

## POST-SOVIET TRANSIT AND DEMODERNIZATION

Alexander Etkind

European Institute University

Mikhail Minakov

Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars

ORCID: 0000-0002-0619-7321

Development of post-Soviet societies was long seen—equally by scholars and political and economic actors—in terms of transit. It was a shared view that this transit meant a collective move from the totalitarian past to democratic society and market economy (Gel'man, 2003: 89ff; Pickles & Smith, 2005: 2ff) New post-Soviet and Western modernities would be established and stabilized, creating One Big Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

However, this optimistic assessment was soon blurred by unexpected deviations from the “transit” in many parts of Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia. We use the concept of demodernization to describe the new and under-theorized realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this issue, we test this concept in the post-Soviet context. For our purposes, we define demodernization as a reverse development in a modern society, which borrows from the previous stages of modernization and creates a new, mixed and improvised order.

In his recent “Development and Dystopia”, Mikhail Minakov explores the history of the concept (Minakov, 2018a: 117ff). Western sociology first used the concept of demodernization to describe a response to modernization by particular communities such as new religious movements or the countercultural youth (Hunter, 1981; Berger, 1973). Alain Touraine and Shmuel Eisenstadt attempted at moving this concept to the center of social theory, but they had a modest success (Touraine, 1992; Robertson, 2011). John David Bone and David Fasenfest tested the concept of demodernization in the economic analysis of late capitalism (Bone, 2010; Fasenfest, 2011).

In Eastern Europe, scholars employed this concept more eagerly, especially when post-Soviet demodernization became transparent with the return of Vladimir Putin as Russia’s president, victory of authoritarian tendencies during Viktor Yanukovich rule in Ukraine, and strengthening of the authoritarian-conservative belt stretching from Astana to Minsk, Ankara and Moscow. First, Russian ethnographer Valery Tishkov used the term to describe the cultural and socio-psychological consequences of Chechen wars for the population of Chechnya (Tishkov, 2001). Russian politician Grigorii Iavlinskii used the same term to describe a tendency in the socio-economic development of Russia in the early 21st century (Iavlinskii, 2003). Somewhat later, Ukrainian historian Andriy Portnov wrote about demodernization in the context of Ukrainian education (Portnov, 2015). Russian cultural scholar Ilya Kalinin wrote about similar processes in Russian memory politics and in the official discourse of modernization (Kalinin, 2011). Alberto Rabilotta, Yakov Rabkin and Samir Saul offered a theory of demodernization, defining it as a reverse development of a modern society (Rabilotta et al., 2013).

Alexander Etkind explained the Russian demodernization by resource dependence of Putin's state, which quasi-monopolized the lucrative trade in oil and gas, separated the revenue of the state from the income of the population, and led to the "mass distortion of value judgments and destroyed the very capacity to produce such judgments" (Etkind, 2013: 165). Reliance on oil and gas empowers "petromacho"—the oil-and-security personnel that has populated the higher echelons of the Russian state. When the population becomes an object of the care-taking on the part of such an "elite", it loses competitiveness, social capital, and even survival skills. Basic features of modernity such as education, health-care, and trust all become irrelevant for the purposes of the state and its stake-holders. That is why modernization in Russia must start again with "educated, industrious, creative women and men sending the ridiculous, puffy petromacho to the ash heap of history" (ibid., 166).

In recent *Demodernization. A Future in the Past* (Rabkin & Minakov, 2018), eighteen authors—philosophers, historians and sociologists—describe fourteen cases from the past and present that explore demodernization in various societies. Two core debates in this book unfold between those who see demodernization as a linear process or a cyclic and repetitive one, and between those who emphasize internal or external causes of the reverse development. Yakov Rabkin defines demodernization as a linear process:

"Demodernization means regression on the scale of modernity... It implies lasting degradation of material, health, and cultural conditions

in a formerly modernized society, a return to “premodern” forms of life and collective identities” (Rabkin, 2018: 17, 23).

On the contrary, Jean-Luc Guatero and Mikhail Minakov are skeptical about this linearity (Guatero, 2018: 376ff; Minakov, 2018b: 250ff). Guatero demonstrates that modernization and demodernization are relative terms that denote events in which elements of the both are inseparable (Guatero, 2018: 380). On the other hand, Minakov sees demodernization as a moment of developmental cycle, when a radical modernization provokes reaction and reverse development (Minakov, 2018b: 250ff). Also, Yakov Rabkin, Francisco Rivera, Mikhail Minakov and Guy Lanoue focus on cases in which demodernization grows out of the internal causes, though they also recognize the relevance of external factors (Rabkin, 2018; Rivera, 2018; Minakov, 2018b; Lanoue, 2018). However, Orit Bashkin, Detlev Quintern, Hitoshi Suzuki and Ilan Pappé demonstrate that Iraqi and Palestinian demodernizations have been led by external causes and supported by internal forces (Bashkin, 2018; Quintern, 2018; Suzuki, 2018; Pappé, 2018).

