

## Risk studies at St. Petersburg State University: From tradition to new challenges\*

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The article examines the thirty-years' experience in risk studies that has been acquired by scholars at St. Petersburg State University. The authors analyze the distance travelled from the first attempts to integrate risk approach into Soviet sociology to current research carried out at the intersection of conflict studies and risk studies approaches. Using classic research interpretations of risk and risk perception, such as “risk society” (U. Beck), “cultural theory” (M. Douglas, A. Wildavsky), “system theory” (N. Luhmann), the authors identify several features that distinguish the St. Petersburg University approach in risk studies, such as applying risk theory to the whole social system rather than isolated business or political cases. As an example of this approach to examining risk, the article presents the results of an all-Russian survey carried out by project group of St. Petersburg University in order to identify risk-reflections as a factor in conflict strategy choice. The *collected data* demonstrates that the integration of risk and conflict studies offers significant opportunities for highlighting the *divergence of interests between producers and consumers of risks*. At the same time, the original research strategy should facilitate the creation of a realistic model for the evaluation of effective political risk management. *The authors conclude that* the present phase of risk research by scholars at St. Petersburg University is characterized by the consolidation of conflict and risk studies that makes it possible, on the one hand, to investigate any risk as a conflicting phenomenon and, on the other hand, to examine risk perception as a special discursive practice which has a high manipulative potential.

**Keywords:** risk, conflict, risk perception, risk studies, St. Petersburg University.

The modern theory of risk management faces a new challenge caused by the “COVID-transformation” of society and contemporary problems of social management pathologies. One can safely presume that the above-mentioned paradigm changes are linked to some corrections that occur under pressure from the pandemic. It is understood not only as a modification to strategy and tactic of political risk management or decision-making development under conditions of uncertainty, but as everyday practices, social links structure, a collective vision of common recognition of threats, and attitudinal patterns. Updated risks shape and legitimize new political behavior at both institutional and person existential levels. At the same time, they create political structures, processes and

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technologies of social control that previously were unlikely to be viewed as normal, while fake information also constructs a new political reality.

In the “strange” and “inadequate” (in other words, undesirable) reactions of the population, the regulator sees a deficit of reasonable responsibility of the instructed masses, but not its own failures in communication. ... Authorities do not see in this their own inability to engage in dialogue, lack of willingness to accept free will and subjectivity of Other even if he has not a right track... Administrative structures and the whole of governments bogged down into whirlpool of technical and political unpredictability... As a result — unwitting mutual provocations that are almost like social groups are being forced to inadequate behaviour [1].

These emotional and imaginative conclusions reached by Alexander Rubtsov, Head of the Department of the Philosophical Studies of Ideological Processes of the Russian Academy of Sciences, are shared by many sociologists today. To sum up, debates about the adequacy of risk management practises are coming to the fore.

Certainly, St. Petersburg University has a long tradition in researching the impact of risk perception on the dynamic and structural indicators of the conflict that can be seen in various social and cultural contexts. Without any doubt, the founder of this scientific area at St. Petersburg University was Professor Anatoly Algin (1951–2009) who *could, with full justification*, be considered as one of the first Soviet scholars who opened the door to risk theory for domestic sociologists. He wrote pioneering scientific works about the nature and key characteristics of risk — Risk and its role in public life (1989) which was the first book in the USSR devoted to risk and risk management. Among other things, Algin highlighted “the need to search for cognitive means allowing to take into account the factors of uncertainty, stochasticity, conflict when choosing optimal alternatives” [2]. According to Algin, the piecemeal application of risk theory only for isolated business or political cases will not be sufficient to realize the full potential of the risk approach. Moreover, he underlined the requirement of applying risk theory to the entire social system, all human activity.

Algin focused on clarifying the meaning and content of the concept of “risk”, its place and role in the structure of human activity as well as substantiating the meaning of socially useful risk. We can highlight the most principal provisions of Algin’s concept of “risk”:

- possibility of deviating from the intended goal for the sake of which the chosen alternative was carried out;
- probability of achieving the desired result;
- lack of confidence in achieving the set goal;
- possibility of the occurrence of adverse consequences in conditions of uncertainty for the subject taking the risk;
- material, environmental, moral, ideological and other losses associated with the implementation of the alternative chosen in conditions of uncertainty;
- expectation of danger, failure as a result of choosing an alternative and its implementation.

