

Political Settings of Contemporary Moscow Youth

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The article analyzes a range of political views and orientations of the Moscow youth based on the results of a sociological survey that was conducted by means of a poll. It was found out that young people of Moscow are predominantly characterized by an average interest in politics and the ruling elite orientation. At the same time, a considerable share of the capital's young people is marked by an insufficiently high interest in politics, political views that run counter to the current power and an aspiration to take efforts to influence the elaboration and adoption of political decisions. A conclusion can be made that political settings of young people in Moscow are a contradictory, specific political and psychological phenomenon that produces a substantial impact on the whole system of their political culture.

Keywords: political settings, youth, political activity, political awareness.

Configuraciones políticas de la juventud contemporánea de Moscú

Resumen

El artículo analiza una variedad de puntos de vista políticos y orientaciones de la juventud de Moscú en base a los resultados de una encuesta sociológica que se realizó mediante una encuesta. Se descubrió que los jóvenes de Moscú se caracterizan predominantemente por un interés promedio en la política y la orientación de la elite gobernante. Al mismo tiempo, una parte considerable de los jóvenes de la capital está marcada por un interés insuficiente en la política, puntos de vista políticos que van en contra del poder actual y una aspiración a hacer esfuerzos para influir en la elaboración y adopción de decisiones políticas. Se puede llegar a la conclusión de que los entornos políticos de los jóvenes en Moscú son un fenómeno político y psicológico contradictorio y específico que produce un impacto sustancial en todo el sistema de su cultura política.

Palabras clave: entornos políticos, juventud, actividad política, conciencia política.

1. Introduction

The social comfort of citizens, above all, depends on the stability of the political conditions in a country. Stability, in turn, is an essential condition for the competence of political institutions, their authority in the public opinion, and, as a rule, it is based on political settings of the public (Sheregi, 2003). Political settings are a key component of the mass political awareness, which is used to assess the state of the society and its dominating trends. It is the trends that reflect the attitude of various public groups towards the activity of political institutions, organizations and the entire political system in general. Currently the study of political settings of the youth – the society's intellectual potential – is especially important. On the one hand, objectively, young people are an active subject of social changes. Some recent sociological surveys showed that Russians, in general, welcome the idea of the youth getting involved in the public and political life of the country. On the other hand, the youth itself is less interested than the older generation in this respect (Youth and Politics: Points of Contact, 2017). Most young people believe that

the lack of interest in politics is a peculiarity of the present generation (Youth Interest in Politics, 2017). So, the authors of the article suppose that surveys related to political settings of young people and especially in big centers of the country's public life make it possible to get a better understanding of the issue and assess strategic development prospects of political processes in the contemporary Russian society.

2. Methods

The analysis of sociological survey results focuses on three main components that form political settings of the youth: cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Meanwhile, a political setting is construed as a socio-psychological state, which determines the internal quality of a subject of politics that is based on its previous experience and political culture that influences an individual's attitude towards future political events (Gozman, Shestopal, 1996).

The empiric base of the survey includes results of the sociological survey "Political settings of the youth in modern Moscow" that was conducted in April-May 2018 by means of polls in social networks (Vkontakte and Telegram). The sampling population for the survey included young people from Moscow (400 respondents) aged 18 to 30 who were selected by target indicators of age and residence. The empiric base of the analysis also consists of transcripts of six in-depth interviews conducted with young Moscow politicians. The transcripts were thoroughly analyzed in terms of content for the purpose of informal interpretation of the data obtained.

To measure political settings of the youth, nominal ordinal scales were elaborated, and they reflect quantitatively the degree of political awareness, range of political views and values, political activity, attitude towards political life in the country and confidence in authorities. The results were assessed and analyzed with the methods of descriptive statistics using procedures for indexing initial sociological information and ranging indicators.

3. Results

3.1. Political awareness of Moscow youth

Poll results showed that most young people in Moscow, to a certain extent, are interested in political life in Russia. Around half of the respondents (57%) are quite well aware of the actual political processes and events in Russian society (Table 1).

