



BOOK REVIEW

Rossiia v poiskakh ideologii. Transformatsiia tsennostnykh regulatorov sovremennykh obshchestv [Russia in search of ideologies: the transformation of value-based regulators in modern societies] (2016). Viktor Martyanov, Leonid Fishman, eds. M.: ROSSPEN

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In recent years, the irrationality of political actors and their choices has become a central preoccupation of researchers who analyse political events. In Russia, these are increasingly at variance with the calculated scenarios and ideas concerning common values that have developed in the West. The “Brexit” vote for Britain’s withdrawal from the EU and the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election forced analysts and researchers to rethink the assumption that influences on people’s emotions are not a significant component of ideologies. In this connection, “Post-truth”, the latest buzzword in political rhetoric, refers not to facts and logic, but rather to personal emotions that ignore counterarguments; “post-truth” verities are instead constructed around the ritual repetition of certain phrases.

In this situation, all attempts to understand politics and ideology as rational phenomena are perceived sceptically, if not ironically. Despite this, the authors of this monograph rely on the notion that ideologies are aimed at *legitimising* permissible violence through appeals to *consciously* held common values and are backed up with actions *commensurate* with these values. In the case of the study of the ethics and politics of modern Russia, this methodological move unexpectedly turns out to be justified.

For the authors, Russia appears as one of several possible configurations of a contemporary society. However, when considering it in the context of global

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contemporaneity, it is not possible to lay bare ideologies and their corresponding institutions, but only to expose the fault lines in the value system and political framework. In the introduction to the monograph, it is suggested that the relevant common values for contemporary Russia consist in notions of a “desirable present and future [...] for humanity as such” (p. 14). In particular, these include concern for the future and the ethics of trust. But if Russia, according to the authors, is to take increasingly peripheral positions relative to global contemporaneity, are there any domestic ideologies with the capability of carrying the ethical ideals of a common future for humanity, or are we here purely dealing with speculation? To answer this question, it is necessary to turn immediately to the third part of the monograph, which studies the appropriation in Russia of ideologies that were formed as part of a widely understood European political process.

The first two parts of the monograph are devoted to the theory of ideologies, allowing the authors to place the ideological development of Russia in a global context. The history of the development of the ideologies of modernity is reprised. The securing of individual human freedoms is seen as a reference value around which the liberal consensus of modernity is constructed. Turning to the subjects of the history of the 20th century, the authors show how liberalism became a meta-ideology, which, by entering into alliances with conservatism or socialism, softened the forms of left and right radicalism. The various crises in the project of modernity are associated with the inability of this fluid consensus to recast political arguments in the face of social transformations. Investigating the features of neoliberalism that accompany late modernity, the authors consider first of all the institutional consequences of the introduction of the model of the “economic man” into the ideological value kernel. The substitution of the concept of the public good with its economic derivatives and the creation of an “ideology of the propertied” receives sharply critical treatment in the monograph.

The chapters of the first two parts partially overlap each other in terms of content. The line of argument concerning theses of rootedness of ideologies in morality, the inhumanity of neoliberalism and the inadequacy of the postmodern idea of the “end of ideologies”, is thoroughly discussed. However, the new formats of collectivity and their value bases are given little attention. The tendency to more distinctly designate the generality of the theoretical positions of the authors leads to key ideas being systematically repeated and the monograph becoming in places more like a textbook. Particularly suitable for educational purposes are chapters 2.2 “Ideologies of Modernity in the Structural and Functional Perspective” (a variety of ideologies is clearly presented in tables and diagrams) and 2.3. “The Concept of Ideology in the Second Half of the 20th to the Beginning of the 21st Century: from the End of Ideology to its Global Return” (the concept of ideology is presented as a necessary element of the modern era; the idea of the end of ideology is considered alongside the critique of this position in the work of F. Jameson).

Perhaps, of all the theoretical texts of the monograph, the one that is freest from repetitions and most frankly expresses the general values of the authors is chapter 2.4, in which the advantages of communitarianism as a contender for meta-ideology

are described. The hope is expressed that the communitarian turn will be adopted in Russia, since it “does not infringe upon the national sentiment”, allowing us to move from the logic of catch-up modernisation to an ideological common space in which a new world system can be created.

