science, narrations on the beginnings of Russian political science

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1. Introduction

It will be good to start with raising a banal, but vital remark. The Russian history is marked by several pivotal moments which shifted the prevailing perspective on political and social issues. Without reaching far into the past, the time of reforms pursued by Peter the Great, the period of war with Napoleon and the birth of the 19th-century idea of native Russia, the 1917 revolution which initiated the period of Soviet Russia and the USSR, the Perestroika and the collapse of the USSR, the end of the era of Boris

Yeltsin and the commencement of Putin's Russia should be mentioned here.

Each period between those pivotal moments was characterized by different rules and complexity, course of development, and inner inconsistencies. Each of them brought certain principles and views on politics and its role in the life of the society, as well as an understanding and evaluation of socio-political processes. The principles and rules served as ideological fundamentals of the time. Certain individuals, who knew how to recognize and formulate those fundamentals, shaped

trends in political and social thought and dialogue of the time. Having permeated into the collective awareness, they still exist as reference in the modern Russian political science and are often referred to as protagonists of certain trends.

Putting a lot of emphasis on one of those individuals and the tradition represented by them is often understood as explicit expression of one's own ideological stand and view on the rules of conducting political science research. Hence the tension and confrontations which co-determine the conflict over the role of tradition in modern political science. To a large degree, the conflict fits within the framework of co-operative competition in which antagonists need one another (as a reference and counter-source of individual and group self-awareness). This state of things has many consequences which determine the modern shape of Russian political science. One of them is the dispute over the beginnings of political science in Russia.

2. Chosen comments on the beginnings of Russian political science

Some researchers look for the sources of Russian political science at the time of the emergence of university education in Russia¹.

¹ For example, scholars of the Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU), one of the most important research facilities in Russia (founded in 1755), look for the beginnings of Russian political science in the 1770s. According to Andrey Shutov, on 22 April 1771, on the birthday of Catherine II, Karl Heinrich Langer gave a lecture (speech) entitled "On the scope and important representatives of political science", which was considered the first speech at the Imperial Moscow University on the nature of political science of the time. Interestingly, Langer was born in Silesia and studied at German universities (e.g. law at the University of Jena). He arrived in Russia (Saint Petersburg) in 1759. During the years 1764–1774 he worked at the Moscow University (for more information, see [43. — P. 6–16]. The work entitled "Избранные труды профессоров нравственно-политического отделения МГУ", edited by Shutov, published in 2010 [44], features selected texts by professors of the Faculty of Moral and Political

Others stress that, although no particular dates can be indicated which would at least symbolise the birth of political science in the empire of the Tsars, it should be borne in mind that the tradition of political thought in some parts of its territory dates back to the 11th century at the least. In the *Foreword* to a selection of texts on the development of Russian socio-political thought from the 11th through to the 17th century, Sergey Perevezentsev states as follows: "The history of Russian political thought dates back to centuries ago. The first deliberations on the essence and sense of power, realistic or idealistic political organization of a state, an ideal ruler, etc., can be found in the 11th–12th century monuments of writing. In their theoretical deliberations and practical recommendations, political thinkers of the 11th–17th centuries attempted, on one hand, to reflect real problems faced

Sciences at MSU, including a work by Christian von Schlözer (1774–1831), in which the author proposed a detailed classification of political sciences [42. — P. 163–183]. As regards the beginnings of political sciences at the Saint Petersburg University, we can rely on information provided by Leonid Smorgunov. He says that the curriculum followed in the 18th century at the Faculty of Law at the Saint Petersburg University included, among other subjects, lectures on practical sciences, i.e. politics, ethics and natural law. In the first half of the 19th century, according to Smorgunov, the contribution of the Saint Petersburg University into the propagation of knowledge on political science could not have been overrated: "It was the Saint Petersburg University where the first attempts were made at establishing university programmes in political sciences in Russia, which would correspond to such programmes run at other universities at the time". What is more, Smorgunov claims that political sciences programmes at the Saint Petersburg University had their specific character developed as early as at the beginning of the 19th century (in comparison to other Russian universities, there were fewer lectures in philosophy and theology; more emphasis was put on teaching economics; "political arithmetic" was taught, with focus on possibly the most effective use of new mathematical knowledge, instead of statistics defined as description of the current condition of nations and countries; and disciplines which provided the students with opportunities to learn about the situation beyond the Russian borders were developed [33. — P. 15].

by the society in their respective time spans, and to juxtapose them with certain ideal models of power and state on the other. As a result, political thought in the 11th–17th century Rus' reflected and expressed the specific historical and political development of Russia, and shaped certain social and political ideals which built social awareness and, what is more, became the objective of the development of the society and the state" [25. — P. 10].

