

THE TRAUMA SOCIETIES – THE OBJECTIVE REALITY OR A ZIGZAG IN HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The trauma society as the third modality in development

There are countries in the world today, the life in which does not fit any classical social theories. The current stage of world development is characterized by such notable, meaningful and significant events and processes that are impossible to define and qualify using old concepts – evolution or revolution, progress or stagnation and recession. What happened in the end of the 20th century and early 21st century in Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Syria, Tunisia and a number of other countries falls out of the generally accepted and previously understandable logic of social development.

Disintegration of the USSR looks no less impressive from this point of view as well as what was launched after it in many now independent states. It especially relates to Georgia, Moldova, Kirgizia and surely the Ukraine. Russia did not avoid its lot either. Emotional words said by the President of Russia V.V. Putin are generally known – he named the results of the USSR disintegration a geopolitical catastrophe. So, Russia can't fail to be included in the number of states we're going to speak about.

The so-called candidates to this specific group can be added to these countries. According to the World Bank data, only 52% of democratic countries and 48% of countries referred to authoritarian turned out to be successful in their market reforms.

All these countries are united by the same things – political upheavals, stagnation and/or economic decline, uncertainly even in the nearest future, and finally, disillusion and loss of trust in the proclaimed way and means for attaining the set aims.

All that in no way fits the classical ideas of progress or regress, evolution or revolution.

Then what are we dealing with? How to characterize these political, economic, social, cultural processes (and more likely uncertainties) that are similar to catastrophes? Do they have something in common – with all the variety of special features?

The word “trauma” comes from an Ancient Greek word meaning “wound.” But already in the modern medical and psychiatric literature the term became treated also as a wound of consciousness as a result of an emotional shock, disrupting comprehension of the time, self and the world in an individual and the society.

One of the first to pay attention to the social meaning of trauma was German scholar Jürgen Habermas when he connected it with studies of heavy depression forms, borne by the crisis in the European society [Habermas, 2001]. Polish sociologist P. Sztompka used the concept when analyzing the issues of sociocultural development (“social and cultural trauma”). Characterizing the aggregate changes taking place in the world and in most countries, he looks at *traumas* as “social transformations” based on “long, unforeseen, partly indefinable processes with an unpredictable end, launched by a collective agency and originating in the field of structural options (limited options for action), inherited as a result of the early stages of the said processes” [Sztompka 2001: 6–7]. When studying upheavals taking place in Western societies, N. Smelser determines a cultural trauma as an “entrapping and suppressing event that undermines one or several key elements of culture or culture as a whole” [Smelser 2004: 38]. D. Alexander states that some events in today’s world are traumatic in themselves, i.e. they are direct reasons of the deforming effect [Alexander 2004]. Z. Bauman described the traumatic impact on the fates of nations, their national consciousness [Bauman 1989]. They started using the social treatment of trauma also when analyzing other processes, for example, when researching the issues of collective identity, including religious and ethnic [Narrating trauma 2011].

As for the Russian researchers, the following people wrote about the traumatic aspect without actually using this term: M.F. Delyagin [2016], R.S. Grinberg [2016] in economics, Yu.A. Krasin [2003], V.K. Levashov [2015] in politics, M.K. Gorshkov [2015] in the social sphere, O.N. Smolin [2015], A.S. Zapesotsky [2014] in culture and education. In our opinion, the treatment of changes by the above said authors can be expanded to the “society’s trauma” concept, if we mean contradictory, turbulent and deformed character of social processes, when the analysis of the going on in the world and certain societies changes has a lot of sense from the point of view of explaining and understanding the essence of transformations (catastrophes) that are taking place.

Contemporary definitions or traumas affecting many societies led this concept to application to the special condition of social processes manifested in uncertainty, distortion of unstable societies’ and states’ development. Surely, there are its nuances, details, specifications in this approach, but I’d like to immediately address the features, factors and indicators that I consider important for understanding the phenomenon.

