

Challenge to Stability Inside and Abroad: Internalization of the International Factors in the
Russian Discourse
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One of the key elements of the Russian hegemonic discourse is so called 'stability'. 'Stability' is the main achievement of Putin's presidency but this achievement is under permanent internal and external threats. Since 2014 Russia experiences protracted confrontation with the West that challenges the Russian sovereignty and stability, according to the official ideology. However, the Ukrainian 'Orange revolution' was considered as a real menace already in 2004-2005. During these 12 years the discourse on the external threat developed and strengthened. The strategy of the Russian regime, which accuses the principal opposition as agents of the West, is not innovative. Nevertheless, discursive practices construct a unique constellation of the international and domestic factors in the hegemonic discourse. Here I examine the discursive internalization of the international factors in the context of the rise of populism worldwide.

The term 'internalization of the international (geopolitical) factors' was proposed by Adam David Morton in his 'Revolution and State in Modern Mexico'¹. But initially it was reduced to problems of the so called 'uneven and combined development'. In other words, development of the global economy affects development of national economies; developing countries combine in their economies, social and political systems pre-modern elements inherited from their own past and modern elements borrowed from developed countries. If we interpret this approach into terms of discourse analysis, we can say that 'internalization of the international factors' may mean acceptance of the universal (or the Western) cultural values and consider them as own. For instance, Viacheslav Morozov in 'Russia's Postcolonial Identity' demonstrates that Russia's 'traditional values' were borrowed from the West and, then, transformed or inverted².

I consider 'internalization of the international factors' in another way. First of all, I have to note that 'internalization' doesn't simply mean that 'international matters'. It doesn't mean that the regime uses foreign policy to justify its internal policy. Indeed, international situation affects home affairs of the country and the regime definitely uses successes in foreign affairs for propagandistic purposes. Nevertheless, all these facts are common and cannot add anything innovative to understanding of the Russian regime. But I suppose that internalization of the international factors may be considered as a discursive practice. Thus, we can find out an agent of this practice.

'Internalization of the international factors' means that re-definition of the border between external and internal. The problem of this re-definition is elaborated in the framework of poststructuralist theories. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe pose the question of the antagonism in the society. In 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy' they demonstrate that conservative political forces strive to maintain social order and displace the frontier of possible antagonism to the 'periphery of the social'³. The question of the borders of the social is always opened and can be solved through the political decision. Therefore, the Russian regime can decide what is external and what is internal for the Russian society. But while the border between external and internal is almost contingent and depends on the political decision, this border becomes problematic. Moreover, if we conceive of the border as zone (not line), externality and internality are intertwined.

¹ Adam David Morton. *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development*. (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers). 2011. P. 60.

² Viatcheslav Morozov. *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*. London: Pallgrave Macmillan. 2015.

³ Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London, New York: Verso. 2001. P. 130.

The Ukrainian crisis which began in 2013 is an important event for the Russian political system and may shed light on the problem of internalization of the international factors. From the very beginning of protests in Kyiv in 2013 Russian mass media paid significant attention to the Ukrainian crisis. At some moment the news from Ukraine prevailed over the news from Russia in streams of the largest TV channel. Ukraine was the main theme in official mass media. Only in autumn 2015 it was replaced by Syria.

The Ukrainian protests, 'Euromaidan', are described as turmoil provoked by the West who wants to colonize Ukraine. Russian media and officials insist that European and US politicians were real leaders of the protest. They organized 'Euromaidan' using the old scenarios of 'color revolutions'. 'Color revolutions' that occurred in the postcommunist countries are connected with the 'Arab spring' which was also sponsored by the West⁴.

While the Western elites organize unrests, people resist 'color revolutions' and try to protest stability. For instance, Eastern Ukrainian miners were presented in the Russian mass media as supporters of the Russian foreign policy and opponents of the new Ukrainian government. According to Russian TV channels, Donbass miners condemned the protests in Kiev and regime change. They said in interviews that participants of 'Euromaidan' went to the rallies, destroyed Kyiv and did nothing useful while the miners worked. Here, Russian mass media demonstrate political virtues that have to belong to the subaltern social groups. These virtues include loyalty, social and political apathy. Political activity itself is connected with idleness. Subaltern groups should perform their duties (work in mines, for example) and shouldn't participate in politics. But when there is a threat for stability and order, they have to leave their routine and defense present regime. Donbass miners, who were unsatisfied with new government, defined it as fascist and promised popular uprising⁵.

Ukrainian affairs became certainly internal for Russia. Phantom menace of 'maidan' is a real factor, which governs political discourse. Literally, the Ukrainian subaltern groups were included in Russian hegemonic formation. Appearances of Ukrainian miners, metal workers, teachers etc in Russian TV news were targeted to constructing the mass support of ruling elites.

According to Russian media, there is a confrontation between the pro-Western elites and people who support traditional values and condemn revolutions and regime changes. This follows one of the main ideological points of populism, i.e. opposition between corrupted elites and people⁶. Analyzing the presidential run-up in France, pro-Kremlin pundits argue that Marine Le Pen who is backed by Moscow can use 'Russophilia', sentiments shared by 'ordinary' French people⁷.