In terms of understanding the phenomenon of “risk,” clarification of its own basic elements is no less interesting. According to Algin, “risk” consists of the probability of

obtaining desired outcomes as well as undesirable circumstances and, clearly, the amount of deviation from originally selected purposes.

An analysis of factors that influence the way we selected one or other alternative risk decision or risk-off behavior is also important. Does the person or social group have a predisposition to high-risk actions or not? How can we provide optimal availability of resources for rational risk? Is it possible to isolate voluntary risk from non-consensual action? Does the management of political risk differ greatly from economic cases? As a result, there are many challenging questions.

Examination of all previously mentioned aspects were promoted in research provided by scholars at St. Petersburg University in the framework of a grant from the Russian Scientific Foundation named “Risk reflection in modern Russian conflict management strategies”. This project brings together scholars from different departments of St. Petersburg University: conflict studies, philosophy and theory of politics, sociology of political processes. Thus, the tradition continues of researching risk reflection (or perception, as it called in the western tradition) influence the dynamic and static elements of conflict in different social and cultural contexts. Therefore, there are a wide range issues on interdisciplinary aspects of conflict in the Russian version of “risk society”, mutual evaluation of risks, threats, dangers, as well as risk perceptions and attitudes represented by different social actors.

Consequently, it is no exaggeration to say that the original school of risk and examining risk management has to date been institutionalized inside St. Petersburg University. At the same time, the long history of traditions of risk investigation and the debatable results of rapid response tests to the effectiveness of risk and threats control systems illustrate the need to upgrade the basic heuristic algorithm for the fundamental identification strategies as well as technological design of political risk management programs.

As Giorgio Agamben writes “Fear is a poor advisor, but it causes many things to appear that one pretended not to see. The problem is not to give opinions on the gravity of the disease, but to ask about the ethical and political consequences of the epidemic. The first thing that the wave of panic that has paralyzed the country obviously shows is that our society no longer believes in anything but bare life” [3].

Slavoj Žižek develops this argument along the following line: “When we react in panic, we do not take the threat seriously — we, on the contrary, trivialize it. Just think how ridiculous is the notion that having enough toilet paper would matter in the midst of a deadly epidemic”. He reasonably puts forward some questions as a relevant subject of analysis in scientific discourse: “So what would be an appropriate reaction to the coronavirus epidemics? What should we learn and what should we do to confront it seriously?” [4, p. 64–65].

It can be concluded that all parties of pandemic risk perception debates share Ulrich Beck's thesis that in modern world “distribution of wealth” has been changed to the “distribution of risk” [5, p. 13].

By analyzing the ways to conceptualize inequality of “risk distribution” between different social groups, it can be found that the most fundamental *questions remain unanswered*. What criteria we should be guided by to articulate possibilities and limitations in different methodological attitudes to risk perception examination? [6] What kind of theoretical models can be chosen for well-founded identification of everyday risks perception? How do personal experiences, cultural, religious, political, and social backgrounds

determine risk perception stereotypes? [7] And finally, the general question that needs to be posed is the accuracy of risk-reflection and is it a reaction of social actors or does it only represent predominant power discourse, which defines what kind of thing is dangerous, who is at risk and eventually subjects all social parties to its own models of risk reaction and acceptable forms of risk behavior. If we do not reach clarity in these challenging issues we will definitely fall according to words of Martin Heidegger to “averaged and vague intelligibility” [8]. It is understood as the clash of knowledge when at first sight well-argued risk descriptions are contrary to real management practices which in turn lead to the strengthening of risk prevention and threats distribution that are interpreted as fictional and irrational. As mentioned above, a key feature of justifying the risk-reflection role in strategies of conflict management, without any doubt, is current risk allocation and harm compensation policy [5, p. 13].

In light of the relevance and urgency of the addressed concerns expressed in the risk-reflection approach in decision-making practices, it should be clarified that risk assessment is produced not by abstract persons or groups but by definite social actors who have their own political interests and needs. In conditions of “a reproducible algorithm of successful extreme behavior without rules, in which the authorities easily provoke repeated risks relying on irresponsibility to the population” [9, p. 17], the fight between a conflict’s interest holders entails case preferences where one party is provided in some cases while another parties’ risks are totally ignored. This is simply because risks, as a rule, have a hierarchical structure that is not always understandable to outside observers. As a result, the most vulnerable social groups who are least able to minimize risks consequences are at risk more than anyone else [10, p. 216]. It is the pattern that significantly strengthens Michel Crozier’s conclusion that the real force of authority drastically depends on to what extent leaders have total control over sources of uncertainty [11].

