

КОНФЛИКТОЛОГИЯ

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**Public Governance in the Context of Global Turbulence:
Risk-Reflexive Approach***A. V. Aleinikov¹, D. A. Maltseva^{1,2}¹ St. Petersburg State University,

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The article examines methodological trends and combinations in the discourse of political strategic management of dangers and threats under the conditions of the new specific type of risk society formation, which is qualitatively different from the classical version of the ‘risk society’. In this study, using a risk-reflexive approach, authors propose a research route to analyze the transformation of public governance and enlighten the main directions of social behaviour strategies modeling, designing tools for prevention and reducing negative effects of emerging risks. Based on the analysis of the ‘Giddens paradox’ and the concept of ‘organized irresponsibility’ by U. Beck, the problems of the efficiency of public governance institutions in ensuring security and preventing threats are considered. The authors’ attention is focused on analyzing the hierarchy of ways to justify the acceptability of risk and the subjects of risk management. Approaches to the classification of types of power used by subjects of public risk management are investigated. In this regard, the article identifies three mechanisms for the formation of risk-reflexivity (forced, imitative, normative). A theoretical perspective is presented for considering informational, strategic, institutional, motivational and simulation risk reflections in public governance process. Special attention is paid to the main forms of public governance competencies in political risk management, especially in the context of digital transformation, which opens up new opportunities for information impact and cognitive programming of risk perception.

Keywords: public governance, risk, risk reflection, ‘risk society’, risk-stakeholders.

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We are currently witnessing, to use F. Fukuyama's harshly criticized term, a sort of 'end of history,' which is marked by unpredictable and ruinous total bifurcations caused by long-running world crises of various genesis, as well as by ambiguous effects of rapid digitalization. Emphasizing that "we must recognize that we cannot fully control unstable phenomena around us, just as we cannot fully control social processes," I. R. Prigogin providentially warned about 'risk overload' ("there is risk only where the universe opens up as something multivariate, similar to human existence") in dissipative systems, in which unpredictable micro-social actions (acts committed by individuals) may lead to macro-social consequences that change social order not only of countries and peoples, but also of civilizations [1].

"The era of turbulence, as contemporary Russian researcher Rozov points out, is a historical period of feeling the failure of previous determinations, turbulent contradictory emotions (from utopian hopes to embarrassment and pessimism) that seize the strongest states (societies) and significantly disrupt the intrasocietal, mental and functional order" [2, p. 82–83].

Prominent Russian sociologist Oleg Yanitsky, developed the concept of 'critical case' as institutionalized complex social, administrative, political, information and symbolic interaction between risk stakeholders. In the logical limit, this leads to qualitative transformations and the emergence of a new specific type of riskogenic society, essentially distinct from the classical 'risk society.' He identified the following to be its most indicative characteristics:

- social environment transformed from a 'risk absorber' to a 'risk producer';
- risk production as a dominant way to reproduce institutional practices with its goals and values becoming a tool and result of political game and used as a means of consolidation and mobilization;
- a system of 'collective irresponsibility' created at different levels, where risks are only responded to rather than managed, due to the lack of tools and techniques to determine a source and extent of real danger;
- legitimized production of risks and dangers, as well as capitalized consequences acting as a mechanism to increase the political and social capital for a number of interest groups;
- purposeful and organized production of risks sooner or later turning from a point process into an exhaustive one aimed at the destruction of a certain social community;
- public discourse on risks shaping public opinion and determining the political process, thus inciting the emergence of specific risk divisions and risk solidarities;
- threats and dangers being politically constructed and replicated, which legitimize all types of risk production, including risks for their producers, generating shadow bargaining between risk beneficiaries and risk outsiders on the price of risk and the right to dispose of resources for its prevention and minimization [3].

