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**PECULIARITIES
OF THE TRANSFORMATION
OF THE UK POLITICAL ELITES
IN THE CONTEXT OF BREXIT:
HISTORIOGRAPHIC ASPECT**

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The paper examines the main aspects of the studies of the British political elite, conducted by both Russian and Western researchers. The key publications devoted to the subject were identified and analysed. The author concludes that the topic of the transformation of the British political elite in the context of Brexit has not been sufficiently studied to date.

Keywords: political elites; UK; Brexit; historiography

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Signs of the British political elite transformation had become noticeable long before the referendum on the UK membership in the European Union took place. However, it was Brexit that intensified these changes, making it necessary for the current state elite to adapt to new political realities and moods of its voters. In this regard, the question of whether the old British political elite will be able to stay in power, or, on the contrary, is ready to give place to the new one becomes even more relevant. The answer to this question determines how British policy will look like in the nearest future and what type of Britain the Russian Federation and other states will have to conduct a dialogue with. Finally, a partial renewal or a complete change of elites may lead to a shift in the place of the United Kingdom in the world, altering the existing picture of international relations. Not surprisingly, various aspects of this problem have attracted attention of researchers. This entire range of literature can be conventionally divided into four main groups.

The first group is represented by theoretical works on political elites, their characteristics and functioning without reference to particular countries or their cultural specifics. The works of V. Pareto and G. Mosca are of high importance [Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1968]. The definition of elite transformation provided by these thinkers, as well as the explanation of how it differs from elite evolution or elite change, are key for the operationalization of the central concepts of the study. In addition, the "iron law of oligarchy", which implies separation of the ruling elite from its main members and its subordination of politics to its own interests, formulated and described by R. Michels, gives an idea of the change in the political behavior of the elite over time [Michels, 2001]. The sociological works of P. Bourdieu and M. Weber also make valuable contribution to the research on political elites and analyse specific features of their representatives. Thus, M. Weber identified the types of political leadership that can characterize the political elites and their members [Weber, 1919]. P. Bourdieu's research on the importance of person's cultural and social capital made it possible to characterize methods that elite representatives can use to achieve their goals [Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241–258]. The works of the Russian political scientist O.V. Gaman-Golutvina are also of particular interest [Гаман-Голутвина, 2016, с. 38–73]. In her articles, the researcher provides a detailed description of the political elite, distinguishes between political elite and political class, and also focuses on the methods of elite studies. Moreover, it is worth mentioning the handbook edited by H. Best and J. Higley, which is a review of existing research on political elites [Best, Higley, 2018]. The paper discusses theoretical approaches to the elite studies, methods of their analysis, as well as behavior patterns and other attributes of these specific social groups.

A number of works are also devoted to the characteristics of modern political elites. In their work A. Shipman, J. Edmunds and B. Turner considered the so-called "new" political elite of the 21st century, which came to power as a result of financial crises, corruption scandals and other factors that undermined the authority of the traditional political elite [Shipman, Edmunds, Turner, 2018]. The authors showed that having occupied positions of power representatives of the "new" elite continue the policy of their predecessors, but they are more successful in dealing with the opposition. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that these works do not tackle those specific features of national elites that are formed in the course of their historical, cultural and social development.

The second group of researchers paid special attention to the British political elite and its characteristics. These works have become especially important in identifying key features of the British elite that are not typical of any other social groups. For example, British researcher, professor of Sheffield University E. Gamble analyzed the existing approaches to the analysis of British politics in five different areas — ideology, constitutional law, public policy, political economy and political behavior [Gamble, 1990]. The third and the fifth sections of his research have become an important source of information about the specific British context in which political elites operate, as well as about possible approaches to their study. In addition, British researchers P. Allen and P. Cairney established a clear distinction between the political class and the political elite of the United Kingdom [Allen, Cairney, 2017, p. 18–27]. This made it possible to focus on those representatives of the political sphere who are most capable of influencing the decision-making process. A number of researchers have also defined the composition of the British political elite. In particular, English journalist A. Sampson analyzed British power structures and determined the degree of influence that not only government officials, but also representatives of intelligence agencies, as well as economic actors lobbying their interests in politics, have within them [Sampson, 2004]. Consequently, a clearer understanding of the indirect political influence exerted on those empowered to make political decisions can be formed. Contemporary historian A. Seldon and professor of political science at the University of Liverpool D. Kavanagh studied the performance of prime ministers from 1970 to the present day. They also revealed the degree of influence of various departments and individual officials serving the head of government, as well as highlighting the existence of tensions between civil servants and their political assistants [Seldon, Kavanagh, 1999]. The monographs of the Vice-President of the University of Hong Kong M. Birch and professor of the University of Manchester I. Holliday analyzed the specifics of the work and development of the British Cabinet in detail [Burch, Holliday, 1996]. Since it is precisely members of the Cabinet that represent the nucleus of the British political elite, identifying their characteristics

is highly important for the analysis of elite transformation. In his article P. Williams identified those actors which have a significant impact on the formation of various aspects of UK foreign policy, and noted the complexity of these processes [Williams, 2004, p. 909–929]. The work successfully complements the earlier work of M. Clarke, in which the researcher analyzed factors influencing political decision-making process in the country, taking into account the dependence on the country's participation in European integration [Clarke, 1992].

