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6

Socio-Cultural Factors and Russian Modernization

Emil Pain

Introduction

On 12 November 2009 Russian President Dmitrii Medvedev announced in his address to the Russian Parliament that Russia would embark on a programme of modernization.¹ The public discussion that followed reflected the poor intellectual preparedness of the Russian elite to formulate an efficient modernization project. Various groups within the elite have different political agendas, although they often demonstrate an identical and nearly mystical attitude towards Russian culture as a destiny defining a Russian 'unique path' that differs fundamentally from the course of modernization in the West. In this chapter I discuss these ideas and raise questions about the nature of the socio-cultural conditions necessary for Russian modernization.

Socio-Cultural Factors and the Russian Debate

Russian political discourse interprets 'modernization' mainly as a national project designed to boost Russia's competitiveness in the world economy by innovation and advanced technologies. Hardly anyone challenges the innovative development goal; rather, the debate concerns the choice of ways to pursue that goal.

The currently most influential group in this discussion strongly promotes the traditional Russian 'top-down' method of modernization with major dependence on the political will of the authorities (or, as it is referred to nowadays, the 'vertical power structure') and command-and-control methods of regulation. A much smaller group of people, identifying themselves as liberals, propose a method based on the promotion of private initiative and free competition.

Although they seem to be two opposite approaches, they are practically identical in their narrow interpretation of modernization as a straightforward technological upgrade of the economy. Essentially, the debate simply concerns who is to be the major agency of this upgrade – the state apparatus or business. In my opinion this is a fictitious dilemma, since the fusion between bureaucracy and business in today's Russia makes it hard to discern where a bureaucrat ends and a businessman begins. It is often impossible to understand which private pockets – the bureaucrat's or the businessman's – are being lined with the funds allocated for public purposes, including the innovative development of the economy. Thus, both views share a strictly technocratic interpretation of modernization and pay minimal attention to socio-cultural conditions. This significantly hampers the understanding of the real mechanisms behind the establishment of an innovative development paradigm in Russia.

Socio-cultural changes have preceded technological change in human history. Europe's transition from agrarian and manufacture production to industrial production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was preceded by changes that Max Weber called 'the disenchantment of the world'. A new rational consciousness gradually displaced the traditional mythological consciousness, and social relations regulated by law replaced informal traditional social relations. The turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries marked a new cycle of modernization – the transition from the industrial phase to a post-industrial phase and a 'knowledge economy' – bringing a change in social relations and social culture. The new economy requires popular initiative and creativity and cannot be dependent on forced labour mobilization. The fact that the Soviet totalitarian system was successful with its invented so-called *sharashkas* (research and development institutions with forced labour under the NKVD, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) is no argument for mobilization-style methods of engaging the working population in an innovative economy. The phenomenon of creativity in *sharashkas* dates from the time of the Second World War, when defence of the fatherland outweighed enduring hardships such as forced labour in prisons and camps. In times of peace, the feeling of a lack of freedom is a factor that causes a massive brain drain from any repressive country.

It would not be correct to claim that the designers of Russian modernization projects are unaware of the impact of socio-cultural conditions. On the contrary, there is an active debate among the political elite regarding the link between culture and modernization, although

it mainly concerns the myth of a predestined Russian mentality – of Russians lacking initiative and in need of a ‘strong hand’. Such ideas view culture as a constant element, like a natural environment. For instance, a popular view is expressed as ‘What can you do? Russian winters are fierce and the public consciousness is indestructibly paternalistic’. None of the parties to the debate considers that changing the socio-cultural environment is the ultimate goal of modernization.

The reasons why the authorities advocate such ideas are very clear. Maintaining the belief that fate is predestined and that nothing can be improved through public effort is for them a critical means of self-preservation.

Since the early 2000s, the Russian state-owned mass media have circulated the idea of a unique Russian civilization, determining a unique path of political and socio-cultural development. This idea was demonstrated in the 12-episode TV series called ‘Culture is Destiny’ that was aired in 2006, when the idea permeated official Russian politics. In a lecture held at the Russian Academy of Sciences in June 2007, Vladislav Surkov, First Deputy Head of the Administration of the President, said: ‘Culture is destiny. God made us Russians, Russian citizens.’² Surkov told the Russian population that culture determines *eternal* features of the political system. In Russia’s case it is centralized authority, in which the individual leader stands above the law. The Kremlin canonized the idea of a unique Russian civilization and a unique Russian path.

This dogma was accepted throughout the country without significant opposition. Many liberals who oppose the existing regime also essentially support the idea of Russia’s uniqueness. The historian Yuri Afanasev published an article entitled ‘We are not slaves? History is running on the spot: Russia’s “unique path”’,³ which attracted a lot of public attention in late 2008. The article discusses the notion that Russian history since at least the seventeenth century still determines the servility of the Russian elite. Remarkably, Afanasev was one of the leaders of the 1990s democratic movement in Russia claiming that the victory of the liberals was inevitable. Today he interprets the idea of predestination differently and claims that there is no alternative to authoritarianism in Russia.

