

УДК 327(477+470):316

**Chamontin L.**

Engineer and essayist

32 Henri Dunant str., 92500 Rueil Malmaison, France

Tel. +33 680 74 39 21

E-mail: laurent.chamontin@dbmail.com

**SPLIT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: A CARDINAL CHANGE  
IN MODERNIZATION PROCESS OF POST-SOVIET AREA?<sup>1</sup>**

Russia was the first country to start power race with Europeans in 18th century. Three hundred years later, one must admit that the modernization process there is not over, remains quite chaotic and has led to mixed results. Would there be specific roadblocks in the modernization process of the empire and its successors?

Actually, the driving forces of this process in Russia have been very different from what they have been in Europe: a very specific geographical context has enabled the existence of an isolated pole of power, which took the initiative of modernization on a fundamentally reactive mode, in order to answer to the challenge posed by its European neighbors. Meanwhile, civil society had no incentive for change; its passivity was seen by rulers as an obstacle to overcome. The result of this somewhat laborious process is irreversible but incomplete modernization; instrumental goals have been reached, but serious problems remain in social, political and economic spheres, so that its completion remains a key political issue in post-Soviet States, as well as the question of the legacy of «reform led from the top».

In spite of visible revival of some Soviet patterns in public life, several phenomena actually hinder the rebirth of full-scale conservative authoritarian regime. Emergence of civil society and oligarchs in Russia and Ukraine will not allow the State to monopolize public stage; totalitarian climax can probably happen only once; and organization of post-soviet space between revolutionary Ukraine and conservative Russia creates an unprecedented competitive situation. Rearrangement of relations between the State and its challengers in this context will most likely be fully original.

**Key words:** Russia, Ukraine, Modernization.

Some 500 years ago, a race for power started amongst Western European countries, which led eventually to replacement of old agrarian society inherited from Neolithic era with a fully new type of society.

Favorable conditions — dynamic pre-democratic institutions and a context of frantic competition between countries comparable in terms of power [1] — resulted in an unprecedented social change — «from traditional, agrarian, village-centered, patriarchal, holistic [society] to modern, industrial or 'post-industrial', urban, democratic, individualistic» [2] one.

---

<sup>1</sup> Стаття була підготовлена для міжнародної наукової конференції «Соціальні та політичні трансформації у Центральній та Східній Європі (1917–2017 рр.): чинники, досягнення, проблеми» (28–29 червня 2017 року, ОНУ імені І. І. Мечникова, Одеса, Україна).

This transition — that we will call «modernization» hereafter, following in this Prof. A. G. Vishnevsky — could not be without consequences for the rest of the World, which experienced first and foremost consequences of economic and military dynamism it enabled.

When it comes to Muscovy and its successor state, the Russian Empire, reaction to this challenge started at the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century, using a characteristic Russian pattern — the «reform led from the top».

With totalitarian experience, 20<sup>th</sup> century was a climactic moment in this respect, which enabled indeed to reach a no return point in the modernization process. Yet it led notoriously to quite a mixed result, either in terms of economic, social, demographical or political conditions.

This somewhat unfinished modernization inevitably sets the problem of its completion. Will the «reform led from the top» remain the driving force of modernization in the coming decades? Will ups and downs of the State set up the pace of public life, as they used to do during 20<sup>th</sup> century?

### **The deep-rooted pattern of «reform led from the top»**

It is important, before entering the discussion of these questions, to insist on the necessity to put both Russia and Ukraine into its scope. Whereas the current Russian-Ukrainian crisis may be seen as Kiev's attempt to get out of Moscow sphere of influence and reject any concept of Russian world, it does not mean in any way that Ukraine can ignore the problems set by Russian style modernization.

Indeed the legacy of some 300 years of russification in all spheres of life could not be wiped away in only 25 years of independent rule [3]. Actually, one might even say that the painful divorce in progress is an unambiguous sign of how much these two countries share the same problems. In short, the legacy of the «reform led from the top» cannot be ignored either on the Russian or the Ukrainian side.

The persistence of «reform led from the top» pattern cannot be separated from very specific geographical and strategic conditions that have been influencing the course of Russian history until today [3].

Actually exceptional dimensions of the territory where expansion of empire took place do play a part in social inertia that has been a headache for rulers of all times.

Indeed the whole of Russian history takes place in a context where population density is very low: level of 30 inhabitants per square kilometer is reached in France on 13<sup>th</sup> century, and in Western Russia only today, let alone Siberia and Far East.