Table-1. Assessing the Moscow youth's awareness of the activities carried out by public authorities and political parties (in indices)

Public authorities and political organizations	Degree of awareness
Russian President	0.61
Russian Government	0.32
City administration	0.19
Parliamentary political parties	-0.15
Opposition political parties	-0.05
Total	0.18

Source: The authors' calculations. The awareness index was calculated as a difference between positive and negative answers given by the respondents to their awareness, which was measured on the five-point scale and compared with the total number of people surveyed. The index possesses values of -1 (absolutely unaware) to +1 (fully aware).

At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize that the youth is not equally aware of all public and political institutions. Young people are quite well aware of the activities carried out by the President of the Russian Federation, are moderately aware of what the Government of the Russian Federation, city administrations do, and their knowledge of parliamentary and opposition political parties is below average. It is evident that political information among the youth is mainly related to the activities carried out by high executive bodies and, first and foremost, the President of Russia.

3.2. Political values of the Moscow youth

To reveal the range of political values in the mass understanding of the Moscow youth, the respondents were proposed to assess political values in terms of a nominal scale within the range "very important – absolutely unimportant". The hierarchy of political values in a generalized form reflects the scale of values among young people in Moscow (Table 2).

Table-2. How the Moscow youth assesses the importance of political values (in indices)

Political value	Class of importance	Ranking position
Freedom of speech	0.91	2.5
Security	0.9	2.5
Human rights	0.9	2.5
Order	0.9	2.5
Legitimacy	0.88	5.5
Stability	0.86	5.5
Tolerance	0.81	8.5
Private property	0.81	8.5
Democracy	0.79	8.5
Patriotism	0.77	8.5
Equality	0.76	11
Collectivism	0.62	12.5
Traditional nature	0.61	12.5

Source: The authors' calculations. The index showing the attitude of the youth towards political values was calculated as a difference between positive and negative answers given to the subjective importance of political values as measured on the five-point scale and compared with the total number of people surveyed. The index possesses values of -1 (absolutely unaware) to +1 (fully aware).

It is evident that all presented political values are of high subjective importance. At the same time, four groups of value priorities are plain to see, and the groups, as the authors believe, point to the youth's ideological orientation. The first group of values (the importance index is 0.91-0.9) unites general humanistic and partly democratic values, the second group (the importance index stands at 0.88-0.86) unites traditional values, which are close in terms of importance. The third group (the importance index is 0.81-0.77) includes liberally democratic values and the fourth group (the importance index is 0.76-0.61) concerns socialistic values.

3.3. Political views of the Moscow youth

Political values directly influence the methods of decision-making and forms, by

which the youth participates in the political process and, consequently, establish political settings and an individual's orientation. The survey showed that there are some signs of eclecticism in the political awareness of the Moscow youth (Table 3).

Table-3. Assessing the Moscow youth's awareness of the activities carried out by public authorities and political parties (in indices)

Political views	Share of supporters	Ranking position
Social democratic	35.3	1
Liberal	19.3	2
Communist	14.0	3.5
Conservative	10.7	3.5
Nationalistic	8.3	5
Anarchistic	4.0	6.5
National socialistic	2.0	8
Fascist	0.3	9

Source: The authors' calculations. In addition, 6% of the respondents were unable to unilaterally identify their political orientation.

Most respondents, as they put it, stick to social democratic and liberal views. As a whole, this meets the values they share. However, traditional and communist views, which ranked third and fourth out of eight in terms of prevalence, are only in 10-13 places in the frame of the youth's value orientation.

3.4. Political activity of the Moscow youth

The behavioral component of a political setting means an individual's readiness to take specific actions in specific conditions. When asked what form of participation in the country's political life is the most preferable, 46% of respondents said that they do not want to participate in politics at all. Moreover, 33.3% of young people mentioned participation in political campaigns, referenda and elections as the most preferable form of participation, and participation in political demonstrations and other political campaigns (Table 4) turned out to be the least acceptable form.