Why are the concepts of predestination and historical fatalism so popular in Russia today? One explanation is that these ideas are appropriate in times of stagnation, defined as a historical situation in which the ruling elite does not want to, and the opposition cannot or does not know how to, change life conditions. In the current period of Russian stagnation, both the authorities and the opposition operate according

to the same myth about the predestined fate of the Russian state and the country’s ‘unique path’. Some liberal intellectuals reject the idea of a ‘unique civilization’ and the ‘millennial greatness of Russia’, but welcome the same myth in a different guise – as a civilization of ‘millennial slavery’. In September 2010, at the ‘What hinders Russian modernization?’ press conference, the liberal economist Igor Yurgens, one of the architects of Medvedev’s modernization programme, blamed the Russian public for failures in introducing the proclaimed modernization. According to Yurgens, the traditional consciousness and archaic cultural values of the Russian public are the obstacles to modernization, and the Russian people would not become ‘mentally compatible with the average progressive European in understanding democracy’⁴ until 2025.

We return to the discussion of this idea below, but the next section assesses how these ideas correspond to present Russian realities. The approach that views traditional culture as an obstacle to modernization used to be common in classical versions of modernization theory but then was heavily criticized. New versions of this theory, specifically ‘neo-modernism’, are based on principles that fundamentally differ from those supported by contemporary Russian modernizers.

Classic Modernization Theory under Revision

The concept of modernization as the progress of social change designed to ensure higher living standards was criticized in Russia in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, the classical version of the theory, which had developed over almost a century and a half, was blamed for the empirical discrepancy between its theoretical postulates and the reality of third world countries undergoing modernization under pressure from external factors. In those years, modernization was commonly called ‘enforced civilization and a tool of colonialism’ since in some countries, primarily in Africa, the process of modernization was accompanied by the collapse of traditional institutions and lifestyles, and caused social disorganization. At the same time, it was premature to assess the results of industrial modernization. Positive results were not visible until the early 2000s, and only in those countries where the modernization process had been most complete and consistent. These countries managed to overcome, or significantly mitigate, the major problem plaguing the African continent – infant mortality.⁵ They also developed relatively stable democratic regimes and 15 per cent growth in per capita income over the period 1995–2007. Most of Africa’s autocratic countries, where

the political elites had fought against the so-called export of modernization, showed negative trends in economic and social performance indicators⁶ and were not able to deal with problems that had accumulated for centuries. In the 1970s, however, most Western intellectuals had demonized modernization in the third world as colonialism.

By the mid-1980s the scholarly debate had changed profoundly as new versions of modernization theory appeared that incorporated ideas from theories such as those of postmodernism. The term 'postmodern' was tacked on to the schemes, indicating a final stage of the modernization process with a specific relationship between material and moral values.

The build-up of a large bank of empirical data became an important stimulus for the development of modernization theory. As recently as the mid-twentieth century, all versions of this theory had rested only on historical arguments or on various historical accounts put forth by researchers. The 1980s modernization theory was for the first time supported by extensive sociological and cross-cultural research as the vast amount of data made it possible to draw conclusions about universal patterns of social development.⁷ This research showed that there was a universal link between the change of technological structures (of the agrarian, industrial and new post-industrial society of the late 1980s) and a number of social processes, such as urbanization and changes in the social and demographic structure of the population. These studies freed modernization theory from the speculative arguments of philosophers and political theorists and strengthened it by stringent methodological procedures, using new sociometric and econometric methods to analyse social and cultural processes.

Under these conditions, a new version of modernization theory developed – neo-modernism – with innovations such as those described below.

1. Neo-modernism discarded all remnants of classical evolutionism and no longer emphasized any final goal or purpose of social development. Instead, it acknowledged the reversibility of historical changes and claimed that retrograde movement was no exception, but rather the rule. Many countries have experienced cyclic changes of reform and counter-reform, democratization of the political system, and then a reversion to authoritarian rule. In this regard, it is useful to note Samuel Huntington's concept of the three waves (or stages) of global democratization. According to Huntington, at each new stage a reverse wave eliminated a significant number of new democracies

from the democratic camp and pulled them back to traditional authoritarianism.⁸ In my opinion, the concept of democratization waves and reverse waves can be applied to the analysis of Russian history, including the post-Soviet period.

2. According to the revised theory, modernization is a historically limited process for which only a specific collection of contemporary institutions and values is appropriate. Various scholars write about different sets of institutions and values. Jürgen Habermas believes that the universal features of modernity are characterized primarily by the development of civil rights and freedoms.⁹ Alberto Martinelli emphasizes the drive for innovation in modern societies, and identifies the critical attributes of modernization as the 'increasing structural differentiation of societies and the formation of sovereign nation states'.¹⁰
3. A link between two types of modernization was established: one controlled and initiated by the elite ('project modernity'); and the other organic and based on spontaneous diffusion (dissemination, borrowing) of cultural norms and values. In addition, it was proven that the efficiency of controlled modernization is determined not only by the will of political elites, but also by the state of society. Moreover, at late stages of the modernization process, especially during the transition to a postmodern (post-industrial) society, the driving force is not so much the political elite as the initiative of the wider society. In other words, the 'top-down' type of modernization becomes historically replaced by modernization from below.
4. One of the basic hypotheses of the new modernization concept is the acknowledgement of diverse models of historical development. Consequently, there is also a diversity of modernization trajectories, depending on the initial conditions, historical experience, and cultural specifics of different countries.¹¹ This idea is most consistently reflected in S. N. Eisenstadt's concept of 'multiple modernities'.

