

Preface

The current issue of *Politics, Culture and Socialization* focuses on Russian Politics, and more in particular on “Russian Politics: Leaders, Citizens’ Attitudes and Political Socialization”. The articles were collected from a series of papers from a conference held at Lomonosov Moscow State University in October 26-27, 2012. The aim of the conference—that was sponsored by the Research Committee on Political Psychology of the Russian Political Science Association, together with two Research Committees of the International Political Science Association IPSA, RC21 on Political Socialization and Education and RC 29 on Psycho-Politics was to discuss the interrelation of citizens and leaders. (Past) Presidents of IPSA RC29 Paul Dekker (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Planning Office and University of Tilburg*) and IPSA RC21 Christ’l De Landtsheer (*Antwerpen University*) and Paul Dekker (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Planning Office and University of Tilburg*) have done a lot of efforts for attracting the international political science community in this project. They co-edited the collection of Russian papers that are grouped in this special issue on Russian Politics. Seeing the fact that many conference papers were of interest, I expect that more, also non- Russian papers, will find their way to coming issues of *Politics, Culture and Socialization*.

The conference theme consisted of “Leaders, Citizens’ Attitudes, and Political Socialization” and in my opening address I started off with the following explanatory question. “Citizens and Leaders in a Comparative Perspective. What can political psychology and political socialization researches tell us about recent trends and events”. Conference participants in Moscow seemed to concentrate on one question in this discussion: whether theories of Political Socialization and Political Psychology are relevant for the interpretation of recent political trends and events. It is hardly a secret that for the majority of observers such phenomena as Arab spring, new movements like “Indignados” in Spain or “Occupy Wall street” in the USA and protest marches in Russia after the 2011 elections were absolutely unexpected. Both leaders and citizens were not prepared for them. But inviting our colleagues for discussion we believed that political psychology conceptions and theories did not exhaust their explanatory potential, though in some of the aspects

they definitely need reappraisal and development for a more adequate estimation of new political phenomena.

The suggested conference theme of “Leaders, Citizens’ Attitudes, and Political Socialization” presupposed the achieving of two very different tasks: one task concerns the study of the psychological nature of politics and it is fundamental for political science. The other task has an applied character and it is focused on those psychological consequences that new political phenomena have for leaders and citizens.

The first task urged us to revise our theoretical approaches, models and schemes. We were keeping in mind that at several occasions the International Political Science Association IPSA initiated such theoretical discussions that were dealing with the issue of the nature of knowledge in Political Science. There were published, as a result, some fundamental books that were summarizing the development of Political Science as a discipline¹.

Recently, IPSA sponsored a new multi-volume edition of the Oxford Handbook of Political Science. One out of ten volumes was dedicated to political behavior². As the publisher notes, this volume is responding to the very latest scholarship in political behavior, with sections covering: mass belief systems and communication, political values, new debates in political behavior, political participation, and public opinion. Contributors of this volume examine the role of the citizens in contemporary politics. It is symptomatic that even in the latest editions of Political science series, or in major books on Political Science as a discipline, topics of political leadership, political psychology and political socialization are absent. Political behavior is as a rule reduced to electoral behavior. Matters, concerning political attitudes, values and images in citizens’ minds are missing.

The situation is much better in the “Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology”³, edited by David Sears, Leonie Huddy and Robert Jervis. This book contains a chapter on personality in politics by David Winter and interesting chapters on political socialization by Orit Ichilov and on values by Stanley Feldman. This book summarizes our knowledge on the development of theoretical approaches to the interrelation of citizens and leaders in contemporary politics. It is important that for the first time in such a fundamental book one can find two articles on the problem of political perception that in political science literature are still ignored while in a highly mediatized political practice this problem appears to be one of the central ones for understanding the interrelation of citizens and politicians.

Inviting scholars to this discussion we assumed that it is important to provide a variety of political experiences that we want to interpret. That is why at the conference, we did not want to restrict ourselves to one national political culture and why we represented different types of political experience from Israel to Japan and from Norway to Iran. As Russia was hosting the conference, the experience from this country was represented more completely. Participation of scholars from many countries permitted us to collect a number of methods and results of the studies which not only enable us to describe some current shifts in mass political mentality but to start their theoretical modeling.

