
From Modernization to Import Substitution: Perspectives on State Development ‘from Above’ and ‘from Below’

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This paper focuses on the policies of the embargo and import substitution in the context of previous state projects of socio-economic development in Russia. It explores how the country's development, its means and objectives, are envisaged by the state and members of the new middle classes. In particular, this study inquires into the meanings and interpretations of ‘modernization’ and puts this concept into the context of broader theoretical debates. The paper follows the discussion on the ‘modernization’ and ‘neo-modernization’ paradigms and demonstrates how the term has acquired a primarily instrumental meaning as part of an increasingly particularistic project of socio-political development embraced by the Russian state. The analysis traces how this state vision resonates with, and differs from, the perspectives of the new middle classes on state development, in particular, the wide-spread sympathies towards ‘technocratic’ governance. Finally, it discusses the political implications of these interpretations and the ways they shape the enactment of the new policies ‘on the ground’.

Key words: consumption, import substitution, middle class, modernization, state, policy

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a remarkable change in the consumption politics and policies of the Russian state. In August 2014, the government introduced an embargo on food imports from the countries of the EU, the US, Canada, Australia, and Norway, which was in retaliation for the sanctions imposed on Russia over the conflict in Ukraine.

In addition, the political leadership reaffirmed its commitment to import substitution with a specific focus on agri-food production, but this strategy was also extended to other spheres of the economy.

Initially, the emphasis on import substitution became part of the agricultural policies in the “Doctrine of food security” adopted in 2010¹; yet, the doctrine had more of a symbolic meaning [Barsukova 2018, p. 247] and its implementation remained vague, especially after Russia entered the WTO [Barsukova 2018; Wegren 2014]. Still, the doctrine had an important ramification: it endorsed and codified the state-centered approach to food security. The latter was defined not in terms of the availability and accessibility of food which meets the nutritional and safety requirements of the population, as the UN interpretation suggests, but in terms of the country’s self-sufficiency with regard to basic food products. Such self-sufficiency is supposed to ensure independence from imports rendering it as a question of ‘national security’ [Barsukova 2018; Shagaida, Uzun 2015; Wegren, Nikulin, Trotsuk 2016]. With the embargo, however, import substitution which promises a revival of domestic industry has become both a guiding strategy and a widely-discussed topic in the media² and popular discourse. Thus, these new policies should not be reduced to mere instruments of foreign politics.

While these measures have been introduced and implemented amid the general economic downturn, they seem to turn away from the previous principles of *laissez-faire* consumption and integration into international trade. By these means, the new policies have been redefining the strategy of the country’s socio-economic development, probably in the most significant way since the “modernization” announced by then-president Dmitry Medvedev in 2009. The state once-again has represented itself as the chief promoter of socio-economic development and the “only genuine modernizer” [Trenin 2010, p. 32]. Furthermore, as this paper demonstrates, despite significant changes, the current policies in many ways continue and draw on previous projects. Therefore, it seems important to understand the underpinnings and implications of these regulations; how they are related to the previous strategies of state development, and how these strategies are perceived ‘from below’ and are enacted by people ‘on the ground’. In this regard, this paper focuses on a section of Russian society – the ‘new middle classes’ – who due to their socio-economic status and lifestyles are particularly positioned in relation to these policies.

The ‘new middle classes’ in Russia appear to be ‘new’ in a double sense. First, they are part of the occupational shift of advanced capitalism which is associated with the growing share of qualified salaried positions (managers and professionals). The “new middle classes” or “salaried” were thus contrasted with the “old” middle classes” that were traditionally composed of small entrepreneurs and craftsmen [Ross 1978; Wacquant 1991; Wright 2015]. In the context of post-Soviet Russia, these individuals pursued their careers as specialists in the newly-establishing market economy, which offered dramatically different conditions and professional opportunities as compared to the state-run system. The difference between the ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ middle classes in Russia has a different character from societies without a socialist historical background: entrepreneurship emerged

¹ The text of the “The Doctrine of food security” is available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6752>, accessed 23.02.2019.

² The number of mentions in the federal press after 2014 increased roughly tenfold compared to the period 2010–2014. The assessment is based on the results of the search in the database *Integrum* for the word “importozameshhenie” (import substitution) from 01.01.2010 to 31.07.2014 and from 01.08.2014 to 01.01.2018.

in the wake of the dismantling of the command economy, thus, is also relatively 'new'. However, the Russian new middle classes still have as their main assets their professional credentials and competence, unlike entrepreneurs who rely on their property and available capital in their business. This defines the particular position of the new middle classes in Russia's political economy. Such communality of structural positions, however, should not be automatically converted into thinking about the new middle classes as a bounded homogeneous group in terms of lifestyles, perspectives, or strategies. Secondly, these are the people who 'newly' entered the ranks of the global 'new middle classes' both in terms of occupation and consumerist lifestyles [Heiman, Freeman, Liechty 2012].

In the scholarship on Russia, the concept of the new middle class is typically discussed as part of the debates on the structure and composition of the middle class in Russia [Belyaeva 2001; Gorshkov, Tikhonova 2016; Tikhonova, Mareeva 2009]. The available estimates suggest that the new middle classes have been the main constituent of the 'middle-class core' comprising more than 80% of this sub-group, while less than 25% of the total population work in positions which require a university education. [Anikin, Tikhonova 2016, pp. 63–64]. Along with occupational positions, other divisions within the middle class such as working in the state or non-state sector play important roles. This study focuses primarily on those professionals, specialists, and managers who are involved in the for-profit sector.

