

The year 1991: a look at the events after 30 years

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THE END OF THE SOVIET ERA: ASSESSMENTS FROM A 30 YEARS DISTANCE (round table)

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Abstract. In December 2021, it has been 30 years since the end of the history of the USSR, but the Russian society has not yet decided on its attitude to this event, contradictory assessments are also given by social scientists. Continuing the discussion started in No. 8 of this year, the magazine organized a round table discussion in absentia, having invited social science experts representing different scientific and ideological fields to discuss issues about the events of 1991. Participants demonstrate the opinions and assessments range – from apologetic to critical.

Keywords: the USSR collapse • “real socialism” • socialist idea • social development • public consciousness • events of 1991

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Issues proposed for discussion:

1. How do you assess the 1991 events that resulted in the Soviet Union collapse and a change in the country political and economic course? What do they mean for Russia and the world? What positive and negative social consequences do they have?
2. The 1991 events are comprehended with various theoretical approaches. What theoretical environment, in your opinion, can lead to the deepest understanding of them?
3. In your opinion, to what extent have contemporary Russians accepted and legitimized the social economic and social political results of the 1991 events? Does the socialist idea have a "second chance" in Russia? Is it possible to recreate a multinational association in the Eurasia territory?
4. What role did domestic sociology play in the development and comprehension of the early 1990s events and their consequences?

M.F. CHERNYSH "Soviet cynics generation" threw out the baby with the water

1. In August 1991, just the day after the State Committee on the State of Emergency coup, my colleagues and I performed an express survey by telephone. Its non-trivial results were published hot on "hot scents" in the popular magazine "The XX Century and the World". The assertion that Russian society welcomed the State Committee on the State of Emergency crash appeared to be a serious exaggeration: only about a third of the respondents experienced victorious moods, 40% saw the news of the coup defeat deeply concerned. There was a premonition in the wind that the collapse of the power institutions and order would turn out to be grave consequences for Russia, for each of its citizens. The foreboding was true. Less than six months after the country where we were born, studied, lived and built hopes ceased to exist.

How to evaluate what happened? On the one hand, the logic of destructive processes benefits reapers is eloquently expressed in the title of one of the books of perestroika – "There is no other way."¹ (In fact, this is just a paraphrase from one of Margaret Thatcher's statements – "There is no alternative.") The meaning of this position can be expressed as follows: the entire sequence of events preceding this coup led precisely in this direction, the former USSR citizens were ordered by fate itself to accept what happened, since no alternatives were available. Such "tunnel" vision of the history easily makes its way post-factum as a strategy for justification of what happened. But when history is being created, the vector of events and possible consequences (including remote ones) is determined by the choice made by the direct participants of the dramatic events.

The 1991 events showed that during historical pivotal moments the Russian society divides into "deep people" and a "public" capable of releasing its active core. In the short term, the events outcome is not determined by the opinion of the "deep people" about desirable things, but by interaction between different political class factions, on the one hand, and the "public" represented by activists, movements, crowds, on the other hand.

The second conclusion after August 1991 events is that any historically important events have a moral foundation. A society can be considered solid when based on a common moral standard for everyone, a common moral discourse. The cynicism that prevailed among the elites affected the society destructively. An authority, which looks immoral to population, is vulnerable and, as T. Parsons said, can count on only two tools to bring the population to obedience – violence and deceit². These instruments are not only unreliable, but also destructive: large-scale violence burns out the development hubs in the society, condemning it to stagnation and subsequent crisis. Hanging in mid-air, with no counterbalances, the government makes new, more and more fatal mistakes, ultimately leading to a collapse. This collapse can drag the state itself into the abyss.

¹ There is no other way. Fates of perestroika. Peering into the past. Back to the future/under general editorship of Yu. Afanasiev. M.: "Progress", 1988.

² Parsons T. On the Concept of Political Power // Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society. 1963. Vol. 107. No. 3. P. 232–262.

The third conclusion from that time events is that any ideas presupposing continuous progressive development (the new system supposedly wins the old by higher labor productivity) have no solid empirical grounds. Indeed, evolution in some periods leads to a more complex institutional structure, but upward trends are replaced from time to time by downward ones, a degradation period starts, when society comes to the phase of archaization and decline.

The Soviet project failed because, due to internal reasons, to an immanent structure, at the decisive moment on August 19, 1991, it could not unite its proponents, mobilize the “street” convinced of the need to preserve it. Turning to the above mentioned study: the majority of Soviet citizens believed that order and preservation of the best of what had been created up to that moment were necessary. But they, the “deep people”, held the position of observers, not participants, and not inside, but outside the process that was gaining momentum and strength.

2. The dramatic 1991 events failed to become the subject of deep sociological analysis. Meanwhile, for sociologists who became living witnesses of the gigantic social cataclysms of the early 1990s, society in that state was a unique laboratory where new theoretical discourses could and should have been originated.

It seems that the most appropriate foundation for analyzing those events could be the institutional theory in its type, where institutions (“game rules”) are studied in dynamics, in the collapse and birth processes. In the book “How Do Institutions Think?” M. Douglas described special situations where the normalizing role of institutions is weakening, and the resulting gaps are filled with considerations of feasibility, intersubjective reality, that return players to a primordial state, when the norm is formed by ideas of parity and exchange³. Something similar happened in the Russian society in 1980s and 1990s, when the top layer of public consciousness was destroyed, bringing archaic, sometimes ancient, methods of survival and phobias to the fore.

In the “post-Soviet laboratory”, that the transit societies of the 1990s became, an experiment was performed to transplant Western social and economic institutions onto Russian ground, and it evidently failed. It was during this period that the ideology of “second hand purchase” prevailed. What may seem easier? However, in practice, institutions are not in the least universal specimens that can be transferred from one end of the globe to another, but sensitive and complex structures with meaning, that grow into cultural and semantic ground and mutate unpredictably in a different environment.

A legitimate question arises: how could the hard-fought, important achievements of Soviet society be displaced by weak, amorphous structures, just superficially and fragmentarily resembling the source which they were borrowed from? Partially the answer is found in the special complexes arising during the decay of communist ideology as the gap between its testimony values and the real situation increased.

Free space between the fires of communism dying out and the real conditions of life was filling with increasing consumer expectations. They formed a motive of the constant quest for comfortable living conditions, and for young representatives of the Russian elite it invariably ended in Western countries or at least in developing countries, where one could get what is impossible at home. To work abroad, to earn foreign currency, to obtain Vnesheposyltorg cheques – this has become a real desire for many representatives of a generation that has learned to regard their own country as “second-rate”, backward and inhuman. The Soviet system, focusing on achieving higher living standards, paradoxically created a gravedigger for itself – the next elite generation, that cherished the dream of a forbidden but so comfortable Western life. The Soviet system’s collapse and the surrender of entire Russian historical legacy was just a matter of time: the “Soviet cynics generation” finding themselves at the head of a weak Russian state, happily engaged in destroying and appropriation what had recently been considered common property. I would like to underline that this is exactly the elite and its generational evolution, which skeptically (sometimes with hate) judged the obvious restrictions

³ Douglas M. *How Institutions Think?* N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986. P. 31–45.

imposed on it by the Soviet system. It was the elites who directed the country to the course that led to August 1991, and ultimately to the country destruction.

3. It seems to me modern Russians think about the events of that time more and more rarely. Current needs more often overshadow the evaluations of the past, and the past itself is constructed and reconstructed on apace with what is happening today and creates today's tensions. The events of 1991 are already among the national myths: some people see it as a "big deception", in the eyes of others it is a "glorious time of freedom", "holy 90s". It is only fair to say that there are significantly more people considering what happened in the early 1990s as a "big deception" than those who feel nostalgic about the times of crisis and degradation.

It is difficult to present the process of legitimizing the USSR destruction as a conscious consensus, a formalized agreement or disagreement with what has already happened. Legitimation processes have at least three levels.

The first of them is acceptance at the everyday life level, consent to submit to new routine and domination forms. In this representation, the legitimation of the 1991 events results can be considered complete: the overwhelming majority of Russians accepted the new game rules, live according to them and align with them, defining the life priorities.

At the second level, an assessment of the existing order is performed from some arbitrarily determined judgment point, located, as a rule, in the "times of innocence", non-acquaintance with the future. In this case, the thoughts about the present, what hopes were justified and what were broken in a new unfriendly reality, play the role. At this level, the 1991 events are often assessed negatively, as a movement towards degradation, as a way of losses and not gains. In this context, resentment is cultivated about the irrevocable loss of production power, the destruction of the friendly union of cultures and peoples, which was replaced by parochial nationalisms, loss of the confidence spirit and serenity on the basis of the "developed socialism" social guarantees.