How can the role of tradition in Russian society be understood from the perspective of new modernization theories?

A New Look at Russian Traditions

Classical modernization theory sees innovation as incompatible with tradition and assumes that innovation will displace traditions. Revised modernization theories, however, replaced these anti-tradition ideas with the '*modernizing potential*' of traditions. As Joseph Gusfield, one of

the pioneers of the Neomodernism School, has remarked, 'traditional symbols and forms of leadership can be a vital part of the value system on which they are based'.¹² Another proponent of this school, the Russian scholar Piotr Sztompka, believes that it is necessary to 'identify "modernization traditions" and adopt them for further transformations'.¹³

Essentially, society can naturally accept innovative economic technologies only when innovations stem from traditions. To support this statement, I refer to Robert Putnam's classic study of Italian regions with different socio-cultural conditions as they were entering modernization. He showed that, in regions which successfully underwent modernization, civil society and democratic values usually had been strong as far back as the nineteenth century and were preserved in cultural traditions.¹⁴

Zygmunt Bauman put forward a similar but more categorical theory, alleging that society is doomed to destruction and complete collapse of its socio-normative system if new collective institutions fail to combine with traditional ones. A combination of new and old exists in many countries. Germany, for instance, has preserved traditional mechanisms of social regulation,¹⁵ and traditional collective institutions (family, religion, neighbourhood associations, and craft guilds) have become the backbone and cultural mode for new types of institutions, such as those that engage youth, professionals or charities. About 60 per cent of the adult population in Germany, and almost 70 per cent in Scandinavian countries, participate in both new and traditional informal associations. Moreover, this is a question not only and not so much about natural reproduction of traditions as about the interest in a conscious cultivation of traditions on the part of politicians. In Germany, meeting public needs in the areas of culture, sports, tourism and communication through various associations costs a great deal less than it would cost an individual consumer. The potential influence of civil associations on the authorities or local government is far more effective than complaints by individuals.

Now, what do we have in Russia? There is a common belief that new institutions, primarily legal institutions, do not manage because they are not a part of traditional Russian culture and therefore do not fit into the Russian institutional matrix.¹⁶ I do not agree with this point of view, hence my second statement: most urbanized Russian regions of Russia (which account for most of the country) suffer neither from a lack of tradition nor from any preserved traditional obstacles but from the destruction of the traditional institutional matrix.

What is cultural tradition? Tradition is the inter-generational handover of cultural norms, standard behavioural patterns, ideas and values that members of a certain society are supposed to endorse. Such a handover of accumulated experience over time is only possible if certain fundamental conditions for cultural transmission are preserved, primarily social institutions, which act as the carriers and keepers and above all as the controllers, ensuring compliance. Social control uses moral encouragement for observing traditions and moral sanctions against violation.

Certain nationalities in Russia, especially ethnic groups in the North Caucasus, have preserved such mechanisms. They often use their patriarchal traditions as a means of self-defence, as a sort of armour. There are many examples of how traditional societies used tradition to defend themselves against forced 'de-kulakization', collectivization, deportation and forced reinstatement of the 'constitutional order' in 1994–96, and how this defence saved thousands of human lives.

However, in most Russian regions with a predominantly ethnic Russian (or Slavic) population, mechanisms of social control were more or less completely demolished along with the institutions that maintained them. Village communities were forgotten as early as the mid-twentieth century. Religious communities, especially Orthodox parishes, were annihilated in the Soviet period and their role will probably never be restored, considering the fact that over 87 per cent of Orthodox believers do not consider themselves members of any particular parish and attend church services only sporadically. Until recently there were places where pensioners played dominoes while they kept an eye on their neighbours, and elderly women sat on benches at the entrance to an apartment block chatting about the morals of a particular family. This partially compensated for the lack of valid mechanisms of social control and operated on the principle of 'What will people say?' However, even that no longer exists.

With regard to family traditions the once close relationships of ethnic Russian families have been reduced to occasional contacts. In these circumstances, there is no doubt that the idea of Russian society as collectivistic, synodical and communal is a pure myth. On the contrary, today Russian society is one of the most atomized in the modern world. Based on the results of international studies (particularly the European Social Survey of 2004–05 and 2006–07), social scientists have concluded that Russians are leading in Europe in terms of atomization of social relations, and also have the lowest rates of values of collectivism.¹⁷

The same studies indicate that Russians are unwilling to participate in volunteer associations.¹⁸ The country also has one of the lowest rates of mutual trust in Europe.

Social scientists and philosophers have long been discussing the specifics of traditional societies, such as those preserved in the North Caucasus, and the decentralized societies that are common throughout most of Russia. Francis Fukuyama in his study claims that traditional (he calls them 'familistic') societies are more socialized than ones in which traditions have been destroyed. Robert Putnam rejects this theory and refers to the example of Sicily, arguing that patriarchal societies are today antisocial and often produce mafia clans. I would argue that from the perspective of preserving group trust, group unity or joint survival, traditional patriarchal societies would appear to be better suited for a modern lifestyle in terms of everyday routine. However, the high level of trust within such societies is combined with an extremely high level of conflict between groups. This hampers national consolidation and preserves hard-line authoritarian political systems. In this respect, mainland Russia is far less prone to being overtaken by conflicts or hard-line authoritarianism, but it faces a set of other problems.