It is too early to speak about the possibilities of a comparative method. Each of the suggested models has its’ own peculiarity, determined by the national political culture, the traditions and the theoretical priorities of the scholar as well. But we believe that the approaches suggested by the discussants do permit us to think of a further integration of the academic community and to hope that in the future we can complete projects on compara-

tive political leadership, on political values and on attitudes of citizens, on political perception and political socialization. Geographical diversity of studies, represented at the conference, offers the representation of different political practices in a wide range of countries. The conference discussion (and this special issue of *PC&S*) focused on three main issues.

The first subject was devoted to the study of **political socialization**. Russian articles in this special issue on Russian Politics addressing this issue are by Tatiana Samsonova (Civic Education for the 21st Century: Russia and the USA) and by Irina V. Samarkina (Political world view in the context of political socialization theory: cross-temporal and cross-regional comparisons). This political socialization theme was in the center of political scientists' interest in the second part of the 20th century. But in recent years it was rather out of the mainstream of political science. The discussion has shown that it is this area of knowledge where one can look for the basis of the explanation of the newest forms of political behavior. As was stated by Orit Ichilov in her Key Note Lecture to the conference, one can find substantial shifts in political socialization that determine the changes in political behavior of citizens: it concerns a number of socialization agents and the character of their interrelation. If earlier the leading role in the political socialization process belonged to the family, now it is the Media (mainly electronic ones) that have a priority. As a result in such countries as Egypt and Russia, Germany and Japan, we can find a new generation, whose political views are molded by the Internet. Another important feature of contemporary models in comparison to theories of political socialization of 1970-1980s is the acknowledgment by students of socialization that it is not only the adjustment to the existing political system that can be regarded as a result of this process. Today we see the legalization of the models of political disobedience and civil resistance. Transfer of the accent from the early stages (childhood) to the lifespan is another important feature of contemporary approaches to political socialization. One more new development in theories of political socialization concerns the fact that in their studies of the context of the formation of political concepts, scholars now pay more attention to conflicts, wars and other widely spread circumstances that accompany the acquaintance of young people with political reality.

The second subject was focused on **citizens** with their attitudes, values, images, mentality and needs. Articles in this "Russian" special issue of *PC&S* that discuss this subject are by Igor Yu. Kiselev & Anna G. Smirnova (Deprivation of needs as the mechanism in the formation of the protest political moods) and by Antonina Selezneva (Psychological Analysis of the Young Generation in Contemporary Russia). This group of papers contained a number of theoretical models, used for the analysis of current trends in political life. Scholars analyzed categories of citizens, different by their age, residence, political and ideological identity as well as those psychological interrelations between citizens and authorities that emerge when there is no effective communication between them like distrust, lack of political support, political misperception, political protests etc.

The third kind of topics was devoted to **leadership** in the modern political world. Articles in this "Russian" special issue of *PC&S* that discuss this subject are by Olga Bukreeva (Perception of Russian political power and political leaders in the conceptual area of demotivational posters), by Olga Mitina & Victor Petrenko (Psychosemantic study of the political mind of the contemporary Russian political elite), and by Dmitry A. Lanko

(Stakes are High in the Middle East': Comparative Risk Acceptance by Presidents George W. Bush of the United States and Vladimir V. Putin of the Russian Federation through the Lens of Regionalism). In their papers participants of the conference have shown that leadership in the 21st century has a number of new traits. First of all, together with the classic types of requirements to the contemporary leaders we can see a number of new ones that can be explained by changes in political processes (globalization, new forms of political communications new role of leaders' followers) and by changes in social demands. In studies of political leadership issues of methodology play a special role.

As one can see, the discussion of the mentioned three areas of political science theories of political socialization, political attitudes, and political leadership have a substantial potential that enable political scientists, united in the corresponding IPSA Research Committees and National and International PSAs to achieve a new quality of interpretation of the current trends and events of political life.

Helen Shestopal
Guest Editor
Lomonosow Moscow State University

Notes

- 1 See New Handbook of Political Science/Ed by R. Goodin and H.-D. Klingemann, Oxford University Press 1998
- 2 The *Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* edited by Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Oxford University press. Oxford, 2009
- 3 Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology/ Ed By David O' Sears, Leonie Huddy, Robert Jervis. Oxford University Press, 2003