An investigation of the grounds for the communitarian turn in Russia is to be expected in the third part of the monograph, which deals with contemporary domestic ideologies. But the pathos of the movement towards communitarianism is stymied in its first appeal to Russian political discourse. V. Martyanov considers the rhetorical reinforcement of various anti-modern steps of the authorities in some detail. Promising stability for a share of rent, the anti-modern consensus consolidates Russia at the periphery of contemporaneity. Conversations about non-economic values turn out to be speculation to the extent that they are not supported by institutional changes. The author retains the hope of overcoming this peripherality through “political and ethical projects and approaches that claim to be more universal, appealing to the more egalitarian future of all mankind” (p. 186).

The second chapter elucidates the metaphor of “spiritual bonds”. L. Fishman points to the lacuna between the rhetorical figure that refers to a religious conception of spirituality and the hidden request for modernisation. The appearance of this metaphor is interpreted as an attempt by the authorities to create a value basis for capitalist development. Here the request for social capital, which is a necessary component of modernisation processes, comes into conflict with the logic of raw capitalism. It is suggested that the anti-capitalist premise of the “spiritual bonds” formula can be deciphered in terms of civic virtues. The author distinguishes the secular term “morality” and the religious term “spirituality”, showing how an attempt to conflate them into one metaphor leads to the emergence of an ideological tool for consolidating the existing political order. Consequently, the task of developing social capital remains unresolved. In the following chapter, Y. Startsev explores how the metaphor of neo-feudalism is used when describing Russian realities. It is hard to know whether it is simply intended to shock or rather as a means of expanding upon contemporary processes that cannot be described in other research languages. The author offers an open list of topics for which the optics of neo-feudalism may be productive. Recognising its high methodological potential, the author confines himself to examples of individual phenomena that acquire a new signification if thought of as neo-feudal.

Also functioning as a metaphor is the idea of the “Soviet past”. M. Ilchenko argues that this metaphor is not applicable as a methodological tool for humanitarian research since the concept of “Soviet” is significantly blurred and the “past” is often confused with the “present”. In contrast, when used as a rhetorical device by political authorities, it works productively since it allows significant political tasks to be solved through addressing collective emotions. Firstly, the legitimisation of power since the 1990s and up to the present day has been constructed by means of a transformation of emotional attitudes towards the “Soviet past”. Secondly, the metaphor becomes a source of different (often opposing) meanings for filling an empty axiological or ideological field. The study of statements made by presidents of the Russian Federation and symbolic organisation of contemporary state holidays allows us to make the move

from analysing political discourses to a consideration of the collective unconscious. However, the author dwells upon the statement that a thorough understanding of the Soviet past is yet to be achieved.

In the fifth chapter, I. Fan discusses the notion that a lack of reflection on its own past may be what is preventing Russian society from breaking out of the resource state trap. Developing the analysis of political culture within A. Etkind's conceptual framework of internal colonisation, the author focuses on the relations of the "colonialists" with the "natives" and on the forcible displacement of borders. The rhetoric of ideologists close to the top leadership is considered alongside some works of literature and cinema in terms of carrying nationalistic and militaristic ideas into the mass consciousness. The author does not provide any positive examples of new cultural forms by which society comprehends itself. At the same time, it is to precisely such cultural forms to which the texts of the researchers, whose rationalisations support the argumentation of the original author's thesis, relate. Thus, it becomes impossible to raise the question of how the anti-modern discourse can be transformed.

The shortcomings of the rhetoric of threats and violent changes are explored in the next chapter in terms of their conformity to the global context. V. Martyanov contrasts soft hegemony (means of creating attractiveness) with the politics of hard power (instrumentality of military-economic pressure). The author reprises the main positions of supporters of the theory of soft hegemony. It is argued that political elites of different countries need to cultivate openness and trust, since, in the post-industrial world, the attractiveness of a society is made up of the combined efforts of each participant. The readiness of the Russian elite to take a step towards openness and learn to use soft power to advance the interests of the state on the global agenda is viewed sceptically.