The main characteristics of the trauma society

The traumas of many contemporary societies, about which we’ll speak, started from forceful overthrow of the existing political regime and respective administrative institutions. This took place either because of intervention of external forces (Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Syria, Tunisia) or under the impact of internal cataclysms (Russia, the Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova). But at the same time, all originating upheavals took place under the slogan of the urgency of cardinal changes, with the demand for serious shifts in economic and social spheres, with promises to quickly achieve worthy life of the people and absolute prosperity of the country. There were also calls to elevate respect for human rights and freedoms to a higher level. But intervention of external forces into the countries not capable to reform themselves (Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan) led to bloody conflicts not

stopping in them. The results in Georgia, the Ukraine, Moldova were no less impressive. These republics found themselves even farther from what they had being parts of the USSR. Achievements in Russia turned out to be no more successful: in a quarter of a century, it did not achieve the socioeconomic indicators that the RSFSR had in 1990.

Thus, all the named states have not managed to advance their societies to worthier economic levels, to reach positions dictated by the modern information era, provide new high standards of living for the population. And the above mentioned states were defeated in this way after this task was successfully solved, and within a short period of time, by both capitalist countries (Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea) and socialist countries (China and Vietnam).

In my opinion, the reason of failures here is, first of all, the trauma society's having such a complex of features that strongly and clearly separate it both from revolutionary transformations and advancing revolutionary changes. And this difference starts from the trauma society's lacking precise and clear strategy and not understanding its development prospects. The outlined changes mostly come to being focused on solution of certain urgent and pressing matters. Sometimes – taking other countries' experience into account (as they tried to do it in Russia). Or everything was limited to passive following somebody's pieces of advice, without taking national special features into account (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya – where this is done under economic and political pressure from the outside).

As for Russia, the answer to one question stays obscure and uncertain: what society are we building for ourselves? For example, academician O. Bogomolov expressed his public interest to this uncertainly already in 2008 [see e.g. Bogomolov, 2008]. Indeed, a lot of recipes and ideas were discussed then, but all of them mostly came to refusal from the former socialist way of development, using recommendations based on the experience of other countries (there were very different offers – to borrow the American, German, Japanese, French and even Argentinean experience). Or just some theoretical speculative constructions

like Chicago school theses, on the conclusions of which Russian liberals set their hopes [For more details see Aven, Koch, 2013].

There were many homebred offers more likely borne by fantasies than academically based development programs. Famous liberal L. Gozman's reasoning is demonstrative; he grieved that liberals had many development variants but they were not given an opportunity to realize everything offered [For more detail see *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 2019, No. 7, February 20–26]. This reminds of an old joke about the used tips for feeding chickens, one tip after the other, but all chickens died before they could be actually fed. The initiator of these methods lamented – he still had so many unused variants.

Besides, the analysis of reasons for falling behind in development shows why there are losses in trauma societies and even rolling back from the economic and social lines, where these countries were before attempts to change their development vector. And what is more, it's possible to speak about the obvious degradation throwing some countries back from the achieved level, in which today's economy represents destroyed sectors of national economy [For more details see Toshchenko, 2017; Toshchenko, 2018].

Collective agencies – how efficient are they?

Alas, it seems to me that approximately the same state of affairs is observed in modern Russia. We're speaking not only about reduction of the rates of development but also the loss of previously achieved economic and social indicators that have not been restored till now. Thus, according to some comparisons, the national economy of the country lost more during the period of the Gaidar reforms in the 1990s than during the Great Patriotic War. We have not managed to achieve a lot in the 2000s. As the creator of the market reform, ex-Minister of Finance of Poland Grzegorz Kołodko (foreign member of the Russian Academy of Sciences) said, exactly the lack of a competent economic strategy in

the Russian Federation led to sorrowful results. If 25 years ago our GDP exceeded Chinese GDP thrice, now the People's Republic of China surpasses Russia in this indicator six times [Quoted by: Moscow Economic Forum... 2016:13].