Finally, at the third level, legitimation occurs in the context of moral discourse, evidence of moral adjustment or its crisis. The picture is more variegated at this level. In most cases, the modern society moral foundations are assessed as unsteady; corruption, theft and cynicism have multiplied much since 1991. However, the "maturity" of society, overcoming the childish naive attitude towards oneself and the future is considered an obvious attainment. It is realized that each person has a bit of freedom, an area in which only he/she is free to decide. The idealism flourishing in the late 1980s that praised the "winds of change", became no longer possible. New realism, a post-Soviet era product, makes total manipulation of public opinion difficult or impossible in principle, although it does not completely cancel the possibility of behavior control with the help of proven tools – violence and deception.

4. During the past decades, the contemporary Russian sociology agenda has been formed mainly as a response to *current* challenges. Sociologists had no opportunity to move the events of the past away from themselves to the extent allowing to look at them with a cold, distant gaze. The reason perhaps is also that assessments of the 1991 events still use a purely political terminology.

As for the particular consequences of the 1991 radical turn, their main points are reflected in many sociological works, in Russia and abroad. What is meant here is the main trend accompanying the reforms – deepening of social disparity institutionalized in formal and informal norms.

Currently, numerous works appeared in which the reforms direction chosen in 1991 is assessed as archaization expressed in the formation of a semi-feudal, quasi estatist social structure. In this regard, it is quite pertinent to talk about the return of the social status differences fixed in culture and about the displacement of the universalists' principles and norms, characteristic of modern societies, from the circulation of public life. This is one of the unintended consequences of the 1991 events: the Soviet project collapse created, as collateral damage, a complete or partial refusal of the Enlightenment project in the form it was implemented in Russia in the XX century. In a certain way, it can be said that along with the shortcomings and vices attributed of the Soviet system, the baby was thrown out – achievements in the preservation and development of human capital represented by a developed education system, Big

Science, healthcare system (perhaps not the best one, but still more effective than the current one), social guarantees and “networks” that help to survive in a complex society.

Research showed that, contrary to expectations, the 1991 crisis launched social processes that undermine the social order in the new conditions, in the states that appeared on the debris of the Soviet system. This means that what happened *then* is worthy of deep and interested consideration to understand the state of modern Russian society and the changes taking place in it *now*.

I.N. TROFIMOVA In 1991 Russia has shocked the world again

1. The 1991 events “shocked the world” so much that even today they evoke contradictory assessments. Moreover, events of different nature happened during that year. If we try to find a common meaning in them, it is sooner seen in the attempt of Russian politics as a form of socio-political structure to find its place in new conditions.

Determination of the positive and negative consequences of the 1991 events depends on the time period and what value scale they are considered against.

Comparing “before” and “after”, it is difficult to overestimate the *positive* significance of the democratic upheaval that swept the country at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s: elimination of the state monopoly on ideology and information, growth of civic engagement, freedom of discussion, etc. Much of this turned into its opposite or imitation later. For example, democracy never became a priority value in Russian society⁴, but its norms and ideals are still relevant for understanding current processes and phenomena.

Negative consequences are associated, first of all, with the scale and depth of changes perceived as demolition, destruction of the usual order of things. Many of them became a new standard later, but some are still raise questions. Perhaps legitimization of the results of the unfair, in the opinion of most Russians, privatization and the dubious background of a part of the current elite is most acutely perceived. Gradually, with the replacement of generations, mass distrust to this issue will disappear, but it is possible that the memory of the 1991 events (especially against the background of increasing social stratification) can become part of the ideological justification for the need for new transformations.

2. The 1991 events have many story lines, each of which is the subject of a separate discussion, but in general different conceptual frameworks are suitable for the analysis of the situation: democratic transition, transformation processes, liberal reforms, a trauma society, etc. An important part of them is the matter of condition and dynamics of public consciousness.

Sociological and political science literature has a practically ubiquitous conclusion about the long term duality of Russian public consciousness and its conflicting effects on public choice⁵. A. In this respect, Auzan aptly notes⁶ that the adherers of the opposite – traditionalist and modernist – values generate opposite requests to the authorities, and their opposition prevents formation of a consensus project for the country’s future. It has been seen for at least half a century. Such confrontation is traced in the events of 1991 and thereafter. But over the past 30 years of social transformation, society has changed, too: it has never been segmented and heterogeneous so much as now⁷. What is the nature of the discrepancy between the

⁴ Twenty-five years of social transformations in assessments and judgments of Russians/Ed. by M.K. Gorshkov, V.V. Petukhov. M.: The whole world, 2018. p. 140.

⁵ A.S. Akhiezer Russia: criticism of historical experience. T. 1–3. M.: Philos. society, 1992; S.V. Patrushev, L.E. Filippova Dualism of mass consciousness and typology of mass policy // Political Science. 2017. No. 1. p. 13–37; The mind at a crossroads. Public consciousness between past and future/Ed. by Yu.A. Krasin (ed. in chief), A.B. Veber, A.A. Galkin. M.: Aspect Press, 2017; Zh.T. Toshchenko Trauma of the society: between evolution and revolution//Political studies. 2017. No. 1. p. 70–84; and other.

⁶ A. Auzan The third attempt // Gorbachev. Lesson of freedom. Collected papers, ed. in chief R.S. Greenberg. M.: The whole world, 2021. p. 46–51.

⁷ M.K. Gorshkov On the social results of post-Soviet transformations//Sociological research. 2019. No. 11. P. 15.

society heterogeneity, on the one hand, and the continuing duality and partial confrontation of public consciousness, on the other hand, how it functions and what is its significance – these are the questions that could be interesting when analysing events of 1991 and subsequent years. Will the pendular/cyclical nature of Russian transformations be substituted by progressive development without abrupt ruptures and transitions? Obviously, the search for an answer to these questions should unite representatives of different sciences.

3. Assessments of direct participants and contemporaries of the events, although may change over time, are more personal, reflect the hopes and frustrations of 1991 and the subsequent changes. Future generations will sooner perceive these events indifferently. For example, today's youth most often take the collapse of the USSR with indifference, as an accomplished and irreversible fact significant for the older generations rather than for the young⁸. Almost half of young people under 30 cannot evaluate market reforms and the State Committee of the State of Emergency⁹.

As for the socialist idea "second chance", one should distinguish here between the social system, political technologies and the public ideal. Socialism as a socio-economic system based on public ownership of the means of production has discredited itself (at least in its Soviet version). By contrast, socialism as a dream of social equality and justice will always live in society, finding both sincere proponents and those who use it for practice – political strategists, public propagandists, unnoticeable beneficiaries within the elite. After all, socialism in Russia is an ideology that can be fitted somehow by the adult population of the country to their personal experience and compare with the current situation. According to the results of the monitoring by the Institute of Sociology (2018), 38% of Russians positively regard everything related to the word "socialism", another 51% assess it neutrally and only 8% – negatively. At the same time, such words as "capitalism", "conservatism" and "liberalism" are spoken favourably about by only 11% of Russians.

4. The attitude of society to those events and consequences thereof has always been in the high light for sociologists. Studying the dynamics of processes, identifying and analyzing the changes taking place in society, and prediction of the future situation were specially emphasized¹⁰. The fact that different sociological centers represent different ideological currents and approach differently the collection, analysis and interpretation of empirical data, can also be considered a great advantage of Russian sociology – the state has what to choose from and what to rely on to define and justify the development goals.

To understand the role of sociology in Russian society, it is best to use the words of B.A. Grushin: "The main cause of all the mistakes made by the reformers, all their failures are the flagrant discrepancy between their proposed strategies of behaviour and the actual characteristics of the social matter called Soviet society of 1917–1991"¹¹. Unfortunately, these words, when adjusted for the current state of Russian society, are still relevant today.

N.I. LAPIN Transit of the Russian population to a different interaction culture and massification of traumas

1. Laconic assessment of the 1991 events can be expressed as follows: there were chances for different options, but hardly the best¹²

⁸ L. Gudkov, N. Zorkaya, E. Kochergina, K. Pipiya, A. Ryseva "Generation Z" in Russia: attitudes and values. M.: Phil. association "Friedrich Ebert Foundation", 2020. P. 77.

⁹ Twenty-five years of social transformations in assessments and judgments of Russians. P. 112, 115.

¹⁰ See, for example: L. Gudkov "A Soviet man" through all the regimes. Thirty years of research project //Dismantling of communism. Thirty years later. Edited by K. Rogov. Moscow: New Literary Review, 2021. pp. 268–297.

¹¹ B.A. Grushin Change of civilizations?// Free thought. 1991. No. 18. p. 27–29.

¹² See for more detail: N.I. Lapin Complexity of formation of a new Russia. M.: Anthropolociocultural approach. The Whole World, 2021.

