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## **ABOUT THE TRANSFORMATION OF ELECTORAL POLITICS AND THE CHOICE OF A PARTICULAR COUNTRY OF THEIR METHODS TO INCREASE THE VOTER TURNOUT**

Ensuring voter turnout in the elections is becoming a new urgent problem for leading politicians in Europe and the world. In the article, the author reveals a new trend in electoral politics: the use of restrictive models and qualification characteristics in Russia and in some foreign states to solve the problem of legitimization and delegation of political power in case of low turnout. The thematic range of the study concerns the specialized discussion within the Russian Federation. In the article, the author gives examples of restrictive models and qualification characteristics. These are the methods and mechanisms used by each country individually in order to increase the voter turnout. The author of the article came with the following conclusions. In Russia and in some foreign states, an identical tendency is observed for the emergence of new increasing models of voter turnout and the abolition of qualification characteristics, with the exception of those countries where participation in elections is mandatory. Thus, voter turnout is increasing in a safe manner for the state and for voters.

**Key words:** voter turnout; legitimacy; voter; elections; Central Election Commission; election process; political activity; absenteeism; electoral politics

### **Introduction**

Voter turnout is the degree of participation by which eligible voters use their vote on election day. This indicator is measured by the number of all votes cast in the election, including all invalid votes. In the case of a decrease in voter turnout, there is a risk that the elections will lose their attractiveness as a fundamental tool of democratic governance. Studies showing differences in voter turnout among various population groups, virtually none not least, due to the lack of details. On the many factors can influence voter behavior and depending on specific circumstances, these factors can appear in unique and complex combinations in each country.

The main aim of the article: to reveal a new trend in electoral politics in Russia and in the foreign states, which consists in the choice by each individual country of its own ways to increase the voter turnout by applying restrictive models and qualification characteristics.

## Main part

### Review of Russian and foreign scientific literature about the ways to increase the voter turnout by applying restrictive models and qualification characteristics

David Van Reybroek, a Belgian historian and writer, published the book "Against Elections" in 2018<sup>1</sup>. In the book, the author created the following scenario: "The clinical picture of the condition that democracy led to the application of the electoral procedure." The author suggests looking for a means of treatment in the ancient Greek origins of mankind and turning to another legitimate way to form government bodies - to draw.

An article by scholars Joao Kanchelaa and Benny Geys, "An explanation of the turnout: a meta-analysis of national and subnational elections," was published in 2016. Scientists confirm the high interest among foreign studies in voter turnout: "In recent years, studies on voter turnout are expanding rapidly"<sup>2</sup>. One of the main methods of conducting scientific research in the study of voter turnout, scientists single out such a method of scientific research as meta-analysis. According to scientists, the requirements for voter registration in national (state) elections plays a big role in terms of voter turnout.

The only country in the world where a citizen who has reached the age of 16 has the right to vote is Australia today. Scientists Marcus Wagner, David Johann, Sylvia Kritzinger published their study, "Voting at 16: Voter Turnout and the Quality of Voting Choices." They came to the following conclusions: "the quality of the choice of these citizens is similar to the choice of elderly voters, so they vote so that their interests are represented equally well." According to the authors of the article, these results of the study "reassure supporters of an earlier age of voting"<sup>3</sup>.

Gallego Aina, in her article "Understanding unequal turnout: education and voting in a comparative perspective," published a study on the participation of the population in elections, depending on the availability of education: "Well-educated citizens vote more often than less-educated in some countries, including the United States. However, in many countries such differences are not observed." According to the author of the article: "Mandatory voting reduces

<sup>1</sup> RAYBROOK, David Wang (2018): Against the election. Publisher Ad Marginem Press, 160 p.

<sup>2</sup> JOAO, Cancelaa – BENNY, Geys (2016). Explaining voter turnout: A meta-analysis of national and subnational elections. *Electoral Studies*, 42, p. 264-275. DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2016.03.005.

<sup>3</sup> WAGNER, Markus – JOHANN, David – KRITZINGER, Sylvia (2012): Voting at 16: Turnout and the quality of vote choice. In: *Electoral Studies*, Volume 31, Issue 2, p. 372-383. doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2012.01.007.

inequality, because a quasi-universal turnout is achieved within the framework of this system.” In addition, the author emphasizes that “poorly educated people vote more often when the voting process is simple”<sup>4</sup>.

