

*D.A. Degterev, Doctor of Philosophy, Candidate of Economic Sciences,
Professor*

*FROM "PROVINCIAL" TO SOVEREIGN SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE
NON-WESTERN WORLD: THE ROLE OF THE BRICS*

One of the instruments of hegemony of the "Collective West" is control over the "mechanisms of formation and dissemination of knowledge" - the so-called fourth structural power of the first level according to Susan Strange, the founder of international political economy. By structural power she meant the power to create its own "rules of the game" by which others, including, not least, university professors around the world, operate. This element of structural power, she argued, was as important as the other three (security, production and finance).

In February 2023, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff presented the Joint Concept for Competing, which reflects the spaces of international competition, which are roughly divided into four main groups: geographic, domain, thematic and cognitive. The cognitive spheres are ideology, education, information and innovation. The thematic ones are shaping the global agenda on the following topics: global order, international markets, climate, human security, medicine, technology and extremism.

The important role of control over the dissemination of knowledge is also emphasised by representatives of critical theories. For example, J. Galtung speaks about the formation of "false consciousness" and "the ability to suppress one's own genuine interests (, which) can be the main part of socialisation in general and education in particular". About cultural imperialism and hegemonic control of discourse writes A. Gramsci .

Compared to other elements of structural power, control over the mechanisms of knowledge dissemination is perhaps the most unobvious, since knowledge is intangible. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the main elements of structural power and hegemonic hierarchies of the "Collective West" in this sphere and to outline the main ways of building the relevant non-Western capacity in the context of BRICS development.

The title of this paper is based on the narrative of "provincial science", which is brilliantly described in the work of two anthropologists from St Petersburg, M. Sokolov and K. Titaev, entitled "Provincial and Indigenous Science". For those who are not yet familiar with this work, I strongly recommend it! The authors managed to ridicule the most acute shortcomings of both "provincial" and "indigenous science" in a very subtle and ironic form of ethnographic observation.

By the former they mean those researchers whose discourse is secondary to the "capital", and the "capital" for most sciences before the Second World War was Germany, and afterwards - the USA and Great Britain, with a short "flash" of the "capital" of Paris in the 1960s-1980s. I venture to suggest that after the end of the "power transit", after cardinal international transformations, the intellectual "capital" of the world will change again. According to M. Sokolov and K. Titayev, "for provincial science it is the attendance of intellectual salons of the metropolis that is the main marker of status". Formal "signs of personal proximity to metropolitan science" - long "metropolitan" internships and business trips, "the cult of ... physical visits of metropolitan celebrities", etc. - are also at a premium. At the same time, there is a "chronic lack of importance that its representatives attach to each other's work" . Indeed, why, because "neighbours on the shop floor" are "provincials"!

The other extreme is the so-called "indigenous science", which implies "the constant displacement of the fact of the existence of metropolitan science" and the

increasing tendency towards regionalisation and nationalisation of scientific communication. At the same time, in conditions of infrastructure-driven isolation, only local authors are recognised, the share of self-citations is high, there is an abundance of science-like vocabulary, many researchers "simmer in their own juice", and there are no reliable mechanisms for verifying scientific knowledge. In the context of BRICS, we can also note the small share of studies published in the respective languages - this unfortunately applies to Russian, Portuguese (for Brazil), Arabic and Amharic. I.e. the effect of scale, the presence of international scientific communications of the non-Western world, which can be formed by the BRICS structures, is important here.

The existing international scientific environment is rather hierarchical, it is characterised by centre-periphery relations, and unfortunately, in the 1990s our country strengthened its periphery, while other BRICS member countries made not always successful attempts to overcome this periphery. At the same time, the countries of the so-called "Centre" are no longer leaders in a number of critical technologies, but are being overtaken, for example, by China and the Russian Federation.

However, their "centrality" is conditioned not only by objective factors, i.e. the level of development of scientific research in a particular field, but also by the very configuration of the network, the system of international academic cooperation. In the established system, the main part of contacts goes through the "Centre", through journals, conferences, professional associations, bibliometric indices of the "Centre".

"Power transit" (from Western countries to non-Western countries), the beginning of the NWO, the Middle East conflict and other events of the last three years call into question the whole architecture of the hegemonic "pyramid" of dissemination of "metropolitan" knowledge, because the "upper floors" of the

above-mentioned hierarchies are occupied by representatives of unfriendly countries.

Moreover, the processes of so-called "decoupling" (i.e. rupture) are developing between the Western and non-Western worlds. This phenomenon has developed most of all in the technological sphere; it is also actively developing in the economic and political spheres, where competing international institutions with similar functionality are being formed. But there is also fragmentation of the global information and, more widely, value and academic space

And, perhaps, for the first time in the post-Soviet history, the issue of formation of sovereign public knowledge is so acute. In the natural science environment, the role of the normative (i.e. ideological) factor is lower and the problem is not so acute. In addition, there is the task of partially reorienting the network of international co-operation, forming direct scientific ties between the BRICS countries and linking them to non-Western scientific infrastructure.

It is important not to fall into the already described extremes of both "provincial" and "indigenous" science. It is necessary to have a good command of foreign (Western and non-Western) discourse, to be able not only to adapt it, but also, if necessary, to deconstruct it in a reasoned way and to offer alternative meanings. Even Western experts have long recognised that Western countries do not have an exclusive view of modernity; there is a "multiple modernity" - Russian, Chinese, Turkish, etc.

We should not be afraid to put forward alternative social concepts, because competition is what drives science! If suddenly the "only correct concept" turns out to be wrong, there will be no alternative to it [Pereslegin 2017: 63-64]. One should not be afraid to compete in the English-speaking environment dominating in today's science. But for this purpose it is necessary to have its own elements of structural strength, namely, leading scientific journals published simultaneously

in Russian, English, Chinese, languages of other BRICS countries, and most importantly - powerful publishing holdings, publications in which should become *sin qua non* for any serious scientific or educational programme. The bibliometric systems of the BRICS countries need to be interfaced. We have RINC, and there are attempts to create other systems. China has CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), and Arab countries have Al Manhal.

In fact, today there is already a "creeping" recognition of each other's journals. For example, many Russian journals have started to be indexed in the CNKI, and, accordingly, many Chinese authors have become more interested in publishing in them, as this has started to count in their scientific performance indicators. For example, colleagues from South Africa and other African countries have approached us with similar proposals.

However, more systematic measures are needed here. There should not be pure symmetry, but in all the main elements of the "Collective West" structural force in the sphere of knowledge formation and dissemination, the corresponding serious non-Western instruments should appear, including on the basis of BRICS. And healthy competition may well develop between Western and non-Western publishing houses and journals. This will only move global academic science forward! The main thing is to overcome asymmetric interdependencies (according to R. Cochain and J. Nye) - when we depend on publications in Western publishing houses, which have become quasi-global in nature, and they do not depend on our structural power in this area, which is still at the initial stage of formation.

The non-Western BRICS member countries can do a lot in the field of joint development of social science, and Russia as a "distinctive state-civilisation, a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power" with unique opportunities for "cultural

triangulation", i.e. generalisation of cultural knowledge, can play a key role. This is recognised by foreign experts as well.