The articulated trends and tendencies indicate that contemporary political science finds itself in a situation of revision of classical approaches to the analysis of public governance in order to mark new formats for ensuring the legitimacy of political power, maintaining the stability and sustainability of the political system, as well as increasing the indices of national competitiveness. This means that it is necessary to search for relevant methodological combinations introduced into the discourse of political strategic threat management, as well as to conceptualize and re-conceptualize senses and categories in

this area, which are experiencing large-scale effects of rapidly changing external conditions, in particular those of digital nature. Therefore, an important task is to model social behaviour strategies in the structure of public governance under conditions of risk, as well as to design tools for its prevention and abatement of negative effects. In this context, let us recall Giddens' paradox: "since the dangers... are tangible many will sit on their hands and do nothing about them. Yet waiting until they become visible and acute will, by definition, be too late" [4, p. 2].

Revising his classic version of risk society, Beck distinguishes the fundamental differences between old and new risks:

“1. *Delocalization*: their causes and consequences are not limited to one geographical location or space; they are in principle omnipresent.

2. *Incalculability*: their consequences are in principle incalculable; at bottom they involve 'hypothetical' risks based on scientifically generated nonknowing and normative dissent.

3. *Non-compensatability*: although the dream of security of the first modernity did not exclude harms (even major harms), these were regarded as compensatable so that their destructive impacts could be made good (by money, etc.). ... Today, the logic of compensation is breaking down and is being replaced by the principle of precaution through prevention... Moreover, attempts are being made to anticipate and prevent risks whose existence has not yet been demonstrated” [5, p. 52].

Back in 2013, Army General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces (the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'), put forward a number of propositions characterizing a new balance between old, traditional, and new risks in the realm of public policy:

- a blurred distinction between the state of war and the state of peace;
- broken patterns of dynamics and escalation of military and socio-political conflicts: in a matter of months or even days a quite prosperous state can turn into an arena of fierce armed struggle, become a victim of foreign intervention, plunge into chaos, humanitarian catastrophe or civil war;
- emergence of a new type of conflict, comparable with catastrophic social, economic and political consequences;
- a significant change in the very 'rules of war' associated with the increasing role of non-military methods, which are much more effective than military and forceful ones in terms of achieving political and strategic goals;
- widely used political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military methods implemented with the involvement of the protest potential of population;
- transition to the open use of force mainly to achieve ultimate success in the conflict, with extensive use of information countermeasures;
- widespread use of asymmetric actions levelling the enemy's superiority in armed struggle, involvement of internal opposition to create a permanent front throughout the territory of the opposing state, and information and remote non-contact influence on the enemy [6].

In this situation, as N. Taleb recommends, "to make decisions we should focus on the consequences (which we can know), and not on the probability of an event (which we cannot know) — this is the main rule of accepting uncertainty. On this foundation, a general theory of decision making can be built. All you need to do is to try to mitigate the consequences" [7, p. 340–341].

In an 'asymmetric society,' a new balance between old and new risks emerges. These specific, difficult-to-predict risks are almost impossible to manage. The problem of risk-based decision-making by actors comes to the fore, as Luhmann suggests, when the political assessment of risk tolerance or safety level begins to play a significant role. "But precisely this development takes politics into tricky territory. It is not only exposed to the usual over and underestimating of risks, which initially triggers the politicization of the topics, but also to distortions arising from the fact that one regards the primary risk as being controllable or uncontrollable depending on the result one is hoping to achieve. Every risk evaluation is and remains context bound. Neither psychologically nor under prevailing social conditions is there an abstract risk preference or lack of preference. But what happens if the context producing the risk evaluation is itself a further risk?.. The omission of prevention becomes a risk. It is apparently easier to distance oneself politically from dangers than from risks" — even where the probability of loss or the extent of loss is greater in the case of danger than in that of risk" [8, p. 30–31].

Thus, an obvious question is who is responsible for the risks in the public space structure? In this regard, Beck puts forward the concept of 'organized irresponsibility' (a bluff played out as a means of pretending to have control over risk) as a specific form of risk management that involves embroilment, divergence and mystification aimed at 'symbolic detoxification' of risks: "Each is cause and effect and thus is not a cause. Causes dissolve in overall interdependences between agents and conditions, responses and counter-reactions" [9, p. 38].