Thus, according to John Tulloch and Debora Lupton, the dispute over who is to blame for producing risks and threats remains an essential instrument for rapid political mobilization [7]. As Anthony Giddens writes, “Risk is the mobilising dynamic of a society bent on change, that wants to determine its own future rather than leaving it to religion, tradition, or the vagaries of nature” [12, p. 42]. Ulrich Beck is also worth recalling “since socially recognized risks, as appears clearly in the discussions of forest destruction, contain a peculiar political explosive: what was until now considered unpolitical becomes political — the elimination of the causes in the industrialization process itself” [5, p. 24]. They define conflict behavior patterns and strategies that social actors choose. Mary Douglas describes it as follows: “Risk is invoked for a modern-style riposte against abuse of power. The charge of causing risk is a stick to beat authority, to make lazy bureaucrats sit up, to exact restitution for victims” [13, p. 3–4]. It is thus obvious that a lot of scholars try to explain risk distribution imbalance through risk-reflection distinctions in different cultures and political systems. In conclusion, there is a clear need to provide scholars and practitioners with a better understanding of how risk perceptions determine the ways social actors adapt to new challenges and what kind of responses they ready to provide.

In responding to this need, in November 2019 the aforementioned project “Risk reflection in modern Russian conflict management strategies” with the Centre for Sociological and Internet Research of St. Petersburg State University carried out an all-Russian survey in order to identify risk-reflections for choosing forms of political participation

[14]. The research program was based on a “psychometric paradigm” of risk-reflection examination that captured the difference between various risks through the understanding of what kind of risk perception individuals or communities demonstrate. This research methodology is effectively applied in many sociological studies in Russia [15].

In this study we also relied on Paul Slovic’s experience of risk perception in driver distraction and selected the most relevant for the questions of our study [16, p. 86, 138]:

1. Voluntariness of risk: Do people get into these risky situations voluntarily?
2. Immediacy of effect: To what extent is the risk of death immediate — or is death likely to occur at some later time?
3. Knowledge about risk: To what extent are the risks known precisely by the individuals who are exposed to them?
4. Knowledge about risk: To what extent are the risks known to science?
5. Control over risk: If you are exposed to the risk of each activity or technology, to what extent can you, by personal skill or diligence, avoid death while engaging in the activity?
6. Newness: Are these risks new, novel ones or old, familiar ones?
7. Chronic–catastrophic: Is this a risk that kills people one at a time (chronic risk) or a risk that kills large numbers of people at once (catastrophic risk)?
8. Common-dread: Is this a risk that people have learned to live with and can think about reasonably calmly, or is it one that people dread greatly — on the level of a gut reaction?
9. Severity of consequences: When the risk from the activity is realized in the form of a mishap or illness, how likely is it that the consequence will be fatal?
10. Can mishaps be prevented?
11. If a mishap occurs, can the damage be controlled?
12. How many people are exposed to this hazard?
13. Does the hazard threaten future generations?
14. Are you personally at risk from this hazard?
15. Are the benefits equitably distributed among those at risk?
16. Does the hazard threaten global catastrophe?
17. Are the damage-producing processes observable as they occur?
18. Are the risks increasing or decreasing?
19. Can the risks be reduced easily?

As a separate issue we considered how conflict dynamic was impacted by risk perception. Our hypothesis was that there are some key indicators that play a significant role in this aspect: involuntariness of risk, uncontrollable and innovativeness of threats, awareness of it, what sort of things produce “common dreads,” and are the benefits equitably distributed among those at risk?

To make conclusions in this examination, a synthetic methodology approach was used to find unique risk perceptions of different social groups which are united by a common idea of risk integration into power relations in society when social and political challenges are infiltrated by risk, in other words, any trouble starts to appear as a “risk-perceived” problem [17].

The method of the primary collected data was a representative telephone interviewing among Russian citizens over the age of 18. The final sample size turned out to be 1600 people. The respondent sample included various socio-demographic groups (see Table 1).