The lack of a development strategy in the trauma societies is related to their having no active, driving, creative, constructive forces, personified as Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka wrote, by a “collective agency” that could implement a strategy of desired changes based on the clear, thought-out program of actions guided by objective development laws [Sztompka 2001:7].

If such a program and such a team are lacking, the following takes place: official structures with the access to the structural and cultural resources fund, as a rule, act impulsively, and it's not rare that such actions look like an imitation of rational activities. Thus, the then President Dmitry Medvedev in his time engaged in such urgent in his opinion measures as militia's renaming into police, abolishment of time change, introduction of zero promille for car drivers, etc. instead of scientifically-based cardinal changes in the economic and social fields.

A no less convincing evidence for the trauma society is the fact that these societies are characterized by power resources conversion into capital and capital into power as political authorities in this process are viewed as a source of income, the way to justify and camouflage dubious actions on the economic and financial market.

The development strategy unclear for the people led to elimination of the majority of Russians from control and public participation in what authorities are engaged in. Today, 80.3% of the people are not members of any non-governmental organizations, 93.7% think that they have no impact on taking state decisions [*Lifeworld*... 2016:356–357]. The issue of state ideology is raised exactly in this context, the ideology that could, together with other worldview mindsets existing in the society word development prospects, taking into account the deep-laid interests of the people.

For the time being, there is, on the one hand, the domineering statement that according to the Russian Federation Constitution, no ideology can be established in the country like a state or obligatory ideology. On the other hand, people are regularly reminded about the necessity of building a democratic society, which is impossible in essence without some serious ideas approved by the whole society and capable of mobilizing people for the real development of the country. As a result, there is a political regime formed in Russia that a number of authors determine as non-ideological [Gaman-Golutvina 2006]. Because of that, I think the worries of analysts who mention that instead of national and state identity's formation there is uncontrolled and chaotic search in the country for ways of transformation of ethnic, regional and local self-consciousness that, no matter their importance, can't replace general ideological orientation points, the idea of uniting the multi-national and polyconfessional nation are justified.

In my opinion, attempts to word the national idea ended (and still end) in nothing because they reflect hypothetical ideas of just some representatives of the Russian ruling classes and offers by some scholars, not the expectations and aspirations of the people.

And this is clear. Because in the trauma societies "collective agencies" (i.e. ruling circles or the so-called elite) do not take into account or absolutize (hypertrophy) national special features. To put it differently, everything that was accumulated by the countries in the process of their historical development. Thus, the experience of not only Soviet but also the earlier historical past was fully and categorically rejected, proceeding from the evidently prejudicial and detrimental mindset – there was nothing positive in former Russia and especially in the USSR.

There is still an argument going on in relation to Russia – what's taking place there? What happened there in the beginning of the 1990s? Along what way has it been developing over the recent quarter of a century and how to call what is going on in the right way? Many politicians, scholars, journalists, using some aggregate data, insist that the socialist system broke up and the process of returning

to the tried and tested by experience liberal society arrangement has started. But, they say, transfer to capitalism in this case is being distorted by the current political leaders of Russia [Inozemtsev, 2013].

Representatives of other worldviews, basing on the experience of analysis of the new Russia's functioning processes, prove no less convincingly that the country goes along the evolutionary way of development, though it's complex and different, with enormous expenditures [Grinberg, 2016].

Another group is represented by neomarxist and socialist views on what happened in our country as a forced coup d'état, refusal from focusing on people's interests. Acknowledging miscalculations and mistakes of the Soviet leaders and the following market reforms, representatives of this group insist of promoting the policy establishing the tested by life positive changes accumulated in the USSR experience and existing now socialism-focused countries (like China and Vietnam) [Bodrunov, 2016; Buzgalin, Kolganov 2015; Kiva 2015].