Today's Russian authorities build on the perception of Russian society as a traditional society. This does not hold true, however, because the major self-defence mechanism, which a majority of the public adopts in a situation when traditional group defence mechanisms have disappeared, is instead a simulation of obedience. There is a cynical saying from the Soviet days: 'You pretend you pay us, and we pretend to work'. This way of thinking has not only been preserved but actually developed further. Russia has become a country where everyone is simulating. This is why I believe it is wrong to subscribe to the idea shared by many social scientists that Russia has preserved authoritarian-paternalistic traditions. Russia is not a traditional but rather a new society of universal simulation. The federal authorities simulate democracy but pursue an authoritarian policy, which is losing most of the strong support that it previously enjoyed in popular culture. The regional authorities simulate the pursuit of authoritarian policy, while in fact they pursue a policy of anarchy, that is, they do what they want for their own benefit. The public pretends it approves all this and respects the authorities at all levels, whereas in fact they avoid any cooperation with the authorities and avoid any responsibility ('The master rules, so let him be responsible for everything'), evade taxes, and dodge the military draft. The Russian public also tries to avoid bureaucratic corruption, countering it with 'public fraud' ('Why should I pay the bureaucrat for

a certificate if I can get one just around the corner for less money?'). This is not a tradition, but a defensive social reflex of the public. This behaviour not only lacks any signs of idolization of the authorities but also of respect; this is simulated obedience. The public neither resists the authorities nor obeys their will. Hence, small or large barricades or obstruction appear in all branches of the Russian 'power vertical'.

The probability that the norms of the rule of law will ever take root in Russia is very low, given the existing atomization of society and pervasive distrust. Besides, a modern innovative economy cannot develop without a legal institutional system – this is an axiom. So, what now? Is the door to Russian innovative modernization closed?

The 'Russian System' is not Traditional, but Inertial

This is yet another statement that I advocate. In my opinion, Russian inertia is based not so much on the pressure of past experience (cultural traditions) as on the lack of new experiences, above all self-organization, self-government and participation in the state administration. Russian citizens do not recognize the benefits of public solidarity and guarding public interests through collective action.

I believe that the difference between the pressure of traditional experience and the lack of new experience is a clear one, and I will illustrate this with an analogy. A person might not want to buy a new house because he is used to the old one, or because he does not have enough money to buy a new one. In the first instance, buying a new house means overcoming the stereotypes of consciousness, and in the second accumulating sufficient resources. This is exactly the choice Russia is facing after declaring that it will embark on national modernization. What should it focus on? Should it focus on overcoming existing stereotypes of consciousness or acquire new resources including new cultural skills? The potential for gaining new experiences and skills in a very short time is, in my opinion, supported by the 1990s experience, although those years are currently described mainly as a period of chaos and disorganization.

The then US ambassador to Moscow, George F. Kennan, wrote in 1951 about the sort of Russia it would be futile to look for. The first attribute he named was Russia's inability to build a market economy, and he supported his conclusion with the following reasoning: 'Russia has scarcely known private enterprise as we are familiar with it in this country'. In addition, trade and commerce were never regarded in Russia as an honourable business, as they were in the West.¹⁹ Indeed, historically, trade

was viewed in Russia more negatively than in Western Europe, America, Central Asia or the Caucasus, and this negativism was even more pronounced in the Soviet period. However, although Russia seemed to have lost all traces of private entrepreneurship during the years of Soviet rule, in 1991–94 it experienced an unprecedented boom in private entrepreneurship. In four years, the ‘shuttle trade’ sector alone involved 10 million individuals – former milkmaids, teachers, engineers and industrial workers.²⁰ The press was concerned that Russia had become a country of traders, while the intellectual community lamented that anything could be bought and sold.

It turned out that the struggle for survival and other extremely harsh conditions (in other words, ‘strong external shocks’) can in a short period of time change national cultural stereotypes that have been shaped by centuries of experience. I do not argue that Russia’s experience is positive in terms of the accelerated expansion of entrepreneurs, but it is worth noting that this disproved the academic dogma that ‘the level of education can be improved over a short period of time with appropriate investments, whereas the working culture is formed in the course of national historical development and traditions; that is why it can only change over a relatively extended period of time’.²¹ However, professional orientations towards certain specific fields of work are regarded as the most inert elements of a working culture, although Russia managed to turn them around over a period of three to four years, that is, less time than it takes to get an academic degree (five or six years).

The European Social Survey (ESS), one of the most respected international benchmark surveys, in its 2004–05 and 2006–07 editions noted that ‘modern Russia is close to most European countries’²² in terms of its value structures, as measured on a scale showing both value preservation and readiness to change. Russia has the same rating as Belgium and the Netherlands, and the Russian public is rated as more prepared for change than that of some EU member states, such as Bulgaria and Poland. In most urbanized and industrialized Russian regions, the values of independence and readiness for risk-taking are leading social attributes for over half the number of respondents.²³

Does this mean that socio-cultural conditions in Russia do not hinder innovative development? My answer to this question is ‘No’ and it would be a mistake to assume otherwise. First of all, the Russian initiative is anarchical. Russia has one of the lowest levels of respect for rules and norms in Europe, both formal (the law) and informal (religious, family, traditional ethnic, etc.). Second, Russia has the lowest level of mutual trust among the countries examined in the surveys. Qualities

that in the Russian language express ‘faith’ are weakly developed, not just the word itself but also trust and confidence. In other words, this includes everything that relates to the likelihood of good things coming to people from God, from a partner or in the future.