The key specific features of Russian socio-political thought in the 11th–17th centuries, according to Perevezentsev, include: traditionalism, passed down by generations of common people, especially peasantry ("Here, *obshchina* played a major role. Peasant communities in Russia maintained tradition for centuries. Hence, certain common law traditions, established at the end of the 19th century, originate from the 11th century;" [25. — P. 13]); a common belief that authorities should not engage in the construction of a "new, bright future", but rather secure conditions for people to live "the old way," a popular opinion that authorities, against their intended purpose, often act as adversaries of proven lifestyle and attempt at forcing people to adopt pernicious novelties; a large number of traditions referred to by the creators of Russian political thought ("Russian political thought was not based on tradition as such; instead, various political thinkers based their theories on diverse political traditions supported in Rus'. [...] In other words, political disputes during the 11th–17th centuries were not only a simple war between *the old* and *the new*, *the good* and *the bad*, but also a competition among various traditions for precedence in the socio-political awareness and practice. Therefore, the significance of a certain stand or political thinker was characterized by their affiliation to a certain tradition of political thought" [25. — P. 15]); anchoring in the religious and philosophical outlook on life, and forming socio-political ideas within the framework of a popular religious and philosophical understanding of the world,

which translated into a lack of political thought developing independently of any religious and philosophical context [25. — P. 16]; a lack of sociopolitical treatises (which are popular in the West), instead — expressing the socio-political thought in the form of literary and artistic works or in journalistic writing ("*words*, admonishments, missives, readings, allegories, novels, etc." [25. — P. 17])¹.

¹ See also [35; 23; 26]. Diversity and complexity of tradition of the Russian political thought (especially in the 19th and 20th centuries) is also admitted by Yuri Pivovarov and Aleksander Solovyov, editors of a selection of classical Russian socio-political texts published by the Russian Political Science Association. According to their comments in the introduction to the publication ("Введение. Политическая мысль и политическая наука в России: Сложные переплетения, противоречивые традиции, прогноз будущего"): "Russian political thought, still in its conservative form in the 19th century, demonstrated its historiosophical character, the presence of collectivistic emotions, orientation towards moral values and focus on the future of humanity, anticipation of religious salvation and responsibility for all the flaws of life, *as well as for the organization of the entire universe*. At the same time, throughout its history, political thought has drawn on the intellectual tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church (from Metropolitan Ilarion through to Simeon Polotsky) and general Christian tradition, Byzantine ideas and later *ordynstvo* [cultural influence of tribes inhabiting the Eurasian Steppe. — E.J., B.H.]. Moreover, episodic divisions within particular traditions, occurring temporarily in the history, *related to the qualitative transformation of the society (revolutions, wars, radical reforms)* and the consequences of a breakdown of the society into two *antagonistic structures of life* (W. O. Klyuchevsky), westernized and traditionalistic, became an influential factor as well" [27. — P. 10–11]. What is equally important, the authors emphasize that there is a significant difference between Russian socio-political thought and Russian political science. The latter, in their opinion, was born and developed much later than its West European equivalents. Nevertheless, in spite of the delay, "it swiftly and organically entered this intellectual mainstream". Pivovarov and Solovyov refer to the following facts for support: in 1804 the Faculty of Moral and Political Sciences was established at the Moscow University; in the 19th century, political disciplines appeared as a lecture subject at many Russian universities; in 1837 G. Stepanov gave a speech entitled "A speech on significance, importance and purpose of political sciences" at the Kharkiv University; in 1862, D. Kachenovsky gave a lecture entitled "On

There are also numerous supporters of the view that while searching for the roots of Russian political science, stress should be put on the processes which occurred at the time of the USSR. Then, political science research developed in line with the development of the Soviet Political Sciences Association, whose greatest institutional success was the organization of the World Congress of Political Sciences in Moscow in 1979 [22].