Hence, public governance institutions designed to ensure security and prevent threats have proved to be ineffective: "The restless search for the lost security begins through measures and strategies that lend the appearance of control and security instead of guaranteeing them and exacerbate the general feeling of insecurity and endangerment" [5, p. 156].

For the purposes of analyzing the risk management continuum, it is worth identifying a 'risk subspace' in the political space, which functions "simultaneously as tools and targets of struggle in different areas" [10, p. 40] and appears to be an asymmetric structure of production, reproduction, ranking and distribution of threats and hazards [11, p. 850–851].

In this 'subspace of risk,' the value-institutional hierarchy of ways to justify risk tolerability, its management subjects, and distinctive features of risk behaviour implementation in the political order, updating the concept of 'forms of sociability' of the Russian-French legal scholar and sociologist Georges Gurvitch*, *it is possible to distinguish spontaneous and organized forms of risk-reflection*, capturing the real structure of social construction and deconstruction of threat situations.

The *first* one is based on individualization of risk perception, marking of distance between 'Threats to Me' and 'Threats to Others,' and closed individual risk-reflexivity in relation to each other.

The organized form is linked to patterns of risky collective behaviour and is mediated by stereotypes of threats and hazards "crystallized in reflective schemas that are formulated in advance and prescribe hierarchical and centralized patterns of behaviour" [12, p. 706].

It is symptomatic that Gurvitch's sociological theory of two forms of sociability essentially asserts different forms of legitimization (justification or rationalization) of manage-

* Georgy Davidovich Gurvitch (1894–1965) graduated from the Petrograd University in 1917.

rial decisions taken in a risk situation (social and individual right in Gurvitch's terminology). He convincingly shows that "...social law is based on trust, whereas individual law, i. e. interindividual and intergroup law, is based on distrust. The first is the right of peace, mutual assistance, and friendship; the second is the right of war, conflict, and division. For even where individual law partially brings individuals together (as in the case of contracts), it divides them and delimits their interests" [12, p. 712].

A risk-reflexive approach to public governance can be viewed as a multilevel system of algorithms and norms of socially adequate behaviour in a situation "when people lose the ground under their feet, the past loses credibility, and the future is depicted in tragic colours" [13].

Hence, risk-reflection can also be regarded as "a process of political and communicative actualization of conventionally enshrined, imperatively intentional, and generated by the system of threat and danger assessments, 'special warning signs'" [14] in the structure of the institutional matrix that defines potential strategies of power in a threat situation. Herewith, the subjects of public risk management have three types of power: "power of interpretation," "power of disposition," and "power of position," which, using the terminology of M. Foucault forms patterns of perception of risks and reality and models of risk behaviour, and prescribes certain actions to risk consumers [15, p. 226, 230–231].

Studying these patterns of perceptions of risks and forms of adaptations to them, researchers have articulated the concept of institutional environment, which is based primarily on the concept of institutions James March and Johan Olsen. The conceptual starting point of this trend is the understanding of institutions not just as procedural 'rules of the game' regulating human interactions, but primarily as "relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances. There are constitutive rules and practices prescribing appropriate behavior for specific actors in specific situations. There are structures of meaning, embedded in identities and belongings: common purposes and accounts that give direction and meaning to behavior, and explain, justify, and legitimate behavioral codes. There are structures of resources that create capabilities for acting" [16, p. 3].

Based on the concept of institutional isomorphic changes [17], three mechanisms of risk-reflexivity formation can be distinguished:

- *coercive*, consisting of formal and informal pressure (by force, persuasion or invitation to collude) exerted by risk beneficiaries on risk outsiders;
- *mimetic*, in which risk stakeholders model their risk behaviour 'in' the image and likeness' of others under the conditions of uncertainty and lack of understanding of the most effective strategies for adapting to threats;
- *normative*, arising from the new essence of modern public risk management.

As contemporary Russian researcher Leonid Smorgunov rightly emphasizes "the modern theory of management, be it management or public administration, radically changes the attitude to cognitive components of the management process. From an instrumental factor of management, albeit procedurally significant for it, cognitive components turn into a substance of construction" [18, p. 186].