In the work of W. Coxall, senior lecturer in humanities at the University of Brighton, one of the sections is devoted to the analysis of ideological approaches to the study of the state political system, namely, the influence of “Thatcherism” on the functioning of British politics [Coxall, 1992, p. 505–528]. The author paid special attention to the question of the influence of the backgrounds of the political elite representatives on their behavior. Having studied the composition of the British political elite, the researcher interpreted the results obtained using the theory of pluralism and the theory of the ruling class. B. Coppenolle, professor at the University of Essex, emphasized in his article that the length of a parliamentarian's legislative career does not affect the creation or continuation of a parliamentary dynasty [Coppenolle, 2017, p. 449–475]. A 2019 study conducted by the British charity organization “Sutton Trust” in collaboration with the Commission on Social Mobility of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provides an analysis of the UK political elite members’ education [Sutton Trust, 2019].

A number of authors also analyzed characteristics of the UK regional political elites. In particular, freelance researcher D. Soul and professor at the University of the West of Scotland M. Leith explored how Scottish elites understand regional identity [Leith, Soule, 2011, p. 120–138]. N. Meer defined the potential role of political elites in ensuring the formation of Scottish statehood [Meer, 2015, p. 1477–1496]. In addition, some attention is paid to Welsh political elites. For example, A. Thomas studied language policy pursued by political elites in Wales and also focuses on nationalism in the British province [Thomas, 1997, p. 323–344]. M. Jones emphasized the differences between politics in Wales and the ones in Scotland and Northern Ireland. He also justified the choice made by the Welsh in the referendum on the UK membership in the EU and examines the shortcomings that existed in the communication between political elite representatives on this issue [Jones, 2017]. Finally, the elites of Northern Ireland were not neglected by researchers either. For instance, researcher at Queens University in Belfast J. McAvoy identified basic principles of political elite representatives interviewing, using the example of Northern Ireland [McEvoy, 2006, p. 184–191]. American researcher J. Blake analyzed the elites in Northern Ireland and the instruments they use to retain their power [Blake, 2019, p. 817–835]. A. Cohan assessed the prospects of the united Irish elite

formation [Cohan, 1977, p. 232–254]. Researcher at the Barry University E. Dutter analyzed ethnic politics of Northern Irish elites [Dutter, 1980, p. 613–640]. M. Taylor and K. Rice looked at how discourse about political elites in Northern Ireland influences the non-profit organization leaders perception of the government reliability [Rice, Taylor, 2020, p. 237–256]. These works made it possible to highlight the features of regional political elites, to identify their differences from the national elites and to outline the scope of powers inherent in them. However, the considered studies do not touch upon the issue of political elite transformation, which is not sufficient for studying changes in their composition and characteristics, as well as identifying the factors that influenced these changes.

The issue of relations between the center and the provinces was also taken into consideration by researchers. D. Kenealy, J. Eichhorn, R. Parry, L. Paterson and A. Remond in their collective monograph studied the problem of the need to reform the central government system in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland [Kenealy et al., 2017]. Significant attention is paid to the changes that have occurred between the referendum on the independence of Scotland in 2014 and the general elections in 2015. The British political elite representatives' attitude to these processes has also been considered by the authors, which makes this study valuable.

The works devoted to the British political elite transformation stand apart. In his first work devoted to this problem German historian W. Guttsmann examined the period from 1886 to 1916 and revealed the changing role of the middle class in the British political elite [Guttsman, 1954, p. 12–32]. Then, concentrating on the period from 1888 to 1935 he explored the backgrounds of the British Cabinet representatives who form the nucleus of the country's political elite [Guttsman, 1951, p. 122–134]. It is the approach to the study of the nucleus of the British political elite that is most valuable for the research on the topic, since it allows, in conditions of limited time and lack of information, to analyze the most important changes in the composition of the political elite in general. In addition, British political scientist and former professor at Oxford University R. Johnson, relying on the methods used by W. Guttsman, analyzed British political elite in the period from 1955 to 1972 and emphasizes the need to study the broader legislative elite separately from the narrower executive one [Johnson, 1973, p. 35–77]. It is especially valuable that the researcher analyzed not only the changes that took place in Parliament as a whole, but also compared them with the changes in the British Cabinet. This makes it possible to extrapolate the results obtained in the course of studying politicians from the nucleus of the elite to the British political elite as a whole more accurately and objectively. Also, Professor of American history E. Wasson, comparing the number of hereditary politicians in Parliament from 1660 to 1945, came to the conclusion that the number