This cannot be without consequences for social dynamics, as it hampers development of horizontal links and market economy, as well as connections with Europe.

For the same reason, interaction between people and the State has always been quite loose, which actually did not enable to establish a constructive relationship between them. Two well-known patterns of Russian history are here

to illustrate this fact: the first is the famous Potemkin village; the second is the escape into the wild, allowing to evade constraints set by a notoriously heavy-handed State — this escape being made possible precisely by the size of territory.

In addition to this context, one must have in mind the lack of roots of rural private property linked with abundance of land, the authoritarian traditions inherited from Mongol rule, and the thorough effort of the rulers to eradicate any kind of urban self-government — from conquest of Novgorod to abolition of Magdeburg rights in Kiev in 1835 [4].

All this together enables to understand the development of a State that does not tolerate any kind of limitation de jure and takes all possible profit from its position of isolated continental power. Accordingly, the main features of modernization in this area are the key role of the imperial ruler, submitted to pressure of modernizing Europe and mainly concerned with increase of military power, the absence of checks and balances, and reluctant social forces, in connection with absence of visible incentives.

Doubtlessly this authoritarian modernization in a confined space left deep traces in ideas and attitudes in respect to Europe: it must indeed be seen as the very cause of long lasting predominance of conservatism and Russian messianism in politics [5; 6].

### **Modernization mixed results**

The Bolsheviks had actually no choice but to cope with this legacy and revert to old style «reform led from the top». Yet they did it their way; indeed under imperial rule, the confined space was not perfectly closed and was limited in practice by possibility to travel abroad, by international commitments of the government and by its concern with reputation [4]; all of these mitigating factors disappeared after 1917, enabling an unprecedented speeding up of modernization — under totalitarian conditions.

It does not mean in any way that Lenin and his comrades could ignore the local context: indeed «in Russia of 1920s, the only change strategy that could reach success was one which would allow to combine a really revolutionary 'instrumental' modernization with safeguarding of many fundamental institutions and values» [2].

In other words, modernization was limited from the very beginning by its initial conditions; it actually «enabled the USSR to adopt (...) many instrumental achievements of Western societies (modern technologies, external forms of life, sciences, instruction, etc.), but could not create relevant social mechanisms for their self-development (market economy, modern social structure, modern civil society institutions, political democracy, etc.)» [2].

Today successor States of the USSR have to deal with a World power race more intense than ever, where new competitors such as China and India have emerged. They also have to cope with the mixed legacy of this conservative modernization and the structural problems it did not enable to solve, in particular dependence on export of raw materials, dependence on foreign tech-

nologies, decay of infrastructures, corruption, social and political stagnation. It means that modernization, although having already reached a no-return point, is not over.

When it comes to its next steps, the current revival of Russian military power, combined with authoritarianism, could make one believe in a comeback of the «reform led from the top». Yet the conditions that have given this mechanism its exceptional permanence have started to change significantly.

### **Completion of modernization in 21<sup>st</sup> century conditions: a complex game**

As discussed above, the «reform led from the top» results from the combination of uncontrolled State monopolizing initiative, passive society and confined space of continental dimensions.

Obviously the confined space cannot disappear in one day, let alone the legacy it left in mindsets: let us consider an individual living somewhere in lower Volga valley, speaking only Russian, having not enough money to travel outside former USSR and getting information exclusively through Russian State TV; this individual, who is far from being the only one of his kind, can hardly have an accurate perception of far-abroad World.

Yet the tightness of confinement has started to decay, as indeed freedom of travel does exist and mass transportation has dramatically increased mobility of populations; on top of this, in spite of considerable access restrictions in Russia, the Internet also plays its part in linking its inhabitants with the rest of mankind.

Moreover, as a consequence of freedom of travel, emigration and brain drain are today a massive fact in both Russia and Ukraine [7; 8]. Whereas emigrants can have a positive impact on the economy thanks to transfer of currencies to homeland, their departure deprives it of talents needed for its necessary modernization. In particular, unless energetic policies are put in place to limit the brain drain and attract the talents, opening the confined space could well have a negative impact on growth and economic diversification that are yet urgently needed.