One would assume that, with the current low level of trust in partners and low confidence in a prosperous future, such long-term capital projects as technology parks could never be developed by private enterprise. Under such conditions it would seem logical to rely on the government as the sole source capable of initiating, financing and executing the construction of large capital projects of innovative economic development. This is, in any case, how many major Russian economists view the potential for development. Thus, the economist Abel Aganbegyan notes that Russia does not have any sources of so-called long-term money in the private sector. There are almost no private pension funds, large insurance schemes, cooperative share funds, or ventures or any other funds functioning like the fund-raisers for long-term projects in the United States or Western Europe. Hence, he concludes, it is too early for Russia to relinquish the leading role of the state in the process of modernization, not least because the only potential source of innovative development is the Federal Stabilization Fund, which in any case is too large today.²⁴ The leading role of the federal government and the federal budget in innovative development has repeatedly been advocated by other prominent economists, such as Oleg Bogomolov and Ruslan Grinberg.

Leaving aside economic theories and returning to actual developments, we can note that the federal authorities failed to instil trust in them: it is not enough to simply redistribute cash from the stabilization fund to an industrialization fund. They also need to ensure that earmarked funds are not stolen and spent inappropriately. Obviously, even the highest-priority national projects, such as the Olympic Games, in addition to vast investments also require management by a personally trusted individual with special authority. It is hard to imagine that commissars can facilitate innovative projects in the Russian regions. The designer of the Topol intercontinental ballistic missile and the Bulava submarine-launched ballistic missile, Yurii Solomonov, said in March 2010 that ‘vertical power’ does not work even in the most disciplined, secret and, one would think, controlled industry – the defence industry. He believes that ‘“military police” management methods did not prevent the decay of the defence industry’.²⁵

Another important point to note is that a reproduction of traditional Russian vertical, or ‘top-down’ modernization reproduces the same

type of socio-cultural relations, especially alienation, legal nihilism and total distrust.

There is also a strong link between various manifestations of the vertical-hierarchical social organization and trust. Thus, concentration of power produces corruption, which in turn reduces trust in society. Nearly three quarters of Russian respondents are certain they will never be treated fairly by the bureaucrats. There is also a high rate of distrust in Hungary, although only 50 per cent of respondents reveal this sentiment in their answers. Only slightly more than a third of the respondents share the same view in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.²⁶

Corruption undermines public trust not only in the authorities, with the exception of the top leadership, but also between individuals, not least because people have different access to corrupt contacts. Such connections are not transparent, and this alone breeds mutual suspicion. For instance, the following type of dialogue between two neighbours is common in Russia: 'I can't believe that neighbour X's son was admitted to university by fair selection; he had worse grades at school than my kids had. His parents probably pulled strings. However, I do not have such contacts, so now my children cannot study at university.' People have a similarly suspicious attitude towards other forms of social promotion or access to social benefits.

The research of Andrei Korobkov shows that corruption and practically unrestricted bureaucratic power are the major obstacles for 'even those Russian scientists living abroad who would like to return and help restore national science'.²⁷

Thus, resurrection of the traditional Russian top-down form of modernization creates a vicious circle. The low level of both trust and respect for the law seems to necessitate stronger involvement by the state authorities in national modernization. In turn, such a concentration of power reduces the level of trust and erodes the legal consciousness of the public. How can this vicious circle be broken?

It is important to bear in mind that the rigid vertical administration structure is the cause rather than a consequence of the weak legal consciousness of the public and the low level of mutual trust in society. Consequently, it is virtually impossible to overcome alienation and distrust among people without ensuring a transparent environment and without encouraging initiative and independence. I also realize that positive social reforms cannot be carried out in the whole country simultaneously. For instance, the level of trust between individuals in the North Caucasus is very high, although they largely follow informal social norms. These groups and clans are extremely closed and have so

far been highly resistant to universal legal norms, and they generally do not welcome any form of innovation. The situation is different in most other parts of Russia: here traditional norms are weak and society is atomized. At the same time, under the conditions of a low level of traditionality, a large group of individuals are ready to take risks and embrace innovations. According to the leading Russian social scientist, Nikolai Lapin, values do not constitute barriers for innovative economy development in urbanized Russian regions. Such barriers spring up when there is a gap between the interests of, on the one hand, major agents of innovation (architects of these ideas, investors, producers), and the present system of government in the country, which is run by interests far from any innovative development.²⁸

Lapin's study produced some interesting findings. The Russian regions that show the best performance in terms of the actual evidence of an innovative economy (the creation of jobs and of innovative goods and services) are often characterized by a mediocre socio-cultural environment. The Perm Area, for example, is a region with average socio-cultural indicators but also the highest rates of achievement in the innovative economies of all surveyed Russian regions. How was this possible? The federal authorities did not invest any extra funds in the area, and the regional authorities had no resources for any independent development of an innovative character. However, the potential of local laws and experimental forms of administration was used to ensure that the local institutional environment was more propitious for innovative economic development than the average in Russia.

