

INTRODUCTION

Modern trends in public administration development are characterized by diversification, an increase in the number and variety of country governance practices, and attempts to identify new public administration theories that better fit these practices. This applies in particular to developing countries which join or about to join such associations that are most conducive to the protection of their distinctive national interests. The attractiveness of the BRICS is both a consequence and a reason for the diversification of governance practices: a consequence because in the BRICS some countries do not impose their vision of governance on others, cherish their national management traditions and strive to work together despite their differences; a reason because it is easier for BRICS members and aspiring BRICS members to diversify their governance practices, focus on their own interests, and feel supported by other BRICS countries. This is a radical difference between the BRICS and such interstate associations, which subordinate the governance practices of their member countries and adjust their practices to uniform standards.

This issue of the Journal attempts to analyze what governance practices exist in the BRICS countries, how they differ from each other, what are the origins and current trends in governance practices, and what theoretical concepts these practices adhere to. The collection of articles in the Journal is based on the presentations at the plenary session of the BRICS Symposium on contemporary Administrative Reforms in the BRICS countries, held in October 2022 and dedicated to modern administrative reform trends in the BRICS countries. The articles are arranged in the order of the countries in the BRICS acronym, followed by an article on contemporary administrative reforms in Central and Eastern Europe as part of the EU, then on administrative reforms in countries interested in cooperating with BRICS up to the point of wanting to join BRICS, and finally, the issue concludes with an article on possible changes in the standard paradigms of public administration caused by the governance practices of developing countries. Thus, in this issue of the Journal, the sequence of articles is opposite to the usual order: the issue starts with a review and ends with a theory, rather than vice versa, when general theoretical articles are presented at the beginning and reviews follow at the end and are as if “subordinated” to the unified theories of public administration. With this reverse order of articles, we want to draw readers' attention to the phenomenon of diversity of new practices of country-level public administration in the BRICS and other countries, which requires understanding that goes beyond the common classical governance approaches, models, and paradigms.

The main trends in the BRICS countries' governance practices described in the publications of this issue of the Journal are the following:

- For each of the areas of governance reform in the BRICS countries and in other developing countries, there are significantly varied, up to oppositely directed, vectors of governance practices;
- The BRICS countries and other developing countries do not try to announce their governance practices as the best, do not insist that other countries copy these practices, and do not try to establish the hegemony of their practices. Note that the uneven perception of the EU governance standards by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe indirectly indicates that in this case, the country governance practices strive for self-preservation and national improvement. It seems that the BRICS countries and other developing countries potentially close to BRICS are looking at each other, learning from each other's diversity of practices, and believe that the strength of public administration lies in its diversity and friendly attitude to other practices;
- The BRICS and other developing countries do not strive to bring their governance practices into the "theoretic line", to subordinate these practices to standard models and paradigms of public administration. Rather, the models and paradigms are beginning to blur, to "adjust" to the BRICS countries' governance practices. Instead of a concentration of ideas inside the spectrum from Weber to Neo-Weberian, from NPM to NPG, and "vacuum" outside, one can observe clusters of promising ideas outside this spectrum, so to speak "nebulae", from which in the future "stars" of new theories and approaches will most likely be formed.

Issue Guest Editor
Alexey G. Barabashev