



# FORUM OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, POLITOLOGY, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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FÓRUM CUDZÍCH JAZYKOV,  
POLITOLÓGIE,  
A MEDZINÁRODNÝCH VZŤAHOV

FORUM OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES,  
POLITOLOGY,  
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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politológiu a medzinárodné vzťahy**

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**Fórum cudzích jazykov, politológie a medzinárodných vzťahov** je recenzovaný vedecký časopis vydávaný na CD nosičoch Vysokou školou Danubius. Bol založený v roku 2009 ako Fórum cudzích jazykov ako recenzované neimpaktované periodikum. Od roku 2017 je rozšírený o novú sekciu politológie a medzinárodných vzťahov.

Časopis si kladie za cieľ byť otvorenou platformou pre uverejňovanie inovatívnych výsledkov z teoretického, aplikovaného a empirického výskumu zo širokej oblasti lingvistiky, politológie a medzinárodných vzťahov, výmeny názorov, skúseností a získaných nových poznatkov a tvorivej práce prispievateľov zo SR a zo zahraničia. Je určený predovšetkým akademickým pracovníkom univerzitných i neuniverzitných vysokých škôl a vedeckých ústavov.

Časopis vychádza dvakrát ročne a vydáva štúdie, odborné príspevky, diskusné príspevky a recenzie, pričom je rozdelený do dvoch sekcií a to na lingvistiku a oblasť politológie a medzinárodných vzťahov. Prispievatelia sekcií lingvistiky môžu svoje publikácie písať v anglickom i v inom svetovom jazyku a prispievatelia v sekcií politológia a medzinárodné vzťahy v anglickom jazyku.

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The journal aims to be open platform for publishing the innovative results based on theoretical, applied and empirical research in the fields of linguistics, politology and international relations. Sharing the research results and experience of Slovak and foreign contributors are in the focus of the journal editors. The scope of target spreads to academics active in tertiary education and research institutes.

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Vážení čitatelia,

po ôsmych rokoch existencie vedeckého časopisu **Fórum cudzích jazykov**, ktorý vznikol v roku 2009, nastal čas na zmenu. Ročník 2017 sme otvorili nie len zmenou názvu časopisu, ale aj rozšírením o novú sekciu.

Dovoľte mi, aby som Vás niekoľkými slovami oboznámil s novým zameraním časopisu VŠD pod názvom **Fórum cudzích jazykov, politológie a medzinárodných vzťahov**. Publikuje štúdie, odborné príspevky, diskusné príspevky a recenzie. Je to vedecký recenzovaný časopis.

Prvá sekcia - **lingvistiká** - bude tak ako aj doposiaľ venovaná potrebám a výsledkom výskumu v oblasti jazykovedy, didaktiky, svetovej literatúry a jazykového vzdelávania. Naším prvoradým cieľom je, aby časopis dosiahol vysokú odbornú a metodickú úroveň a zároveň sa stal i užitočným pomocníkom pre všetkých tých, ktorí sa podieľajú na výučbe cudzieho jazyka.

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Verím, že Vás zameranie nášho časopisu osloví, že Vás nami predkladané výsledky poznania a výsledky výskumu zaujmú a že postupne sa rozšíri okruh čitateľov a aj prispievateľov.

**doc. PhDr. Natália Kováčová, PhD.**  
šéfredaktorka časopisu

## Editorial

Dear readers,

after eight years of existence of the Foreign Language Forum scientific journal, which was created in 2009, it is time for change. We opened the volume 2017 not only by changing the title of the magazine, but also by adding a new section.

Let me introduce the new title of the journal **Forum of Foreign Languages, Politology and International Relations**. The journal publishes research, scholarly articles, discussions and reviews. The platform is based on peer to peer reviews.

The first section - **linguistics** - will continue to publish the research in the fields of linguistics, world, literature and language education. It aims to be both research platform and offer the support for those who are active in language education.

The second section - **politology and international relations** - will focus on research, discussions, reviews, and information in the field of politology. It aims to publish the papers on political philosophy and theory, comparative politology, political sociology, policy analysis, European studies, international relations, and security studies.