This massive emigration illustrates unambiguously individuals' ability to vote with their feet, hence showing that societies are today far from being passive when facing Globalization. The incomplete modernization of former USSR was actually complete enough to give people expectations in respect to welfare and standards of life. This is also the very cause of turmoil that can happen when rulers do not pay enough attention to these expectations, as dramatically shown by Ukrainian political crisis of 2014.

Whereas its autonomy and energy are more visible in Ukraine than in Russia, it does not mean that civil society is passive in the latter case: it just operates in conditions where the internal balance of power is more favorable to the State than in Ukraine. The echo met by Alexey Navalny's initiatives is sufficient in itself to remind that the State monopoly on public life is over.

Moreover the latent power of civil society in Russia is undoubtedly one of the factors, which led to over-reaction of Moscow during the Ukrainian crisis. The overthrow of Viktor Yanukovich entered in direct conflict with nationalistic storytelling designed by the Kremlin to divert people from social criticism [9]. For muscovite elites with uncertain social and functional legitimacy, the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Donbass enable to hide the explosive social potential the Ukrainian revolution may have at home [10].

The State cannot ignore the social expectations mentioned above, yet it is not actually best placed to fulfill them, due to historical legacy. Indeed the well-anchored pattern of «reform led from the top», combined with deep-rooted authoritarian habits and absence of checks and balances led to a highly dysfunctional type of State, invaded by corruption and hardly able to provide «healthcare, education, infrastructure management, law and order» [11] to the population, let alone conditions that would enable to take full profit of entrepreneurs' creativity.

Besides, as anywhere else, the State is challenged and its position is weakened by the development of horizontal links, inside the population as well as with the outside World. It means in particular that full-scale destruction of these horizontal links is no more possible and that, if authoritarianism can make a comeback, totalitarianism cannot. Moreover, in spite of lurches of Russian foreign policy, Moscow cannot fully disconnect from Globalization.

In other words, in both Russia and Ukraine, the State is today challenged by emergence of civil society and oligarchs, and it is in a quite difficult position to answer this challenge. The situation is made more complex again with the recent split between Russia and Ukraine: there are now two competing powers in what used to be earlier the confined space placed under the rule of Russian empire, and, as noted above, any shift of modernization process in one country has and inevitably will have an echo in the other one.

## **Conclusion**

The comeback of Russian power orchestrated in 2014 aimed at fulfilling latent expectations of almighty power that centuries of «reform led from the top» have deeply rooted in mentalities. Yet, when having a look behind the scenes, the possible role of the State in 21<sup>st</sup> century is far from being obvious; actually, it is easier to say what will not happen than what will in regard to its contribution to reforms that are still urgently needed.

State-led instrumental modernization has been achieved in 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a huge economic and human cost. The half-modernized societies it produced have pressing expectations for more welfare and higher standards of life, whereas they have to cope with highly dysfunctional State, which can hardly be seen as the driving force of next steps of modernization.

The Ukrainian revolution of 2014 highlighted the importance civil society has taken in social and political games; it has also made them more complex, as the split between Moscow and Kiev has resulted in a political competition between these two poles of power.

In short, the multiplication of autonomous players makes for sure the modernization process more complex than what it used to be; in particular, how the State and civil society could cooperate in the future remains largely a pending question — especially if one thinks about the disrepute the State has to face, in connection with its dysfunctional character and its poor ability to have a fair discussion with social forces. The only certain point is that the era of «reform led from the top» is over.