Therefore, risk-stakeholders voluntarily and consciously adopt those practices and strategies of behaviour in threatening situations that are consistent with their own per-

ceptions of risk management: “decisions of the actor affect the ‘states of the world’ as they appear to them” [19].

From a risk-reflexive perspective [20] in public governance, which includes power formations, managerial instruments with regulatory impact and the outcome of compromises and confrontations [21] of risks it is common to distinguish as follows:

— *informational risk-reflection* — representations of the management subject about parameters and hierarchy of threats and hazards in a situation of uncertainty and ‘representations about representations’ about risks of other risk consumers. The fundamental problem, as shown in Giddens’ research, is the ‘focus on personal choice’ in a situation of danger and the narrowing of opportunities to coordinate political efforts to manage risk in the variability and hybridization of personal risk-reflexivity, which leads to the individual’s conclusions about the ‘ontological unreliability’ [22].

Moreover, this dispersion exacerbates the problem of inadequate awareness of the authorities about threats of a situation and other risk stakeholders’ perceptions of them.

By carrying out information management of threats, risk beneficiaries seek to maximize their gain from a risk situation by forming a dependent structure of hazard awareness among risk outsiders:

— *strategic risk reflection* — the management subject’s perceptions of the principles of decision-making in a situation of threat from other risk stakeholders, especially systemic and non-systemic opponents, determining their choice of risk adaptation strategies;

— *institutional risk reflection* — public risk management is based on purposeful limitation of possible strategies and behaviour of risk-stakeholders. As Dmitry Novikov emphasize, “such restriction can be drawn by explicit or implicit influences — legal acts, regulations, orders, etc. or moral and ethical norms, corporate culture, etc” [23, p. 12];

— *motivational risk reflection* — public risk management is based on the purposeful adjustment of ‘*risk appetite*’, risk capacity, the limit to accept without obvious unavoidable losses and meaningful degrees of disagreement of social actors in connection with the assessment of risk tolerance [24].

This adjustment consists in using a system of punishments/incentives for choosing certain behavioural strategies in a risk situation:

— *simulated risk reflection* — public risk management is based on social performance, ‘carnivalization,’ ‘theatricalization,’ hyperbolization of ‘good’ (for oneself or another) or ‘evil’ as a characteristic of danger, ‘dramatization’ or ‘rendering to comedy’ of risks coming from above.

Jeffrey Alexander, examining the ‘prophetic narrative’ of risk-beneficiaries, emphasized that “every struggle for greater temporal political power is based on a narrative of crisis and salvation. After all, strong personalities can only become heroes by overcoming something unusually great, by solving insurmountable challenges” [25, p. 77].

It concerns the concept of risk ‘staging,’ ‘dramatization’ developed by U. Beck. He believed that “the anticipation of catastrophe, of all things, prompt a reinvention of the political... Global risk is the staging of the reality of global risk... For only by imagining and staging world risk does the future catastrophe become present — often with the goal of averting it by influencing present decisions” [5, p. 10].

We can agree with the position of Russian sociologist S. A. Kravchenko, who noted that “paradoxical syntheses of riskophobia, and riskophilia are becoming the norm due

to the erasure of differences between risk and cultural perception of risk, which is formed thanks to staging” [26, p. 12].

Jeffrey Alexander articulated key approaches to creating a ‘dominant narrative’ of risks, which we use to analyze representations of public reflexive risk management.

1. *The nature of the pain* — How has the specific threat affected society as a whole and certain social groups?

2. *The nature of the victim* — Which group(s) / certain individuals were targeted by the ‘main blow’ of a threat? Were they particular individuals or groups, or the much more all-encompassing ‘people’ as such?

3. *Relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience* — Does the society as a whole see the connection of the threat representation between itself and the ‘victim group,’ will it be able to symbolically join its experience?

4. *Attribution of responsibility* — In order to create a compelling risk narrative, it is important to identify the ‘villain’ who is actually responsible for the risk [27, p. 94–96].