*Table 1. Socio-demographic collection percentage*

Sex	Female	55.6
	Male	44.4
Age	18–29	23.8
	30–39	8.4
	40–49	17.1
	50–59	18.8
	over 60	22.0
Education	primary/incomplete secondary	2.7
	secondary	10.6
	basic vocational	8.3
	vocational	24.6
	incomplete higher	5.4
higher	48.4	
Employment status	Unskilled manual workers	3.6
	Skilled workers	13.1
	Military personnel	0.7
	Self-employment/own business	10.4
	Public sector employees	2.0
	High-level professionals in productive sector	6.2
	High-level professionals in non-productive sector	15.9
	Clerical routine non-manual workers	9.8
	Retirees	23.0
	Unemployed	3.3
	Students	4.0
	Housekeepers	1.5
Temporarily non-working (maternity leave, etc.)	3.8	
Income	< 5000 RUR	2.6
	5001–10 000 RUR	15.2
	10 001–25 000 RUR	39.8
	25 001–50 000 RUR	19.6
	> 50 000 RUR	5.2

The collected data showed that the majority of respondents demonstrated positively linked value attitudes (See Table 2). The majority of interviewees would prefer order (59.0%) compared to freedom (19.6%), interests of the state (48.0%) than individual interests (31.4%), and preservation of traditions (47.6%) to reform launching (30.6%).

Table 2. Value attitudes (%)

What is more important to you?	
Order	59
Interests of the State	48
Preservation of traditions	47.6
Human rights	40.2
Social justice	34.1
Individual interests	31.4
Reform launching	30.6
Freedom	19.6

As for the threats, which respondents were worried most about, a similar feature can be seen (See Table 3). In other words, people were mostly frustrated by collective risks rather than individual damages.

Table 3. Assessment of concrete risks (%)

What kind of risks are you threatened by?	
ethnic, race, gender, age, religious, political discrimination	12.8
stress, loneliness, identity crisis	17.7
loss of savings or property	17.7
dismissal, demotion, unemployment	24.3
threat of war	25
declining health, health loss	50.4
environmental disasters	55.1

In answering the question about their own reactions to risk, the majority of respondents demonstrated that they would prefer to get help from family rather than the authorities when they are under imminent threat. Furthermore, a large majority of respondents believed that they can only rely on themselves in a situation of risk. Generally, the study showed a dramatic extent of distrust towards almost each social institution except the President of Russia. At the same time, even if active protest as a response to risk was the most prevalent answer among respondents (40%), approximately an equal part of interviewees chose strategies that appeared more passive (See Table 4).

As for the most likely strategies that authorities can select during situations of risk, respondents' suggestions were extremely thought provoking. The majority of interviewees (44.1%) believed that the government would try to gloss over the damage and hide risk from society, 13.5% of respondents thought that the authorities would prefer to shift full responsibility to the people and only 27.2% answered that administration would take responsibility for resolution of the crisis.

*Table 4. Responses to risks (%)*

<b>What kind of action are you prepared to take for risk prevention?</b>	
discussions with family	73.5
cooperation with friends	35.9
appeal to the authorities	32
appeal to the media	25.2
<b>Who do you rely on in situations of risk?</b>	
oneself and family	93.8
non-commercial organizations	48.1
President of Russia	46.4
public authorities	45.3
mass media	41.5
international organizations	29.1
private companies	27.7
<b>What kind of institutions do you personally trust?</b>	
President of Russia	60
police	53.8
government	42.7
local bodies	42.1
mass media	37.7
parliament	34
labor unions	28.6
political parties	26.3
<b>What kind of actions are you prepared to take in situations of risk?</b>	
protest against risk actions	40
wait for the risk to reverse itself	15.1
accept the risk	14.5
leave the country	9.5

According to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) [18], these findings make it possible to place conflict strategies into a risk perception “coordinate system” depending on what kind of orientation we see: attempting to satisfy one’s own concerns or attempting to satisfy the concerns of the victim at risk. Developing this further, it is possible to identify such strategies as avoiding, accommodating, collaborating or integrating, competing or dominating, and compromising. Despite a very detailed description of these strategies in conflict studies literature, it is necessary to highlight them in a new dimension of approach to risk which should help to examine conflict representation in terms of risk perception.