2. The author¹³ has already shown before that doubts about the meaning of such abstractions as “socialism”, “capitalism”, “market economy” and “human rights” are increasing in the mass consciousness of population. Sociology and the social sciences in general begin to understand the complexity of the evolution of a human and human communities, the need for approaches allowing for more convincing interpretations of realities.

As a metatheoretical principle for the study of man and his communities, I justified the *anthroposociocultural (ASC) approach*, and also introduced double limitation of application (for consideration of the results obtained as (a) not universal (b) hypotheses). The following provisions from the “desktop” contain the search not only for ideas and methods, but also for an adequate language to present them.

One of the key hypotheses is understanding of the *interaction culture* between people and with the society state as a source of changes that happened in Russia. To study this is especially significant for understanding the meanings of radical transformation, when the former institutions collapsed, and the population was in the position of individuals interacting with each other and with the society state simply as people, having their virtues and vices.

Collapse of USSR and the so-called reforms became, in their human content, a catastrophic anthropo-socio-cultural trauma for the entire population of the RSFSR/Russia and other ex-Soviet republics¹⁴. While losing identification with the former institutionalized interaction ways, the population of Russia, not always realizing this, created new ways of interaction perceived in their immediate human aspect, without correlating with impersonal symbols (“socialism”, “capitalism”, etc.). The value meanings of the methods of interaction (their justice-injustice) sooner came to the fore, assessments such as “chaos”, “no code”, “gangsterism”, etc. became popular.

What was USSR like before the collapse and what interaction culture of the population of Russia emerged in the processes of post-Soviet changes? If we use the institutional diagnostics terms, the most common in this alphabet will be *transit*, more precisely, a hybrid-reverse transit. From where – to what? From elite of functionaries-state (totalitarian) socialism to “democracy and market economy”, as “foremen” of perestroika and postperestroika “catastroika” put it (A. Zinoviev). The following steps of this transit can be singled out: 1) shock privatization for the sake of creating a “crony capitalism” (1992–1999); 2) its modernization into “capitalism for the chosen ones” (since 1999) and 3) “capitalism for the executives” (since 2008). It was a transition **from** the allmightiness of the powerful elite of functionaries, which had actual access to the use of the means of production and its income, treating ordinary citizens, alienated from these funds and income, as virtually deprived of rights and dependent. The initial position of the transit was the *routine-totalitarian, socially symbiotic, pseudo equal civil culture of interactions* between the powerful and executive layers of population, which hid behind a totalitarian propagandized ideology of high civic and moral values of the “communism builders”.

Shock privatization and the declared transition **to** the market economy meant a repeated (after the reforms of Alexander II) *reverse attempt to turn to establishing a private possession culture of interaction for population* – not in its entirety (as in the 19th century), but in its specific clans having power or close to it, i.e. at the expense of the majority of the population.

3. Today the productive potential of the hybrid-reverse transit is exhausted. The processes of stagnating reproduction prevailed in the economy and in other fields of society. Recent amendments to the Constitution cemented these processes. Consequently, 2020 can be considered the contingent completion of the post-Soviet transit and the beginning of the functioning of the *other relatively independent society* – a post-transit one, with a multi-structured economy and a sovereign state-power, the internal functions of which are limited to the initial forms of a legal, socially weak state of minimum population welfare.

¹³ See for instance: N.I. Lapin Anthroposociocultural evolutionism – a meta-theoretical principle of human communities study// Sociological research. 2018. No. 3. p. 3–14.

¹⁴ In this regard, I would like to underline the significant initiative of Zh.T. Toshchenko, who introduced the problem of the trauma society into Russian sociological discourse.

For the emerging society, the deep-rooted massification of anthroposociocultural traumas of the population is essential. Its main two spheres are as follows.

First, the contrasting income inequalities. The three-layer, rhomboid structure of the population's income is indicative – with contrasting edges and a significant middle: 1) the lower macrostratum – the poor and the beggars; 2) middle – the middle class and all the wealthy; 3) upper – rich and super-rich people. Extreme discrepancies between deciles exceed 15 times. I would like to emphasize that this is not only the stratification of the *incomes* of individuals, but also a differentiation by the share of the population's macrostrata in the budget of the country and its regions, and indirectly, their influence on the authorities' budgetary policy¹⁵.

Secondly, the *absence of demand* for the cultural potential of the small homeland of Russians – residents of the regions of the Russian Federation: persistent shortage of high qualification jobs, work of many people (especially young) not in their specialty, immaturity of the national innovation system at the regional level. All these indicate of the most massive trauma of the population of Russia, dangerous for its destiny. This is evidenced by the social and cultural portraits of almost a third of the regions obtained by our interregional program participants and many other researchers.

At the same time, according to mass polls data, the majority of Russians have spontaneously adapted to changes and passively accept the society that arose to a great extent due to the culture of interactions of the population itself. It is necessary to acknowledge the preservation and revival of the long-established routine-proprietary and socio-symbiotic, finally traumatic, nature of the civil-social interactions culture (especially the dependence of the subordinate, performing population layers on the power elites, political and economic), complicated by degradation of the general culture, including education and science.

Summing up, I'd like to be more specific about the emerging society characteristics: it is a Russian-Eurasian socially symbiotic society with a sovereign state-power and a multi-structured economy. It quite successfully performs complex external functions of ensuring sovereignty and security, but its internal functions are limited by the traumatic, routine civil and social interactions culture of population (especially between the power elites and the performing strata).

The post-transit society faces historical tasks of evolution towards a socially strong and humanistically oriented state of the population's welfare. This makes the task of replacement of the existing interaction culture population with a more complex, *innovative-creative, composite-owner culture of interactions*, acutely needed. Such replacement can be performed as a *general civil self-education*, mainly through changing the content of the existing *socialization and resocialization* channels of population. The maximum possible assistance to these processes is, to my mind, the main task of the social sciences and the humanities.

4. I see the prospects of Russia more as a state civilization. We are talking about its active role in the creation and development of a friendly *Eurasian Civilizations Union* (in the locus of "Russian Eurasia", the European and Asian territories of the Soviet Union), and the wider *Eurasia Civilizations Congress* as a continent in general, including several centers of its peculiar civilizations (Western European, Russian, Muslim, Chinese and Indian).

At this level, the main problem is the dominance of the *interests of states* expressing the private-proprietary interests of the classes dominating in the societies, contradicting the terminal values and norms of the civilizations' semantic spheres and constantly creating threats of military conflicts. According to preliminary results of the research by Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences on the "Russian project of civilizational development", the needs of survival and development of a man and all mankind in the setting of global threats require to increase the role of the emerging noosphere of the anthropo-inhabited planet in defining and implementing the goals of international politics of states.

¹⁵ For more details see: N.I. Lapin, V.A. Ilyin, M.V. Morev Extreme inequalities and the welfare state. Parts 1 and 2 // Sociological research. 2020. No. 1. p. 4–17; No. 2. p. 20–30.

A.N. OLEINIK "Socialism" has gone, "empire" has remained

3. Questions about existence of the "second chance" for the socialist idea in Russia and the possibility of recreation of a multinational union in the Eurasian space imply an attempt to forecast trends for the near future. However, reputation of forecasts in the social sciences and humanities is doubtful, and the 1991 events became one of the most striking confirmation of their limited efficacy. Nevertheless, these matters are not only of practical but also of methodological interest: what research methods can be used to answer them (of course, while being aware of the error possibility)?

Large text data context analysis appears to be one of such methods. This research method is actively applied by economists to predict macroeconomic indicators dynamics, the economic growth rate¹⁶. The case is to monitor the dynamics and tone of news messages, and on this basis conclusions are made about the currently prevailing moods. If optimism prevails, growth is probable, and manifestations of pessimism indicate an approaching stagnation or crisis.

The questions raised are more specific than the task of identifying the optimistic and pessimistic news/comments ratio. They can be answered by tracking the comparative dynamics in textual big data of a number of concepts – "socialism" and alternative ideologies (such as "liberalism") for the first issue, "empire" and "nation state" for the second one. Scientific electronic databases (eLibrary for scientific literature in Russian and Web of Science for the one in English), as well as the Google Book Ngram Viewer service can be used as big text data sources¹⁷.

The dynamics of ideological concepts in the Google Book Ngram was tracked at the first stage. The list for answering the first question was founded by such ideologies as "marxism", "socialism", "liberalism", "orthodoxy" and "islam". The list for answering the second question included various alternative state structure foundations in the Eurasian space: "nation state", "national idea", "nationalism", "eurasianism" and "empire". It seems the conflict between the empire and the nation state, as alternative state structure foundations, will determine the dynamics of processes in the Eurasian space for the nearest future¹⁸. Taking into consideration that the relative frequency of some concepts changed synchronously over time (socialism – marxism, nationalism – the nation state), the further analysis used only the concepts most popular in the literature (in the listed pairs, they are specified first).