## References

1. *Kennedy, Paul M.* The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000. New York: Random House, 1987.
2. *Vishnevsky, Anatoly Grigorevich.* Serp i rubl'. Konservativnaya modernizacija v SSSR [The Sickle and the Rouble. The Conservative Modernisation in the USSR]. Moscow: OGI, 1987.
3. *Chamontin, Laurent.* L'empire sans limites — pouvoir et société dans le monde russe [The empire without limits — power and society in russified World]. La Tour d'Aigues: Les éditions de l'aube, 2014.
4. *Pipes, Richard.* Russia under the Old Regime. London: Penguin Books, 1997.
5. *Niqueux, Michel.* «Le conservatisme russe : une longue tradition» [Russian conservatism: a long-lasting tradition]. Diploweb, March 12, 2017. Accessed September 1, 2017. <<https://www.diploweb.com/Le-conservatisme-russe-une-longue-tradition.html>>
6. *Besanzon, Alain.* Sainte Russie [Holy Russia], Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2012.
7. *Shorich, Miodrag and Filatova, Irina.* «Utechka mozgov iz Rossii: kuda i pochemu uezzhajut specialisty» [Brain drain from Russia: where and why specialists go]. Deutsche Welle, March 9, 2017. Accessed September 1, 2017. <<http://p.dw.com/p/2Yujm>>
8. *Charrel, Marie.* «Les travailleurs ukrainiens au secours de la croissance polonaise» [Ukrainian workers rescuing Polish growth]. Le Monde Économie, June 17, 2017. Accessed September 1, 2017. <[http://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2017/06/17/les-travailleurs-ukrainiens-affluent-en-pologne\\_5146238\\_3234.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2017/06/17/les-travailleurs-ukrainiens-affluent-en-pologne_5146238_3234.html)>
9. *Laruelle, M.* Le Nouveau Nationalisme russe. Des repères pour comprendre [New Russian nationalism : some landmarks to understand]. Paris: L'ŷuvre Éditions, 2010.
10. *Chamontin, Laurent.* Ukraine et Russie: pour comprendre — retour de Marioupol [Ukraine and Russia: to understand — return from Mariupol]. Vincennes: Diploweb, 2017.
11. *Mendras, Marie.* Russie, l'envers du pouvoir [Russia : the back of the power]. Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2008.

*Стаття надійшла до редакції 15.09.2017*

**Шамонтен Л.**

Инженер и эссеист

Ул. Анри Дюрана, 32, 92500 Рюэль Мальмезон, Франция

## **РАСКОЛ МЕЖДУ РОССИЕЙ И УКРАИНОЙ: КАРДИНАЛЬНОЕ ИЗМЕНЕНИЕ В ПРОЦЕССЕ МОДЕРНИЗАЦИИ ПОСТСОВЕТСКОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА?**

### **Резюме**

Из держав, вступивших в соревнование с европейскими странами, Россия стала первой, уже в начале восемнадцатого века. Триста лет спустя модернизация по бывшей Российской империи является незавершённой и по крайней мере хаотической. Есть ли тут в процессе модернизации специфические препятствия?

Фактически движущие силы данного процесса в России значительно отличались от тех, которые встречались в Европе: сильная специфика географического контекста создала условия для существования изолированной державы, которая приняла инициативу модернизации в существенно реактивном режиме, чтобы отвлечь на угрозу, представленную её европейскими соседями.

Между тем гражданское общество не имело толчков к изменению; его пассивность руководители считали препятствием, которое требовалось преодолеть.

Результатом этого в некоторой степени тяжёлого процесса является не обратимая, а незавершённая модернизация. Инструментальные её цели достигнуты, но серьёзные проблемы остаются в социальной, политической и экономической областях, так что остаются ключевыми политическими вопросами в постсоветском пространстве как её завершение, так и наследство «управления сверху».

Несмотря на видимое восстановление некоторых советских образов в общественной жизни, некоторые явления фактически мешают возрождению полномасштабного консервативного авторитарного строя.

Возникновение гражданского общества и олигархов как в России, так и в Украине не даст государству монополизировать общественную арену; тоталитарная кульминация наверно может происходить только однократно; и в результате расположения постсоветского пространства, между революционной Украиной и консервативной Россией, возникает беспрецедентное соревновательное положение. По всей видимости, перестройка отношений между государством и его соперниками будет вполне оригинальной.

**Ключевые слова:** Россия, Украина, модернизация.

**Шамонтен Л.**

Інженер та есеїст

Вул. Анрі Дюрана, 32, 92500 Рюель Мальмезон, Франція

**РОЗКОЛ МІЖ РОСІЄЮ І УКРАЇНОЮ: КАРДИНАЛЬНА ЗМІНА  
В ПРОЦЕСІ МОДЕРНІЗАЦІЇ ПОСТРАДЯНСЬКОГО ПРОСТОРУ?**

**Резюме**

З держав, що вступили в змагання з європейськими країнами, Росія стала першою, вже на початку вісімнадцятого століття. Триста років потому модернізація колишньої Російської імперії є незавершеною і принаймні хаотичною. Чи є тут в процесі модернізації специфічні перешкоди?

Фактично рушійні сили цього процесу в Росії значно відрізнялися від тих, які зустрічалися в Європі: сильна специфіка географічного контексту створила умови для існування ізольованої держави, яка прийняла ініціативу модернізації в дуже реактивному режимі, щоб відповідати на загрозу, представлену її європейськими сусідами.