One issue that deserves particular attention in this case is using the politics of hegemony or dominance of producers over consumers in risk situations. As William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker claim, “domination tends to reduce all conflicts to two options — “either you are against me or with me,” which limits one’s role to “winning” or “losing.” The most commonly used dominating tactic is a threat. A threat has to meet two criteria: the source of the threat must control the outcome and the threat must be viewed as negative by the recipient” [19].

As we are witnessing with the pandemic, domination may take different forms [20]:

- ingratiation of the “risk victim” by praising his or her dignity (but if a risk consumer understands that a risk producer, who is trying to make a good impression, has a mercenary character, then any manifestation of ingratiation behavior will be regarded as manipulation);
- ingratiation of the “risk victim” by demonstrating mutual similarity between risk producers and risk consumers;
- ingratiation of the “risk victim” with a provision of services;
- gamesmanship method where the goal is to confuse the “risk victim” and put the victim’s suspicions to rest by action which appears advantageous for the risk consumer or to makes the victim start feeling guilty (this tactic will work properly if the victim is blind to the risk producer’s true intentions);
- hidden reproach tactic when the “risk victim” experiences a crisis of conscience due to criticism towards them;
- using persuasive argumentation to decrease a “risk victim’s” claims;
- threats or promises (when the government states that it must act in a particular way if the “risk victim” is not be able to adapt to a risk situation).

In addition to this, some important features such as culture archetypes, social patterns and value systems turn out to be one of the neglected areas of research. At the same time, these areas largely determine the specificity of conflict behavior attitudes related to risk perception practices. Louis Kriesberg supposes that “Since many parties are likely to be involved in every conflict and each party is generally involved in several other conflicts, a zero-sum conflict may be transformed into a mixed-motive conflict by changing the salience of the antagonism between any particular set of opponents. Social conflicts generally involve many contending parties” [21, p. 10]. As Georg Simmel puts it, “The fact that it aims at peace is only one, an especially obvious, expression of its nature: the synthesis of elements that work both against and for one another. This nature appears more clearly when it is realized that both forms of relation — the antithetical and the convergent — are fundamentally distinguished from the mere indifference of two or more individuals or groups. In contrast to such pure negativity, conflict contains something positive” [22, p. 13].

One cannot fail to mention Mary Douglas’ and Aaron Wildavsky’s outstanding cultural theory of risk that identifies four ideal types of risk perception in culture: hierarchy, egalitarianism, individualism and communitarianism based on distinctions of time perspectives of risk perception, risk admissibility, risk interpretation as an inevitability or possibility, social approval, encouragement, prohibition or punishment for an individual risk in favour of person/group benefit [23].

Also, measurement of how parties resolve their disagreements and what kind of feelings they have inside this process proposed by Mitchell Hammer makes a signifi-

cant contribution to the examination of predicting conflict behavior when differences are related to risk and risk perception [24]. This research supplements Georg Simmel's idea that "negative and dualistic elements play an entirely positive role in this more comprehensive picture, despite the destruction they may work on particular relations" [22, p. 13].

If conflict is understood, according to Lewis Coser's approach, as a "struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" [25, p. 8], then it will be necessarily to emphasize a new category called "risk space." From our point of view, risk space is an asymmetric structure that includes production, reproduction, ranking and distribution of threats and risks. It is also important that this structure operates "both as instruments and goals of fights in different areas" [26, p. 40]. In this methodological context, conflict should be read as a struggle for having a right to distribute limited resources of risk minimization.

In this regard, we suggest the following research strategies for conflict examination because they hold promise of practical, achievable benefits, if done appropriately:

- manifestation of frustration or disagreement of risk consumers with risk producers, or ways that risk was produced as well as the kind of threats is proposed to identify as a risk;
- distinction of opinions of those who are supposed to be accused of a risk action;
- competition for risk control and different ways of risk-taking or avoiding risk;
- perceived divergence of interests between actors at risk and actors which benefit from it, between producers and consumers of risks [5].

It is fitting here to stress Lewis Coser's remark that "Threats may or may not exist in objective reality, but the group must feel that- they do. Social perception of an outside threat may be distorted, but its effect on the in-group may be the same as that of undistorted perception of objective threat" [25, p. 104].