At the second stage, concepts relative frequency dynamics was analyzed both in the Google Book Ngram and in scientific electronic databases. Relative frequency here means the number of references to a concept divided by the total number of words in the indexed books or by the total number of documents contained in the scientific electronic database (due to the obtained values insignificance, they were multiplied by 10⁶). The data on total number of documents published during a given year is not available in eLibrary. Alternatively, the number of documents in the sphere of social sciences in general (code 00.00.00) was used by year of their publication (the obtained values were multiplied by 10⁴).

Considering long-term trends (Google Book Ngram covers the 1800–2019 period), the relative frequency of all the selected concepts approached peak values in two time periods: after the revolution in 1917 and in the 1920s, as well as from the late 1980s to the beginning of 2010. Apparently, these very periods can be considered the time of the most active ideological discussions and deliberations of state structure options. After 2005 interest in the selected concepts declined, and after 2010 this decline has taken particularly distinct forms in all the cases except the concept of "empire".

¹⁶ See, for example: D. Konoplev Asymmetry of information waves in economic thinking: the experience of financial crises // *Economic matters*, 2020. No. 1. p. 111–126; K. Yakovleva Economic activity assessment based on text analysis (economic research report series). M.: Bank of Russia, 2010.

¹⁷ These sources have certain limitations and disadvantages: eLibrary is significantly less selective than Web of Science, and Google Books was originally oriented to solving tasks different from big text data content analysis.

¹⁸ A. Oleinik A national state and an empire: the demand for projects in Russia and Ukraine // *Social sciences and modern times*. 2018. No. 2. pp. 140–159.

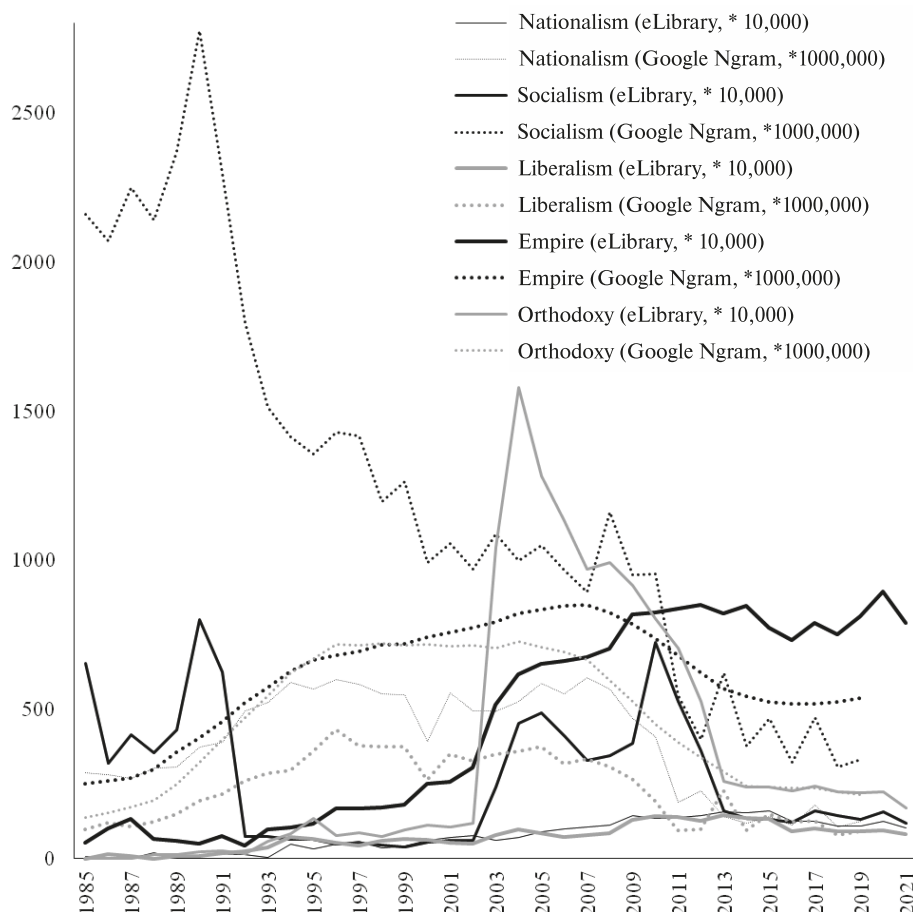


Fig. 1. Relative frequency of mentioning socialism, liberalism, Orthodoxy, nationalism and empire in Russian-language scientific publications and books, 1985–2021.

Source: hereinafter – eLibrary, Web of Science and Google Book Ngram as of 09.21.2021 and the author's calculations.

Note. The total number of unique words in the indexed books (Google Ngram), publications (Web of Science), and social science publications (eLibrary) was used as the base.

Since the round table is aimed at comprehending the early 1990s events and their consequences, the period from 1985 (the start of perestroika) to 2021 was analyzed in more detail. "Empire" is the only one among the considered concepts showing a steady rising trend in scientific publications and in books (Fig. 1). This tendency is confirmed by comparing relative frequencies of the selected concepts in the literature in Russian and English (Fig. 2). The data shown in Fig. 1 were correlated with similar data for texts in English for the same period. In most cases, the selected concepts are mentioned more often in English texts than in Russian ones. For instance, in 2020 "socialism" was mentioned in eLibrary 2 times less often than in the Web of Science, "liberalism" – 3 times less often, and "nationalism" – 5 times less often. "Empire" shows a completely different picture: this concept in 2020 was mentioned in eLibrary 850 times more often, although in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s the gap was even greater.

The decline in interest towards all the other ideologies, except the imperial one, indicates, on the one hand, the insignificance of the chances for revival of the socialist idea in Russia and,

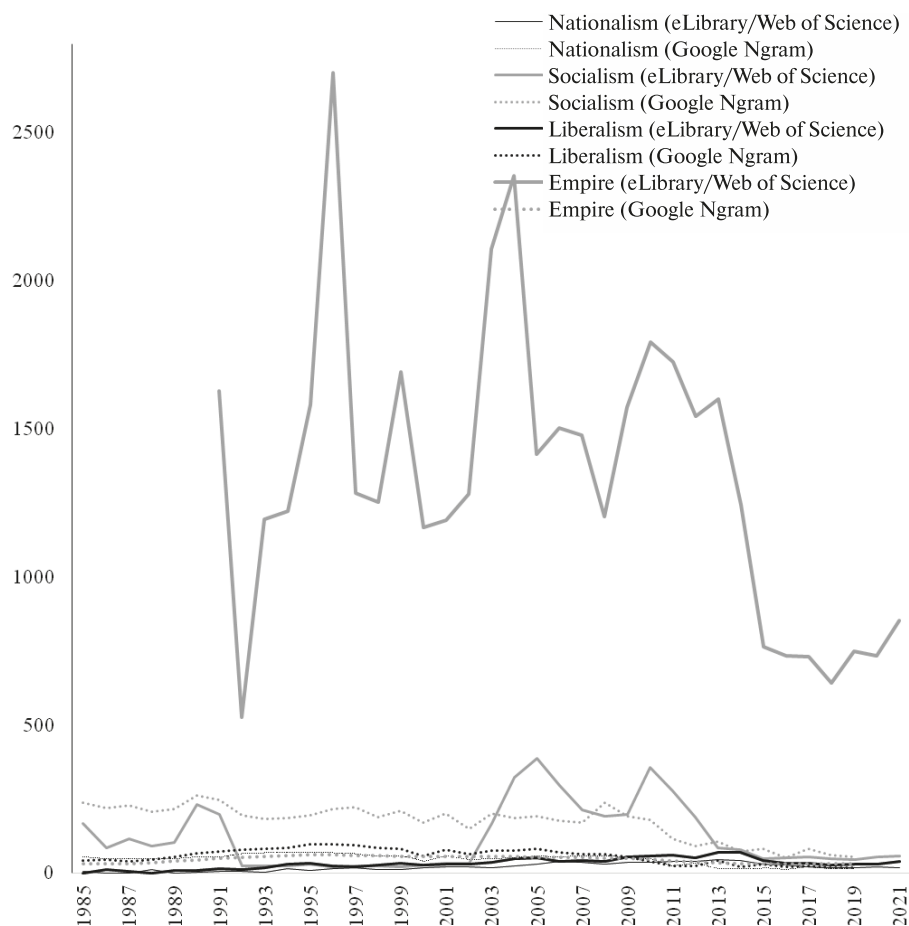


Fig. 2. The relative frequencies ratio for mentioning socialism, liberalism, nationalism and empire in Russian and English scientific publications and books, 1985–2021.

on the other hand, high probability of the empire revival in this or that form in the Eurasian area. The scientific community can play an important role in this process, as evidenced by the apparent scientific interest towards the empire concept. In this regard, the words of one of the characters of Gorky's "Life of Klim Samgin" can be recalled: "Russia is still not a nation, and I am afraid that it will have to shake itself up again as it was shaken up at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Then we will be a nation – probably."