I believe the new focus of the journal will be interesting to the scholarly public and we can together improve the knowledge on the mentioned topics.

**Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Natália Kováčová, PhD.**  
Editor in chief

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# POLITICIANS AND THE MORAL ASPECT OF POLITICS IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL ETHICS

Simona KOVÁČOVÁ

## ***Abstract***

*The article examines the ethical aspects of political engagement and its impact on the character of politicians, drawing on the concept of Max Weber. Weber views politics as an autonomous sphere focused on power and resource distribution, distinguishing between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. The ethics of conviction is based on personal moral principles without regard to consequences, whereas the ethics of responsibility emphasizes anticipating and accepting the consequences of decisions, particularly in relation to future generations. Furthermore, Weber defines that a true politician should possess passion, responsibility, and judgment. Political wisdom, as an ethical tool, is rooted in historical memory, adaptability, and foresight. Political courage is another essential aspect, requiring the ability to defend public interests despite personal losses. The main challenge is to establish an ethical framework that fosters responsible decision-making by politicians and enhances public trust in political processes.*

**Key words:** *politician, Weber, political wisdom, political courage*

## **The Politician in M. Weber's Concept**

The ethical problem related to the effect of politics on the character of a politically active person is answered by the German sociologist **M. Weber**, who understands politics as a certain type of action that seeks to participate in power and influence the distribution of power. *"Politics and power thus appear as autonomous phenomena that are not 'derived' from other social phenomena"* (Weber, 1990, p. 6). In the context of considerations about ethics in politics, he was based on two opposing ethical maxims - the ethics of thinking and the ethics of responsibility. The ethics of thinking does not follow any higher principles or standards in decision-making, and therefore the individual is guided by his moral convictions, without considering the effects and consequences of his actions. But this does not apply to the ethics of responsibility, which is based on the necessity of realizing the consequences of an individual's decision for which he is ready to bear responsibility. *"Through the ethics of responsibility, the actor of the action is in some way forced to take a stand and then be responsible for the consequences of his actions. It follows that these are the opinions of people who take into*

*account the consequences of their actions, which can be expected"* (Machalová, 2008, p. 682). Simply put, while the ethics of thinking emphasizes the strict respect of ethical norms, without taking into account the consequences, the ethics of responsibility is oriented towards the foreseeable consequences of one's actions.

**Weber** clearly includes the relationship between means and ends in the series of ethical problems of politics. According to **Weber**, it is impossible to ignore the fact that achieving some "good" goals does not exclude morally dubious or dangerous means, or means with undesirable effects and side effects. Ethics is not capable of guaranteeing when and to what extent an ethically good goal "sanctifies" such action (Weber, 1990, pp. 67-68).

In connection with the search for an answer to the question of what is the mission of politics in a moral way of life, how does politics work from a moral point of view and where does ethics even begin, it comes across the problem of the past and the future. The focus of ethics on the past is based on the argumentation about the fateful role of ethics, in the sense of justifying an individual's actions in the past, with purposefully created ethical argumentation. On the other hand, from a political aspect, ethics should focus on the future and on responsibility towards the future, which means that it should not be marked by a past orientation, since past guilt is almost intractable. When solving the conflict of taking power and the moral character of politicians, he defines 3 necessary integral features, or the qualities of a true politician: passion in the sense of devotion, responsibility for those he governs and estimation, which can be defined as the ability to accept the outside world with calmness, i.e. the ability to maintain distance (Weber, 1990).