While the new middle classes clearly do not represent the majority of the population, they occupy a particular and relatively influential position. This is due to the significant material, social, and cultural resources that they possess. As part of the 'middle-class core' they have also acquired a special prominence in the scholarly and political discourses. In Russia, the middle class has been portrayed as the most active and forward-moving group, a social agent that ensures progressive development and the stabilization of society [Avraamova, Maleva 2014; Belyaeva 2001; Gorshkov, Tikhonova 2016; Tikhonova, Mareeva 2009].

The new middle classes were believed to be among the major beneficiaries of the economic growth of the 2000s and the country's openness to the global flows of goods: their standard of living has improved substantially, and they embraced globalized consumerist lifestyles. These factors were assumed to underpin their loyalties towards the increasingly authoritarian political regime, suggesting a tacit social contract of accepting restricted political freedoms in exchange for sustained economic growth. Yet, today's developments do not fit easily into this scheme.

Nevertheless, despite the potentially disadvantageous impact on people's lives associated with the shrinking supply of products and surging prices, there was no systematic resistance to these measures, though occasional criticism remains quite widespread. Furthermore, many representatives of the new middle classes support them or recognized their potential benefits and their certain rationality. Significant popular approval of the measures was also reported by large-scale surveys³, which also included those who used to consume the banned products before the embargo⁴.

³ VCIOM reported 84% acceptance (<http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=114946>, accessed 15.05.2015);

Fund of Public opinion reported 79% (<http://fom.ru/Ekonomika/11688>, accessed 15.05.2015);

Levada center reported 78% (<http://www.levada.ru/28-08-2014/sanktsii-otsenki-i-ozhidaniya>, accessed 15.05.2015).

⁴ The Centre of Political Analyses "People and Sanctions" (2014) (<http://centerforpoliticalanalysis.ru/report/read/id/11>, accessed 15.05.2019).

It is not simply the disappearance of certain imported goods – the scale of the embargo could be larger – but its negative effects were coupled with the general economic crisis. Moreover, with these new policies, the Russian state has broken an unspoken agreement by intervening in the sphere of individual consumption, which was previously recognized as the realm of private freedom. Therefore, it is important to understand how the new middle classes perceive and react to these measures. In particular, this paper explores their ideas about state development, including possible forms and limits of state intervention.

This article explores different visions of state development: those articulated in state programs and those expressed by representatives of the new middle classes. It looks at how these perspectives resonate with and differ from each other, and the ways they shape the new policies. First, this paper traces the underpinnings of the current project of development and the models of its implementation, especially, in terms of the role of popular participation. The analysis critically unpacks the concept of ‘modernization’ by contextualizing it in relation to the debates regarding ‘classical modernization’ and ‘neo-modernization’. It discusses the emergence of a specific understanding of ‘modernization’ which is particularistic and instrumental and argues that this understanding is indicative of the mode of government. This study also investigates how representatives of the new middle classes see their own role in the implementation of the policies and describes their views on state development and how these views coincide with and diverge from the state perspective. The paper concludes with a discussion of the political implications of the ways the state and the new middle classes envisage state development.

The analysis draws on data collected in the course of ethnographic fieldwork conducted intermittently from 2015 to 2018 in Moscow and Smolensk. It included a series of in-depth interviews⁵ with the members of the new middle classes and the representatives of industries, and participant observation at relevant events and shopping sites. These data are complemented with the analysis of state and public discourses and legislation.

The new policies and popular participation

From the very beginning, the embargo was framed by the Russian government not only as a restriction on the consumption of imported goods (supposedly, damaging to other economies). It was represented as part of an effort to revive the domestic agri-food industry, overcome import-dependence, and redress the reliance on natural resources, reiterating the goals previously declared by the political leadership⁶. However, the

⁵ This paper is based on the interviews with 33 representatives of the new middle classes (19 women and 14 men). More particularly, I focused on people who have professional or managerial positions (either as employees or self-employed individuals) mostly in profit-oriented organizations in diverse spheres. For all of them, their credentials, professional experiences, and competence served as a major asset in the labor market. The respondents were recruited through a snow-ball technique with a limitation of five people from one initial contact.

⁶ For example: the presidential address to the expanded meeting of the State Council in 2012, the text is available at <http://kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/45/events/15111/work>, accessed 15.05.2019; and the presidential address to the expanded meeting of the State Council “on Russia’s Development Strategy through to 2020” in 2008, accessed 15.05.2019. Based on interviews with volunteer

government had never before used the restrictions on consumption in a systematic way as an instrument to achieve its objectives.

In many ways, this move is anything but unprecedented for the policies of the state across the world and through time. Regulating and shaping individual consumption through formal and informal tools has always been an essential element in the broader strategies of managing national industries and economies [Cohen 2003; Daunton, Hilton 2001; Trentmann 2012; Trentmann 2016], especially during international confrontations. Historical examples of restricting consumption include the embargo of British goods during the American revolution [Frank 2000], the Chinese boycotts against the Japanese and American goods, which were “tacitly and openly encouraged” by the state [Gerth 2012, p. 421], and the Indian anti-imperialist movement. However, in all these cases, though supported by politicians, the rejection of imported products emerged and gained impact as mass movements involving citizens across class-lines.

