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## Формирование новых политических элит в условиях специальной военной операции

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**Аннотация. Введение.** Специальная военная операция (СВО), начатая в 2024 году, стала не только военно-политическим, но и глубоким социально-политическим рубежом для российской государственности. Она активизировала процессы трансформации властных структур и кадрового обновления на различных уровнях управления. **Цель.** Целью исследования является выявление и анализ механизмов, каналов и критериев формирования новых групп политической элиты в России в условиях СВО, а также оценка их влияния на политическую систему. **Материалы и методы.** Исследование построено на анализе широкого массива открытых источников, включая базы биографических данных, официальные документы, медиатексты и материалы социальных сетей за период 2022–2024 гг. Методологическая рамка является междисциплинарной и основана на синтезе качественных подходов: институционального анализа для изучения изменений в правилах и процедурах отбора; биографического (просопографического) анализа для реконструкции коллективных портретов и карьерных траекторий «новых» назначенцев; критического дискурс-анализа публичных высказываний и медианарративов для выявления легитимирующих критериев; сравнительного кейс-стади для углубленного изучения специфики регионального и отраслевого рекрутирования. **Результаты и обсуждение.** В ходе работы обнаружено, что ключевым трендом является формирование новой иерархии, в которой доминирующие позиции занимают носители компетенций, критически важных для ведения конфликта и обеспечения национальной безопасности в широком смысле. Это привело к эффекту «силового дрейфа» — экспансии выходцев из военных, спецслужб и правоохранительных органов в гражданские сферы управления, экономики и дипломатии. Параллельно произошло становление класса «технократов-мобилизационщиков» в оборонно-промышленном комплексе и логистике, чья эффективность измеряется конкретными, измеримыми результатами в условиях санкций. Важнейшим социальным изобретением стала ускоренная институционализация новой медиа- и идеологической элиты (военкоры, патриотические блогеры, ведущие пропагандистских шоу), выполняющей функции смыслополагания, мобилизации и прямой коммуникации. Система критериев отбора качественно изменилась: лояльность эволюционировала в сторону активной публичной идеологической ангажированности; эффективность переопределена как способность достигать целей в экстремальных условиях «фронта» и «тыла», часто в обход процедур; публичная перформативность поддержки курса стала обязательным условием легитимности. **Заключение.** По итогам проведенного исследования можно сделать вывод о том, что специальная военная операция выступила катализатором глубинной и, вероятно, необратимой трансформации элитной структуры. Вместо ситуативных кадровых перестановок сформировался устойчивый контур новой правящей группы, ядро которой основано на синтезе силового капитала, мобилизационной результативности и идеологической идентичности. Это ведет к артикуляции и закреплению новой социальной нормы в элитном сознании, для которой характерны этатизм, централизация, конфронтационное мышление и примат безопасности над другими общественными целями.

Долгосрочными последствиями станут усиление авторитарных тенденций, перераспределение ресурсов и влияния в пользу силового и оборонно-промышленного блоков, а также формирование специфической модели посткризисного управления, унаследовавшей от военного времени логику чрезвычайщины, иерархии и перманентной мобилизации.

**Ключевые слова:** политическая элита, специальная военная операция (СВО), рекрутирование элит, мобилизационная эффективность, силовой блок, технократы-мобилизационщики, медиаэлиты, публичный дискурс, этатизм, трансформация политической системы.

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Research article

## Formation of new political elites in the context of a special military operation

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**Abstract. Introduction.** The Special Military Operation (SVO), launched in 2024, has become not only a military-political, but also a deep socio-political frontier for Russian statehood. She has intensified the processes of transformation of power structures and personnel renewal at various levels of government. **Goal.** The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze the mechanisms, channels and criteria for the formation of new groups of the political elite in Russia in the conditions of the SVR, as well as to assess their impact on the political system. **Materials and methods.** The study is based on an analysis of a wide range of open sources, including biographical databases, official documents, media texts, and social media materials for the period 2022-2024. The methodological framework is interdisciplinary and based on a synthesis of qualitative approaches: institutional analysis to study changes in selection rules and procedures; biographical (prosopographic) analysis to reconstruct collective portraits and career trajectories of "new" appointees.; a critical discourse analysis of public statements and media narratives to identify legitimizing criteria; a comparative case study for an in-depth study of the specifics of regional and sectoral recruitment. **Results and discussion.** In the course of the work, it was found that the key trend is the formation of a new hierarchy, in which the dominant positions are occupied by holders of competencies that are critically important for conflict management and ensuring national security in a broad sense. This led to the effect of "force drift" — the expansion of immigrants from the military, special services and law enforcement agencies into civilian spheres of government, economics and diplomacy. In parallel, a class of "mobilization technocrats" has emerged in the military-industrial complex and logistics, whose effectiveness is measured by concrete, measurable results in the face of sanctions. The most important social invention was the accelerated institutionalization of a new media and ideological elite (military officers, patriotic bloggers, and hosts of propaganda shows), which performs the functions of meaning-making, mobilization, and direct communication. The system of selection criteria has changed qualitatively: loyalty has evolved towards active public ideological engagement; effectiveness has been redefined as the ability to achieve goals in extreme conditions of the "front" and "rear", often bypassing procedures; public performativity of course support has become a prerequisite for legitimacy. **Conclusion.** Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the