**Weber** approaches power, which is one of the central categories of political science, as a natural aspect in the sphere of politics, clearly alienating its abuse for personal gain. The exercise of power that exceeds moral boundaries is reprehensible. *"There is no more hideous distortion of political power than the haughty boasting of power and vain self-admiration in the feeling of power, or any idolization of power as such"* (Weber, 1990, p. 61). The rejection of the connection of the exercise of political power with the aspiration for individual interest can also be demonstrated through his classic categorization of politicians, because in addition to politicians "from politics" he also recognizes politicians "for politics," for whom politics is a life mission to act for the common good. The primary disparity between the mentioned categories of politicians lies in the economic aspect of their activity, because while the main motive of interest in politics for "politicians from politics" is securing income, in the case of "politicians for politics" it is an inner feeling of self-satisfaction, caused by the possibility of contributing to the general welfare. At the same time, the status of "politicians for politics" is

conditioned by the status of financial security, which means that a real politician for politics can only be someone who is financially independent from politics, because he has another sufficient source of income, but this does not negate the fact that financial means from the performance of the function of a politician does not accept. In all political communities with regular elections, political activity is the business of the persons involved. In the process of the genesis of politics into an "enterprise" with a complex structure and hierarchy of functions, professional and political officials are gradually profiled as categories of public officials. While the position of professional officials is more stable from a long-term perspective, political officials can be removed from office at any time. The aspect of freedom from politics should be a common feature for both types of officials, as **Weber** emphasizes that the goal of a real official is to manage public affairs within the limits of the specified competence framework, without being tied to the political sphere. Objectivity, political disinterestedness and impartiality are the most important advantages of a true official who stands in opposition to a politician with his own responsibility. So who is a politician, or what should a politician be in accordance with **Weber's** conception of ethics of responsibility?

- 1) A person whose activity is the intersection of the moral and legal dimensions, through the ability to combine the ethics of thinking and the ethics of responsibility.
- 2) A politician must be aware of the values, norms, principles and principles in relation to the power aspect (legal dimension) and must anticipate what may happen, calculate with it in his actions and thus not forget the consequences of his behavior and actions, especially in the relationship to the next generations (moral dimension).
- 3) A politician professing the ethics of responsibility claims to be the cause of the consequences and calls for their imputation to his actions.
- 4) In the decision-making process, priority should be given to the principle of justice, compliance with valid moral standards of society and think about the future.
- 5) A politician should be committed to some ideal.
- 6) Passion, sense of responsibility and judgment should be the key qualities of a politician.
- 7) A prerequisite for his correct actions and decision-making is the interest in acquiring the ethics of virtues.
- 8) A politician should approach power responsibly and exercise it within moral boundaries.

### **Interpretative definition of politicians from the perspective of political ethics**

From the 20th century comes to the fore the term "professional politicians," which was first used by **E. Millen**, a member of the Australian legislature, in 1907. The establishment of

professional politicians was from the very beginning accompanied by distrust of society in relation to the real intention and mission of the said category of politicians, because their orientation towards parliamentary profits as the main source of income. In the professional literature, they are characterized differently, but most often they are politicians who carry out their activities with an emphasis on developing and supporting their careers for their own financial security, regardless of the collective interest. They are often referred to as obscure subjects of the political scene, distancing themselves from those they should be closest to and whose interests they should represent. **A. King** also contributed to the terminological plurality of types of politicians in the study "The Rise of the Career Politician in Britain - and its Consequences, in which, among other things, he analyzes the members of the House of Commons of the British Parliament, with the adjective "career politicians." This is a category of "*people, whose lives would be meaningless without politics*" (King, 1981, p. 262).

**S. Cohen** approaches politicians as subjects of moral panic, the intensity of which increases under the influence of the media sphere. Simply put, moral panic is initiated by the media, which, in response to a certain moral cause, serve as an information source clarifying the conditions for the emergence of this cause with an emphasis on the person concerned, or groups of persons directly affected by the case (Cohen, 1972).