V.L. INOZEMTSEV The USSR collapse is the end of the World War

1. I would venture a remark that the decline and collapse of the Soviet Union became the most interesting socio-political event in the second half of the twentieth century from a conceptual point of view. It combined two parallel processes: on the one hand, the crisis of an inefficient industrial economy against the background of accelerating technological progress and post-industrial transition, and on the other hand, the crisis of the imperial model policy in the era of national and religious identities awakening. The first was not fatal – awareness of the catch-up development necessity came to many societies. The second, however, appeared to be insurmountable. No system could cope with two transformations simultaneously – and

the Soviet one was not an exception. A thorough analysis of the events that happened 30 years ago and to this day remains an important task for sociologists, far from being solved.

The significance of the communist experiment end and the decay of the USSR is great, but it should not be overestimated. No global trend was broken by this event: technological changes continued and grew even faster; globalization extended to the former Soviet republics without changing its character; conflicts on the periphery of the world did not disappear with the end of the Cold War, and so on. As per the logic of large historical cycles, the USSR disintegration ended the series of conflicts started by the First World War, i.e. drew a line under the War of the World that Niall Ferguson writes about¹⁹. I consider leaving this period to be the main positive consequence of those events.

The social consequences of what happened must be assessed globally and locally. The USSR collapse globally meant the end of the Cold War. It also showed that inefficient social systems cannot last forever, launching a powerful wave of democratization and openness. Competition between countries intensified acutely after the changes in the early 1990s, the world economy started to grow significantly faster. At the same time, for the citizens of the former Soviet Union, its disintegration appeared to be fraught with a serious living standards decline and multiple conflicts that have not ended till the present day. However, the latter was due to selfish and/or incompetent actions of the post-Soviet leaders. Thus, I assess the events at the turn of the 1980–1990s as inevitable. The collapse of the Soviet Union did occur *not despite*, but partly *within* the framework of the *strategy* of the then current government, and partly with its *permissiveness*, and this made it relatively soft and bloodless.

2. The break-up of the USSR as a single country should be analyzed within the framework of the (post) colonialism concept. Dismantling of the planned economy and democratization of political life themselves are not fatal for a state. The problem of the USSR was that its leaders had convinced themselves of a certain peculiarity of their country, considering it a European type national state, and not a colonial empire. The “new historical community of people” concept determined the wrong priorities of perestroika: instead of restructuring the empire and forming a confederation, after which to appeal to economic and political reforms, the reforms were launched in Moscow without understanding the national factor explosiveness.

Therefore, the USSR collapse *did not* take place in the context of struggle between capitalism and socialism, or between democracy and dictatorship. By the end of its existence, the Soviet Union was indeed already transitioning to a market economy, and all democratic elections that led to a change in the country's leadership were held in the USSR in 1989–1991, while in post-Soviet Russia there is not a single case of the opposition peacefully rising to power. As with any empire decay, new national identities and mythologies used by politicians in the struggle against the center became the mainstream in the periphery. The system could not survive within growing economic difficulties.

The main problem that remained after the collapse of the USSR was exactly the same imperial structure of the new Russia. The Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation consisted and still consist of a metropolis with poorly defined borders, settlement colonies in Siberia and the Far East, where representatives of the titular nation constitute the majority of the population, and territories of the North Caucasus militarily annexed in the relatively recent past, with a minimal Russian population²⁰. Unlike Britain or France, which lost their colonies, and even unlike Turkey and Austria, which reduced territorially at the beginning of the XX century, Russia did not turn into a national state, but remained a miniature empire – with the entire spectrum of post-imperial complexes at the same time. To put it differently, the problematic nature of the collapse of the USSR is in the fact that it forced the population to endure all the hardships

¹⁹ N. Ferguson *The War of the World: History's Age of Hatred*, London: Allen Lane, 2006.

²⁰ For more details see: A. Abalov, V. Inozemtsev. *An Endless Empire: Russia in Search for Itself*. M.: Alpina Publishers, 2021.

and complexes of the empire disintegration, but at the same time it did not bring the liberation of the metropolis from the former colonies and the rethinking itself as a modern national state.

3. Adoption of the changes has happened quite successfully in the *social and economic aspect*, but not in the *geopolitical* one. Today, the majority of Russian citizens have adapted to the realities of the market economy, accustomed to new social relations, and feel good in the open world. I think this is confirmed by the fact that in the last quarter of a century serious protests in Russian society have never been generated by systemic *economic* problems, unlike in Western European countries with a powerful movement of citizens precisely for economic rights. As for politics and mythology, the success is much less here: imperial complexes and the concepts of “nationhood” and “autarchy” are deeply entrenched in Russia. Both points are understandable: indeed, “imperialism” existed in the country for several centuries, and the planned economy existed for about 70 years.

However, I do not see a “second chance” for the socialist idea implementation. In the modern world, the political left do not reflect the interests of a worker, but of any minority (the poor, migrants, representatives of ethnic and religious communities). Their goals are not giving people back what was taken from them, but to give them what is due to them based on abstract concepts of human rights. Such an ideology is acceptable in societies with an extremely high level of material well-being, and the majority of the population is brought up to feel guilt towards the rest of mankind. Nothing of the kind is available in Russia now, and it is difficult to imagine it. Revival of the same leftist idea in the repartition categories of the XIX century is now so out of date that I would definitely not wait for it.

A new multinational association prospects also look more or less illusory. One can see today that relatively successful associations of this kind are formed either by culturally and historically former metropolis areas close to each other (like the European Union, which largely helped the imperial centers to survive the post-imperial syndrome), or by the countries that fought against empires (Latin American Mercosur) or didn't belonging to imperial nations (Asian ASEAN). The world does not know examples of integration of a former metropolis and its colonies. This is quite explainable, as the identity of the new states is based on the *opposition* to the former metropolis. An additional factor is proportions of Russia itself, that for objective reasons cannot build relations with the former Soviet republics as with equals. Finally, from economic viewpoint, integration requires countries which convergence can generate economy of scale, but in the post-Soviet area “adding” other countries to Russia, constituting not more than 15% of its own economy, is unable to bring any synergy. Therefore, even without talking of the Kremlin's tactical inability to implement the integration scenario, I think no serious objective basis is available for it.

The main problem of today's post-Soviet countries is their inability to go beyond the Soviet achievements and the desire to constantly correlate themselves with the ideal locating *in the past*, not in the *future*. Dynamism of the Soviet Union, like the dynamism of any country that was implementing a *revolutionary* development strategy, was based on the rejection of tradition and the maintenance of dominance of the future over the past. In modern Russia, this almost universal success strategy, tested in dozens of countries, has been clean forgotten.

V.P. MAKARENKO From nostalgia for the USSR – to understanding of Soviet society.

1. It is feasible to consider fluctuation of political and economic courses in the history of the USSR/post-Soviet Russia as a consequence of dictatorial, authoritarian, ideological and authority-managerial aberrations of the country's leadership, its dependence on the political conjuncture, including on the measure of political and institutional high-handedness in each specific decision. All these parameters are easy to identify applying the methods and concepts of theories of international relations, comparative history and political conceptology to the study of the Russian political history.

Post-communism theory began to shape after a round table of government and “Solidarity” in Poland in 1989. At the beginning of 1990 already, the initial block of ideas for the post-communist institutionalization policy was formulated. It consists of three horizons:

— “long time periods”, defining the complex of challenges faced by the USSR and other countries of Eastern Europe after the communist corset shedding;

— the Soviet-communist formation legacy, analyzed from the point of view of dependence on the path of development, influencing the post-communist institutionalization processes in each country;

— the growth of self-organization processes – the emergence of a multitude of actors engaged in creation of the current post-communist order, associated with the division of resources forming the basis of the current structural power in each country.

The post-communist institutionalization policy depends on a sober accounting of all the constraints that have arisen within the said three horizons. Therefore, it is inappropriate to single out 1991 individually as a special temporal caesura.

A proposal to consider the events of the last 30 years in the context of the universal process of the disintegration of empires (Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, British, German empires) during the XIX–XX centuries can be a fragment of the theory of post-communism. Since it is not yet clear how to measure the effect of this process on all aspects of social life (including political imagination of current and potential politicians), it is possible to apply the political context theory as a substitute.