In this respect, the strategy of the Russian government exhibits some distinctive features that are indicative of how the Russian state operates. The embargo is in a way unique with regard to both its scale and its form of an officially-imposed blanket ban. The state did not go for ‘softer’ options such as buycotts or boycotts that would require them to systematically persuade the population to prefer domestic goods and reject foreign ones. This could theoretically allow for enlarging the scope of the targeted goods without using legislation. Yet, such a campaign would have to rely on citizen’s willingness to differentiate and discriminate between domestic and imported products and mobilize them as active participants of the process.

In fact, there was no large-scale nationwide campaign motivating consumers to buy Russian products – as in the “Buy Russian” campaign launched in the 1990s [Caldwell 2002]. The latter called citizens to buy Russian products in order to support domestic producers, as the Russian industry was declining, as it faced an almost unrestricted and abrupt inflow of imported goods and the deep economic meltdown during the years of transition. At the present moment, the calls to buy Russian products appear in the course of individual events, initiated by their organizers, or in regional and local campaigns with limited outreach. Such appeals in different forms, but on a relatively modest scale, continued in the 1990s and throughout 2000s. While there are numerous cases but there was never a federal campaign.

The activity of civil society also remained limited – very few voluntary initiatives promoted import substitution or discouraged the purchase of foreign goods. Those non-governmental organizations involved saw themselves as agents implementing the governmental agenda⁷. Moreover, they were able to benefit from state grants for civil initiatives. Hence, these organizations comply with the image of “the state’s little helpers”, which in many cases characterizes the relationships between the state and NGOs in Russia [Salmenniemi 2013]. Their activities also were relatively modest in scope: they were often aimed at creating events to spark some short-lived media attention rather than making an impact on the ground or encouraging a wider crusade. Otherwise, no significant grassroots movement emerged in response to these state initiatives, even though the atmosphere in society over the international conflict was heated and the popular approval of the measures was high. Meanwhile, the reports about the achievements of import substitution and the justifications of the embargo abounded in the media.

⁷ Based on interviews with volunteers.

This absence of intention to transform citizen-consumers into ‘champions’ of this process suggests that the Russian state expects people to be loyal but not to be involved as active participants who implement the policy. They are viewed as the recipients of the measures rather than as active agents. This model of popular participation has become an integral part of the strategy of state development, whose arrangements and underpinnings will be analyzed in the next section. In particular, this strategy is framed as a state-led effort to restructure the economy and to grapple with economic vulnerabilities, which would reposition Russia in the new hierarchies of the post-Cold War world.

Negotiating socio-economic development and re-defining ‘modernization’ in state programs

Import substitution can be better understood if put into the context of the preceding state strategies of socio-economic development. The long record of such top-down state-centered ‘modernizing’ initiatives, which saw the ‘Western’ countries as both rivals and as models to emulate, can be traced back to the USSR and the Russian empire [Arnason 2000; David-Fox 2015; Hoffmann, Kotsonis 2000]. These legacies exert a significant impact on the workings of the political regime today, including its authoritarian bent [David-Fox 2015]. Kudrin and Mau, economists who have been associated with the Russian government for a long time in different roles, assert that “closing the gap” between Russia and the most developed countries “was set as a central strategic and policy goal by practically all the country’s governments, starting with Peter the Great. And this challenge, which includes technical innovation and economic growth, remains central in the early twenty-first century” [Kudrin, Mau 2018, p. 19]. However, despite the powerful continuities, it is important to discern the specificities of the present-day situation and to consider the current endeavor in connection to the most recent strategies, in particular, to the program of “modernization”, which became the hallmark of Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency [Medvedev 2009]. The projects of ‘modernization’ and import substitution were similar in the ways they defined their goals and identified the main problems they need to grapple with, namely the resource-dependent and undiversified national economy, which jeopardized Russia’s standing on the global stage and its long-term future. The program of “modernization”⁸ formulated in the wake of the 2008–2009 crisis, prioritized a transition to a knowledge-based economy and focused on high-tech industries (along with fostering the entrepreneurial spirit of the population) in order to cope with the lag in technologies and economic performance. This was supposed to re-establish Russia as a global economic and technological leader and to re-affirm its global-power status.

In contrast to the modernization strategy, import substitution has a special focus on the agri-food industry, prioritizing this sector in overcoming the country’s dependence on imports. This focus, however, is not exclusive and the goal of substituting imports is extended to different spheres, including the technologically-advanced. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the current strategy with the embargo is not aimed at isolationism but, similar to the program of ‘modernization’, at changing Russia’s

⁸ The program of modernization was closely associated with the Strategy 2020.

position in the global economy [Connolly, Hanson 2016]. However, neither project made provisions for or commitments to large-scale state investment or produced comprehensive plans for intervention⁹; thus, they by no means represent the sort of master-plans of “high-modernist” transformations described by James Scott [Scott 1999].

Although modernization is not the ‘central banner’ today, it has a persistent presence and influence on defining the means and goals of government policy. The term has firmly established itself in the conceptual vocabulary of official policy and public discourse. For instance, the successful pursuit of import substitution is associated with “the modernization of agriculture”, “modernization of the agro-industrial sector”, or “the modernization of the technological base”. The conceptualization of modernization is indicative of how the political regime envisages the way the developmental program should be implemented.