Table-4. Political activity of the Moscow youth (in indices)

Type of political activity	Level of political activity
Participation in elections	0.25
Participation in social and political campaigns	-0.45
Participation in political parties/organizations	-0.95

Source: The authors' calculations. The political activity index was calculated as a difference between positive and negative answers given by the respondents with regard to their participation in political life that were compared with the total number of people surveyed. The index possesses values of -1 (low political activity) to +1 (high political activity).

Around 73% of the respondents noted that they had never participated in social and political campaigns, and 50% of them did not plan to do this in the future. At the same time, 22.7% of young people from Moscow nevertheless want to participate in the political life of the city and the country. Only 2.3% of respondents are members of political parties and organizations. Main reasons for the youth's non-participation in political parties and organizations included "busy in more important affairs" (20.9%), lack of confidence that these organizations can change anything (18.9%), lack of interest in politics (11.8%), and lack of support from any party (13.6%).

3.5. Attitude of the Moscow youth towards the political system's institutions

The emotional component of the political setting is characterized by the public attitude towards institutions of the political system, political leaders and groups. Poll results showed that more than half of the respondents do not consider themselves to be active supporters of any political force in the country and, when doing so, most of them are negative about the current socio-political conditions. At the same time, roughly 34% of respondents consider themselves as followers of the current power and, consequently, are positive about the socio-political environment that shaped up in Russia.

Table-5. The Moscow youth's confidence in public authorities and political parties (in indices)

Public authorities and political organizations	Confidence
Russian President	0.48
Russian government	0.32
City administration	0.19
Parliamentary political parties	-0.15
Opposition political parties	-0.05

Source: The authors' calculations. The confidence index of the Moscow youth in respect to public authorities and political parties was calculated as a difference between positive and negative answers given by respondents on the five-point scale, which was compared with the total number of people polled. The index possesses values of -1 (complete non-confidence) to +1 (full confidence).

While young people are more inclined to trust the current power than the opposition, the youth's confidence in the key Russian political institutions and politicians is modest. The results show that the Moscow youth's confidence index for political parties is the lowest. It is interesting to conduct a comparative analysis of "absolute confidence – non-confidence" indicators among young people in Moscow for state and political institutions (Table 6).

Table-6. "Absolute confidence – non-confidence" among young people in Moscow for public authorities and political parties (% of the total number of people surveyed)

Absolute confidence	Public authorities and political organizations	Absolute non-confidence
31.7	Russian President	11.3
16.0	Russian government	14.7
12.0	City administration	14.7
8.0	Parliamentary political parties	20.0
7.7	Opposition political parties	25.7

Source: The authors' calculations.

It can be seen that the youth's polar differentiation in terms of absolute "confidence – non-confidence" in key state and political institutions is wide, with the positive vector of confidence in the President and the negative one in political parties. The confidence index for executive authorities is marked by a bigger variance, with average estimates prevailing and polar positions having equal shares.

4. Discussion

The history of political sociology shows that one of the most important elements of an individual's political culture is his/her political settings. The settings are formed under the influence of opinions, judgments, rumors, generalized experience or gained by an individual from social consciousness. Settings make it possible to avoid the constant definition of a person's needs and ways of their satisfaction as they have already been fixed in his/her settings (Kozyrev, 2008). Settings that come as ready-to-use from social experience and culture are substantial components of research among social scientists. As a whole, on rare occasions, an individual develops his/her absolutely unique attitude towards public and political reality because this, opposed to private life, covers many people and their attitude in accordance with this reality (Diligensky, 1996). In the political sphere, it is a setting that is the very factor, which regulates the behavior of an individual or a community and forms a positive or negative perception of the power, the government, the state and politics as a whole.

