

Review of the Collective Monograph

“Atlas of Modernization of Russia and Its Regions: Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural Trends and Issues”

Compiler and executive editor: RAS Corresponding Member N.I. Lapin.
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The problem of modernization became especially popular in the West in the 1960s and it was picked up in Russia in the 1990s. In both cases mostly the ideologized understanding of modernization prevailed as the achievement of an “exemplary” state of society, where the criterion was “the path traveled by the West” [2, p. 17], with a focus on achieving an efficient, competitive economy through the latest innovations in technology. The approach was very soon acknowledged as limited, and more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of modernization was needed

due to such insufficient technical explanation. The publication of “Atlas of Modernization of Russia and Its Regions: Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural Trends and Issues” duly helped understand modern scientific problems of modernization from fundamentally new semantic point of view.

The analytical and problem-based atlas is a scientific work of authors, showing the findings of the research carried out by the authors for the past ten years. As conceived by its compiler and executive editor N.I. Lapin, the edition is an “experience of the

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spatial systematization of different processes and conditions, problems and trends of modernization of Russian regions and Russia in general" [1, p. 6]. The choice of such original way of research presentation in the form of an atlas was determined by a great number of complex multidimensional concepts oversaturated with current problems that are not yet well understood.

The edition does not represent an atlas in its ordinary sense, i.e. a collection of maps or images used for illustrative purposes, though it does contain many colored maps, graphs and analytical tables illustrating trends and problems of modernization in 2000-2012. The atlas includes unique materials based on Russian and international statistics and sociological research and it enables readers to compare trends and problems of modernization in seven federal districts of the Russian Federation and its regions, to determine strategic goals and objectives of their development and to make necessary administrative decisions and just as importantly, to give directions for further research.

Regarding the present edition it is reasonable to speak of broad philosophical, epistemological understanding of an atlas "as a spatial systematic presentation of data about the subjects of inquiry and significant for its cognition" [1, p. 6]. Furthermore, the information and conclusions presented in the atlas are of a great practical importance and may be used for efficiency increase of activity of all actors of modernization. It should be

noted that editions of that kind are rarely published, and in the context of modernization problems of Russian regions and Russia in general, such fundamental and comprehensive spatial systematization is performed for the first time.

Introductory theoretical and methodological part consists of two chapters and gives a general characterization of modernization, its components and trends, and socio-cultural challenges faced by Russian modernization. It also sets the ideological and structural unity of the research thus ensuring its conceptual integrity. A peculiar feature of the atlas is that the modernization in Russia of today is presented holistically as a multidimensional process of civilization; on the one hand it is considered in the framework of global modernization, on the other, it describes its specific features in various federal districts and constituent entities of the Russian Federation. N.I. Lapin does not only consider modernization as a process of transition from traditional to modern society, he develops a broader understanding of modernization as a global process of civilization, requiring its integrated understanding and measurement.

Novelty and originality of the author's approach to the understanding of modernization is that it is considered beyond its ideological interpretations as "the totality of changes that people (individuals and collective entities and communities) perform on their own or they have to choose new ways of influence on the objects of their activity and on their living



conditions with the aim to improve their life” [1, p. 15]. Thus, modernization is considered from a new angle of modernization research is being set, in which it is viewed as a process having not only civilizational but common cultural and all-human significance as well. N.I. Lapin emphasizes that the main functions of modernization are “ensuring the security of the community (country) and improving the well-being and the quality of life of people and the entire population” [1, p. 16], therefore it is of vital importance to every person and every socio-cultural community.

The first chapter gives a brief description of technological, socio-economic, socio-cultural and institutional-regulatory component of modernization, showing their main features and contradictions at the present stage of social development and describing the tools to obtain indicators and indices of modernization. The tools of the Center for Modernization Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences, used as a basis for the study, made it possible to measure at each stage the levels of modernization of Russian regions and federal districts. Having adapted the tools of Chinese scientists to the Russian realities RAS Institute of Philosophy constructed a comprehensive typology of phases of modernization (types) in the unity of the stages of modernization, their levels and phases in each region. With the help of the typology the dynamics of the current state of modernization degree of the regions, their hierarchy and clusterization is revealed. Since the structure of the indicators

made it possible to measure, first and foremost, the processes of socio-economic and socio-cultural modernization and only indirectly to judge the technical, technological and institutional-regulatory components of it, the authors of the atlas focus on analyzing the processes, problems and tendencies of particular socio-economic and socio-cultural modernization of Russian regions and Russia in general.