As for the reality, the current development process is characterized by indeterminate and inconsistent restoration of some socialist traditions and standards of life, combined with modification, following market fundamentalism and liberalism principles and attempts to substantiate the way, along which the "European civilization" goes, but taking into account special Eurasian orientation. As a result, in our opinion, the economic and social life is in crisis: the main part of high-tech production in space industry, machine building, aviation industry has been lost. For example, if 74.2 thousand metal-cutting machines were manufactured in the country in 1990, and they were even bought by the Federal Republic of Germany, there were just 2.7 thousand manufactured in 2014. There were 18,300 and 79 looms made respectively. [Russia...2015: 264–265; National... 1991: 147]. Collective farms and state-owned farms were thoughtlessly disbanded, especially those that operated successfully; many effectively developing farms were lost. In 2014, there were 247.3 thousand tractors in agricultural organizations (with 1,345.6 thousand in 1990), 64.6 thousand and

407.8 thousand combines respectively, 2.4 thousand and 25.3 thousand beet-harvesting machines [Quoted by: Uzun, Shagaida 2015]. As a result of the so-called agrarian reform, the volume of agricultural products (except grain production) has not reached the Soviet 1990 year level, and decreased by one third in cattle breeding.

As for hypertrophying pseudonational special features, this way is strikingly demonstrated by state building in the Ukraine. Here is what was written about that by a political scientist V. Lapkin: “Stimulation of ethnopolitical conflicts and promotion of ideology and the system of values, dividing ethnic groups and nations as to their relation to freedom, democracy and prosperity, turns out to be one of the key components” in “the general strategy of chaotizing the social substratum of non-consolidated regimes” [Lapkin, 2016:61].

Where is the solution?

Thus, such a feature as traumatizing has acquired special significance and precise definiteness among the new phenomena at the today's stage in the life of a number of countries, including Russia. It is manifested in the disunity, split, contradiction and conflicts in development. At the same time, there is no doubt that the trauma societies can't be eternal – in certain environment they have to overcome this crisis. In the 1990–2000s, there were steps undertaken and not once to get to the new heights of economic and social development.

It was privatization at first with its companions – ruble devaluation, loans-for-shares auctions, creation of oligarchic capitalism that led to complete destruction of national economy. Then there were public health, agriculture, education development projects announced by Dmitry Medvedev when he was the Prime Minister that in the 2000s led him to the post of President, but turned out to be unsound and untenable and are forgotten by everyone by now. Then there were the 4 I's – Institutes, Infrastructure, Innovations and Investments that gave the

country nothing either. The expensive Skolkovo project was created as a part of these ambitious projects, which in the opinion of the ex-President of the Siberian Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences Alexander Aseev, is the “marble telephone receiver in the hands of Old Khottabych”, and in the opinion of Lauren Graham, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a very expensive, dubious act, from which “most likely Western companies will profit.” [Graham, 2016]

In order to leave the trauma condition, not profits or power but serving the society should be the motivation of social, economic and political life. Graham spoke at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in May 2016 and figuratively presented the paradoxical condition of modern Russia: “You need milk without the cow”, assuming the same that had been said by Pitirim Sorokin: emancipation of constructive forces of not only business but creative people as well is required, those who personify the “scientific genius of the Russian people” as well as social reforms [Sorokin 1999:7]. And that would not only satisfy the requirements of the people but also develop the constructive forces of the society.

A significant contribution to this contradictory process is made by the current development model that “can be presented as a bicycle with the socialist handle bar and capitalist pedals” [Livshits, 2013: 202].

All that allows to come to the conclusion that the society’s traumatizing and traumatizing in the society originate when “there appears a form of disorganization, shift, unconformity in the social structure or culture, to put it differently, when the context of human life and social actions loses homogeneity, conformity and stability becoming different, even an opposite cultural complex” (Sztompka, 2001:8).

Because of that the natural reaction to practically unanimous opinion of the expert community (and not only it) about the necessity to cardinaly change the government's economic course is justified, and that was confirmed by the recent Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (in February 2019), with the President deciding to pay attention to the necessity of serious correction of the country's socio-economic course.

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