The way ‘modernization’ is employed in governmental discourse in Russia differs from the ‘classical modernization’ of the 1950–1960s, with its accent on industrialization, a welfare system, and a developmental state [Gilman 2007], and from the so-called “neo-modernization” paradigm of the 1980–1990s, associated with the transition programs. The latter aimed at the democratization of the state and the marketization of the economy through neoliberal restructuring and restricting the role of the state [Alexander 1994; Hodge 2015]. Although different, both ‘modernization’ perspectives rested on ideas about a holistic transformation of society, where economic development was coupled with progressive social change drawing on the principle of universalism. For the ‘classical’ modernization, it was an active developmental (and welfare) state that served as the motive force and the central locus of transformation. The proponents of neo-modernization put their hopes into free markets which would trigger the self-regulating mechanisms of the economy and society, animated by the unfettered entrepreneurial drive of the population [Alexander 1994; Gilman 2007; Hodge 2015].

Both perspectives shared a strong belief in technocratic government and reservations regarding popular participation; democracy was seen as desirable as long as there was a social consensus on values and compliance with government guidance [Gilman 2007]. Modernization has as its ultimate goal the achieving of ‘modernity’. Although the images of a ‘modern society’ were different, theorists understood and defined this condition in universalistic terms. Nevertheless, the reality of the implementation of the projects inspired by these theories often contrasted grimly with the initial intentions encouraging authoritarian government and exacerbated economic crises, especially for the market transition reforms.

For instance, the transition reforms in post-soviet Russia, known as “shock therapy”, were carried out circumventing the very ideals of democratic government, which neo-modernization claimed to champion, for the sake of a more efficient and rapid marketization [Sakwa 2010; Sakwa 2012; Wedel 2001; Wedel 2014; Woodruff 2009]. Similar conflicts between declared democratic ideals and the intention to carry out a top-down transformation in a speedy, unhindered and efficient way seem to be inherent in the realization of such radical projects of societal transformation [Alexander 1994; Gilman 2007; Eisenstadt 2000].

In Russia, the results of the radical market reforms were problematic [Stiglitz 2002] and social consequences – lamentable [Burawoy 2001]. However, this process reinforced

⁹ This description does not refer to military industry, which is not covered in any way by this paper.

and managed to legitimize the model of technocratic government which suggests that a sound functioning economy can be established through localized interventions. Namely, it implied that economic processes could be managed on their own following the guidelines based on ‘objective’ knowledge¹⁰, while changes in social or political spheres could be temporarily compromised [Woodruff 2009]. For instance, many reforms were pushed forward through presidential decrees to forego the supposedly redundant and obstructive parliament [Wedel 2001]. Later, the ‘practical’ disentanglement of the economic from the political dimension of societal change made it possible to re-integrate the idea of technocratic government into a different political project, thus, re-connecting the means to different ends.

To understand the use of ‘modernization’ in this context it is important to follow the history of its use in Russia. For instance, although the Soviet state can be viewed as a variant of alternative modernity, Michael David-Fox notes that the very concept of ‘modernity’ was virtually absent and the words with a similar meaning like ‘contemporaneity’ did not have the same “conceptual and social scientific weight” [David-Fox 2015, p. 6]. During the late Soviet Union, the word “modernization” became used in a particular way. For example, the entry for modernization in the “Big Encyclopedic Dictionary” (1988) defines it as a “change or improvement, which complies with contemporary requirements and tastes, for example, the modernization of equipment”. Thus, rather than denoting a comprehensive transformation of society that leads to ‘modernity’, it acquired an instrumental and even technological meaning¹¹. These connotations remain very influential today.

Following these interpretations helps to understand what modernization has come to mean at the present moment. In the current projects of socioeconomic development, ‘modernization’ is defined in purely instrumental terms as the means of achieving a globally competitive economy and catching up with the world-leaders by following their (foreign) ‘best-practices’, adopting technologies, and mastering business processes. Therefore, it implies adherence to the principle of ‘universalism’ in economic development. The question of economic government is translated into a question of mastering technologies and economic productivity through a kind of ‘technology transfer’. However, such universalism is not extended into the realm of politics.

‘Universal’ ideals of social and political transformation are not simply suspended for practical expediency to accelerate the change, as was the case with the neoliberal market transformation. They are essentially sidelined and dismissed. If Medvedev mentioned ‘political modernization’ marginally, now the category has virtually disappeared. While such economic experts as Kudrin and Mau [2018], intellectually and institutionally associated with the first wave of market reformers, may describe the fallacy of disregarding the political aspect of ‘modernization’, they do it in a cautious way, while providing the required economic expertise to the Russia government. The current developmental effort is essentially launched to promote and legitimize the explicitly *particularistic* political and social

¹⁰ To a certain extent, this model agrees with the ideal promoted by the Soviet state, which represented its model and practice of government as a knowledge-driven system of rational management and differentiated itself from the ‘flawed’ political processes in the capitalist countries [Arnason 2000].

¹¹ To a certain extent, this can be related to the ideological context of that time. The Soviet Union had supposedly achieved the most progressive form of state and social organization. This it blocked avenues for any critique of the system and encouraged viewing problems in terms of localized failures and deficiencies that required ‘instrumental’ solutions.

policy of the regime, which defines itself through Russia's 'civilizational' uniqueness and incompatibility with the models of 'liberal democracies'. Economic growth is not the end in itself and can be compromised for 'state' interests. For example, commenting on the sanctions introduced in 2014 president Putin noted: "it is the 'payment' for our desire to preserve ourselves as a nation, as a civilization, as a state". In this respect, Russia also differs from the Soviet Union, which claimed to seek an alternative path to achieve 'universal values' and saw the communist state as the model that should be promoted globally¹² [Arnason 2000; David-Fox 2015; Hoffmann, Kotsonis 2000].