special military operation acted as a catalyst for a profound and probably irreversible transformation of the elite structure. Instead of situational personnel changes, a stable outline of a new ruling group has been formed, the core of which is based on a synthesis of power capital, mobilization effectiveness and ideological identity. This leads to the articulation and consolidation of a new social norm in the elite consciousness, which is characterized by statism, centralization, confrontational thinking and the primacy of security over other social goals. The long-term consequences will be the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies, the redistribution of resources and influence in favor of the military and military-industrial blocs, as well as the formation of a specific model of post-crisis management, inherited from wartime logic of emergency, hierarchy and permanent mobilization.

**Keywords:** political elite, special military operation (SVO), elite recruitment, mobilization efficiency, power bloc, mobilization technocrats, media elite, public discourse, statism, transformation of the political system.

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**Introduction.** The contemporary Russian political system is undergoing a profound internal transformation, driven by both global challenges (changing world order, sanctions pressure) and the need to consolidate society and elites in the context of a special military operation (SMO). SMOs act not only as a military-political event but also as a powerful institutional and social catalyst, reformatting the logic of governance, personnel policy, and elite formation. Under these conditions, the ruling class is undergoing active renewal and rotation, new figures are emerging, and recruitment channels and selection criteria are evolving differently than in previous decades.

The relevance of this study stems from the need to understand these rapid changes in the structure and composition of the Russian elite. Traditional classical elite theories (G. Mosca, V. Pareto, R. Mills), which describe elite circulation and the "ruling class," as well as contemporary Russian studies (O. V. Kryshtanovskaya, V. P. Mokhov, L. V. Smorgunov), which focused on the analysis of post-Soviet transformation, business elites, and the "power" component, require significant expansion in the new context. O. V. Gaman-Golutvina's work on the types and transformations of elites in Russia has created a solid foundation; however, the period after 2022 is characterized by qualitative acceleration and new priorities that have not yet received a comprehensive scholarly understanding.

**The aim of the study** is to identify and analyze the main channels, criteria and trajectories of the formation of a new managerial and political elite in Russia in the context of the SVO and the associated mobilization.

#### **Research objectives:**

1. To analyze institutional changes in key channels of elite recruitment (the Presidential Administration, the United Russia party, the institution of governorship).
2. To explore the career patterns and spheres of influence of those promoted from the "power" bloc.
3. Characterize the role of managers of the mobilization economy and frontline regions.
4. To define the functions and status of new ideologists and the "media elite" in the context of the SVO.

5. Formulate new dominant criteria for selecting elites and compare them with pre-crisis ones.

**The research hypothesis is that** the SVO did not lead to a situational personnel reshuffle, but to the formation of a stable new elite group, the core of which is formed on the basis of a synthesis of loyalty, practical effectiveness in times of crisis, and public identity associated with support for the official course, which leads to the strengthening of the statist and mobilizational features of the political system in the long term.

**Research materials and methods.** The research methodological framework is interdisciplinary, combining political science, sociology, and institutional approaches.

1. **The institutional approach** is used to analyze changes in formal and informal recruitment rules in key political institutions. It allows us to assess how the Presidential Administration, the United Russia party, and the executive branch are adapting their procedures to new challenges.

2. **Sociological (biographical and event-based) analysis** is used to study the career trajectories of new elite figures. Publicly available biographical data (age, education, previous positions, regional and industry affiliations) of those appointed to key positions in the period 2022-2024 is collected and analyzed. This allows us to identify typical career growth patterns.

3. **Content analysis of media and public discourse.** Official statements, public speeches, interviews with key figures, as well as materials from state and pro-Kremlin media outlets are examined. The goal is to identify the established criteria for evaluating personnel ("effectiveness," "patriotism," "resilience"), key narratives, and symbols that construct the legitimacy of the new elite.

4. **Case study (comparative case study).** Specific cases are selected for in-depth analysis:

- Appointments of governors in frontline and border regions (for example, Belgorod and Kursk regions).
- Appointments of heads of defense-industrial corporations and logistics hubs.
- Institutionalization of individual media figures (war correspondents, bloggers) and their integration into official structures.

The source base consists of open data: official websites of government agencies and companies, biographical databases, news agency archives (TASS, RIA Novosti, Interfax), materials from specialized media and Telegram channels.