Our Journal continues the discussion on the concept of demodernization. In the first article of this issue, Yuriy Savelyev argues that modernization and demodernization processes are inseparable. He uses statistical analysis of European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS) to demonstrate the complexity of demodernization in both “successful” Western countries and controversial Eastern European societies.

Svetlana Shcherbak aims at deconstructing the very concept of demodernization. The concept of demodernization concept relies on constructing an “ideal modernity” as something coherent and consistent, and

Shcherbak disagrees with this vision. She argues that the normative core of modernity evolves because its components do not comprise an internally consistent system but are interconnected freely and flexibly. Modernity consists of “light” and “dark” sides including universal education and the Holocaust, rational science and ethnic cleansing. Shcherbak concludes that some modern phenomena, which we construe as demodernization, are in fact the consequences of contradiction within the neoliberal idea of freedom.

Leonid Luks elaborates on the cases of ideological reaction to political emancipation in Europe after WWI in the forms of the German “conservative revolution” and “Eurasianism” of the Russian émigrés in Europe. Using rich historical evidence, Luks shows how political imagination used irrational arguments to counter political modernization in Central and Eastern Europe. He has also showed that intellectual discourses that promote anti-Westernism also led to the demodernizing effect.

Viktor Koziuk and Oleksandr Dluhopolskyi study the “resource curse”, a demodernizing effect in the resource-dependent societies. Authors show that the over-reliance on natural resources leads to institutional deficit, domination of informal rules and procedures in making managerial decisions, and usurpation of power by the ruling groups. Based on solid analysis of data on the economic and managerial practices in the contemporary societies, the authors prove statistical dependency between the mineral export and development of crony sectors of the economy, as well as the inverse correlation between mineral exports and political stability.

Chris Monday studies a number of post-Soviet and post-communist societies where the legacy of one-party rule led to the increase of the role

of family as cultural institution. Author argues that societies of Russia, Belarus, North Korea, China, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, or Azerbaijan follow a similar institutional path: they have developed a unique situation in which one-family rule has replaced the communist party as the governing mechanism. Even more, the author argues that the one-family rule gives a measure of political stability to these nations.

In a connected argument, Anton Avksentiev and Valentyna Kyselova demonstrate how neopatrimonialism impacts the processes of political coalition-building at the national and regional levels in Ukraine. The authors study the logic of power groups that act in parliament and regional councils. Based on vast collections of data, authors prove that at the national level these coalitions are typically formed based on "minimal winning", whereas the regional councils are prone to form broader models of coalition. Role of ideologies is weaker in these coalitions, while patronal ties are more important. Also, the scholars show how the so-called "party of power"—one of the most visible examples of post-Soviet political demodernization—involves into its pyramid parochial power groups, national and local.

Oleksandr Zbirko analyses political imagination of the post-Soviet Russophone sci-fi writers and its audiences. The author argues that the most popular genres of speculative fiction promote aesthetic—and ideological—"re-enchantment" of the post-Soviet cultural world. In this process, many conservatively oriented authors exploit the generic conventions of fantasy or science fiction in order to suggest a continuity between fiction and reality. Focusing on geopolitical and social models that

construe the negative Other, these authors legitimize archaic communal structures and disseminate aesthetics of resentment. Zabirko also demonstrates how mass literature shapes the ideological and aesthetic views that later realize in political or military actions in the post-Soviet region.

Maria Engström offers the analysis of Russian neomodernist utopia in visual arts. She focuses on the work of Anton Chumak, a Russian contemporary artist. Engström discerns in Chumak's images of the Donbass a vision of imperial modernism, which presents an alternative to the postindustrial era. This aesthetics reflect the new role of the Orthodox Church in contemporary Russia. Author elaborates on this similarity and shows how the aesthetic utopia of "new antiquity" and "new order" visualizes the "conservative turn" in Russian politics and culture, seeking for an alternative to neoliberal postindustrialism.

We hope that the new issue of the Ideology and Politics Journal will provoke interest of scholars and wider audiences interested in the political and cultural processes in post-Soviet societies.

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