As a result, the economic deficiencies are viewed as a matter of management so that their sources are not attributed to the arrangements of the socio-political system in Russia. This effectively inhibits any critique and attempts to transform the latter. On the contrary, the ability to preserve such *particularity* and strengthen Russia's standing on the global stage becomes the goal of the 'modernizing' or developmental efforts. The state represents itself as the engine of transformation and the central locus of power tightening its authoritarian grip. Hence, it does not seem very productive to consider the current understanding of modernization merely as a "narrow" [Gel'man, Starodubtsev 2016] or a 'crippled' version of the programs associated with classical or neo-modernization since it explicitly promotes a different vision of the means, ends and the role of the state.

The project of socio-economic development formulated by the Russian government seems to speak to the concept of "civilizational neo-modernization" suggested by Richard Sakwa [Sakwa 2012]. Civilizational modernization calls for accommodating multiple-modernities within neo-modernization, which would recognize a variety of pathways along with the civilizational/cultural specificities of different societies rejecting "automaticity between the level of economic development and political outcomes" [Sakwa 2012, p. 55]. However, while the concept provides space for accommodating differences, juxtaposing it with the realities of the political, economic, and social life in Russia brings back the question of the limits of the notion of 'modernity' [Cooper 2005] in such 'modernization'.

Nevertheless, the promises of the current project, with the embargo and import substitution as its central components, may sound appealing to citizens. It vows to overcome the deindustrialization and oil-dependence which plague the national economy and to re-establish Russia as a self-sufficient industrial and manufacturing power under the current political regime. This program acquires additional credibility due to its historical conjuncture: the impressive economic growth and an increase in living standard in the 2000s took place against the background of the establishment of an increasingly authoritarian regime.

Even though such projects assume a 'top-down' implementation and the political leadership see themselves as the ultimate 'modernizers', the actual realization takes place in a concrete social, political, and economic context and is carried out by diverse agents on the ground. The next section will look at how the new middle classes experience the

¹² The Soviet regime drew on mass politics. It retained a declared adherence to the principles of popular government and represented itself as a 'truer' form of people's government than the 'rigged' democracies of the capitalist West. The Soviet state also claimed to provide better conditions and opportunities for the self-realization and wellbeing of individuals. It also sought to offer a 'universal' socio-political model, which can be exported and transplanted into other regional contexts. However, these ideological orientations say nothing about the actual coerciveness and brutal violence of the Soviet regime and its failure to achieve its declared objectives [Arnason 2000; Hoffmann, Kotsonis 2000].

impact of, assess, and enact the new policies, and how the broader strategy of the state corresponds to and differs from their visions of the country's development and their own participation in this process.

The new middle classes making sense of and enacting the new policies

Because of Russia's relatively high dependence on imported food, the embargo and import substitution caused some noticeable changes in the system of provision. While the range of food products shrank, the share of the domestic goods increased in all major categories [Trade in Russia 2018, p. 60]. Furthermore, the effects of the new policies were coupled with the impact of a general economic crisis: the devaluation of the ruble, the price surge, and a decrease in real incomes.

These changes have impeded the relatively long-term increase in prosperity and affected the lifestyles of the new middle classes. My respondents spoke about the restrictions as part of the general economic crisis which they experienced in the multiplicity of its manifestations. Their assessment of the policies was ambivalent with no dominant opinion: some opposed the measures, while others approved of them¹³. In most cases, their attitudes were characterized by considerable uncertainty: many acknowledged a certain rationality and the potentially positive outcomes of import substitution but expressed skepticism regarding the ways the policies are implemented and whether they can make a real change.

Importantly, when my respondents reflected on this topic, they spoke about the embargo and import substitution not only as measures that regulate their consumption, thereby affecting them primarily as consumers. The potential consequences of these policies for domestic industry and the national economy were of equal significance for many of the people I talked with. This Janus-like perspective mediated the ways they assessed these measures. The tendency to speak about import substitution in terms of its impact on domestic industry cannot be attributed solely to the successful efforts of the state-controlled media, which have been going out of their way to praise the government's undertakings. Instead, it is important to explore how these ideas become appealing and meaningful to people¹⁴.

The link between the politics and policies of consumption and production appears to be not only a theoretical abstraction or a matter of policy design. In a way, this link has been experienced by middle-class consumers as part of their consumption practices and everyday life under Russia's political economy, which underwent significant transformations throughout the post-Soviet period. The 'holistic' character of everyday experiences in the Soviet economy is described by Caroline Humphrey: "For everyone inside, it was experienced as a *political economy*, that is, imbued at every point with policies and ideologies" [Humphrey 2002, p. 43].

¹³ In general, my findings support the results of large-scale surveys about the relatively wide-spread support for the policies among different groups of the population.

¹⁴ Eric Hobsbawm suggested that nationalism should be analyzed "from below, that is, in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" [Hobsbawm 1992, p. 10].

In the 1990s, the inflow of the imported goods, often of inferior quality, together with a sharp drop in real income for most households, served as evidence of a decline in domestic manufacturing, rapid deindustrialization, and the worsening crisis [Caldwell 2002; Humphrey 2002; Patico 2003; Patico 2005; Patico 2008; Shevchenko 2008]. Simultaneously, the country was losing its standing on the global stage. For the majority of today's new middle classes, the 2000s, due to rapid economic growth, became a time when they achieved their relatively advantageous socio-economic positions. They experienced a remarkable increase in disposable income and their living standards, which was manifested in booming consumption and lifestyle changes.