As noted by Yakov Plieys, the standardization of political science in Russia did not begin until the early 1990s. Resolution No. 386 of the USSR State Committee on Science and Technology, dated 4 November 1988, "On the nomenclature of specialisations of research workers", is the first document in which reference is made to political scientists as a group of profes-

the current condition of political sciences in Western Europe and Russia;" under an order issued by Alexander II in the 1960s, many Russian universities launched political science programmes [27. — P. 8; see also 36. — P. 141–158]. As commented by Andrey Topychkanov, in 1881 Ivan Andreevsky, professor at the Saint Petersburg University, defined the major channels of popularization of political knowledge in Russia under Alexander II. In the opinion of Andreevsky, the process was to be carried out through practical political activity, theoretical work of universities, and by means of the press. As commented by Topychkanov, the 1860s in the Russian Empire saw significant transformations in the three spheres mentioned above, which should be considered conducive to the development of Russians' political awareness. The transformations were stimulated by the introduction of new laws organizing the work of universities (1863), the establishment of local territorial self-governments (1864) and adoption of temporary laws on printing. Under the new regulations applicable to universities, "the legalistic concept of jurisprudence lost its dominant position, and the sphere of legal knowledge was extended to cover political, social and — in consequence — psychological problems". What is more, owing to the new legal regulations, political science and state law gained more lecture coverage. As a result, names of university institutes were adjusted accordingly; institutes of political economics were transferred from faculties of history and philosophy to faculties of law. Moreover, new regulations facilitated the creation of numerous scientific associations affiliated with universities, which considered political research one of their core activities [36. — P. 144–147].

sionals. Under Decision No. 1 of the Higher Assurance Commission at the Committee of Ministers of the USSR of 25 January 1989, the nomenclature adopted by the State Committee on Science and Technology was made mandatory at all research and academic staff assurance authorities [28. — P. 155]. The abovementioned documents mark the commencement of institutionalization of political science as a scholarly discipline in the USSR/Russia. Institutes, academic councils and faculties were created. The first board of experts on political sciences was appointed in the autumn of 1990, composed mainly of members of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The first academic councils specializing in political science were created in 1990 at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (chaired by Fedor Burlatsky) and at the Ural Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences [28. — P. 155]. According to Plieys, research into certain areas of political science was taken up in Russia in the late 19th century and covered mainly the issues of statehood. Unlike in the United States and many European countries, no studies were conducted at the time on political power and its social background, theory of elites, typology of political systems and political party systems, political regimes, political ideologies or civic society.¹

Plieys claims that the attempts made and research taken up in the 1960s and 1970s by Burlatsky, Alexey Rumyantsev, Giennadiy Osipov, Yury Levada, Boris Grushin, Georgy Shakhnazarov, Oleg Bogomolov, Georgy Arbatov, Fedor Petrenka or Mikhail Titarenko can by no means be considered the beginnings of Russian political science. These researchers worked in the environment of ideological monopoly of the communist party, which means that they were not able to practice

¹ Therefore, works by Moisey Ostrogorsky, dealing with democracy and political parties at the time, are considered exceptional by Plieys [30. — P. 5].

political science in the strict meaning of the term [30. — P. 5]. Nonetheless, it is worth citing a statement by Alexei Salmin (1951–2005), the then president of the “Russian Public Policy Centre” Foundation and the chief editor of “Полития” journal, of July 2002. He stated as follows: “I do and do not agree, depending on the context, with the statement that the year 1989 marks the beginnings of political science [in Russia. — E.J., B.H.]. In fact, everything was slightly more complex. After 1989, political science gained, first in the Soviet Union and later in the Russian Federation, a real subject of studies — a political society. Indeed, the political society was emerging slowly, but it was emerging. Russians began to hold regular elections, based on the principle of alternative, factions were formed in the parliament (not always affiliated with political parties), the process of territorial decentralization, full of contradictions, was launched, and relations between the centre and the regions of Russia became problematic. An inconsistent process of introducing highly imperfect self-governments was started. A real, although not always proper, division of power took effect, and caused conflicts at certain stages of the process. Hundreds of organizations calling themselves political parties, etc., popped up and disappeared. In other words, a series of issues arose and a sequence of processes commenced which are rightfully considered political science-related and which constitute the core of political science in the sense this field of study has been developed in Western Europe and the United States and gained international recognition” [32. — P. 328].