Thus, under the present institutional conditions, modernization in Russia will be patchy and will succeed only in those regions where the local authorities are capable of at least partially neutralizing the general national institutional unpreparedness for an innovative society and innovative economic development. Most of the country can be involved in this process only if the institutional, socio-political and cultural conditions change radically.

Changes in Political Institutions as a Prerequisite for Creating a New Cultural Climate

A new socio-cultural experience based on a rational mass consciousness and on legal relations can develop only in a certain political environment. You cannot learn to swim by reading a manual when you live in the desert, and you cannot master the practice of legal relations and legal ethics in a country that does not have an independent judiciary.

Therefore, establishing a free democratic institutional environment is a prerequisite for building a rational legal culture in society. This is why changes in Russian consciousness within a 25-year period (see the comment on Yurgens above) can be regarded as a pure utopia if they are not preceded by changes in political institutions. If this process is delayed, societal cultural changes will be delayed by the same number of years, or even longer given the inertia of public consciousness.

Culture is not only a variable that is entirely dependent on the political environment. It also affects the establishment of new political institutions. There were a few efforts in the 1990s to reform the political institutions in Russia but, unfortunately, most of them did not survive: the beginnings of a genuine federalism, local self-government, competitive elections and a free media are now things of the past. After the Orange Revolution, neighbouring Ukraine made even more radical changes in its political institutions. However, some eight or nine months after Viktor Yanukovich was elected president, in February 2010, most of the revolutionary gains were reversed without any significant social resistance.

The experiences of post-Soviet states confirm the conclusions put forth by many prominent political and social scientists (Charles Tilly, Robert Putnam, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel among others) that democratic institutions will take root in society only if they are naturally integrated in people's cultural traditions and are based on such traditions. Only cultural traditions can legitimize new political institutions, but such traditions do not have to be centuries-old. Many countries have demonstrated that the establishment of a new political culture or a radical change in existing cultural stereotypes can occur over a historically relatively short period of time. A few post-Soviet countries managed a smooth transition from a Soviet to a modern liberal-democratic legal system. In addition to the Baltic states, with their Catholic or Protestant culture, this was also the case in Orthodox Moldova: in this extremely poor country, with high rates of emigration and vast numbers of other problems, the constitutional and legal environment allows both communists and anti-communists to legally alternate at the helm of the state within a constitutional and legal framework. What has Moldova in common with the Baltic states? These republics were the last to become a part of the USSR. Moldova (then Bessarabia) was incorporated in the USSR as late as 1940. As it turned out, Bessarabia managed to develop a political tradition of parliamentarism over the two decades or so that followed the breakup of the Russian Empire.

However, the psychological demilitarization of Germany and its rejection of the 'Sonderweg' (unique path) idea, not dissimilar to the present ideology in Russia, also took place over a couple of decades following the Second World War. It took the United States approximately the same length of time to eliminate much of the pervading racial prejudice after the civil rights movement first entered the scene. The span of 25–30 years represents the active lifetime of a single generation, and this often suffices for building a new cultural tradition.

Some might argue that this reasoning produces an inevitable, irrepressible conflict. Establishing a new culture requires political changes, but political innovations will not survive without a proper cultural tradition. So, what can be done?

In my opinion, there is no reason to raise expectations of such a serious conflict. In existing Russian conditions, as I have demonstrated, public culture does not obstruct the establishment of new political institutions, although they may nevertheless fail to take root in the public consciousness or be legitimized. Furthermore, a new political environment does not necessarily produce cultural changes: this requires a dedicated effort on the part of both the state and society. There should be a specific programme for nurturing a new culture, and it should be aimed primarily at creating rules of the game that encourage the interests of groups aligned with modernization and block the interests that oppose it. In addition, conditions for building new traditions should be created.

The post-Soviet states did not try to design any programme for the cultural development of democracy or the creation of a new culture. Such tasks were not even properly defined. In the 1990s some reformist politicians viewed culture as a simple consequence of political and economic change. Others mystified it and presented it as a kind of permanent property that had grown into the public body and acted as a fatal predeterminism.

It is useful here to note the original, ancient definition of culture as 'cultivation and nurturing'. Cicero called culture 'the cultivation of the soul'. In this respect the term 'invention of traditions', introduced in the scholarly discourse by Eric Hobsbawm in the 1980s, seems to be useful, but it has hardly been used at all in political practice.²⁹ An approach to culture that incorporates the designing of new traditions may help to eliminate inconsistencies in many modern processes and offer hope for positive social change in the foreseeable future.