That historical moment seemed to prove that economic advances can be achieved under (or despite) an authoritarian regime. Having gone through the hardships and controversies of the 1990s and the 2000s, my informants were skeptical regarding democracy in Russia. They suggested that Russia has never had a genuinely democratic government and a few questioned whether it is even applicable or desirable for the country. This disenchantment with the outcomes of the reforms, the miseries of the 1990s, and the political dynamics often served as encouragement for cultural essentialism and ideas about Russia's civilizational uniqueness. Furthermore, they prefer a strong leader or even a 'tsar' or even spoke about today's system as close to a monarchy. For example, Angelina, a young economist, concluded that "our country has historically existed with tsars". Or Artem, a marketing professional in his thirties, suggested "because of our mentality [...] we love grandiose projects[...]. Tsars are loved not for hospitals but for churches and conquests, we live in a very archaic and traditional system of values", furthermore, discussing the difference between Russia and Germany, Artem added: "you cannot make an elephant dance the mazurka".

The authoritarian regime has become, for the representatives of the new middle classes, a given fact in their lives, which, however, does not have a major impact on them, and their individual development and achievements, as they perceive it. In this way, they have normalized the situation. At the same time, a belief in a market economy and its efficiency proved to be much more powerful and persistent.

However, the crisis that started in 2014, with the longest recession in the history of *new* Russia, exposed the vulnerability of the national economy: the dependence on natural resources and the declining industrial potential, despite years of the increasing GDP. My informants associated this condition with a susceptibility to crises and the instability of the economy. In their reflections on this topic, they implicitly suggested that these vulnerabilities have also been undermining Russia's position within the global power hierarchies. For some, it also nurtured a sympathy or nostalgia for the Soviet Union – more particularly, for its industrial capacity and self-sufficiency, and, of course, for the status as a world superpower. Subsequently, for my respondents, the country's economic performance and competitiveness served as the most important criteria for the state to be considered 'advanced' or 'developed', while they assigned significantly less importance to political, social, or cultural factors (though many assumed an association between these).

The message articulated in the policies of the embargo and import substitution addresses these concerns. It seems to carry at least a promise to partially redress the existing deficiencies. By this means, Russia could seize a chance to develop its industry, which it missed earlier.

In this light, the current strategy of import substitution appears to be more appealing than the ‘high-tech modernization’ promoted by Medvedev’s program. The latter has hardly achieved the declared aims and popular support for this initiative remained moderate¹⁵ (in contrast to the current policies). People I spoke with did not think that it has brought any real changes and considered it political rhetoric. Furthermore, my informants tended to be skeptical regarding the abilities of Russian producers to compete with the global leaders in high-tech industries, at least in the foreseeable future. Food products are often viewed as both a basic need, necessary for the country’s self-sufficiency, and a more accomplishable task, since food production does not require complex technologies. Finally, the availability of results – consumers are able to see new products on the shelves and buy them – provides immediate evidence of the advances of the domestic industry.

Another important aspect to understand the middle classes’ reactions to these policies is their preference for ‘technocratic’ governance, that is, decisions informed with ‘expert knowledge’, the justifiability of their top-down implementation (disregarding popular discontent or vulnerability, if they pursue ‘righteous’ aims), and skepticism about popular participation. Many of my informants shared the conviction that the government should be able to push for certain decisions even if they are highly unpopular, such as the increase of the retirement age. In their view, governing should be the task of experts since ordinary people lack the knowledge and competence to make decisions and, consequently, are likely to make bad choices. This position was succinctly expressed by Ekaterina, a finance professional in her early forties: “I think our history has demonstrated that expert opinion and decisions from ‘above’ are better than the democratic ones.”

To a significant extent, such reliance on expert knowledge is an intrinsic element of the functioning of the modern society [Giddens 1991]. However, this orientation can be reinforced by the legacy of top-down governance not only in the relatively remote historical past but also in post-Soviet Russia. In particular, the transition and liberalization reforms were framed and represented as being based on the ‘universal laws’ of the market economy and were advocated by experts. Even if my informants are now critical of the ways the reforms were carried out in the 1990s and their outcomes, the belief in the possibility of such a transformation has become deeply entrenched.

This vision resonates with the state’s. The representative aspect of governance has been weakened and the executive or even managerial function has moved to the forefront, with the government directly subordinated to the president. Such relations are part of the specific configuration of the state’s accountability – both in the way it is perceived by citizens¹⁶ and the way it is recognized by the regime and incorporated in its governance practices [Rose, Mishler, Munro 2006; Sakwa 2010].

Furthermore, my informants also believed in the success of localized actions, that is, the ability of efficient interventions to bring about a positive change even when implemented in separate spheres – as if the processes within society can be perfectly isolated. While in scholarship, this is coined as creating “pockets of efficiency” [Gel’man, Starodubtsev 2016], the middle classes express similar conviction as a necessity to do

¹⁵ Medvedev’s approval rates have been steadily declining since 2009. The data are provided by Levada Center (<https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/odobrenie-organov-vlasti/>, accessed 15.05.2019).

¹⁶ The restrictions of the paper do not allow us to consider the issue of the state’s accountability with sufficient attention. Olga Shevchenko describes the transformation of the ideas about state accountability in the 1990s [Shevchenko 2009].

