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A Word from the Editor-in-Chief: The Anticipation of the Formation of a Scientific BRICS

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From conversations with scientists from BRICS countries, as well as with those who support them, I have learned of great dissatisfaction within their ranks. They believe that the West-based centers responsible for evaluating the quality of scientific journals show a dismissive attitude toward colleagues outside North America, the European Union, Japan, and Oceania. When we recall that all these regions together make up only about 16 to 17 percent of the world's population, the importance of this concern becomes clear.

According to relevant estimates, at least 84 percent of the world's scientists believe they are victims of scientific discrimination. Even more troubling is that some colleagues from Indonesia, Nigeria, China, and India point to the presence of lingering cultural imperialism and even racism inherited from the colonial era. Because of all this, there is growing discussion about creating a "scientific BRICS." It is especially significant that the scientific communities of the Global South, whose countries are not members of the economic BRICS, are very supportive of such an initiative. This gives us reasons to believe that, if realized, this idea could unite the entire scientific community of the Global South. The consequence of this would be a division of the global scientific community and the marginalization of Western academic journal lists.

As their main argument, scientists from the Global South point to this very journal. They note that artificial intelligence in its various forms, and which is almost entirely in Euro-American hands, shows that the Belgrade's *Politics and Religion Journal* is by far the most international scientific journal in the field of social sciences. In terms of the diversity of its authors (by geography, religion, and ethnicity), it surpasses any similar journal in the world. Moreover, given its very strict peer-review process, the journal provides the global community with exceptionally high-quality scientific information.

Its recognition and citation in the journals of the Global South are also significant, yet Western evaluation centers do not assess such journals in the same way as Western ones. For example, some Western journals that are much younger quickly reach

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the most prominent *Clarivate* indexes, while *Politics and Religion Journal* is still placed only in the *Emerging Sources Citation Index*. In other words, it is treated as less important than journals that are far less international in both reputation and influence on global scientific trends.

Let us take just one example. Who could say they are not interested in the roughly 500 million Buddhists in the world and their relationship to politics and other religions? Consider the case of the Rohingya in Burma: they are of interest to Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians alike, practically to the whole planet. Or take, for instance, the previous issue devoted to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the most important international representative of two billion Muslims. Who would not find that relevant? Can we imagine that the issue dedicated to the OIC was not consulted by every scientific institute in the Islamic world, or that it did not attract the attention of foreign ministries, especially in light of the ongoing crisis in Palestine where the OIC plays one of the key roles?

Evaluating scientists by the number of their citations is a decision made by the vast majority of researchers who are unable to achieve true recognition. But what does it really mean to have 10,000 citations if more than a thousand people have just as many? Who can remember the fifth person on that list, let alone the thousandth? Such scientists die unknown, leaving no trace behind. Their genuinely important contributions dissolve into the vast body of useful scientific knowledge. And what need would Benjamin Franklin have for citations? Thanks to the lightning rod and his other inventions, he is permanently present. His face is on the hundred-dollar bill, and millions of people constantly live with his memory. Therefore, when evaluating scientists, the highest recognition should go to those who have managed, through their work, to achieve true distinctiveness. Even the completely neutral, and previously mentioned, artificial intelligence agrees with this.

In conclusion, I appeal to our Western colleagues to take seriously the concerns of more than 80 percent of the world's scientists and to reconsider their approach to evaluating scientific journals. Ignoring these concerns could lead to the breakup of the global scientific community, which would ultimately harm Western scientists more than their colleagues from the Global South. As a journal committed to the brotherhood of all scientists around the world, we sincerely urge that such an outcome be avoided at all costs. We have had enough divisions; what we need now is genuine unity.