of landless members of the elite exceeded the number of representatives of the landed aristocracy only in the late 1880s [Wasson, 1991, p. 635–651]. Finally, Franco-Romanian political scientist M. Dogan and professor at the University of Connecticut J. Higley explained elite changes by changes in political regimes. As an example, they cited the regime change in England in 1688–1689 from “traditional” to “stable democratic”, named so according to their own classification [Dogan, Higley, 2012, p. 269–291]. The presented works, however, do not consider the most modern stage in the development of the British political elites, despite the fact that signs of their transformation are currently visible. Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of Edinburgh D. McCrone compared composition and characteristics of the Scottish elites in 1986 and 2019 in his work [McCrone, 2021, p. 1–30]. The author analyzed not only the political elites, but also the business elites of the province and points out the factors that have changed their appearance over 35 years.

Some authors also traced changes in certain characteristics inherent in the political elite of the United Kingdom and its representatives. In his article researcher P. Cairney analyzed the employment of the House of Commons members before they get into the ranks of parliamentarians [Cairney, 2007, p. 212–233]. He studied how the interconnection between certain occupations of people and their chances of entering the political elite of the state changed in the United Kingdom. The value of the study lies in the fact that it gives an opportunity to look at various channels of recruiting the political elite, and takes into account socio-cultural specifics of the country. The article by D. Baker and his colleagues refutes the widespread assumption that the years of the rule of M. Thatcher and J. Major led to more free access of different classes representatives to the membership in the country's political elite [Baker et al., 1995, p. 703–713]. The authors argue that members of the social elite still have grossly disproportionate access to conservative parliamentary seats, and these disparities are even more pronounced in conservative governments. Professor of University of São Paulo A. Hay, Professor of King's College London A. Grimaldi-Christensen and Professor of the London School of Economics M. Savage studied the new elites of the United Kingdom that have arisen in the context of the dominance of neoliberalism, and also analyze the characteristics of these social groups that have formed around various types of capital (social, cultural and economic ones) [Hey, Grimaldi-Christensen, Savage, 2017, p. 161–179]. In her PhD paper presented at the University of Nottingham, C. Haessly examined the role of women in the UK Parliament in changing women's rights legislation. She also analyzed the changing role of women themselves in this legislature from 1950 to 1979 [Haessly, 2010].

The third group of studies is of great importance for determining the influence of Euroscepticism on the political elites of the United Kingdom. For example, a graduate student

of St. Petersburg State University R.I. Blagoveshchensky gave a definition of British Euroscepticism, and also highlighted the main factors contributing to its development in the state [Благовещенский, 2019]. College of Europe Visiting Professor N. Brack and University of Sussex Visiting Fellow N. Startin analyzed the essence of British Euroscepticism and assessed the extent to which it has become mainstream in political debates [Brack, Startin, 2015, p. 239–249]. British political scientist and former officer of the British army A. Forster examined the peculiarities of skepticism towards Europe and towards Britain's participation in European integration in the leading parties of the United Kingdom since 1945 [Forster, 2002].

Researchers disagree on the role British political elites played in spreading Euroscepticism among the UK citizens. On the one hand, researcher N.A. Pochtin highlighted the role of the British political elite in shaping public opinion about UK's EU membership [Почтин, 2018, с. 211–215]. On the other hand, expert D. Baker singled out the lack of information about the functioning of European institutions as the main reason for the spread of Euroscepticism in Britain [Baker, 2002, p. 18–35].

The research also focuses on British nationalism and British or English identity as key causes of Euroscepticism. For example, researcher V.I. Adilova, who described participation of the United Kingdom in the process of European integration, came to a conclusion that the main problem of the UK as a member of the EU was that Euroscepticism was shared by a significant part of the political elite [Адилова, 2017, с. 64–70]. B. Wellings, senior lecturer at Monash University, and H. Baxendale, Oxford University student, believe that Euroscepticism gave rise to the ideology of modern English nationalism [Wellings, 2010, p. 488–505; Wellings, Baxendale, 2014, p. 1–17]. British-Romanian researcher I. Brown examined the reasons for the British vote to leave the EU, and noted that it boils down to the issues of national and regional identity, as well as self-esteem or the feeling of dignity, which have transformed in UK people over the past 35 years [Browne, 2017, p. 89–110]. Aston University professor A. Glencross, looking for an answer to the question of why 40 years after the year 1975 the request for a referendum on the UK membership in the EU was repeated, came to the conclusion that a new wave of British nationalism, supported by the elites, is currently rising in the UK [Glencross, 2014, p. 7–20]. Finally, University of Trent researcher E. Massetti examined the role of left-wing populism in the British regions and emphasized its apparent growth in Scotland and Wales [Massetti, 2018, p. 937–953].