“real things” or “projects”¹⁷. They spoke about the possibilities of achieving advances in economic and social spheres even under the general conditions of pervasive corruption and authoritarianism. For instance, Denis, a bank manager in his thirties, acknowledged that he prefers to concentrate on his own life and the issues he can “influence”. Speaking about the uneasy economic conditions, he stressed that there are still people who pursue their own ideas and expressed his admiration for those who launch businesses and investment projects in the current situation of the crisis since they are able to “see the potential”. This creed is widely shared across the political spectrum – from those supporting to those opposing the regime.

The new middle classes’ expectations regarding Russia’s development are influenced by and resonate with the state’s strategy. There is a widely shared aspiration for changes in the national economy and a repositioning of Russia in the global hierarchies but for avoiding major political and economic disruptions. Furthermore, in line with the state’s unwillingness to recognize citizens as active agents, the new middle classes perceive the new policies as a move ‘from above’ and generally do not consider themselves as the agents of their implementation and act accordingly.

The new middle classes do not simply replicate and reproduce the state-promoted discourses. Making sense of the ongoing changes in their lives and around them, they relate the available interpretations to their biographical trajectories and experiences, by this means, they negotiate meanings, reserving space for ambiguities and unresolved controversies. For example, the state employs the tropes of ‘civilizational uniqueness’ to justify and legitimize the organization of the current political regime; however, my informants also referred to the ‘distinctiveness’ of Russia vis-a-vis the ‘West’ when speaking about the ‘gap’ in terms of economic development and living standards, and expressing doubts regarding Russia’s ability to “catch up” in the near future. For example, Nikolay, a senior manager in a trading company, asserted that Russia is still one of two superpowers in terms of nuclear capabilities, he admitted that Russia cannot be compared to the US in terms of its economic development and will continue to lag in the foreseeable future. These uncertainties are virtually absent in the official narratives. Considering these discrepancies, the practices of the new middle classes differ substantially from the way the state would like them to be.

Such a configuration of relationships with the state and views on governance and development enable many of the new middle classes to approve or recognize the rationalities of the embargo and import substitution. Simultaneously, skepticism regarding popular participation in politics and governance basically prevents those who disapprove of the measures from challenging the regulations or other policies they oppose. In the conversations, my informants, with rare exceptions, discard the idea of expressing their opinions or defending their interests through collective actions and sometimes even ridiculed it. Such orientation seems to play into the hands of the current political regime.

However, dodging popular participation has its blowback. The new middle classes exempt themselves not only from challenging but also from willing participation in enacting these measures, which curtails their implementation. Even those of my informants who express their approval of the embargo as state policy were ready to circumvent the ban and to buy the ‘sanctioned’ products if they wished to.

¹⁷ In the conversations, it sounded as “*zanimat’sya real’nym delom*” or “*real’nymi proektami*”.

The very idea of ‘patriotic consumption’ – to buy domestically produced goods for the sake of supporting local producers – could hardly find support¹⁸.

Conclusion

The current policies of the embargo and import substitution should be viewed in connection with the previous plans of socio-economic development, in particular, with the program of ‘modernization’. The continuities between them include the definition of problems and objectives (overcoming oil-dependence and diversifying the economy) and the models of realization (when the state represents itself as the chief ‘modernizer’, yet, without taking up the burden of large-scale investment). As these models embrace a vision common to the modernization of technocratic governance, they view citizens as docile subjects rather than active agents of transformation. However, in contrast to modernization theories, the developmental projects of the Russian state frame the final objectives in terms of particularistic values and socio-political organization, which relies on the tenet of Russia’s civilizational uniqueness. In a way, this case demonstrates how the perspective of ‘multiple modernities’ can be ideologically appropriated and employed to justify coercive governance and an authoritarian political project.

We should not mistake, however, the discourse of the program for its implementation. The results of the current effort remain debatable and should be discussed separately. Still, the resources allocated to foster import substitution in the agri-food sector and in the economy in general remain quite modest.

In certain respects, the intentions of these projects resonate with the expectations of many of the new middle classes who share concerns regarding the vulnerabilities of the national economy. They are generally sympathetic to the model of technocratic governance, which they contrast with the incompetence and potential mistakes of popular decisions. This orientation, however, affects the ways they are ready to hold the state accountable. They also do not see themselves as active agents in the implementation of the new policies. This situation is not unique to Russia and reflects the broader tensions of modernity between the aspirations for rational government and trust in expert knowledge, on the one side, and the mechanisms of accountability and democratic participation, on the other [*Giddens* 1991; *Eisenstadt* 2000]. The case of Russia is not exceptional and should be considered in relation to the historical experiences of other emerging economies which have been following a ‘catch-up’ development and trying to reposition themselves globally, and in the context of the crisis of democratic governance across the world.

The new middle classes avoid following the state’s script and develop their own strategies to cope with policies and economic crises. On the other hand, in their activities, they reproduce and normalize the existing socio-economic and political order, and in many cases, manage to side with the Russian state and its developmental agenda. Thus, the implementation and outcomes of the policies on the ground turn out to be very different from the ways they are envisaged by the state.

¹⁸ Jennifer Patico reports that a similar rejection of patriotic consumption was common for Russia’s middle classes in the 1990s [*Patico* 2008].

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От модернизации к импортозамещению: видение стратегий развития государством и гражданами

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В статье рассматривается политика импортозамещения и введения ограничений на ввоз продовольствия в контексте стратегий социально-экономического развития России. Описывается, как изменялось и чем характеризуется в настоящий момент видение социально-экономического развития страны российским государством, а также взгляды и представления об этом процессе, сформированные новым средним классом. Изначально исследование ставит вопрос о том, насколько импортозамещение отличается от предыдущих программ развития, в частности, модернизации Д.А. Медведева, и в чем продолжает их. Особый акцент делается на восприятии государства как агента изменений и на формулировании целей развития и средств для их достижения, а также роли, которая отводится в этом процессе гражданам.