The significance of the youth's political socialization is determined by the fact that adolescence is a stage of life when an individual solves a lot of various tasks related to the expanding range of social responsibility. Political socialization results in an individual's familiarization with the political culture and the formation of his/her own political settings and views (Miller, 2013).

It can be said on the basis of results of the surveys conducted by the authors and other researchers that currently the social and political life, in many aspects, unfolds at levels which are far from what most of the society's young members are interested in (Sheregi, 2013). Russian young people are currently not active participants of political processes, and they are also unwilling to realize themselves within the current system of political institutions (Savrutskaya, Ustinkin, Bikmetova, Nikitin, 2017). Under the circumstances, the youth's settings towards politics and the social order are closely monitored and an essential tool to encourage them to participate in social and political life.

It can be said with a certain degree of cautiousness that among young people in Moscow a decision to participate in politics is mainly caused by the negative attitude towards the socio-political environment that dominates in the country and is driven by the aspiration to change the environment for the better. Young political figures (upon analysis of depth interviews) believe that Russia faces a lot of problems that require the fastest possible solution on the part of public authorities which, as they think, pursue an insufficiently effective policy. Opposition politicians are confident that there is no free political struggle for power in the country because it is prevented by the ruling elite.

The formation of a political setting is substantially influenced by political values, which imply recognition of the importance of one or another political phenomenon by subjects of politics. Many political values named by young people as tangible are liberally, socially and democratically painted. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the youth involved in political activity does not stick to a single political ideology. Moreover, as the poll showed, a young person's consciousness can simultaneously include various settings without any mutual destruction. For instance, one of them is based on knowledge, while the other comes from personal everyday experience. People divide contradictory settings, which do not cause any internal personal contradictions, quite easily. Based on the foregoing, the authors are inclined to agree with the researchers who claim that new settings are formed easier than the old ones are deleted (Gozman, Shestopal, 1996).

The experience gained from the authors' political settings survey and many others shows that settings can be not connected solely with personal experience because this is just a product of experience gained by an individual in the finished form from other people. And in this light, this phenomenon will be a social setting. An individual can get such social settings either from culture as a whole or from the environment and the mass media. If for some reason, an individual has no political settings, then they are formed quite easily by means of mass media (Uznadze, 2001).

Thus, a certain picture can be painted in the course of the discussion that reflects the youth's involvement in the Russian capital's political life. The youth's political socialization is the basis for the formation of a personality whose ideological and political values find their way into views and settings. Political settings of young people are often unstable and contradictory due to fast changes in needs, motives, knowledge and experience of young people. The youth's political activity is largely determined and determine the nature of ongoing political processes in the country, and impacts stability and the scale

of the political process. At the same time, young people's activity in the political process is determined by political settings.

5. Conclusion

Upon analysis of the empiric survey's data, a conclusion can be drawn that the Moscow youth currently shows average interest in politics. Moderate political activity notwithstanding, young people, nevertheless, take an interest in politics and try to participate, albeit quite passively, mainly by means of voting in elections.

The survey revealed that most young people are focused on liberal and democratic values, a sign of the stable democratic culture in contemporary Russian society. The youth does not want any revolutionary shocks and does not back violent methods of political activity. At the same time, the political setting of most young people in Moscow looks divided, with the declarative component prevailing over the behavioral one.

More than half of the respondents do not consider themselves to be followers of any political forces in the country and do not express any solid support towards the policy pursued by public authorities. Being more inclined to trust the ruling power than the opposition, the youth's confidence about key Russian political institutions is low. Young political oppositionists who take an active part in political activity mainly criticize the performance of public authorities due to the unfavorable socio-political environment in the country and are not ready to take any specific actions.

Based on the empiric analysis of sociological information that was obtained during the survey, the authors find it fair to talk about political settings of the Moscow youth as a certain barometer of the society's development, its sentiment and prospects. For this reason, it is important to take into account peculiarities of the young generation's political settings in order to forecast their reaction to events in the political life of the country and the society as a whole as the high political culture is a clue to stability, the development of democracy and the civil society.

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