Parallel, according to Oxana Gaman-Golutvina, the current President of the Russian Political Science Association, notwithstanding the rich tradition of Russian socio-political thought, “political science was officially recognized as an academic discipline and a research field relatively late — at the end of the 1980s”. In the opinion of Gaman-Golutvina, the delay was

mainly caused by objective factors, in particular by the fact that “Historically, both the Russian Empire and the USSR were organized as ideocracies”. It means that, “In the circumstances of extraordinary territorial and geographical, economic and ethnic and confessional diversity, ideology had the consolidating power. It was the Orthodox Church and the statehood in the Russian Empire, and the communist ideology in the USSR”. Interpersonal relations, their concept and description were ideologized with the aim to make the Russian or Soviet reality uniform and thus protect the empire from break-up. At the same time, the ideocratic system reduced “the opportunity for political and intellectual pluralism to get rooted, which is absolutely necessary for the development of social science. As a result, intellectual pluralism was mainly peripheral not in geographical terms, but rather in terms of the hierarchy and structure of the social space” [13. — P. 14]. However, Gaman-Golutvina notes that in spite of the abovementioned circumstances, the development of political research in the USSR was appreciated abroad. She writes as follows: “It is not a coincidence that authors (including first class researchers, such as Raymond Aron, Maurice Duverger, Harold Lasswell, and Charles Merriam) of the extensive paper *Contemporary Political Science. A Survey of Methods, Research and Teaching*, drafted in late 1940s by more than 50 researchers representing a broad range of countries from Mexico through to China, distinguished five leading schools of national political thought: American, British, French, German and Soviet. Indeed, regardless of the fact that political science was not mentioned in the 1989 official index of specialties, there had existed national traditions and schools of research into politics had been formed before”.

It is important to notice that the President of the Russian Political Science Association claims that in the Soviet regime, stress was put on the development

of research into state and statehood, political parties, systems and regimes, the principles of development of the world economy, foreign policy and international relations, ideologies and political cultures, the history of political science and the theory of statehood, and research into local history. Studies in these fields were conducted at several institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences (the Institute of Philosophy, the Institute of International Economy and International Relations, the Institute of International Workers' Movement, the Institute of the United States and Canada, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and other), and disciplines falling into the scope of political science were taught at the major universities in the USSR. In 1944, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations was created, which — Gaman-Golutvina notices — was to become one of the key research and higher education centres in the field of history and theory of international relations. She emphasizes also that the first Faculty of Political Science in the Russian Federation was created in 1998 at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations at Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [13. — P. 15].

3. Conclusion

It is easy to notice that statements and concepts presented in the article are not contradictory. However, they highlight different aspects of the history of Russian reflection on socio-political matters. They allow to see the plurality of opinions on the moments which are being perceived as the most important points of reference by the contemporary political scientists in Russia.

The quoted and characterized statements represent only a narrow part of debate on the beginnings of contemporary Russian political science. However, in the light of them it is easy to see that exchange of ideas on this issue is becoming more and more relevant last years.

Moreover, it should be treated as a part of a broader discussion which regards to questions on specificity and identity of political science in Russia. Development of reflection in this area is connected with deliberation on the set of sources which shape the content and form of contemporary Russian political research. These sources are often divided into national and foreign, and a discussion on the focus of the research pursued by modern Russian political scientists develops against the backdrop of this division. The discussion concerns in particular the proportion between research based on national and foreign sources, research determining the boundary and the relation between the two, the specific nature of the national socio-political thought and its further development, and the role of socio-political thought in the creation of the Russian national school of political science.

Reaching the end of this short sketch, it is worth to add that many other phenomena are related to the division of sources used by political scientists in Russia. Among them let us mention such as: 1) a broad scope and high intensity of discussion concerning the division into national and foreign political science; 2) popular belief in the national character of political science (location and culture exert a significant impact on the shape and results of political science research and education); 3) progressing specialization of political science research, combined with autonomization and a fixed reconstruction of political science sub-disciplines; 4) methodological pluralism in Russian political science, accompanied by little emphasis on the determination of fixed framework of certain research trends; 5) a relatively strong normative background of political science research — objectivism against practical usefulness; 6) a relatively insignificant circulation of the results of research by Russian political scientists in the world, accompanied by a trend of increasing aspirations of Russian political scientists to change it.

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