Russia - one day before a Revolution?

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Tromsø, 03-20-2019
Theories of Revolution and contemporary Russia

- Vilfredo Pareto: non-equivalence of foxes and lions
- James C. Davies: J-Curve
- Theda Skocpol
- Richard Auty: resource curse

- Political bifurcation
Pareto identified two types of elite rulers. “Foxes” dominate mainly through *combinazioni* (“combination”): changeability, deceit, cunning, manipulation and co-optation. “Lions” are more conservative. They emphasise unity, homogeneity, established ways, the established faith, and rule through small, centralised and hierarchical bureaucracies.

Balance in the ruling class between „foxes” and „lions” and the lack of the „foxes” in the masses determines social stability. If more and more „foxes” are among the masses and less and less in the ruling class, then it is possible to create a counter-elite. The existence of the counter-elite among the masses and the prevalence of conservative thinking, the lack of the ability to change by the ruling class lead to revolution.

What is the proportion between „foxes” and „lions” in the Russian ruling class?

How many „foxes” are there among the masses?
S4 The Disappearance of Vertical Mobility and Elimination of „Foxes” in Vilfredo Pareto’s Meaning

Fig. 1. The First and Second (“Kremlin Kids”) Generations of Russia’s Elite in: The Importance of Russia’s Second-Generation Elite
Bartosz Bieliszczuk, Agnieszka Legucka, Warsaw 2018

Graphic by: J. Pieńkowski
Is Pareto’s theory useful?

- It is very hard to define which people are „foxes” and which are „lions”.
- And extremely more difficult is defining the proportion between „foxes” and „lions”.
- I suppose Gleb Pawlovsky and Vladislav Surkov are „foxes” and Dmitri Medvedev and Victor Zolotov (Chief of Rosgvardia) are „lions”.
- It is impossible (or extremely hard) to compute the proportion of „foxes” and „lions” in each member of ruling elite.
- The dependency between the number of „foxes” and the creation of counter-elite in masses is not so simple.
- It may be useful for an explanation of the situation in Russia as the direction of change (into more or less stability) but not for a calculation if the revolution is possible or not.
clepto-authoritarianism

- Corruption as the informal system of relations between the subordinates and the principals
- Double loyalty
- Ruling class as the body of clientelistic-corrupted groups fighting for the exploitable resources (‘krysza’, ‘rejderstvo’, ‘otkat’, ‘wziatka dielowaja i licznaja’)


Resource Curse - Richard Auty
Is Russia a second Venezuela?

Counter-arguments:
- All oil companies in Russia are state-owned or under state control.
- The interdependency between the price of oil and the price of ruble (in dollars) in 2019 was cancelled.

Arguments:
- Reserve Fund was cancelled in Feb. 2018.
- Before 2014 NWF had between 500-600 billion dollars.

Conclusion:
- Lack of resources or voluntary decisions of politicians about resources may be only one of many determinants of the masses’ misery and sometimes social instability but it cannot be treated as reason for revolution.
- Russia is closer to Venezuela than to Norway but the distance to Venezuela is still great.
James C. Davies (1962) J-curve

- Intolerable discord between what people want and what they get

- 47% Russians believes that you should fight for your rights, even if it is against the interests of the state (Lewada, III 2017)

- 31% Russians think that the state gives a lot, but they can demand more (in 2006: 15%)
Theda Skocpol (1979) A condition of revolution is existing groups that are independent from the state (ruling class).

In Russia 80% of economy is state-owned

1/ Small entrepreneurs?

Between economical (anomical) protests (truckdrivers, farmers) and dependency from officials (bribery, krysha, reiderstvo)

2/ Intellectuals, „intelligentsia”?

3/ NGOs?

Almost all people can work in state factories and still revolt against state (Poland in August 1980).

The process of creation of revolutionary situations is more complicated.
Theory of political bifurcation

- Local and global bifurcations (political or social system bifurcation)
- Saddle point
- Attractor - decisive factor of the system’s stability
- Repellor - decisive factor of bifurcation
Repellor of political bifurcation

- The indicators are the scope and the intensity of the paradox of oppressed subjectification (os)*: the development of political subjectivity of the social groups excluded from the political system.
- The greater is:
  1/ the concentration of „os” in key spaces of social communication;
  2/ quantitative coverage;
  3/ the level of collective capacity,
  the larger the range of „os” gets.

The greater the level of the refutation of the existing political system is, and, concomitantly, the attempts of exclusion (which are so ineffective that they do not deprive a given group of subjectivity), the greater the intensity of “os” is.

The greater the range and intensity of „os” is, the greater the instability of the system is.

*category of Joanna Rak and Roman Bäcker
Social Consciousness I: Political Conformism Occurs in Public Situations

- Ranking assessment of the activities of Putin as the president

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- Trust rankings for the prime minister, government and Duma - all are negative

- E.g. Dmitrij Medvedev as a prime minister

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The Hidden Level of Social Awareness

- Approval and non-approval of politicians in non-democratic regimes in private spheres of life
- Songs
- Jokes, anecdotes
- Rumors, gossips and city legends
- „Talking in kitchens” (idle small talks)
- The level of the political system’s refutation during demonstrations etc.
Hidden level of non-conformism in Contemporary Russia

- No song that approves Putin since March 2018
- More and more jokes about Putin
- The system's refutation according to moral criteria becomes widespread.

- E. g.:

Мало кто знает, что с первых дней своего президентства Владимир Путин поставил себе цель уничтожить США. Но пока он тренируется на России. (anekdot.ru)

Only few people know that from the first days of his presidency, Putin set himself a goal to destroy the United States. Meanwhile he uses Russia as a training ground.
Russia in a Saddle Point

Lilia Shevtsova: Russia is at the saddle point (August 2018)
Лилия Шевцова. МЕРТВАЯ ТОЧКА | Новости России

- In my point of view, Russia was at the saddle point between the military intervention in Syria (Sept. 2015) and March 2017
First lap of the ellipse of bifurcation

I. From March 2017 („On Wam nie Dimon” 28735550 views on You Tube) to summer of 2018 (pension reform)

II. Until March 2017 („On Wam nie Dimon”), the dispersed anti-system opposition acted mainly in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

III. From March 2017 to the announcement about the pension law (summer 2018) demonstrations in all major cities and many towns in Russia gathered more than 100,000 people.

IV. The scale of protests is below the threshold of mass social mobilization, but the followers of Navalny persistently can mobilize to protest in all significant Russian cities
Protests in March and June 2017
Second lap of the ellipse of bifurcation

I. In summer 2018 the increase in the awareness that the Kremlin broke the unwritten contract („sdielku”) -


silent consensus between the ruling class and the masses - we let you rule, you let us live - so our standard of living (including the level of using social rights) will not at least be worse.

II. The 9.IX. 2018 election (voting in four regions for anyone who is not from Jedinaja Russia) reveals the existence of a strive for spontaneous mass opposition to the ruling elite.

III. In February and March 2019 local parliaments changed election law in majority voting. The so-called „power party of first type” Jedinaja Rossija and other parties connected with the Kremlin are not yet useful at the regional level.
Conclusions

- The Russian ruling class cannot make significant self-corrections of its political regime ("revolution from above" is impossible).
- It is not possible to increase the system stability resources.
- The extent of „os” increases by leaps.
- The level of the bifurcation of the Russian political system is growing.
blue sky catastrophe
Thank you very much for your attention!

Any comments or opinions: backer@umk.pl