In addition to the aspect listed above, it seems clear that inside risk space wrongly issue-based judgements and interpretation of risks and threats inside risk space, which parties use, can lead to conflict escalation. As a result, there may be an increasing trend towards risk phobia as a well as risk philia. As Sergey Kravchenko notes: "Fluid fear is amplified through the changing interpretations of risks produced by scientific and everyday knowledge. As a result, both objective risk-generating realities and subjectively constructed risks and risk-perceptions actually become the norm of life, contributing to the permanent self-reproduction of risk phobia... Along with the tendency of riskophobia, riskophilia arises and develops — a craving for risk-generating activity, everything that causes positive emotions from activity associated with an increased degree of risk" [27]. It can be assumed that the emergence of risk phobia or risk philia is a key factor that determines the whole conflict dynamic and, as a result, lowers the probability of successfully resolving the conflict.

On the one hand, these research strategies help treat risk perception with regard to conflict development in a positive or negative way and, on the other hand, make it possible to be more accurate in risk perception research as a factor of intensification or easing of tension. Using this approach allows one to answer the question of how risk perception determines the following:

- forced conflicts;
- deliberately provoked conflicts;
- wrongly collocated or complicated behavior by incorrect parties;
- non-realistic or expressive conflicts;
- false, displaced or non-attributive conflicts, etc.

A certain understanding of the significant role of perception in displacing conflict already existed previously, of course, but it was felt to be insufficient. Modern approaches clearly indicate the presence of risk perception in displaced conflict using the concept of social fear. As Ulrich Beck writes, “For risks, interpretative diversions of stirred-up insecurities and fears are more easily possible than for hunger and poverty. What is happening here need not be overcome here, but can be deflected in one direction or another and can seek and find symbolic places, persons, and objects for overcoming its fear” [5, p. 75].

For instance, the concept of social fear plays a large role in Morton Deutsch’s claim that “The destructiveness of their way of dealing with their conflicts was reflected in their tendency to escalate a dispute about almost any specific issue into a power struggle” [28, p. 18]. At the same time, social fear is often described as a political phenomenon. As Corey Robin emphasizes, fear is born in society, it has a far-reaching implication and “may dictate public policy, bring new groups to power and keep others out, create laws and overturn them” [29, p. 3].

Indeed, any manipulation of the risk perception is a pillar of populism technologies in politics. This is what Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis mean by artistic and skillful practice of transfer private to public with the additional opportunity to maximize the exploitation of fear. As they write “Fear and hatred are twin sisters, as we know. They never walk alone the real fear of an individual becomes a matter of public interest and general concern, and sometimes even turns into a mass obsession” [30].

Drawing on the results of examining risk perception, the project group’s research papers presented the description of the models used by government for placing risks in a social order framework. While regulator efforts are aimed at preserving the existing order, authorities legitimize risks forcing anything they want to be meaningful to ultimately appear meaningful. Daur Abgadzha consistently claims the following:

specificity of risk, based on the assumption of nonexistent or potentially possible events, which serve as the basis for decision-making, suggests that risk management can be speculative.... The discourse about risk for beneficiaries of a socio-political order constitutes an “objective” basis for public administration, since a particular social situation turns out to be the direct effect of a certain action. Thus, knowledge about risk, causal relationships that can generate negative consequences for actors, acquires the quality of an internal motive that compels individuals to behave responsibly, that is, one in which the individual, realizing that certain of his actions can lead to undesirable state, begins to interpret his behavior differently, control and direct it [31].

Alexander Strebkov and Rashid Musaev, in their turn, operationalize the meaning of such concepts as “power of risk” and “risk of power”. These concepts aggregate the relations in which risk represents itself as a tool for maintaining a dominant position in the political sphere. They conclude that obliging others to bear the burden of social risks is the

most common attitude which turns objective risks to subjective troubles where someone at risk is responsible for itself [32].