Quite controversial thoughts about politics without politicians are presented by **M. Canovan**, whose argumentation is based on professional politicians deprived of moral status, who have always been and will be an ordinary element of politics, desiring only power, profit, influence and prestige. But this has nothing to do with the assumption of the implementation of the function in such a way that the power decisions incorporate the needs and interests of the citizens. Therefore, it is sharply defined against professional politicians, for whom politics as an effort for the common good is distant. At the same time, he notes that the best politician seems to be an amateur politician. Political parties, structures and politicians are only residues, ambivalent in relation to people's interests and thus represent a threat to social values and interests (Canovan, 1981). The reality of the growth of politicians with the absence of any commitment to the holders of power, i.e. of political agents in accordance with the characteristics of professional politicians (individual actors with a distance from people whose interests are foreign to them, because they are oriented towards their own career and profiting from it) is reflected in the growing tendency of populist moral panic. The term professional politician is thus accompanied by negative connotations, due to an egoistic orientation to personal gain as well as a deficit of ideological union, in the sense of a lack of acceptance of the ideology, program or values of the political spectrum that it represents. The effects of public

and media concern about this category of politicians are manifested in the alienation of the electorate, which denigrates the essence of politics as such and reinforces populist moral panic.

### **Political wisdom**

In response to the above, political ethics emphasizes the need for political wisdom as a situational conscience, the mission of which is the rational solution of practical problems in politics. Wise is the one:

- *"who is oriented towards unquestionable principles and good goals, but does not cling to them,*
- *who tries to understand and influence complex situations, but does not put things above people,*
- *who can understand and assess complex situations and manage them, but will not become an opportunist"* (Sutor, 1996, p. 81).

Political wisdom is manifested in the context of means, mechanisms, methods, strategies or in general, ways to achieve the set goals. Competing clashes of opinion and conflicts between the wise are not shaped by disagreement about general goals (freedom, peace, justice), but rather the tools to achieve them. Wisdom as a political virtue is the most fundamental rejection of politicization based on ethical thinking. While the ethical dimension of politics is expressed by success achieved in accordance with the values of the common good, the determinant of wisdom is the degree of rationality in political decision-making.

In wisdom, knowledge and action are reciprocally connected through three primary steps, which can be expressed at the political level in terms of execution:

1) situation analysis, which is desirable, despite the fact that it does not bring any conclusion, due to the impossibility of capturing all aspects, factors of the given constellation or clarifying all reactions on the part of other actors, or the consequences of their actions. *"The judgment of true wisdom cannot be concluded either theoretically or scientifically, it is rather a judgment of practical reason, in which experience and assumptions participate"* (Sutor, 1996, p. 82).

2) Assessment, consideration of possibilities: if we start from the perception of politics as the art of the possible, then it is important to think about a more precise formulation, since the desire to enforce what, depending on specific conditions, is not likely or possible is politically incorrect and doomed to failure. At the same time, however, it is not correct to accept and accept the existing conditions, which could realistically be modified or completely changed, just because of indecision. In the sense of political wisdom, politics is the art of making possible

what can be realistically desired from the point of view of certain goals, while the individual ways of realizing the goals must be sought with a certain amount of perseverance.

3) Decision-making and decision-making: decision-making is "*a choice among alternatives...it is a structured, complex and complicated process associated with the activities of individual subjects in a specific situation*" (Prorok, 2012, p. 9-10). Its output is the implementation of decisions into practice, without which it is impossible to implement and fulfill the essence of the policy. It is necessary to avoid constant hesitation, indecisiveness, egoistic or intuitive decision-making without rationality and, on the contrary, implement decisions as the results of a rational decision-making process preceded by public discussion. It is essential to present justifiable decisions based on relevant argumentation, for which individual entities are qualified to bear responsibility.

Wisdom includes 3 basic aspects relating to the past (memory), the present (dexterity) and the future (foresight).

1) Memory is a prerequisite for the perception and acceptance of the past in the form of historical experience, which cannot be abstracted from in politics, as it is still applied in it. Therefore, political wisdom emphasizes the protection of history from falsification, with the aspiration of preventing the emergence of self-deception of the nation and historical lies that can have fatal political consequences.

2) Dexterity is another aspect by which political wisdom approaches certain tactics to achieve goals depending on changing conditions. The aforementioned aspect includes the politician's ability to be objective, to rationally evaluate situations, to keep a "cool head" and to be flexible in the sense of adapting to new situations. A wise politician should have the ability to put up with circumstances that do not suit the fulfillment of his intention, wait for a more suitable moment, make concessions and not be strictly defined towards the opposition just because it is expected of him.