It is also necessary to talk about a special emotional background accompanying the processes of the empires collapse – from Homeric laughter to various resentments. The list of questions proposed by the editors itself evidences that a feeling of sadness over the collapse of the USSR, especially over the Soviet version of “socialism,” penetrated into sociology as well. But why not be glad that the USSR collapsed not due to the military defeat of the country, but under the influence of less destructive factors, instead of feeling sad over the collapse of the USSR?

4. Domestic sociology could not play a significant role in the development and comprehension of the events of the early 1991, since the legitimate opposition and stable mass movements traditions have not yet developed in the USSR and post-Soviet Russia, which provide for formation of various traditions of citizens’ political identity. The time of such traditions formation cannot be determined. Russia needs diversification of the entire range of humanities based on the prospects for the complication of the social and professional structure and formation of research needs in each cell of it, free from influence of moneybags, government orders and market conditions. It is necessary to cultivate and publicly represent critical attitude to any government initiatives, implementation of which does not make it possible to leave the state of permanent internal and external political crises.

It is important to pay attention to the terminology used to discuss the events of the turn of the 1980s – 1990s. In particular, the frequently used term “collapse” has a hidden focus on finding the culprit, which means when this term is used in sociological mode, we immediately get into the circle of engaged publicism. Meanwhile, when discussing the problem “Where is Russia moving to?” at seminars by T.I. Zaslavskaya in the 1990s, the term “disintegration” was used, referring rather to natural processes, and not to the political qualification of the ongoing processes.

Long-term concentrated efforts are required to obtain truly scientific knowledge about the processes of the empires collapse, including the USSR. At the same time, it is necessary to bypass the conscious policy of nostalgia for the USSR imposed by the present propaganda machine.

V.V. DAMIE The collapse of the Soviet Union is winding up of the “USSR Concern”

1, 2. Analysis of what happened to the Soviet Union is closely related to understanding the very Soviet society nature.

It was assessed already in the 1920–1940s as “state capitalism”, where the party, state and technical bureaucracy plays the role of the bourgeoisie of the “normal” capitalism. In the Soviet variant, only a concentrated manifestation of the global trend towards a more “organized”

capitalism was seen²¹. At the same time, some authors, both then and later, associated the establishment of such a model with the ruling elites needs for an accelerated and consolidated industrial-capitalist modernization²². Soviet science also raised the question of the forced industrialization effects in the USSR, during the perestroika period²³. However, to understand the development trends and features of the Soviet society functioning, the approaches that were formulated within the framework of the theories of state capitalism and forced modernization, need one more element – the concept of an unspoken social compromise as a special form of the Soviet social state²⁴.

The author of these lines has previously tried to summarize and synthesize these approaches²⁵. Analogies are allowable between the Soviet model and a large capitalist corporation principles of organization and functioning. The tasks of the “USSR Corporation” consisted in the forced destruction of traditional social structures, creation of the foundations and further development of an industrial society with industrialization characteristic of it, colonization of village, urbanization, dissemination of knowledge necessary to perform industrial work, etc. Acceleration of the process presupposed the extreme concentration of economic and political power, as well as the extreme brutality of compulsory measures. In spite of tough protectionism, the “Corporation” actively entered the external market, participated in the world capitalist division of labour and fought with competitors for a place in the capitalist world system. At the same time, the economy was based on the hired labour of urban and countryside workers for the concern-state.

Thus, the USSR is a society where pre-capitalist, early capitalist and developed capitalist elements were whimsically mixed. The ruling stratum/class, determining the policy, directed the economy and distributed the obtained profits, was constituted by “managers” of this Corporation – party, government, production officials, the repressive apparatus officers, etc.

However, the implementation of internal tasks (ensuring economic growth for obtaining profit and privileges) and external tasks (achievement of victory over competitors in the world system) encountered growing contradictions and conflicts within the USSR. Forced growth presupposed the preservation of the ruling class unity, readiness to sacrifice private and group interests for the betterment of the Corporation as a whole, on the one hand, and constant increase in the profits volume and size, and, consequently, production tasks and norms, on the other hand. But the further, the more problems grew, both “from the top” and “from the bottom”.

Managerial bureaucracy class constantly tended to form internal interest groups (both departmental and territorial). These phenomena had to be fought by repressions and “shaking up” of staff, until bureaucratic groupings achieved a certain stability in their position (“stagnation”) after the victory of the “middle level of the elite of functionaries” in the late 1950s and cancellation of “voluntarism” of N.S. Khrushchev. At the same time, constant ballooning of production standards and the resulting exploitation of hired labor in the early 1960s encountered rigid boundaries. After a series of riots, workers’ strikes and uprisings (not only in Novocherkassk in 1962), the “USSR Concern” leadership was forced to agree to a secret and unofficial “social compromise” with the workers, henceforth refraining from rigorous increases of production standards, as well as to agree to general increase of wages, active subsidizing of prices for food, communal services, etc. Significant expansion of social policy in the form of a specific version of the “social state” occurred.

²¹ R. R. R. Die Rationalisierung der Wirtschaft und die Arbeiterklasse. Berlin: Der Syndikalist, 1927; Voline V. Fascisme rouge // Ce qu'il faut dire. 1934. No.2. Juillet et al.

²² Harper J. (Pannekoek A.) Lenin als Philosoph. Amsterdam: Gruppe Internationaler Kommunisten in Holland, 1938; Marcuse H. Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958; Kurz R. Der Kollaps der Modernisierung. Frankfurt a.M.: Eichborn Verlag, 1991; Rubel M. La Perestroïka ou la nostalgie du capitalisme // Economies et Sociétés – Cahiers ISMEA. 1991. T.25. No. 6–7. Juin – juillet. P. 17–60; and others

²³ See, for example: Simoniia N.A. What we have built. M.: Progress, 1991

²⁴ Das Ende des sowjetischen Entwicklungsmodells. Berlin; Göttingen: Schwarze Risse; Rote Strasse, 1992; Cook L.J. The Soviet Social Contract and Why It Failed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

²⁵ V.V. Damie The Steel Age: the social history of Soviet society. M.: LIBROKOM, 2013.

The further, the more the inability of the bureaucratic administration mechanism to fulfill the tasks set since the 1960s by the third industrial revolution became apparent. Consequently, the Soviet model crisis began to increase. Competitiveness in the world market was rapidly reducing: the Soviet Union in the 1970s – 1980s turned from the exporter of equipment into the exporter of raw materials, primarily fuel. The production and labor productivity growth rates failed to keep pace with the wages growth more and more, and then began to decline. The situation was aggravated by enormous military expenses to maintain and expand positions during the competitive struggle in the world system. In other words, the forcing methods were no longer efficient, and the modernization project was in a deep crisis. The drop of world oil prices in the early 1980s put the lid on.

The new administration headed by M.S. Gorbachev tried to find a way out by saving costs (including the reform of pricing) and intensifying labour, that is, increasing its exploitation level ("acceleration"). The expansion of the market mechanisms was also supposed to strengthen the power and economic opportunities of the directors' corps and departmental elites, and decentralization was supposed to increase the powers of regional nomenklatura groups.

However, the perestroika policy failed. The workers answered to the intensification and price reforms with a powerful wave of strikes. New social movements (ecological, quarterly, workers', etc.) with a strong self-governmental potential started to emerge and spread. In turn, a growing desire to change the methods of management and economic exploitation was within the ruling class itself. A Soviet official-manager could pander to the limitations of his private accumulation of property as long as he could count on an increase in income from the total growth of the economy, but not within a deepening recession. The ruling class partly started develop the plans for termination of the "social compromise" and the division of the single property of the "USSR Concern" in the name of "transition to the market." The "democratic" faction of the elite of functionaries that adopted this course, entered a coalition with the nationalist movements in the republics and simultaneously tried to "tame" and use the new social movements activists. Ultimately, this line prevailed: in 1991, the "USSR Concern" was wound up, and its property was divided between bureaucratic and oligarchic groups.

It is difficult to assess the results of these events unambiguously after as much as 30 years. The working people gained more access to consumer goods, but the hopes for emergence of a developed social state completely failed. The countries of the former Soviet Union went through massive impoverishment in the 1990s and rolled down to the semi-periphery or even the periphery of the world system, and the level of social stratification topped all records. Capitalism is of a distinctly oligarchic character in almost all of the former Soviet republics. Moreover, at present we face a progressive dismantling of the last available social services in healthcare and education, retirement age increase, etc. The failure of the social movements of 1980s to implement another (self-governing) alternative, made such development in many respects inevitable. Possible socialistic perspectives in the future are connected only with the self-government alternative

A. YA. DEGTYAREV²⁶ Indigenization of staff is the root cause of the USSR collapse

2. Thousands of publications are dedicated to the main geopolitical cataclysm of recent decades – disintegration of the USSR. But only a small number of works (V.A. Tishkov, B.N. Mironov, R.G. Pikhoya, Yu.L. Slezkin and some others²⁷) investigated the underlying causes of this collapse. It is a case of ethnic-political aspects, formation of national elites in the union republics and, most importantly, the results of the policy of so-called indigenization.