In 2018, a literature guide “On Elections, Public Opinion and Parties” was published, containing more than 40 chapters prepared by leading experts in relevant research areas from universities in the USA, Europe and Australia<sup>5</sup>. The publication of the collection of articles “The Routledge Handbook of Elections”<sup>6</sup> sums up the development of electoral research in world political science from the beginning of the 1960s to the present. The second chapter provides a list of literature on theoretical approaches to the study of voter turnout. The list of this guide includes scientific research, including on the topic of our study. For example, an article by scientists Christopher H., Aachen T.Yu. Wang, “Reducing the voter turnout in Taiwan: the effect of generation?” The article discusses voter turnout among young people in Taiwan. The authors of the article come to the following conclusions: “since the beginning of the 2000s, the voter turnout in Taiwan has decreased by almost fifteen percent.

There was a low voter turnout in the elections held in 2016. Especially strong absenteeism was recorded among younger voters. Thus, the voter turnout rate in Taiwan is similar to other mature democracies, such as the USA, Canada, Sweden and Finland, where the decline in turnout affects young people”<sup>7</sup>.

Blais André, in her article, “What Affects Voter Turnout?” Addresses important discussion questions about voter turnout: “Why is turnout higher in some countries and / or in some elections than in others? Why does the voter turnout increase or decrease over time?”<sup>8</sup>.

Highton Benjamin, in his article “Simple Registration and Voter Turnout,” concluded that “registration requirements are often defined as factors that reduce turnout in the United States”<sup>9</sup>.

The system of lists in the Kingdom of Spain is closed, which means that when voting it is impossible to change the order of preference of candidates in the list. Lists of candidates and coalitions are published in the official state newspaper about a month before the election. If a party gains 20% of the vote, it also receives about 20% of the disputed seats. Sans Carlos, in his article “The Impact of Electoral Systems on Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Natural Experiment,” came to the following conclusions: “An open list system increases turnout by 1-2 percentage

<sup>4</sup> GALLEGO, Aina (2010): Understanding unequal turnout: Education and voting in comparative perspective. *Electoral Studies*, 29, 2, p. 239-248. DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2009.11.002.

<sup>5</sup> The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems. Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, Matthew S. Shugart (2018), p. 1016.

<sup>6</sup> The Routledge Handbook of Elections. Voting Behavior, and Public Opinion (2018)/ Ed. by J. Fisher, E. Fieldhouse, M. N. Franklin, R. Gibson, M. Cantijoch, C. Wlezien. Routledge, p. 1-191.

<sup>7</sup> ACHEN, Christopher H. – WANG, T.Y. (2019): Declining voter turnout in Taiwan: A generational effect? *Electoral Studies*, 58, p. 113-124. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9375036>.

<sup>8</sup> BLAIS, André (2008): What Affects Voter Turnout? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9(1), p. 111-125. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.070204.105121.

<sup>9</sup> HIGHTON, Benjamin (1997): Easy Registration and Voter Turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, 2, p. 565-575. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381600053585>.

points. The results show that open list systems that create competition both within and within parties contribute to greater voter turnout<sup>10</sup>.

Francois Abel, Fauvel-Aimard Cristina, in their article “The effect of proximity on voter turnout: an empirical attitude based on a two-round ballot paper study”, consider that “the first vote provides excellent information to voters about the expected proximity of the upcoming second vote, and the proximity of the second voting has an important and significant influence on the participation in elections”<sup>11</sup>.

In foreign scientific literature, there are often publications about absenteeism among young people. This is a common topic of scientific research among Russian and foreign researchers. In general, foreign researchers study individual magnifying voter turnout models and identify restrictive qualifications that affect voter turnout. However, studies are carried out on certain aspects of increasing the voter turnout; there is no scientific description of existing practices by country, their comparison and classification, solutions to the problem of legitimization and delegation of political power in case of low voter turnout.