The fourth group of research works is devoted to the study of Brexit influence on the further political development of the United Kingdom, as well as the political elite of the state. P. John, King's College London professor, examined how Brexit influenced the theory of British politics [John, 2018]. The article analyzed nine different theories and assesses their

importance for researchers after the UK's withdrawal from the EU. It is argued that traditional institutionalism, formal models and sociological theories will become more relevant after Brexit. According to the author, multilevel management theories will become less relevant for researchers. New institutionalism, interpretivism, political economy, feminism and neopluralism will retain their value.

Several authors tried to understand how British political culture is transforming after Brexit. Researchers at the Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis of the University of Canberra M. Hall and D. Marsh, for example, wrote about the change in British political tradition with the coming to power of B. Johnson [Hall, Marsh, 2019]. Professor of the University of De Montfort C. Copus examined the reaction of the British elites to the decision of the people to leave the EU, and described how opponents of breaking the established ties with European partners sought to undermine and deprive the legitimacy of the result of the referendum [Copus, 2018, p. 90–104]. Professor of the University of Manchester D. Fitzpatrick and professor of the University of Aston D. Richards believe that elitism will characterize British political tradition in new historical realities, although they consider this to be a negative trend [Fitzpatrick, 2016].

Other scholars analyzed changes in the moods of the population and political elites after the membership referendum. For example, Doctor of Historical Science, Professor of the National Research University "Higher School of Economics" I.G. Kovalev looked at the political behavior of British elites in the context of the need to negotiate an exit from the EU [Ковалев, 2018]. The article by E. Kharitonova, Candidate of Political Science, Senior Researcher of the Department of International Political Problems of the Russian Academy of Sciences, examined the relationship between the political elites of the United Kingdom and the country's population in the context of leaving the EU [Харитонов, 2020, с. 123–134]. In his interview, Professor of the Technical University of Darmstadt M. Hartmann also raised the issues of relations between the masses and the elites in the United Kingdom, as well as tackling the relations between various elite groups among themselves in the context of Brexit [Hartman, Lueg, 2017, p. 28–34]. He emphasized the disunity of the British political and economic elites which arose before the question of the state's membership in the European Union was raised in the 2016 referendum. M. Hartmann showed that the strong economic elite of the United Kingdom is currently unable to resist the domestic political elite.

Changes are also noted in the characteristics of the British political elite. Flinders University Professor Ch. Lees explained the elite's failure in Brexit negotiations with the growing polarization of this previously relatively homogeneous social group [Lees, 2020]. Researchers also noticed changes in the UK's domestic and foreign policy after the return of

certain powers from supranational level to the national one after Brexit. Russian Academy of Sciences researcher A.A. Aleshin predicted transformation of the British political elite approaches to the implementation of UK's foreign policy after Brexit. Professor of Sheffield University S. Bulmer and Professor of King's College London J. Scott define the role of various elite groups in organizing the key processes of leaving the EU [Bulmer, Scott, 2018].

Nevertheless, these works do not take into account changes in the composition of the British political elite that have occurred at the present stage, and also do not pay attention to the channels for recruiting the political elite. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no holistic view of changes in key characteristics inherent in both the national and regional elites of the United Kingdom.

To sum up, it can be said that the selected and analyzed research works make it possible to study the subject of the research fully. On the one hand, they consider the political elite in a static position, that is, they fix its distinctive features and national specifics at particular periods of time. On the other hand, a number of works also trace historical changes affecting the composition, characteristics and channels of recruiting the British political elite, that is, they study it in dynamics, which makes it possible to conduct a study of the current state of the elite without separating it from the earlier evolution trends. Moreover, the transformation of the British political elite should be studied based on the phenomenon of Euroscepticism analyzed by researchers. This will help to understand why the decision to leave the EU as the highest point of people's dissatisfaction with the state's membership in the integration association contributed to certain changes in the composition of the elite. Finally, the British political elite should be studied based on the theoretical positions of the classics of political science, which allows to describe the transformation processes taking place in the state within accurate terms, as well as further comparing the changes in the British elite structures with the changes within the elites of other states.

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В работе рассматриваются основные аспекты изучения британской политической элиты, раскрытые как российскими, так и зарубежными исследователями. Выявлены и охарактеризованы ключевые публикации, посвященные данной теме. Автор приходит к выводу о том, что трансформация политической элиты Соединенного Королевства Великобритании и Северной Ирландии в контексте Брекзита не является в достаточной степени изученной в настоящее время.

Ключевые слова: политические элиты; Соединенное Королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии; Брекзит; историография

Препринт WP21/2021/01
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Великобритании в контексте Брекзита**
(на английском языке)

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