Indigenization was the practical implementation of the internationalism principle, which is the cornerstone of the communist ideology during the entire Soviet period. The ideas of the policy proclaimed by the Bolsheviks gave abundant and very positive shoots for the Union republics

²⁶ In 1991 – head of the CPSU Central Committee ideological department.

²⁷ See, for example: B.N. Mironov From indigenization to sovereignty: how the disintegration of the USSR was prepared // Russian history. 2021. No. 6 (preparing for publication).

peoples after several decades. Formation of republican elites led not only to their predominance in power and power structures (except the army), but also to changes in basic economic spheres. By the time of the USSR collapse, the overwhelming majority of the union republics transferred the economic power also to the hands of national elites. The proportion of native-born leaders in the industrial sectors of the national economy was 60–70%, reaching in some cases more than 90% (for example, in Armenia). The metropolis, providing the growing indigenization of governance in the republics, generously spent funds on national personnel training, confirming the thesis appeared in recent studies (V.A. Tishkov and others) that Soviet Russia was “an inverted empire”, “an empire of positive action”, “a breeding ground for new national states.”

Rapid decay of the USSR that stupefied the world is impossible to understand without awareness about the processes that took place within the political core of the state – within the CPSU and especially its higher stratum, the Central Committee and the Politburo. From 1917 to 1991 1,931 people were the members and member candidates of the CPSU Central Committee. For some time it was a very conservative community. Its noticeable expansion, combined with an active derussification of its members took place only at the last two “Gorbachev’s” congresses in the party’s history in 1986 and 1990.

The Central Committee members belonged to different historical periods. In the 1930–1950s the Central Committee was dominated by people who matured in socialist construction and participants of the Great Patriotic War. The establishment of the so-called functionaries elite principle in the party’s life refers to this very period. It is evaluated differently, but it is difficult to deny that for several decades it has ensured the stability of the political system, since the core around which it was built was the ideological dedication of the staff included in the top party functionaries elite. But the next generation of leaders that grew up in stable post-war conditions, made successful careers in 1960–1970, were no longer distinguished by the rigid ideology unlike their predecessors. The functionaries elite principle was also negatively changed, losing its former severity in staff selection to highest power echelons.

Large scale internal changes were performed in the republican party organizations. By the beginning of the 1960s, as B.N. Mironov showed, titular ethnic groups prevailed in the republican party organizations and, most importantly, as their senior executives. The same was found in law enforcement structures and the judicial system. By the end of the 1980s squeezing of Russians out of all power structures in the union republics was completed. Moreover, the derussification of the administrative apparatus in a number of republics during perestroika began to obtain on a Russia-hating hue.

Derussification of the state political core expectedly led to a decrease and weakening of the influence of the state-forming people on the situation in the country. National elites formed the vanguard of the struggle for complete sovereignty of their republics. The consequences of this process have not been overcome in the Russian Federation to the present day.

The XXVIII Congress in July 1990 elected a new Central Committee team, renewed by 4/5, which meant a breaking the continuity of the highest party structure activities. It included a lot of people who were active, but had no sufficient political and life experience, or even directly hostile to the ideas of socialism (such as, for example, the playwright A.I. Gelman, who announced his withdrawal from the CPSU in a month and a half already). The Political Bureau members composition evidences that indigenization reached its highest political expression: 21 Political Bureau members represented the national republics, and the share of Russians was less than a third. At the same time, 27 of 29 Political Bureau members entered the party’s supreme body for the first time, only M. Gorbachev and V. Ivashko had come to it earlier. No surprise, the supreme power body designed in such an artificial way, appeared incapacitated and at the critical moment of the superpower crash did not even get together to discuss the events. The Central Committee was the supreme authority in August 1991 during the State Committee of the State of Emergency, not bothering to convene the Central Committee plenum and having managed to develop a statement about what was happening only by the end of the third day of the national crisis.

The role and significance of M.S. Gorbachev and the inner circle of his associates in the organization of tectonic processes that destroyed the USSR is an important issue. All the researchers here encounter the eternal question of the personality role in history. Enormous number of people, including many sociologists, historians, political scientists, etc., are sincerely convinced that several people who had supreme power deliberately destroyed the state. In our opinion, the improvisational actions of M.S. Gorbachev, who became the USSR leader in March 1985 actually due to a behind-the-scenes deal of the top party leaders, played the role of an *accelerator for the Soviet Union collapse process, but not its main reason*.

Due to transformational change, the country quickly came to a tragic contradiction, which, in complete accordance with the laws of dialectics, required resolution. Due to the indigenization policy, the superpower was brought to the verge, beyond which an avalanche-like sovereignization began, taking hold of all full members of the Union. An attempt to stop the process by confederation creation in such settings was, of course, doomed to failure in any case. The State Committee of the State of Emergency coup only saved the country from prolonged fatal convulsions in case of confederative relations formalization, to which only half of the union republics agreed. Death was painful but quick.

The USSR collapse was essentially not a whim of capricious and willful rulers, but the result of deep and still very insufficiently studied processes that accumulated the potential over the decades, which caused a chain reaction. The political component accelerated this process, which in a different distribution of political forces (for example, in the case of G.V. Romanov's coming to power), could be postponed for some time. But the "graphite bars" that absorbed the excess of national ambitions were misguidedly removed from the union's "reactor" during the poorly conceived "perestroika". The result is always unexpected in such cases. And it happened so. "Capitalism with a beast grin" was established in Russia instead of "socialism with a human face".

V.K. LEVASHOV The USSR collapse is a national catastrophe caused by neoliberal radicalism

1. It is necessary to leave the tradition of total smearing Russian empire, Soviet and Russian Federation history, to restore the continuity of the socio-political relation of times and the historical process continuity. In the XX-XXI centuries all the political leaders of the country were consistently subjected to devastating criticism – Nicholas II, V.I. Lenin, I.V. Stalin, N.S. Khrushchev, L.I. Brezhnev, M.S. Gorbachev and B.N. Yeltsin. For each of these leaders large-scale campaigns were performed in the world and domestic media. The aim of the unfounded propaganda campaigns, which took the shape of a hybrid war after announcement of the sanctions, is to create a moral and political inferiority complex in Russian civil society, spread a mood of uncertainty in the future, mistrust of the authorities and the Russian state.

Most of the researchers are inclined to believe that the fate of the USSR was never predetermined since the moment of its formation, and that in its heroic and tragic reality it was not in the least a mistake of history. Opinions more often tend to a fatal coincidence of circumstances, mistakes and incompetence of politicians. Experience and results of the economic development of China and other countries, including the Russian Federation, show that the market reforms and the market model of socialism success depends on an active creative role and the activity of the state to create relations based on labour motivation of citizens in society, and not on the establishment of a financial, speculative and criminal capital dictatorship. No state can withstand the destructive potential of mistakenly understood ideals and practices of freedom as anarchy and force of nature, no matter what bright slogans populist politicians would show ("take as much sovereignty as you can", "the market and reforms are more important than preserving the USSR"). "Democracy and freedom" as the most demanded slogan among demagogues and manipulators begins to function stronger than dynamite during the reforms, destroying the society and the state political culture.

In our country, E.T. Gaidar and his government failed to completely solve any of the constructive institutional tasks of market reforms and build an economy breaking through into a

sustainable future for everyone. After breaking the system of the planned economy, they were unable to provide the new economic model launch, having made a number of serious systemic mistakes. In particular, the cost of economic reforms proved to be exceedingly high: in the 1990s there was a significant decrease of population living standards, the production decline intensified, the scientific and technical potential of the country was actively destroyed, and the processes of de-industrialization of the economy started.

Systemic miscounts of the Gaidar-Yeltsin neoliberal reforms slowed down the state and society development for many years and have not been overcome to the present day. They do not allow effective response to sanctions, challenges and threats of the modern Western world and were the reasons for all the subsequent political and economic crises.

However, neither time nor propaganda was able to destroy the social and cultural core of the Russian empire/ Soviet/ Russian Federation civilization, where after the disturbance the social and political guards for the security of statehood were triggered. Humanistic ideals and values, under the symbol of which almost the entire XX century passed in the Soviet Union and in the world, have become demanded and are slowly being established in our society during the last 20 years. It is obvious that Russian society and state are today in the process of working on the mistakes made by radicals and extremists that resulted in the tragic geopolitical catastrophe of the Soviet Union, which affected the destiny of each of us and many peoples. It is important not to deceive oneself with the new architects and foremen of the future, who are constantly building plywood decorations to hide the ruins of their mistakes.