Тим часом громадянське суспільство не мало поштовхів до зміни; його пасивність керівники вважали перешкодою, яку було потрібно подолати.

Результатом цього в деякій мірі важкого процесу є не оборотна, а незавершена модернізація. Інструментальні її цілі досягнуті, але серйозні проблеми залишаються в соціальній, політичній та економічній сферах, так що залишаються ключовими політичними питаннями в пострадянському просторі як її завершення, так і спадок «управління зверху».

Незважаючи на видиме відновлення деяких радянських образів в суспільному житті, деякі явища фактично заважають відродженню повномасштабного консервативного авторитарного ладу.

Виникнення громадянського суспільства і олігархів як в Росії, так і в Україні не дасть державі монополізувати громадську арену; тоталітарна кульмінація напевно може відбуватися тільки одноразово; і в результаті розташування пострадянського простору, між революційною Україною та консервативною Росією, виникає безпрецедентне змагальне становище. Напевно перебудова відносин між державою та її суперниками буде цілком оригінальною.

**Ключові слова:** Росія, Україна, модернізація.

**Chamontin L.**

*Engineer and essayist*

*École Polytechnique, France, MSc*

*École Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Administration Économique, France, MSc*

*Born in 1964 and fluent in Russian, Laurent Chamontin is Manager in an international company. He spent 3 years in Eastern Ukraine, from 2008 to 2011, where he was in charge of continuous improvement in a metallurgical plant.*

*Publications:*

• *«L'empire sans limites — pouvoir et société dans le monde russe» («The empire without limits — power and society in russified World»)*, publisher: Éditions de l'Aube, France, preface by Isabelle Facon, in French, 2014.

• *«Ukraine et Russie: pour comprendre — retour de Marioupol» («Ukraine and Russia: to understand — return from Mariupol»)*, publisher: Diploweb, France, in French, 2016.



*Lectures :*

• «*Russia after Putin : current model and scenarios of transformation*» (Krynica Zdryj Economic Forum, Poland — 2015 — in Russian).

• «*Ukraine — a barrier, or a bridge between the East and the West ?*» (Krynica Zdryj Economic Forum, Poland — 2016 — in Russian).

• «*Le conflit russo-ukrainien : crise géopolitique ou crise de modernisation ?*» («*Russian — Ukrainian conflict : a geopolitical crisis, or a modernisation crisis ? INALCO, France — 2016 — in French*»).

Laurent Chamontin is graduated from *École Polytechnique* (France — 1987 — Master degree) and from *École Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Administration Économique* (France — 1989 — Master degree). He also holds a degree in *Chinese language and civilization* (*Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, France — 2001*) and has completed *Beijing Tsinghua University summer school on business strategy and management in China* in 1999.

**Шамонтен Л.**

*Инженер и эссеист*

Окончил Политехническую школу (Франция, 1987, MSc) и Национальную школу статистики и экономического управления (Франция, 1989, MSc).

Он также получил диплом Национального Института восточных языков и цивилизации (Франция) по китайскому языку и цивилизации (2001) и окончил летнюю школу Университета Цинхуа (Китай) по стратегии бизнеса и менеджменту в Китае (1999).

Родившийся в 1964 г. и говорящий по-русски, Лоран Шамонтен работает менеджером в международной компании. Он провёл 3 года на востоке Украины, с 2008 по 2011, где возглавлял отдел непрерывного улучшения на металлургическом предприятии.

*Публикации:*

• «*L'empire sans limites — pouvoir et société dans le monde russe*» («*Безлимитная империя — власть и общество в русифицированном мире*»), изд. *Éditions de l'Aube*, Франция, с предисловием Изабеля Факона (*Isabelle Facon*), на французском языке, 2014.

• «*Ukraine et Russie: pour comprendre — retour de Marioupol*» («*Украина и Россия: чтобы понять — возвращение из Мариуполя*»), изд. *Diploweb*, Франция — на французском языке, 2016.

*Лекции:*

• «*Россия после Путина: сценарии трансформации*», Крыница Здруй, Польша, Экономический форум, 2015.

• «*Украина — барьер или мост между Востоком и Западом?*», Крыница Здруй, Польша, Экономический форум, 2016.

• «*Le conflit russo-ukrainien : crise géopolitique ou crise de modernisation ?*» («*Российско-украинский конфликт: геополитический кризис или кризис модернизации?*»), INALCO, Франция — на французском языке.