

POST-SOVIET TRANSIT BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND RESTORATION

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The recent history of post-Soviet societies is often described with the use of the transition metaphor. The image of movement, changing the place and situation, was foundational for the social imagination of new nations. This idea of looking for novelty and new beginnings legitimized the dissolution of the USSR and many state- and economy-related experiments. The period between 1990 and 1993 was indeed a revolution with strong citizen/bourgeois, neoliberal/capitalist, and nationalist/collectivist intentions.

However, the post-Soviet social imagination has had its own contradictions. The revolutionary quest for new forms of social, political and economic life paradoxically coincided with the collective will to 'return' to some 'normal history' and/or 'civilized world' (these expressions were the buzzwords in the late Soviet – early post-Soviet media). The idea of return also had a transitory intention: from the Soviet dead end, Russian, Ukrainian or Lithuanian societies had to go back to their natural, 'correct' past. Leaders of the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Russia were calling to republican experiments launched by the February revolution in 1917 as

their founding moments.¹ This way the revolutionary creativity of 1991 was limited by the strategy of restoration, intention to use forms and models of the first half of the twentieth century for post-Soviet societies entering the twenty-first century.

Another limitation for our societies' imagination was posed by the idea of copying. The revolutionary possibilities of 1991 were also seen as a time when transfer of Western experience can guarantee democratic and economic success for the new Eastern Europe and Western Eurasia (see: Stefes, 2006: 10-11; Gaidar, 2010: 17ff; Kordonsky, 2010: 10).

Neither transition through transfer, nor transit via return were the strategies that delivered the promised success and normality. New forms of collective life took over the post-Soviet societies where neopatrimonialism, patronal networks, mafia-state, neo-imperialist politics, neo-sovietism, neo-nazism, and demodernization became as strong as the democratic tendency. The Baltic countries, in spite of strong EU impact, still have considerable obstacles to functioning democracy (Maciukaite-Zviniene, 2009: 29-30). The other twelve post-Soviet republics were slowly losing Perestroika's emancipatory impulse (Hale, 2016). Even the most 'democratic' countries out of these twelve remain in the state of semi-freedom and weak association with the EU (Nodia, Cenusa & Minakov, 2017). The situation with democracy and the rule of law in the six de facto post-Soviet states is even worse (Fischer, 2016: 5-7). This unexpected current post-Soviet social reality was created by an interplay of revolutionary and restorationist strategies.

¹ For details of the February revolutionary legacy in the twentieth century see: Minakov, 2017.

In this volume of the Ideology and Politics Journal we present a collection of research papers demonstrating the results of the post-Soviet transit.

In the first article, Pavel Skigin joins the debate about the nature of Putin's regime in Russia. He supports those scholars who use the Weberian concept of neopatrimonialism for the description of Russia's political system. Due to this, Skigin manifests how the system functions through the establishment and evolution of the patron-client hierarchy, different forms of rent extraction and conditional property. He also adds to the study of the post-Soviet "power vertical" using a wide range of examples in Russia.

Andreas Umland's article focuses on ideologies that cooperate and compete in today's Russia. Umland claims that the radicalization of Putin's regime in 2013-15 can be explained not only through economic interests of the ruling elites, but also by the dominant anti-western and neo-imperialist beliefs of influential political players. The author shows that Putin's regime combines reactionary politics with the elements of Zhyrinovsky's and Dugin's 'revolutionary imperialism.' This ideological cocktail is spread among the elites and society, and thus it defines Russian public discourse and foreign policy.

Jennifer Carroll's study shows how propaganda returned into post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine. The author studies how Russian propaganda launched 'the counter-narratives' against Ukrainian popular and nationalist causes in 2013-2014. Carroll shows how these counter-narratives accomplished their goals by generating faith in false objectivity of the images that negatively brand Euromaidan events and participants. This

article provides an analysis of the post-Soviet social imagination and the practices of its manipulation.

Yuriy Matsiyevsky and Oleksandr Kashynsky offer a study of populism in Poland, Romania and Ukraine. They tested a theory that populism becomes influential in a society with weak democratic institutions. In the case of Poland and Romania, the authors prove, rapid economic liberalization provoked lasting social discontent in significant part of population that, in turn, invested into paternalistic and nationalistic right-wing populist movements. In Ukrainian case, social populism was provoked by the lack of reforms; in that case populism was growing into both right and left political movements. In all three cases, as the authors conclude, strong populist movements increase the democratic deficit and add to the growth of populist sympathies.

Giuseppe Iurato offered a social psychological method for the analysis of modernizing and demodernizing societies. In his article, Iurato applied Mead's symbolic interactionism to manifest how the dominance of the Generalized Other in modern institutions functions in the forms of automatisms and 'recursions in the past.' His model seems to be applicable to the further analysis of postcolonial societies, including the post-Soviet ones, that live on the margins of modernity.

This volume concludes with the sociological study of Ukraine's democratic transit in the conditions of geopolitically fragmented society. Oleksandr and Volodymyr Reznik demonstrate that mutually exclusive geopolitical orientations of Ukrainian population are connected to the contradictions between the two big collectives oriented at national identity

the Ukrainian language as a single state language, democratic and market values, on one side, and those opting for rapprochement with Russia, Russian identity, support for bilingualism, negative attitudes toward a multiparty system, and support for planned economy. So far, these contradictions are not properly addressed by Kyiv, which provides grounds for a permanent radical shift between different administrations.

Post-Soviet transit is not finished. Revolutionary and restorationist processes remain strong in all societies of the region. Our journal will continue publishing research analyzing these ongoing developments.

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