In Russia, scientists confirm the need to ensure a high voter turnout by the state. According to A.E. Lyubarev from an interview for RBC (appeal March 18, 2019), “high turnout is considered one of the main signs of the legitimacy of the presidential power. In addition, the struggle for turnout is a traditional form of activity of Russian authorities and election commissions, starting in 1996”<sup>12</sup>. In March 2019, the first issue of the Electoral Politics magazine was released. The journal published an article by A.V. Petrov on the election of the President of Mongolia in 2017<sup>13</sup>. The article said that the presidential election was postponed to July 7, instead of July 9. In this case, it so happened that on July 9 a national holiday was celebrated in the country and the country’s citizens took leave and left the city, and this, in turn, could seriously affect the voter turnout. According to V. Mikhailov, “elections are distinguished by some special qualities. They must inevitably have a mass character, the organizers want or do not want it. Therefore, this may be a problem for the current government”<sup>14</sup>. That is, the problem of ensuring voter turnout falls on the shoulders of the state. Therefore, we can outline ways to increase the turnout of voters by studying the features of restrictive and increasing models of Russia and foreign states. Scientists

<sup>10</sup> SANZ, Carlos (2017): The Effect of Electoral Systems on Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 5, 4, p. 689-710. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.54>.

<sup>11</sup> ABEL, Francois – FOUVEL-AYMAR, Christina (2006): The impact of closeness on turnout: An empirical relation based on a study of a two-round ballot. *Public Choice*, 127(3), p. 461-483. DOI: 10.1007/s11127-005-9004-x.

<sup>12</sup> LYUBAREV, A. E. (2018): Deliver to the station: what will turn out the struggle for the turnout, [rbc.ru/](http://rbc.ru/), 03/12/2018, available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/politics/12/03/2018/5aa63c9e9a7947eb4a2e54fd>, last checked 09/27/2019. (In. Russ.)

<sup>13</sup> PETROV, A. V. (2019): Mongolian presidential election: old stereotypes or democratic transit in action? *International Electoral Politics Magazine*, 1, electoralpolitics.org, 03/20/2019, available at: <http://electoralpolitics.org/en/articles/vy-bory-prezidenta-mongolii-2017-goda-starye-stereotipy-ili-demokraticheskii-tranzit-v-deistvii/>, last checked 09/27/2019. (In. Russ.)

<sup>14</sup> MIKHAILOV, V. (2010): Statistical analysis of election results: the need for inclusion in the legal field. *Electoral law and practice*, 1, p. 20-30. (In. Russ.)

use the term “political absenteeism” to denote the problem of low turnout. Nebredovskaya V.V. says that “from election to election, our country is faced with such a negative social phenomenon as the low turnout of people with the right to vote<sup>15</sup>. In science, this phenomenon is called “political absenteeism”. Zagidulin R.A., Dinchit Sh.B. state that “the analysis of the voting results shows that during a series of elections a low turnout was recorded - a phenomenon defined as absenteeism, which reduces the objectivity of their results, and, consequently, the legitimacy of the elected government”<sup>16</sup>. Scientists confirm in their works the emerging trend of the need for a more serious study of voter turnout. In particular, in his work Lukonina E.S. said that “insufficient attention is often paid to the problem of popular activity in the elections, although the level of voter turnout has a significant effect on the outcome of the vote”<sup>17</sup>. Many works are devoted to “political absenteeism” among young people. Kochemasova M. A. presents in her work the results of a survey of 700 people, including 100 senior schoolchildren; reveals a trend in the level of absenteeism depending on the gender group of the respondent; justifies the need and the possibility of preventing absenteeism in the future electorate<sup>18</sup>. Other scholars have approached the solution to the problem of “political absenteeism” with real proposals, for example, to amend the electoral law and increase competition between political parties and candidates. Baksheev A.I., Zlotkovsky V.I., Komova N.V., Lunev V.V., Tyazhelnikov Yu.A., studying the notion of political activity of voters in their work, came to the following conclusions: “1) selective activity of the population weakly depends on his financial situation and social well-being, 2) electoral activity sharply increases in conditions of real competition between candidates when the voter realizes his “significance” in the election process ”<sup>19</sup>. In the work of Sulakshin S.S. provides an analysis of statistics on voter turnout in Russia from 1980 to 2010<sup>20</sup>.

At present, Russian scholars associate political absenteeism also with the fact that voters have ceased to influence changes in the political situation, there is no intrigue in the electoral process and election competitiveness.

<sup>15</sup> NEBREDOVSKAYA, V.V. (2013): Legal awareness and legal culture of young professionals in the countries of Scandinavia. Social sciences. *Scientific notes* 27. St. Petersburg : RSUH, p. 236-243. (In. Russ.)