In the seventh chapter, K. Kiselev addresses a typically pessimistic contemporaneous agenda. According to the logic of modernism, all predictions of the end of history, economic collapse or environmental disasters are transformed into growth points. The author shows that, in the case of Russia, this mechanism does not work. The analysis of everyday ideas about the fundamental orientations of human existence, i.e. space and time, shows that pessimism is reinforced by daily practices, whereas modernistic optimism is emasculated to cheers and patriotic slogans. In a situation where all greatness is located in the past and the normal achievements of modernity (from civil rights to everyday comforts) are still a matter of the distant future, the present is eternally hopeless. The vast Russian expanse translates into everyday life as poverty; its state of disorder is justified by its scale and climate. This pessimism, which covers all of the conceivable space of Russia as well as its entire foreseeable future, serves to block possibilities for its modernisation.

The attempt to escape from pessimism is discussed in the subsequent chapter on the example of fantastical literature. L. Fishman sees political science fiction as mirroring the last three, post-Soviet decades. Three ways of responding to ideological constructs are coherently discussed: revanchism-revisionism (in texts that can be conditionally combined as utopias), humanism (in anti-utopias) and social constructivism (in the stories of contemporary people who have fallen into the past). The question of how

contemporary people will construct ideologies in reality, rather than in fictional worlds, is deferred to the following chapter.

Both mythological and reactionary ideas about the desired future are found not only in fantasy literature, but also in reality. The problematic of the third part of the monograph is again concentrated on details concerning the anti-modern consensus. It is shown that legitimisation of permissible violence is carried out by the authorities with the help of “protective logic”, which, in turn, requires the idea of nationalism. Post-Soviet variants of ethno-nationalistic ideologies are criticised by the author as neither being able to unite within a shared set of common values, nor to conclusively defeat other ethno-nationalisms, for example, Ukrainian. The paradoxical Soviet version of “nationalist internationalism” is seen as a possible source of a new ideology: in the Soviet era, there were enough achievements to be used as the basis for constructing a national myth. It remains an open question whether this strong – albeit compromised – source is likely to be used.

Summing up the research of ideological discourses in modern Russia, L. Fishman, the editor of the monograph, traces value transformations in Russian society achieved through changes in the symbolic messages of Victory Day. Victory as an archetype presupposes a confrontation in which the currently existing carrier of ideas has prevailed over other subjects and ideas. The fact that the victories of post-Soviet Russia are not connected with August 1991 (victory over the *putschists*), October 1993 (shelling of the parliament), June 12, 1990 (Independence Day) or December 12, 1993 (day of the Enactment of the Constitution), makes it possible to suspect political elites of impotence.

The ten studies of modern Russian ideologies presented in the third part of the monograph consist primarily of research simulations. Unlike the plastic liberal consensus, at the core of which it is possible to identify stable basic values, anti-modern discourses are fragmentary and negative. Of course, liberalism can consist of nothing more than moralising (which is also happening in Russia and is indicative of the attempt to treat civil virtues as “spiritual bonds”). Even if one accepts the theory of Russia’s special path, neither its nationalistic justification nor the idea of resurrecting Soviet-inspired premises correlates with real infrastructural changes, and, in this sense, cannot be considered in ideological terms.

In analytically following the political changes, the third part of the monograph is more focused on addressing what ideologies are not and why. The presented studies of the paradoxes of authoritarian rhetoric provide a contour outline of the discursive traps that can impede modernisation. In the longer term, the results of this complex collective work make it possible to take one more step – towards an effective study of the mechanisms that support a non-critical attitude to political decisions or create the (mere) appearance of a “community” in the understanding of values. In this sense, the third part of the monograph will be of interest to researchers attempting to understand irrational mechanisms of contemporary politics.

In general, the monograph is of a theoretical character. Chapters that manage to avoid a long digression into the history of concepts are few and far between. For those who only wish to get acquainted with the theory of ideologies and criticism of

neoliberalism, this is a source of concentrated information, referring to the landmark works of I. Wallerstein, F. Jameson, D. Harvey, L. Boltanski, E. Chiapello and others. Following the logic of critical theory, an analytical investigation of the established order will necessarily involve a call for the creation of a new order. The communitarian turn and consequent possibility of going beyond the neoliberal logic of the late contemporaneity is explored only at the theoretical level, as a possible but not obligatory response of the fragmented societies of the Russian Federation to the anti-modern consensus imposed by the authorities.