The key ideological premise, uniting the authors, consists in affirming the integral nature of modernization, the interconnectedness of all its components. If, however, “this or that component is not sufficiently represented, or, on the contrary, dominates the others, complex modernization can turn into partial quasi-modernization” [1, p. 25].

The atlas gives a characteristic of the industrial and informational stages of modernization from the viewpoint of a comprehensive understanding of the process as a unity of technical, technological, socio-economic, socio-cultural and institutional-regulatory components; it also shows that in the modern world both stages are simultaneously being performed on a global scale: 90 developing countries are carrying out the industrial stage, and about 40 developed countries are at the informational stage. In a number of countries, to which Russia belongs as well, both stages of modernization are taking place simultaneously, each is in its phase and prevails in different regions of the country. At the current stage

of history a priority task for most countries, including Russia is to continue and complete the stage of industrialization, because at the beginning of the 21st century Russia ceased being one of the industrialized countries. According to N.I. Lapin, with the start of the new century, "it posed a challenge of restoring the industrial base of the manufacturing industry and the entire economy, and the need for modernization of the society on the whole became acute as a way of solving the fundamental problem of modern Russia, that is the problem of a new civilizational choice" [1, p. 33].

For understanding modern civilizational processes the atlas raises a very important issue of uneven modernization, it is emphasized that in the 21st century the process will increase, and "the competition between countries will be extremely tough" [1, p. 19]. The growing problem is also evidenced by the migration from the less developed countries to the more developed ones and by numerous attempts of certain civilizations to impose their ways of development on others. All these facts confirm that in the globalizing world the price of evasion from modernization is too high, and its primary goal is to ensure the security of the country and state sovereignty.

The atlas represents and summarizes numerous data giving evidence to the fact that "in Russia irregularity of modernization spread between the second informational stage and the first industrial one is 2.5 times more than that of the other countries" [1, p. 17]. This

fundamental circumstance for understanding development prospects of Russia has been poorly studied for various reasons for a long time, including absence of safe measuring tools. In this respect the present edition comes as a deep present-day stage in scientific understanding of the problem and in working up the strategies of regional development. The existence of significant differences between the states of modernization of macroregions represents a problem that creates real socio-political risks, especially dangerous for the border constituent entities of the Russian Federation, which are 28 out of 85, as socio-economic and socio-cultural differences between territories pave the way for increase of national separatist sentiments. A scientific approach to the analysis of this problem is needed, assuming a differentiation between the contradictions caused by the problems of Russian society, and ethno-confessional, cultural features rooted in the historical and cultural diversity of Russia. As N.I. Lapin fairly says "social contradictions should be resolved, and cultural characteristics, on the contrary, should be taken into consideration and used as one of the resources for the successful modernization of Russia both as state and civilization" [1, p. 44].

The process of modernization depends on the course made by the country, its historical trends and the real state of the country, contemporary values of the population, but it is also important for all socio-cultural communities, therefore, ignoring or opposing



its processes can lead to social stagnation and degradation. According to N.I. Lapin, a targeted impact of the state and other political forces plays a huge role in the implementation of modernization, because if spontaneously developed the modernization process “loses its necessary complexity and becomes fragmentary, unbalanced, dysfunctional and is often accompanied by revolutionary upheavals” [1, p. 19].

In the second chapter, devoted to the analysis of the socio-cultural challenges of modernization, L.A. Belyaeva notes that some of the problems of Russian society are systemic in nature and can be perceived either as challenges or as a development potential “depending on how well these problems are understood, and if a society could translate them into political, social and economic decisions and determine purposes and steps” [1, p. 45]. Analyzing the impact on the spatial modernization as one of such challenges, the author shows that mass consciousness always correlated the effectiveness of Russian government officials work with the territory expansion, giving significant and diverse natural resources that always played a key role in the development of the country and its recovery from crises. In accordance with the World Bank research data, citing in the atlas, Russia’s natural resources per capita are 2.2 times more than in the U.S., 5.2 times more than in Germany, 3.4 times more than in France. But at the same time there is a considerable (fivefold) lag between Russia

and other countries by man-made wealth, and even more significant is the gap between the indicators characterizing intangible capital, such as the level and quality of education, medical care, the effectiveness of governance institutions, the provision of public services, etc.