<sup>16</sup> ZAGIDULIN, R. A. – DINCHIT, Sh. B. (2017): The constitutional foundations of the further development of the institution of suffrage of the Russian Federation. *Scientific notes Togu*, 8, 3, p. 31-46. (In. Russ.)

<sup>17</sup> LUKONINA, E. S. (2007): Sociological analysis of the dynamics of voter turnout. - Scientific library of dissertations and abstracts [Text]: Ph.D. sociologist. Sciences / Lukonina Elena Sergeevna. N. Novgorod, p. 4. (In. Russ.)

<sup>18</sup> KOCHEMASOVA, M. A. (2018): About the problem of reducing absenteeism in the Russian Federation. - XXI International Conference in memory of Professor L. N. Kogan, Culture, personality, society in the modern world: methodology, experience of empirical research, Yekaterinburg : UrFU, p. 2100-2117. (In. Russ.)

<sup>19</sup> BAKSHEEV, A. I. – ZLOTKOVSKY, V. I. – KOMOVA, N.V. – LUNEV, V. V. – TYAZHELNIKOV, Yu. A. (2013): The activity of members of the local community as a factor in the legitimacy of state authorities and local self-government. – *Actual problems of science. Philosophy*. Bulletin of the Krasnodar State. ped University named V. P. Astafieva, 3, p. 136-139. (In. Russ.)

<sup>20</sup> SULAKSHIN, S. S. (2013): The electoral system and the success of the state (the secret always becomes apparent. *Scientific expert*, 5 (52), p. 6 -11. (In. Russ.)

The works contain individual examples of increasing voter turnout models. According to Morozova O.S.<sup>21</sup> “the use of the voter turnout threshold is one of the main methods of selective engineering”. Voter turnout is higher with a proportional vote system than with a majority system. According to Bykov I.A. “The institute of elections in modern Russia is undergoing intensive research, both in Russia and abroad. Among the variety of investigated problems in this area, issues of electoral engineering and political geography dominate”. Bykov I.A. in the above article, he conducts a correlation analysis of the effects of low turnout in the State Duma of the Russian Federation in 2016. According to the scientist, “2016 elections were held with a change in some electoral procedures (postponement of the election date to September, return to a mixed majority-proportional system). Thus, the turnout at the elections was lower than at the elections in 2011 by 13%”<sup>22</sup>. Zagainova N.N.<sup>23</sup> confirms the emerging trend of the abolition of electoral qualifications in recent decades in Russia and abroad. Salamatova M.<sup>24</sup> says that historically selective qualifications were introduced as part of the discriminatory policy of a state of disloyal population. It is believed that mandatory voting leads to low voter turnout. Rudometov S.S. believes that “in the world there are two ways to overcome absenteeism: the use by states of measures that encourage citizens to go to the polls, or the introduction of a mandatory vote for citizens, and the introduction of a mandatory vote in Russia will not be an effective way to talk about the legitimacy of power by citizens Russia, therefore, proposes as a measure to increase the voter turnout in elections in Russia - the introduction of remote electronic voting in order to provide citizens with the opportunity to vote be from anywhere in the country or the world”<sup>25</sup>. In world practice, there are already precedents for the introduction of remote electronic voting (Switzerland, Estonia), there are also cases where states refused this method of voting for an indefinite period due to the unreliability of the procedure for holding such a vote (Germany, Ireland). We agree with the author of the article that the introduction of remote voting can increase the voter turnout, however, in our opinion, in order to increase the turnout of voters, we should generally consider the system of restrictive models of participation of certain population groups that has developed in the states, and not just the introduction of remote voting.

<sup>21</sup> MOROZOVA, O. S. (2014): The turnout threshold as an element of the electoral system. Basic research, 1, p. 185-188. (In. Russ.)

<sup>22</sup> BYKOV, I. A. (2017): The effect of low turnout in the 2016. State Polytech State Duma elections, 13, 2, p. 77-87. (In. Russ.)

<sup>23</sup> ZAGAINOVA, N. N. (2012): Electoral qualifications in the mirror of international standards of suffrage. *News of Altai State University*, №. 2-1 (74), p. 81-84. (In. Russ.)

<sup>24</sup> SALAMATOVA, M. S. (2017): Russian and foreign election qualifications in the first third of the XX century: the letter of the law and reality. *Quaestio Rossica*, 5, 3, p. 708-726. (In. Russ.)