When risk perception management falls into the realm of “state bureaucracy, it can draw on the governmental power to channel the representational process... forcing the appearance of witnesses, and creating carefully choreographed public dramaturgy, such panels tilt the interpretative process in powerful ways, expanding and narrowing solidarity, creating or denying the factual and moral basis for reparations and civic repair” [27, p. 100].

The main problem is the extent to which society attempts to control the uncontrollable.

The theoretical interpretations of the phenomena of John Rawls’ ‘overlapping consensus’ [28] and Lewis Coser’s ‘basic consensus’ [29] are extremely significant in this regard.

It is to highlight and emphasize the similarity and ‘coherence’ of risk stakeholders’ positions in different positions regarding the social acceptability of risk, which implies ‘reflective equilibrium’ (mutual recognition by different positions of each other’s rights to exist within the framework of some common principles of risk prevention and mitigation recognized by all, and refusal by each position to claim the universal nature of its point of view on threats and hazards) [30].

Lewis Coser introduces a distinction that is crucial for us, between conflicts over basic matters of principle and conflicts over matters presupposing adherence to the same basic principle. The lack of mechanisms to adapt to risks and dangers increases hostile feelings and represents a real threat to basic consensus. Coser cites a fundamental tenet of conflict studies by Edward Ross: “society, therefore, which is ridden by a dozen oppositions along lines running in every direction may actually be in less danger of being torn with violence or falling to pieces than one split just along one line. For each new cleavage contributes to narrow the cross clefts, so that one might say that society is sewn together by its inner conflicts” [29, p. 78].

G. Simmel and L. Coser have the idea of analytically distinguishing the subjects of internal threats into *renegade* (“desertion of those standards of the group considered vital to its well-being, if not to its actual existence... symbol of the danger in which the group finds itself in the face of potential enemy attack”) и *heretic* (“presents a more insidious danger: by upholding the group’s central values and goals, he threatens to split it into factions that will differ as to the means for implementing its goal”) [29, p. 68–70].

Thus, risk-reflections can be regarded as a peculiar type of social regulation, multi-layered constructions of risk interpretation, implementation as cognitive constructs into risk-actions and risk-behaviour and reinterpretation of threats in the process of their possible

'heretics' or 'renegatization.' For example, describing the adaptation strategies of supporters and opponents of the special operation, Russian sociologists have identified a number of similarities and differences in the perception of risks and threats and the future depending on informants' political views. The adaptation strategies of the supporters, according to the authors of the study, consist in solving their own everyday issues, believing in the best and trusting the authorities. The adaptation strategy used by the special military operation opponents consists in avoidance and pessimistic rejection of the situation [31].

Based on the theory of organizational capabilities [32], the following main forms of public governance competences in political risk management can be distinguished:

- strategic foresight — timely identification of risks of a multivariate future;
- strategic agility and shared strategic alertness;
- combining long-term political strategies with high adaptability to risks and threats under conditions of uncertainty [33];
- strategic sensitivity: acuity of perception and intensity of awareness and attention to strategic risk situations as uncertainty develops;
- resource fluidity — the ability of the authorities to rapidly reallocate available resources to cope with existing hazards or prevent new ones;
- collective commitment — the ability of political leadership “to make and implement bold joint strategic decisions fast, without getting bogged down in “win-lose” politics, and to carry through implementation with high energy” [34];
- ‘dynamic capabilities’ — Revealing threats, identifying risk opportunities, responding to the danger, choosing the right moment to change habitual strategies and models of dealing with new risks, developing and adjusting the political course, allocating resources for risk prevention, predicting the response of opponents, updating the management structure and political culture, breaking managerial templates;
- ‘Ambidexterity’ [35]. Ambidexterity is commonly understood to mean “the dilemma as a paradox management challenge, where opposite demands can be reconciled by accepting paradoxes as sources of enduring tensions to be constructively used over time rather than ‘resolved’” [36].

As experts in the field of strategic management emphasise, “The Roman god Janus had two sets of eyes — one pair focusing on what lay behind, the other on what lay ahead... This mental balancing act can be one of the toughest of all managerial challenges — it requires executives to explore new opportunities even as they work diligently to exploit existing capabilities” [37].