The analysis of comparative studies of resource-rich countries shows the direct correlation between higher per capita incomes, living standards, the level of social development and the quality of the institutional environment. Therefore, one of the most urgent issues for Russia is “shifting from the exploitation of natural resources to high-tech manufacturing and information technology and becoming competitive in comparison with the world developed countries in these spheres” [1, p. 48], as well as a significant reforming of the institutional environment and management system. It will allow one to use vast Russian territory and its natural resources as a powerful factor of the country’s modernization.

Chapter 2 deals extensively with a comparative analysis of certain characteristics of human capital. It shows that sufficient quantitative and qualitative parameters of human potential are essential to meet the challenges of modernization throughout the vast territory of the country. The author pays attention to such issues as “population and depopulation in Russia and its regions, resettlement system and mass displacement, inconsistency of urbanization occurring as a forced chaotic process rather than a factor

and consequence of modernization, and realization of some territories" [1, p. 51].

Considering the structuring of modern Russian society by living standard of the population, the composition of the formed social stratum, and the presence of middle class in the society as a definite challenge to modernize, Belyaeva notes that her analysis "must be carried out in the context of the tasks of development and stimulation of economic activity of the population and the opening of channels of social mobility, especially for young people" [1, p. 68]. It may be seen from the research that a social stratification of the employed population has developed in Russia, featuring the industrial stage of development with some elements of preindustrial and post-industrial economies. Social layers, not belonging to the elite, but with cultural capital, professional and adapted to the changes, make up about 50% of the employed population in total, it is they who can "nominate not only the participants but also the organizers of the modernization process" [1, p. 84].

The main content of the atlas is a spatial mapping of trends and issues of modernization in seven federal districts of the Russian Federation presented in seven chapters. Many chapters give a brief sketch of ethnic, religious and territorial administrative history of a federal district, therefore enhancing to a better understanding of current processes. The semantic unity of the chapters is provided by the analysis of main components of modernization - technical and technological, socio-economic,

socio-cultural and institutional and regulatory components. To characterize the processes of modernization in these spheres the atlas relies on Russian and international statistics and opinion polls of some regions of these federal districts. The authors show the hierarchical differentiation of constituent entities and federal districts of the Russian Federation according to the state of their modernization, the dynamics of the current state (type) of modernization, which are illustrated in each Chapter with a set of relevant diagrammatic maps; the contradictions concerning the development modernization of the regions are considered from low states to higher ones. The atlas examines the directions and phases of the proposed modernization strategy, shows the possibility of practical application of research results in the documents of strategic planning of Russia and its regions.

The undoubted merit of the scientific work is that it justifies the humanistic vector of Russian modernization. The national monitoring results of "The Values and Interests of the Population of Russia", cited in the atlas, demonstrate that the majority of the country's population (77%) are committed to humanistic values and it is the real humanism that comes as the initial value landmark of the way of life, that is the dream of the vast majority of Russians as a fair and worthy way of life. This position is held by N.I. Lapin, believing that "it is not only about the values of indices, but it's about the increase in the socio-cultural efficiency of modernization,



and particularly, in raising the standard of living and improving the quality of life of the population” [1, p. 303]. To fulfill the need to live in the civilization of real humanism, “the entire population of the country should take an active part in promoting the humanistic orientation of Russian modernization and the phased implementation of a strategy integrating its industrial and informational stage” [ibidem].

In conclusion, I would like to note that the studies of the team of authors under the leadership of N.I. Lapin led to the publication

of the edition which is highly appreciated; it presents a unique information that outlines the multidimensional modernization processes in Russia and its regions. The book is full of new ideas, with beautiful language; it is easy to read with great interest and demonstrates both scientific novelty and practical relevance. The atlas may achieve a wide readership, as its information and ideas are interesting and useful to scientists, teachers, graduate students and students, officials, and a much wider range of readers - to all interested in the evolution of modern Russia.

References

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