<sup>25</sup> RUDOMYOTOV, S. S. (2017): The specifics of overcoming absenteeism in the information society. Electoral processes in the modern world: A collection of abstracts based on the results of the VIII International Youth Scientific Conference. SPb.: Scythia-print, p. 27-30. (In. Russ.)

### **About the choice by each individual country of its own ways to increase the voter turnout by applying restrictive models and qualification characteristics**

By restrictive models we mean compulsory voting, absentee voting online and individual qualifications, qualification characteristics that limit and expand suffrage.

Qualification characteristics that allow increasing the number of voters in elections: the problem of determining the reliable number of voters, improving the formation of the voter register, increasing polling stations abroad, canceling the absentee ballots, sending out ballots in advance for voters, softening the electoral filters for candidates for political posts.

These are the methods and mechanisms used by each country individually in order to increase the voter turnout, the possibility of voting within a few days, lowering the tariff cost for consular registration and other fees, extending the working hours of polling stations by two hours from eight to ten in the evening, practice of compulsory voting. There is another reserve for increasing turnout - these are hard-to-count citizens voting abroad.

### **Restrictive models and qualifications to increase the number of voters in elections in Russian Federation and in the foreign states**

In 1996, General Comment No. 25 of the UN Human Rights Committee determined that voter registration should not contain unreasonable obstacles. In Russia, the law also abolished the system of absentee ballots. Instead, a mechanism has recently been introduced to include a citizen in the voters list at his location on election day.

July 1, 2020 the All-Russian referendum on amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation was held. Residents of Moscow region and Nizhny Novgorod region had the opportunity to vote using electronic voting. The Central Election Commission of Russian Federation has received more than 1.2 million applications for online voting. For Russian citizens, this is an incomparably new way and experience of participating in the country's political life to express their will, there is a clear interest in this form of voting. It was possible to vote for amendments for the Constitution of the Russian Federation in advance of the voting day from June 25 to June 30 at the polling station, at the place of the location of the voter. The turnout voted over 67,88%.

A new trend among states is an increase in the number of polling stations, both from the Russian Federation and from other states (for example, Moldova). In world practice, there are already precedents for introducing remote electronic voting to increase the turnout of voters permanently residing abroad (Switzerland, Estonia), there are also cases where states have refused this method of voting for an indefinite period due to the unreliability of the procedure for holding such a vote (Germany, Ireland).

In Latvia and Estonia, voting at the polls is held within two days.

In the Kingdom of Spain, Ballot papers in Spain are mailed. It is not necessary to send such envelopes and leaflets, since on election day they will have similar ones at the polling station. Not all parties send a green envelope and leaflet, only those parties that have money for postal and paper costs. Other parties can be voted on election day. A flyer is put in an envelope for a party for which a vote is cast. If you put two leaflets in the envelope, then the voice is canceled. Thus, an envelope with a leaflet is sent by mail so that the voter makes a decision at home.

The Republic of Kyrgyzstan before the elections reduced the tariff cost for processing consular records and other fees in order to increase the number of voters in elections voting in the country's diplomatic missions.

Thus, in Russia and in some foreign states it is possible to highlight a new course in state electoral policy - the use of new methods and mechanisms to increase the voter turnout. Such actions of states should be regarded as awareness of a possible danger to the stability of the state and a search for a solution to the problem of legitimization and delegitimization of political power in the event of low voter turnout.

Right now, a transformation and selection by a separate country of its own way and ways to increase the turnout is taking place. Slowly, each individual country, relying on its resources, not referring to the experience of other countries, uses its own models, which allow solving the problem of legitimization and delegitimization of political power in case of low voter turnout, based on their own experience.

There is a point of view about what low turnout may mean. It is believed that this situation suggests that citizens become less interested in politics or less trust in the political process. On the contrary, a higher turnout in most cases is a sign of the viability of a democratic society.

## Conclusions

We assume that our country and some foreign states are considering a solution to the problem of legitimization and delegitimization of political power in the event of low voter turnout, developing a new form of relations with their voters without significant pressure on them in the current situation in their country. The voter retains the right to absenteeism at the polling station, but the state introduces new magnifying models of voter turnout, as well as removes possible barriers for voters to participate in elections, thereby increasing the turnout in a safe way for the state and voters. In Russian Federation and some foreign states, an identical tendency is observed for the emergence of new increasing models of voter turnout and the abolition of qualification characteristics.