Также исследуется, как новые меры воспринимаются и реализуются людьми в их повседневной жизни. Статья концентрируется на представителях нового среднего класса, которые занимают позиции профессионалов, высококвалифицированных специалистов и менеджеров, работающих преимущественно в коммерческом секторе. Статья опирается на данные глубинных интервью с членами этой социальной группы.

Благодаря значительному повышению уровня жизни на фоне экономического роста 2000-х гг., а также активному использованию новых возможностей потребления, проявившихся как в большей доступности, так и в более широком ассортименте товаров, образ жизни представителей этой группы зачастую ассоциировался с консюмеризмом как в СМИ, так и в академическом дискурсе. Эти обстоятельства также определили особую позицию нового среднего класса в ситуации введения продовольственного эмбарго и общего экономического спада.

Новый средний класс не являет собой большинство российского общества, в то же время его представители обладают значительными материальными, социальными и культурными ресурсами. Кроме того, российская исследовательская традиция относит новый средний класс, как часть «ядра среднего класса», к наиболее активным и передовым слоям населения. Соответственно, представляется важным понять, как эта группа приспосабливается к происходящим в настоящий момент изменениям на фоне экономического кризиса и воспринимает новую политику. В статье исследуется, как стратегия государства соотносится с представлениями нового среднего класса о развитии страны, методах осуществления преобразований, а также о возможностях участия широких масс населения в этом процессе.

В статье проводится сравнение импортозамещения и эмбарго с другими историческими примерами политики в сфере потребления, с обсуждением альтернативных форм и механизмов ее реализации. Анализ указывает на слабую активность неправительственных организаций в инициативах, связанных с поддержкой потребления продуктов российского производства и отказом от покупок импортных товаров, а также отсутствие массовых движений, мотивированных этой повесткой, несмотря на широкую поддержку нововведений различными слоями населения. Таким образом, демонстрируется, что нынешняя модель реализации не предполагает вовлечения граждан как активных участников и видит их скорее как реципиентов и исполнителей мер, внедряемых государством, т.е. как объект его воздействия.

В этой связи проводятся параллели с предшествующей программой модернизации как в отношении централизованной модели реализации с государством в роли главной движущей силы перемен, так и в постановке задач по преодолению нефтяной зависимости, диверсификации экономики и развитию внутреннего производства в областях, где значительную долю потребностей обеспечивают импортные поставки. Для того чтобы описать специфику нынешней стратегии развития, в статье обсуждается значение, приобретенное концептом модернизации в официальном политическом дискурсе. Оно интерпретируется в контексте более широкой дискуссии об исторической эволюции теорий модернизации как программ комплексного преобразования общества. В частности, в статье прослеживается изменение принципов социетальной трансформации в парадигмах «классической модернизации» и «неомодернизации»; обсуждаются противоречия, связанные с историческими примерами попыток реализации этих программ на практике (в особенности в случае радикальных рыночных реформ), выразившееся в том числе в маргинализации демократических механизмов принятия решений. Эта динамика также оказала влияние на то, как в настоящий момент в России видятся политическими элитами и россиянами развитие страны и роль государства в этом процессе.

В статье демонстрируется, каким образом концепт модернизации приобретает преимущественно инструментальное значение в рамках партикуляристского проекта социально-политического устройства страны, провозглашаемого нынешним режимом. Подобный партикуляризм предполагает фактический уход от принципа универсализма, который лежал в основе теорий модернизации, стремившихся сформулировать принципы универсального общественного устройства в пользу представлений о цивилизационной уникальности государства и социально-политической системы России. Таким образом, сохранение этого своеобразия (особенно в условиях геополитического конфликта) утверждается как цель функционирова-

ния государства, в том числе его экономического развития. В этом аспекте современное российское государство отличается от советского, позиционировавшего коммунизм как универсальную идеологию и форму устройства общества, которая должна быть распространена и на другие регионы. Имеющее место в настоящий момент сочетание стремлений к экономической модернизации и к перепозиционированию России в международном разделении труда с партикуляристским политическим проектом анализируется в диалоге с концепциями «множественности модернов» (*multiple modernities*) и «цивилизационной неомодернизации».

Далее в статье рассматривается, как это видение соотносится с представлениями нового среднего класса о развитии страны. Описывается распространенность симпатий к технократической модели управления и веры в успех локальных действий в отдельных сферах, а также представлений о своеобразии России в сравнении с другими странами. Последнее, однако, в отличие от официального дискурса, не всегда имеет положительные ассоциации, в частности, признается хроническое отставание от наиболее развитых стран. Сама идея импортозамещения часто находит поддержку, так как отвечает на запрос необходимости преодоления нефтяной зависимости и диверсификации экономики. В то же время представители нового среднего класса не видят себя в качестве активных участников реализации данной программы и готовы при необходимости идти в обход ограничений даже в тех случаях, когда они поддерживают эмбарго и идею развития внутреннего производства. Таким образом, в своих действиях они, с одной стороны, не следуют моделям, навязанным государством, с другой стороны, нормализуют и воспроизводят существующую систему.

Ключевые слова: государство, импортозамещение, модернизация, политика, потребление, средний класс

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