Russia also needs a policy of cultivating traditions of modernization from the remains of traditional culture. The world has seen examples

of policies based on designing a culture. For instance, the state of Israel resurrected the essentially forgotten language of Hebrew. Japan illustrates many of the features of such a policy. It is well known that socio-cultural factors played a significant role in creating the Japanese economic miracle. The Japanese maintain a tradition of loyalty to the company through the material and social encouragement of employees, including for instance the 'employment for life' system. All the same, this was a relatively new construct, which largely artificially incorporated ancient traditions of loyalty to the family, clan and community, and respect for elders. There was nothing like Japan's employment-for-life system during the economic crisis of 1929–33. On the contrary, that was a time of unprecedented job turnover in industry, whereas the countryside experienced a turbulent process of rural community disintegration and migration to the cities. The present employment for life system did not develop until the mid-twentieth century, and it is most common in small and medium-size business. In large companies, however, those employing over 5000 personnel, this form of employment extends to no more than a quarter of all employees, generally the skilled staff. This system is not used at all when business expands or radically modernizes. This explains why the famous top-manager Akio Morita, founder of the Sony Corporation, wrote, 'we could not rely on the traditional system of hiring new people to maintain healthy growth rates'.³⁰

I am not suggesting that Russia should copy Japanese practice. I simply want to point to the paradigm of 'constructing traditions', which helps to legitimize innovations by attributing to them a traditional image. For instance, the elite could have supported the idea of restoring the Russian liberal tradition, which had a good track record in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³¹ Only a few social historians remember this today, and it is practically unknown to the general public. Such a construction (or reconstruction) would be extremely useful for understanding liberalism and democracy as phenomena with Russian origins.

When constructing traditions of Russian modernization, it may be worthwhile to borrow from traditional Russian culture the values and ambitions of a 'great power'. This value system, like any other, can have both positive and negative effects. False ambitions could be used to justify passivity, and ambitions linked to phobias could be a source of aggression. However, this system could also serve as an incentive for development, not least because it is currently the basis for national

consensus. All political groups in Russia agree that the country must not lag behind in the global economic competition and become a marginal participant. Both the government and various branches of the opposition agree that Russia should strive to be ranked among the leading states. The traditional saying 'Can't beat the Russians!' (*Znai nashikh!*) is an important incentive for innovative development.

Moreover, the preparedness of many Russians to accept innovations and to take risks needs to be reconstructed, primarily by ridding it of its anarchism and public disrespect for the law. In cultivating new values and transforming them into traditions, a special concern is the legitimization of the right to property, which has never been sacred in Russia. It is equally important to prepare society ethically to incorporate and legitimize the idea of a state ruled by law. The process of establishing the rule of law is usually a long process.

Conclusion

This analysis of Russia's socio-cultural conditions for modernization emphasizes that Russia cannot be characterized as an excessively traditional society – its traditions were destroyed by the years of totalitarianism. This specific feature should not be viewed exclusively as a constraint to modernization because it also contains a certain positive resource that could give Russia a competitive edge in introducing an innovative economy. My main conclusion is that the project of Russian modernization should be designed in rational, consistent steps. The first step should be to change the institutional environment, thereby paving the way for nurturing a culture and the development of traditions supportive of modernism. These new political, legal and social institutions will in turn ensure that political changes take root in society and withstand any opposition to them.

And yet, I believe that the critical obstacles to establishing a Russian democratic state ruled by law and to modernizing Russia are related not so much to traditional culture or the state of political institutions as to the psychology of hopelessness, which paralyses social activity. Imposing on the public consciousness an image of a unique Russian civilization as a predestined condition, as is currently done by the Russian leadership, exacerbates feelings of hopelessness. This is why political groups that support the task of modernizing Russia must reject the present dominating psychology, which suppresses the belief that Russian society can improve life by its own efforts.