To sum up, it is highly important to stress that risk management should aim at reducing, as much as possible, conflict of interest effects. This is necessary because its outputs may well dismiss sustainable solutions and lead to “non-realistic optimism” or “non-realistic pessimism” about threats and dangers as well as social perceptions about behavioral principles in risk situations. At this point the whole community is exposed to the risk because reacting to risk perception, manifested by the majority, turns out to be beyond the effective solutions space, while frequently the risk perceptions of the majority are shaped through manipulative techniques of promoting politicians to the electorate [33]. Following Jean-Marie Baland’s and other’s peculiar paradox of ineffective risk, actions can be seen. It is a great irony that, in spite of damage to which society is exposed due to poor quality risk management, it can appear very attractive and politically comfortable [34]. Therefore, it is essential to keep in mind the ideas expressed by Niklas Luhmann who continues to be one of the most influential scholars in risk studies — for we can speak of risk only if we can identify a decision ... and the decision is far from always the best, it implies the uncertainty of the onset of both a desirable and undesirable future, its consequences are not the final result, once and for all obtained, but continue to be corrected in the context of unnecessary and multiple dependence, recognition of the existence of known and unknown risks, communicable (expressed in messages) and non-communicable risks [35, p. 16].

While agreeing with Gleb Pavlovsky’s statement it can be tentatively concluded that government is becoming increasingly bifurcated as both a supplier of threats as well as a supplier of defense [36]. Actually, not managing threats turns out to be an incredibly beneficial position for authorities. While people are acting rationally, power institutions are inclined to qualify human behavior as harmful to him or her. Authorities establish new challenges, generate demands for its creation, spread anxiety among the population and after that supposedly come to the rescue. Government hates conflict but at the same time finds it advantageous to resolve or prevent it. As a result, risk juggling practices are raised as well as the creation of a false agenda. Therefore, in the proposed research risk reflection is considered as a special type of discursive practice for which a high degree of manipulation is characteristic, and consequently one of the research tasks is to identify mechanisms and parameters for structuring the space of “postponed instability” [37].

The message of this article can be clarified in several short statements. First of all, it can be stressed that since Anatoly Algin’s experience, risk studies at St. Petersburg University have been actively developing over the past thirty years. This has resulted in the birth of the original scientific school which examines risk in a holistic, rather than a stand-alone, manner that should be integrated into political, economic and social contexts of different communities and locations.

Secondly, the present phase of researching risk is characterized by the consolidation of conflict and risk studies. This approach allows to investigate any risk as an inherently conflicting phenomenon because every problem, be it an ecological or threat to cultural identity, can be identified with someone’s interests. At the same time, risk perception is viewed as a special discursive practice which has a high manipulative potential for forming a political agenda, choosing a way to protect from threats, etc.

And, finally, the selected research strategy should enable the creation of a realistic model to evaluate effectiveness of political risk management and thus contribute to

the implementation of risk to the indicator system of “good governance” — “bad governance”.

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### Исследования риска в Санкт-Петербургском государственном университете: от традиций к новым вызовам\*

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В статье исследуется более чем тридцатилетний опыт изучения риска учеными Санкт-Петербургского государственного университета. Авторами анализируется путь, пройденный от первых попыток встроить теорию риска в дискурс советской социологии до современных исследований риска и риск-рефлексии на стыке конфликтологии, социологии, политологии и психологии. Используя теории риска У.Бека, М.Дуглас, А.Вилдавски, Н.Лумана, Э.Гидденса, наряду с классическим для конфликтологии трудами Г.Зиммеля, Л.Козера, Л.Крисберга, авторы приходят к выводу, что в Санкт-Петербургском университете к настоящему времени институционализировалась своя научная школа, отличительной чертой которой является фокус внимания на риске как целостном феномене. В качестве примера такого подхода в статье демонстрируются результаты всероссийского исследования, проведенного в ноябре 2019 г. в рамках исполнения гранта Российского научного фонда «Риск-рефлексии в современных российских стратегиях управления конфликтом». Показывается, что использованные в исследовании подходы позволили, с одной стороны, интерпретировать восприятие рисков с позиций динамики конфликта, его развития в разрушительном или конструктивном русле, с другой — дали возможность более адекватно выявить роль риск-рефлексий в интенсификации или ослаблении конфликта. Авторы приходят к выводу, что нынешняя фаза исследования рисков учеными Санкт-Петербургского университета характеризуется консолидацией исследований конфликтов и рисков, что позволяет исследо-

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вать любой риск как изначально конфликтное явление, в то время как риск-рефлексия рассматривается как особая дискурсивная практика, обладающая высоким манипулятивным потенциалом для формирования политической повестки дня, выбора способа защиты от угроз и т. д.

*Ключевые слова:* риск, конфликт, риск-рефлексия, теории риска, Санкт-Петербургский университет.

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