3) The ability to anticipate future developments: foresight should be subsumed as a necessary attribute in every decision-making process, the outputs of which should be oriented towards improving the current state with a future perspective. Thus, a politician cannot act without abstracting from the genesis of the future state, he must be able to predict and consider the consequences of his actions, which is emphasized by the ethics of responsibility.

### **Political courage**

In addition to political wisdom, political courage should also be a part of political activity, which requires sobriety, rational judgment, objectivity and the ability to accept and

reconcile with personal harm at the expense of higher values. When applying the negative definition, we must emphasize that bravery certainly does not mean risking one's life at any cost, deliberately seeking danger, deliberate heroism, but on the contrary, it is about doing good at the cost of personal profit. The activity of every politician who, in addition to particular interests, focuses on the public interest of society should therefore show signs of political bravery. It proves itself in 2 basic forms, namely in the passive form, which, by manifesting itself as tenacity, endurance, patience or resistance, creates the basis for the formation of the active form. Within the active form of political bravery, the following manifestations can be identified:

1. Civic courage: i.e. the courage to freely present one's opinion, to criticize, the right to have a different position, to insist on one's argumentative opinion, the ability to resist the pressure of the opinions of others, which, however, can lead to conflict situations.
2. Entering into conflict: in the given sense of the word, it is not about the necessary search for and provoking conflicts, but about the wrongness of retreating from a conflict, as a politician must be capable of handling conflict resolution. **A. F. Bentley** and **D. Truman** emphasized that conflict is not a cause or an expression of political system instability, it is a constructive element of the political process and a natural part of a healthy competitive system. (Müller et al., 2010).
3. Assertiveness: is an expression of the courage to undertake something, the ability to prove something, or to handle. A politician must know how to mobilize people, unite them and lead them in order to move towards the common good. Weighing the arguments for and against must not take on the character of anxious hesitation, but must lead to a decision that requires consistent argumentative skill so as not to succumb to harsh criticism. The state of the common good, or moving towards it is a demanding process that cannot abstract from the adoption of unpopular measures. In this case, the politician cannot lack the courage to resort to the implementation of measures of the given type. If a politician associates his activity with managing or directing relations between individual social entities, instead of defining the direction himself, or if he relies on public opinion polls, instead of forming the majority himself with his active approach, then these are political actors who misunderstand either the essence of the political process, the political struggle or democratic institutions. Political ethics draws attention to the negative consequences for the entire society that occur if politicians strictly oriented only to political power assert themselves in the political sphere. Such a politician does not feel the need for bravery, or personal sacrifice of certain values for higher values. If the aforementioned situation is to be prevented, it is necessary to emphasize the need for higher

citizen participation, because citizens must also show a certain degree of political bravery in the form of courage, the ability to enter into conflicts and participate in public life.

## Conclusion

The current trends in social and political life are significantly marked by the decline of moral values, particularly in the political sphere, which reflects a broader value crisis not only in politics but also throughout society. In the public's perception, politics is increasingly associated with the pursuit of power, viewed as a means to satisfy personal needs and interests. This perception distances politics from the holders of power, ultimately reinforcing citizens' apathy and their passive stance toward public participation.

In this context, **H. Hrehová** asserts that "*politically involved individuals hold power delegated to them by citizens, yet they seem to bear no responsibility for the state's prosperity and the common good. They show no concern for reasonable or moral order. They focus primarily on securing as much for themselves as possible during their term in office*" (Hrehová, 2011, p. 32). This represents a serious and persistent problem rooted in the absence or neglect of morality and ethics in politics.

Emphasizing the importance of ethics in politics and restoring the relevance of morality to the political sphere is no simple task. Modern practical politics, evaluated through behavioral categories, indicates that political actions, decision-making by political actors, and overall political culture are engulfed in a breakdown of moral values. Expecting absolute ethical behavior from politically active individuals that invariably adheres to moral norms under all circumstances is unrealistic and overly utopian. The core issue is not so much the rejection of the need for moral politics but rather its actual implementation in practice.

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