Notes

1. Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (2009) Moscow, 12 November, Grand Kremlin Palace, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5979>.
2. V. Surkov (2007), *Russkaya politicheskaya kultura. Vzgl'yad iz utopii* (Russian Political Culture. Outlook from Utopia), (Moscow: Presidium of Russian Academy of Sciences) 8 June, <http://surkov.info/publ/4-1-0-55>.
3. Yu. Afanasev (2008), 'My – ne raby? Istoricheskii beg na meste: "osobyi put" Rossii' [Aren't We Slaves? Historical Running on the Spot: The Russian 'Special Path'], *Novaya gazeta*, 5 December.
4. M. Sergeev and S. Kulikov (2010), 'The public is to blame for modernization failures. This is also why Dmitry Medvedev should remain in power, according to Igor Yurgens, the head of the Russian Institute of Contemporary Development (INSOR)', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 September, http://www.ng.ru/economics/2010-09-16/1_modernize.html.
5. Benin, Botswana, Namibia, Niger, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mali, Madagascar, the Seychelles, Senegal and a few other countries (c. 25% of the African states) managed to accomplish, on average, an 18% reduction in infant mortality over the period 1995–2007. J. Siegle, Morton H. Halperin and Michael M Weinstein (2005), *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace* (New York: Routledge).
6. Ibid.
7. The World Values Survey (WVS) fund has been conducting annual research since 1981, covering 52–88 countries in various years. At about the same time GlobalNR and Gallup International started annual sociological and cross-cultural research programmes covering over 60 countries. Russian scholars from the Sociology Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences participated in the 'European Sociological Study' (ESS) in 2005–07, covering 27 countries.
8. S. Huntington (2003), *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late XX Century* (In Russian) (Moscow: ROSSPEN).
9. J. Habermas (1985), *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Modern* [The Philosophical Discourse on Modernity] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).
10. A. Martinelli (2006), *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (St Petersburg: St Petersburg State University Publishers), p. 23.
11. See e.g. S. N. Eisenstadt (1999), *New Modernization Paradigm: The Comparative Study of Civilizations*, An anthology edited by B. S. Erasov (In Russian) (Moscow: Aspekt Press).
12. J. R. Gusfield (1967), 'Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72, Issue 4, January.
13. P. Szotomka (1996), *Sotsiologiya sotsialnykh izmenenii* [The Sociology of Social Change], translation from English, edited by V. A. Yadov (Moscow: Aspekt Press), p. 183.
14. R. Putnam (1993), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
15. Former Russian nationals who moved to Germany had a hard time adjusting not to new laws (which are actually similar to Russian laws but better enforced) but to the informal control, such as neighbours constantly reminding them what they should or should not do at home or in the street.
16. S. Kirdina (2004), 'Institutsionalnaya struktura sovremennoi Rossii: evolyutsionnaya modernizatsiya' [Institutional Structure of Modern Russia: Evolutionary Modernization], *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, No. 10, pp. 89–98; and S. Kirdina, *Institutsionalnye matrisy i razvitie Rossii* (Institutional Matrices and Development in Russia) (Novosibirsk: Russian Academy of Sciences).
17. M. Magun and E. Rudnev (2008), 'Zhiznennye tsennosti rossiiskogo naseleeniya: skhodstva i otlichiya v sravnenii s drugimi evropeiskimi stranami' [Values of the Russian Public: Similarities and Differences as Compared with Other European Countries], *Vestnik obshchestvennogo mneniya*, No. 1, p. 44.
18. E.g. neighbours living on the same floor of an apartment complex can still agree on something, whereas it is harder for neighbours living in the same section of the apartment block to agree about anything, and tenants in the whole building would agree on something only in extreme need.
19. G. F. Kennan (2001), 'Amerika i russkoe budushchee' [America and the Russian Future], *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, No. 3. The article appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1990, but was first published in 1951: see <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/45446/george-f-kennan/america-and-the-russian-future-1951>.
20. 'Shuttle traders' are individuals who move commodities across borders in personal luggage. 'History of Shuttle Trade Entrepreneurship in Russia' (2007), 18 April, http://www.bishelp.ru/vne_format/detail.php?ID=30103.
21. O. I. Shkaratan and V. V. Karacharovskiy (2002), 'Russkaya trudovaya i upravlencheskaya kultura. Opyt issledovaniya v kontekste perspektiv ekonomicheskogo razvitiya' [Russian Labour and Management Culture. A Study in the Context of Economic Development Perspectives], http://p1.hse.ru/journals/wrldross/vol02_1/shkar_kar.pdf.
22. Magun and Rudnev (note 17), p. 44.
23. N. I. Lapin (2010), 'Tsennosti "sokhranenie-otkrytost izmeneniyam" i setevye innovatsionnye instituty' [Values of 'preservation – availability for change' and web innovative institutions, Lecture at the symposium in memory of Samuel Huntington 'Culture, cultural change and economic development' (Moscow: State University Higher School of Economics), 24–26 March.
24. A. Aganbegyan (2009), 'Ne vykapyvaite kartoshku ranshe vremeni' [Do not dig out the potatoes before it's due], *Stolitsa NSK. Informatsionno-analiticheskii zhurnal* (Novosibirsk), No. 2, September, p. 18.
25. "'Yadernaya vertikal ne rabotaet!" – priznal genkonstruktor "Bulavy" [Nuclear vertical does not work!, admitted the General Designer of the Bulava missile], Russian Information Agency, 'Novyi Region', <http://www.nr2.ru/policy/275338.html>.
26. See D. Lovell (2002), 'Doverie i politika v postkommunistichesom obshchestve' [Trust and Politics in Post-Communist Society], *Pro et Contra*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Summer, <http://www.carnegie.ru/ru/pubs/procontra/67145.htm>.
27. I. Dubinskaya (2009), 'Diagnoz rossiiskoi nauke' [Diagnosis for Russian Science: Brain Drain], <http://www1.voanews.com/russian/news/Analysis-and-perspectives/Russian-Science-Open-Letter-Part-Two-2009-10-06-63710747.html>.
28. Lapin (note 23).

29. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (1983) (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1–2.
30. Yu. Morozov (1991), 'Sotsio-kulturnye osobennosti yaponskogo puti modernizatsii', Ver. 1 [Socio-cultural specific of Japanese modernization, Ver. 1], http://www.sociodinamika.com/puti_rossii/05.html. See also Yu. Malenova (2007), 'Chto takoe klassicheskii yaponskii menedzhment? [What is Classic Japanese Management?]' <http://shkolazhizni.ru/archive/0/n-6808>.
31. *Rossiiskii liberalizm: Idei i lyudi* (2007), [Russian Liberalism: Ideas and People] (Moscow: Novoe Izdatelstvo), p. 904; and A. A. Kara-Murza (2009), *Intellektualnye portrety: Ocherki o russkikh myslitelyakh XIX–XX vv. Vypusk 2* [Intellectual portraits: Essays on Russian Thinkers of XIX–XX centuries. Issue 2] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo IFRAN), p. 160.

Part III

Piecemeal Reform under Putin and Medvedev