I.F. KONONOV And yet – a catastrophe!

1. I regard the events of 1991 as a social catastrophe – a chain of events leading to a very rapid destruction of the social system and the political system, with the following decrease in the level of development of the new social formations that emerged. Another connotation of this term is the possibility, but not the inevitability of this events chain.

The catastrophe prerequisite was the increase of crisis phenomena within different areas of life in the USSR. The economic situation deteriorated since the mid-1970s, resulting in a prolonged crisis, which at the beginning of perestroika was attempted to overcome by the “acceleration” policy²⁸. In particular, the rupture in labor productivity with developed countries was growing: if in machines manufacturing the ratio of labor productivity compared to the United States was 46.1%, in the coal industry – 11.1%, and in the iron ore sector – just 8.6%²⁹.

The economic crisis in the USSR developed in the setting of the downward phase of one of the waves of the Kondratyev's economic conjuncture³⁰. In decreasing phases, investments are largely directed to the types of economic activities leading to transformation of the economy technological basis. But unfortunately, there was no mechanism for solving this problem during this period in the USSR. A threat emerged that the USSR would not fit into the new technological mode at all and become militarily vulnerable. The latter circumstance, apparently, worried the leadership of the Soviet Union very much, forcing them to drag into the arms race, because of which defense expenditures amounted to 20–30% of GDP³¹. Simultaneously, they began to notice market mechanisms, and the market soon began to be perceived as a panacea. Socialism was increasingly turning into a ritual phrase for the administrative elite of the USSR, to cover its process of becoming bourgeois.

Of course, the USSR catastrophe cannot be explained merely by the economic crisis. Our country had large natural, economic and human resources making it possible to find a way out

²⁸ G.I. Khanin *Economic history of Russia in contemporary times. T. 1. Economy of the USSR at the end of the 30s – 1987*. Novosibirsk: Novosibirsk State Technical University, 2008. Pp. 396–397.

²⁹ *Id.* p.439.

³⁰ V.N. Kostyuk, *Kondratyev's long waves and the theory of long-term economic growth // Social sciences and modern times*. 2002. No. 6. p. 96.

³¹ G.I. Khanin *Economic history of Russia in contemporary times. V.2*. Novosibirsk: Novosibirsk State Technical University, 2010. p. 9.

of this. Let us say, the economy of the USSR until the end of its life remained the second or third economy in the world, and in terms of human development indicators our country ranked among the thirty most developed countries. But these resources were not used because of a deep management crisis.

The social structure development processes stood behind the management crisis. By the 1980s, the party and state functionaries elite became reserved in a kind of caste where corporate interests dominated. Malignant social formations arose that united party officers, shadow economy operator and trade networks. Among people, its alienation from decision making was realized both at the country level and at the level of a specific enterprise, so the workers had no strong incentives for the development of the economy either.

In such conditions communism, as an officially proclaimed goal of social development, lost its real ideological energy. The perception of the West as an embodiment of utopia became characteristic both for elite groups and for significant groups of the people. This utopia performed a manipulative function in the process of former functionaries elite adaptation to the new reality. The functionaries elite members capitalized their power positions using the seemingly extremely dangerous anti-bureaucratic moods of the end of perestroika. Public property was eviscerated to the accompaniment of curses on communism. The functionaries elite began to differentiate into competing political and economic clientele groups. At first, this happened along the "center – republic" line, ending with the collapse of the USSR. After that the internal clientele groups started the struggle for dominance in the former Soviet republics.

I think the main role in preparing the crash of socialism belongs to the internal reasons. No external factors could have changed the social system in our great country of that time without them.

The consequences of the USSR catastrophe from a macrosociological point of view are mostly negative. On the ruins of socialism, a social system has developed, which I have long called "mulk (slang "doodad") capitalism"³². This oxymorone phrase is based on the term of the famous Arab thinker of the XIV–XV centuries, Ibn Khaldun, – "mulk" meaning "power-property". Of course, this does not mean we had a direct and complete return to the forms of social relations as in the medieval Islamic world, but there is a qualitative similarity.

Ukraine can be considered a classic country of "mulk capitalism"³³. The main political and economic process in our country is constant exchange of power and property. The dominating class is divided into clientele groups; its structuring was performed predominantly on a regional basis. Clientele groups struggle for access to economic and political resources, the main operator of which is the presidential power. Therefore, the president elections have become extremely conflict-generating, like a rehearsal of a civil war. The winning clientele group redirects the administrative rent as per their interests, redistributing property as much as possible. Contradictions within the elite are pushing its different factions to use external reserves, which turned out into external dependence and, in fact, external management. The concept of neo-patrimonialism discussed today concerns the political practices of mulk capitalism³⁴.

The collapse of the USSR also had large scale international consequences. The alternative center of world development was terminated, the world capitalist system grew global. The pressure of buyers of labour force on its carriers increased throughout the world, that is, pressure of capitalists to people of labor and culture. A layer of the transnational bourgeoisie appeared, which now decisively influences the world processes. Loss of an alternative variant

³² I.F. Kononov Adaptations and adaptive strategies of behavior of urban residents of Lugansk region during the social crisis. (According to the results of the study of mass consciousness) // *Sociology: theory, methods, marketing*. 1999. № 2. p. 70–88.

³³ I.F. Kononov The nature of the social system in Ukraine // *Ukrainian society in search of answers to modern challenges: worldview. Materials of the All-Ukrainian scientific-theoretical conference June 18–19, 2020*. Odessa: Phoenix, 2020. p.73–76.

³⁴ A.A. Fisun Democracy, neo-patrimonialism and global transformations. Kharkiv: Konstanta, 2006.

of social development led to the fact that the search for overcoming global problems, the development of harmonious social structure forms, were marginalized.

Of course, no society is unambiguous. For example, the current social structure of the former Soviet republics does not experience a commodity deficit. Even the military actions in Donbass did not significantly affect the functions of the Ukrainian commodity market. However, the market as a social institution in our country is to a great extent destructive. For example, such segment as the labor market actually works for labor migration to the EU countries (inter alia). There was one more aspect of public life that served as the foundation of the social contract between the government and the population – non-interference of the government in private life and the provision of basic conditions for the population welfare. This tacit agreement is now being destroyed by the linguistic, religious and regional policies of the Ukrainian authorities.

2. The research framework for understanding 1991 cannot be set by just one theory in principle, due to multilevel and multidimensional changes in public life. My personal research perspective is set by the world systems analysis, the theory of modernization (including such a type as the theory of the second modern by W. Beck) and the theory of socialism.

The world system analysis allows to look at the USSR from external points – from the world capitalist system positions. Although the internal life of the Soviet Union was built on foundations other than in the Western countries, coexistence with the world of capitalism made our country compete in foreign markets as per capitalistic laws. In terms of economic, military, cultural power, including scientific one, the USSR could claim to enter the core of the world capitalist system. However, its full integration into this system could not happen, which made the system of international relations only *quasi*-stable. Obtaining of advantages by one of the parties could become a prerequisite for general destabilization. The neoliberal turn of the 1980s gave a second breath to capitalism, and the Soviet Union did not find a corresponding answer to this challenge.

Modernization theory allows to look at the Soviet Union as a kind of modern society. Though at huge costs, nevertheless it coped with the task of building an industrial society. Transition to the second modern with a technological foundation requiring substantial personal initiative of a worker, with the weakening of the sovereign functions of states, with their shared sovereignty, with globalization, became an unsurmountable obstacle for the USSR.

The theory of socialism, which should not be rigidly matched with Marxism, makes it possible to understand the Soviet social system nature. In view of social experience of the XX century, socialism can be understood as a type of modern, where the main landmark of public life is the public welfare associated with the interests of the majority of the population. This majority is constituted not only by physically working people, but also the people engaged in science, education, healthcare, and cultural activities. A. Buzgalin and A. Kolganov defined this stratum as “socialiat”³⁵. A socialist society will be a society scientifically governed and striving for harmony of public and personal interests, for harmony with the natural environment.

In real societies moving along the path of socialism, these features can manifest themselves to varying extent and in different combinations. From these viewpoints, the social system in the USSR must nevertheless be recognized as socialistic. A form of state socialism was implemented here, which at the initial stages of existence was able to mobilize enormous social energy for solving the problems of modernization, but in the long term it was doomed to erosion.

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³⁵ A.V. Buzgalin, A.I. Kolganov Transformation of late capitalism social structure: from the proletariat and bourgeoisie to the precariat and the creative class? // Sociological research. 2019. No. 1. P. 24.