In 2011, during the protests in Russia, official propaganda stated that Vladimir Putin was supported by the workers, while the opposition represented 'richer' social groups: 'While anti-Putin rallies in the capital were conducted by the rich middle classes, "white collars", laboring people, workers who are in the real sector of economy advocate the prime minister. It is evident

⁴ TASS. Rossiya v OON Rasskazala, Kto Razzhigal Gibridnuu Voinu [Russia Told, Who Had Fuelled Hybrid War]. March 31, 2017, <http://tass.ru/politika/4143947> (accessed April 21, 2017)

⁵ Vesti. Novaya Zhizn' Donbassa [New Life of Donbass]. April 22, 2014, <http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=593540&cid=58> (accessed April 25, 2017)

⁶ Enyedi, Zsolt. "Paternalist Populism and Illiberal Elitism in Central Europe". *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no 1 (2016), p. 10.

⁷ *Argumenty i Fakty [Arguments and Facts]*. Le Pen Idyot Va-Bank. Zachem Kandidatu v Prezidenty Frantsii Ekhat' v Rossiyu [Le Pen Goes All-In. Why Does the French Presidential Candidate Visit Russia]. March 24, 2017, http://www.aif.ru/politics/world/le_pen_idyot_va-bank_zachem_kandidat_v_prezidenty_francii_priehala_v_rossiyu (accessed April 24, 2017)

that the later are a majority in the country. They are Putin's core electorate'⁸. Therefore, we see that the Russian hegemonic discourse combines Putin's support by the Russian subaltern classes and support of the pro-Russian political forces by the subaltern classes of the other countries (Ukraine and France, for instance).

Russia tries to simulate anti-Western counter-hegemony, preserve authoritarian regime inside and forge its sphere of influence. The West is presented as an imperialistic power, which strives to colonize Ukraine. Colonization leads economic crises, unemployment, impoverishment and cultural oppression of the Ukrainians and the Russians in the eastern regions. Thus, according to Russian official media, Russian regime conducts anti-imperialistic foreign policy, which must be supported by peoples around the world.

Speaking at the plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2015, President Vladimir Putin accused the West which exported the democratic revolutions and undermined the state sovereignty as such. 'Export of democracy' brings about instability and terrorism⁹. Russia opposes these Western aspirations trying to restore previous systems of international relations. As Bobo Lo points out, 'Putin's response to uncertainties at home and abroad is to seek refuge in tradition, rather than address the need for wide-ranging modernization. In domestic affairs this means conservatism... In foreign affairs the emphasis is on the retro construct of Great Power ("Concert") diplomacy, geopolitical balancing, and spheres of influence'¹⁰.

Indeed, it's not only about international relations. For instance, Putin compared the protest rallies which took place in Russia on March 26 with the 'Arab spring' and 'Euromaidan' and pointed out that those events had cause chaos¹¹. It means that Russian domestic stability is also challenged by global chaos provoked by the West. If protestors in Russia are not directly ruled by the foreign elites (although the official media argue that the Russian principal opposition is sponsored by the Department of State), nevertheless, they are 'carriers' of external chaos. In other words, external and internal cannot be precisely delineated in the Russian hegemonic discourse. Moreover, assertive Russian foreign policy (annexation of Crimea and operation in Syria) is considered in this discourse as protection of internal stability in Russia as well. Two propagandistic documentary films, 'World Order'¹² and 'Crimea. The Way Home'¹³, demonstrates that domestic stability relies on existence of the certain world order.

The Russian regime presents itself, first of all, as a champion of the national sovereignty, legitimacy, and stability across the globe. Russia's international mission and domestic policy supplement each other. The potential inner instability, which is successfully prevented by the regime, is a part of global chaos invoked by the corrupted Western elites. The West brings about revolutions and coup-d'états and undermines the traditional world order. Donald Trump's success and rise of the nationalism in Europe is interpreted in the Russian hegemonic discourse as evidence that the policy of the Western elites failed and are condemned by the masses. The

⁸ *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*. Rukavitsy Za Putina [Mittens for Putin]. January 29, 2012, <http://www.spb.kp.ru/daily/25825/2802180/> (accessed April 23, 2017)

⁹ Vladimir Putin. Speech at the Plenary Meeting of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. September 28, 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385> (accessed April 20, 2017).

¹⁰ Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Chattam House: London. Brookings Institution Press: Washington, DC. 2015. P. 56.

¹¹ *RBC*. Putin Vpervye Prokommentiroval Antikorruptsionnye Mitingi [Putin Has Commented Anticorruption Rallies for the First Time]. March 30, 2017, <http://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/03/2017/58dcfb469a794724c89684df> (accessed April 21, 2017)

¹² Vladimir Soloviev. Miroporyadok [World Order] December 20, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNhYzYUo42g> (accessed April 28, 2017)

¹³ Kondrashov, Andrei. Krym. Put' na Rodinu [Crimea. The Way Home] March 15, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t42-71RpRgI> (accessed April 29, 2017)

masses are presented as partisans of the traditional values as such and traditional values in the international relations, i.e. legitimacy, existence of the spheres of influence, the national sovereignty etc. Thus, the Russian regime appears in its own ideology as the representative and advocate of the subaltern classes not only in Russia, but around the world. While the corrupted Western and pro-Western elites provoke the cataclysms such as civil war in Syria, the Ukrainian conflict, refugee crisis, Russia protects stability on behalf of the people.

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