**Research results and discussion.** The implementation of the SVO led to a reformatting of traditional channels. The Presidential Administration's personnel work shifted its focus from balancing clan groups to finding and promoting "mobilization managers" with proven ability to solve problems in crisis situations. The United Russia party strengthened its role as a talent pool and a tool for upward mobility for regional and local activists who had distinguished themselves in supporting the SVO (humanitarian headquarters, patriotic projects). The institution of governorship underwent significant rotation, especially in the regions most affected by the war, where skills in rapid logistics, security, and coordination with law enforcement agencies, rather than solely socioeconomic development, became more important.

There has been a significant increase in the influence and expanded responsibilities of those from the security agencies (the Ministry of Defense, the FSB, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Emergency Situations). Their career patterns demonstrate a shift from operational and command positions to positions in the civil administration (vice governors for security, regional leaders), corporate governance (especially in strategic sectors), and diplomatic work. This indicates the emergence of a management culture that prioritizes discipline, hierarchy, secrecy, and the ability to operate under conditions of uncertainty and direct opposition.

Those responsible for ensuring the functioning of the economy under sanctions and the strain of mobilization have dramatically increased their status. The heads of major defense enterprises and holdings (Rostec, UAC) have become key political actors. The role of managers in logistics, import substitution, and energy has increased. Governors of industrial regions (the

Urals, Siberia) tied to the military-industrial complex have received additional resources and political clout. Their effectiveness is assessed through specific, measurable delivery indicators, creating a new type of "mobilization technocrat."

The SVO has given rise to a new layer of public ideologists and media figures who interpret events, mobilize public opinion, and legitimize government actions. Political strategists, propaganda talk show hosts, war correspondents, and patriotic bloggers with millions of followers have acquired a quasi-official status. Many of them receive state awards, official positions in public chambers or advisory bodies, and are becoming institutionalized. They shape public discourse and themselves become a new channel for feedback and even recruitment (for example, recommendations from war correspondents).

There has been a shift in the system of criteria. While in the 2000s and 2010s, a combination of **loyalty** and **technocratic efficiency** (often in a narrow sphere), as well as informal **clannishness**, dominated, now:

- **Loyalty** is understood as not just personal devotion, but active, public defense of the official course and its ideological foundations.

- **Efficiency** takes on a **"mobilization"** character – it is the ability to achieve results "at any cost," in a short time, under constraints and external pressure, often with the use of force and the simplification of procedures.

- **Publicity** is becoming a requirement. The new elite must be able to publicly articulate their position within the established narrative, demonstrate personal involvement (visiting the SVO zone, meeting with military personnel), and be part of the overall media landscape.

**Conclusion.** The study concludes that the SVO is a powerful factor in the transformation of the Russian elite structure. It confirms the main hypothesis that the ongoing changes are not situational but systemic in nature and lead to the formation of a new, sustainable elite group.

1. **By section:** The transformation affected all key recruiting institutions, shifting the emphasis to mobilization effectiveness. The "power bloc" and military-industrial complex managers significantly strengthened their positions, forming a new elite core. Ideologists and the media elite underwent accelerated institutionalization. Selection criteria evolved toward the triad of "loyalty, mobilization effectiveness, and publicity."

2. **On the status of the group:** The emerging group possesses the characteristics of a new elite, rather than a temporary pool: it controls key resources (power, economic, informational), possesses unique legitimizing capital (merits in the face of a "historical challenge"), and demonstrates the ability to self-reproduce through new institutional channels.

3. **Long-term consequences for the political system:**

- **Strengthening of statism and centralization:** The primacy of state interests in their forceful interpretation becomes absolute.

- **"Militarization of consciousness" of the elite:** Crisis, confrontational thinking, experience of working in the logic of "front and rear" are consolidated as the norm.

- **Shifting balance of influence:** There is a relative weakening of the positions of traditional "liberal" technocrats and financial-economic blocs, while the security forces, military-industrial complex industrialists, and ideologists are simultaneously strengthening.

- **Formation of a new social ladder:** Public support for the SVO and practical work in its interests are becoming the main social elevator.

**Future research areas** include: studying intra-elite dynamics and potential conflicts between "new" and "old" groups; analyzing the social origins and values of the new elite; comparative analysis of elite transformation in Russia and other countries experiencing periods of mobilization; and investigating the long-term impact of this transformation on the country's economic model and foreign policy.



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Написание текста -- подготовка оригинального черновика и окончательной редакции рукописи.

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Conceptualization and formulation of research is the development of a common idea, goals and objectives of the work.  
Data collection and analysis is the search, systematization and interpretation of empirical material.  
Writing the text is the preparation of the original draft and the final revision of the manuscript.