In the context of the digital transition, public governance process is undergoing significant changes. As Russian sociologist D. V. Ivanov emphasizes “digital technologies turned out to be the most suitable means and environment for creating and transmitting images in all spheres of social life” [38, p. 6].

There turns a question about the compliance of the modern public governance model with the threats and risks of intensive digital transformation and with new opportunities of information impact and cognitive programming of risk perception. The article does not aim to review existing approaches in studying the phenomenon of digitalization of public governance. Our task included an emphasis on the strategies of political actors in the context of digitalization to substantiate and justify the social acceptability of risks, the grounds, forms and methods of responsibility for the choice made when making decisions under risk conditions, which becomes an important indicator of the value-normative

foundations of the digitalization of public governance in conditions of unpredictability and global turbulence.

“Each subject, emphasizes the famous Russian philosopher V. S. Diev, has its own system of goals, values and assessments, and its behavior in conditions of risk is determined by this system, and not by the same logical and methodological standards for all” [39].

The focus of scientific works discussing the problems of responsibility for the choice made in the risk situation, formulated back in the ‘*St. Petersburg Paradox*’ by D. Bernoulli (how much is a player willing to pay for a game without losing rationality?) [40] is based on Nassim Taleb’s thesis: “Those who do not risk anything should not be allowed to make any decisions” [41, p. 28].

In his terminology, when making decisions under risk conditions, it is necessary to use ‘skin-in-the-game-style’ rule, so to be ready to face the personal consequences of decision implementation which requires severe punishment for ‘unjust risks’.

In the context of the risks reconfiguration in the digital realm, “skin in the game-style’ rule helps to solve the ‘Black Swan’ problem and overcome other issues of uncertainty at both individual and collective levels: what survives proves that events like ‘Black Swan’ does not affect it, but if the ‘skin in the game-style’ rule is violated, selection mechanisms will not work” [41, p. 49].

In our opinion, such a methodological approach is still poorly or fragmentarily represented in modern studies of the transformation of public governance in the context of digitalization and is a very promising direction for further academic investigation.

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Публичное управление рисками в условиях глобальной турбулентности: риск-рефлексивный подход*

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В статье исследуются тенденции и тренды поиска актуальных методологических комбинаций, внедряемых в дискурс политического стратегического управления опасностями и угрозами в условиях формирования нового специфического типа рискогенного социума, качественно отличающегося от классической версии «общества риска». На основе обобщения литературы, в которой представлен риск-рефлексивный подход, предлагается методология анализа трансформации публичного управления и основных направлений моделирования стратегий социального поведения в условиях риска, проектирования инструментов его превенции и снижения негативных эффектов. Авторы приходят к выводу, что на первый план выходит проблема субъектов принятия решений с учетом рисков, когда политическая оценка допустимого риска или уровня безопасности начинает играть значительную роль. На основе анализа «парадокса Гидденса» и концепта «организованной безответственности» У. Бека рассматриваются проблемы эффективности институтов публичного управления по обеспечению безопасности и предотвращению угроз. Внимание авторов сфокусировано на анализе иерархии способов обоснования приемлемости риска и субъектов управления им, типологизации формы риск-рефлексий, отражающих реальную структурированность социального конструирования и деконструкции ситуаций угроз. Рассматриваются подходы к классификации видов власти, используемой субъектами публичного управления рисками. В этой связи в статье выделяются три механизма формирования риск-рефлексивности (принудительный, подражательный, нормативный). Представлен теоретический ракурс рассмотрения информационной, стратегической, институциональной, мотивационной и имитационной риск-рефлексий в публичном управлении. В этом контексте особое внимание уделяется основным формам компетенций публичного управления в политическом риск-менеджменте, особенно в условиях цифровой трансформации, открывающей новые возможности информационного воздействия и когнитивного программирования восприятия рисков.

Ключевые слова: публичное управление, риск, риск-рефлексия, «общество риска», риск-стейкхолдеры.

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