Challenges Of the Modern World: Global Transformations and The Problem of Human Uniqueness

By

Ekaterina Yurievna Shammazova
Kazan Federal University, candidate of philosophical sciences, associate professor, Department of conflictology, Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications,
Email: eshammazova@bk.ru,
Tel +7(905)3757541,
ID Scopus 56100079700,
ORCID ID 0000-0002-0543-3345

Elena Alexandrovna Tereshina
Kazan Federal University, candidate of political sciences, associate professor, Department of conflictology, Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications,
Email: teralena2010@mail.ru
Tel. +7(927)4015733,
ID Scopus 57191723387,
ORCID ID 0000-0001-6885-7252

Abstract

The paper examines the problems of politicisation of the modern world and the polarisation of societies and trust in the state. It shows to what extent social and political actors are ready for cooperation and unity in the conditions of risks to the country's security. It is noted that the effectiveness of governance strategies should be funded by the principles of self-organisation. The need for a rapid response increases the likelihood of misinformation in the information environment, which contributes to the emergence of hostile attitudes towards the authorities. As a result, there is a danger of infodemia for societal cohesion against the background of the increasing role of the media and social networks in supporting the population. Renewed cooperation and closer communication between the media, health experts, academics and politicians is essential to improve the quality of news. Constructing a human being according to a single model is dangerous and ineffective. In a rapidly changing society, creative and responsible individuals are in demand. At the same time, the social order is still shaping, constructing a non-self-sufficient, conformist, passive and stressful person with fragmented and unstable knowledge and worldview

Key words: Transition, crisis, politicisation of modern society, infodema, principles of self-organisation, political institutions, misinformation.

1. Introduction

The new challenges posed to states and health systems by the COVID-19 pandemic conditions marked a turning point in development, signalling a transition to a new state of social systems. The topic of health undoubtedly deserves a special role in the context of this transition, demonstrating the importance of health in maintaining the political, economic and social stability of the nation state [1;26].

It is now almost obvious that the whole world system is in a period of some transition, including the gradual exhaustion of the potential of modern globalization and, consequently, a return to nationally oriented development is looming [14, p.54].

COVID-19 has become an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that many policy makers and researchers believe contributes to the transition of societies [15;16;28]. The focus of researchers around the world is not just on biomedical issues. Social theorists, together with epidemiologists, journalists, law enforcement officers and civic activists, are analysing the responses of governments, regional authorities and different population groups to the epidemic [29]. Researchers have noted that the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a public health problem but also a test for political institutions, a public policy problem that requires decisions on what should be done, when, by whom, for what purpose and with what acceptable consequences [7;17;18;19]. Under these circumstances, the question of human uniqueness and value becomes relevant, and therefore, an important area of research can be called the regulation of people's social behaviour.

2.   Methods

In this study, the main objective is to identify the readiness of social and political actors to cooperate and unite in the face of national security risks to the state. State security issues are relevant in the context of the increasing politicisation of the modern world and the polarisation of societies.

The authors applied a systemic approach as the main research methodology. The structural-functional and institutional approaches were also used.

The systemic approach made it possible to consider the problems from the point of view of the orientation towards establishing the integrity of the object and the mechanisms that ensure it, discovering the diverse types of interconnections of a complex object and summarising them in a unified theoretical picture.

The structural-functional analysis includes the identification of the main interrelationships of the object of study, as well as the identification of the nature and ways of influence of some substructures and their constituent elements on others.

Institutionalism puts forward economic as well as non-economic problems of socio-economic development as its object of analysis. Institutions play an important role in the competitiveness of a country and the successful development of society. The formation and efficient functioning of institutions is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development and social stability.

All this allows us to emphasize the special and specific features that characterize institutionalized forms of social interactions. Considering social connections, we can confidently assert that "man is connected by thousands of invisible threads to people, to society". Continuing this analogy, we can say that institutions are the strongest in the system of social connections; they crucially predetermine its viability. It is the institutional, established, well-functioning and regular aspect of social life that is the decisive factor determining the level of vitality of individuals and society as a whole. Accordingly, these are the most important objects of analysis.

3. Results And Discussion

Systemic crisis. The pandemic has given governments broad political latitude, on the one hand, and the willingness of the general public to tolerate sometimes disproportionate political responses, on the other [27;29]. Political leaders around the world are attempting to minimise economic, social and health threats to populations, but this is accompanied by an assault on democratic principles and human rights. Practically all countries demonstrate a trend towards the introduction of total surveillance of citizens.

According to G.Leo, we can observe a serious and dangerous trend towards militarisation of increasingly authoritarian regimes, and the use of the military to extend local and regional control. Almost all countries demonstrate a trend towards total surveillance of citizens. Communication technologies used for monitoring and containment have potentially serious implications for privacy and freedom of movement [3]. Will these restrictive and coercive measures prove effective?

One of the cultural barriers to concerted action within countries is political polarisation - the division of opinions debating two opposing, mutually exclusive positions. Polarisation can be worldview polarisation, where groups take rationally justified extreme opposing positions, or it can be affective polarisation, meaning that the parties fundamentally distrust the opposing side's supporters. It is affective polarisation that has political consequences, such as reduced trust, a preference for unfounded accusations and labels. One of the problems of polarization in a pandemic, as J.M. Barrios and J. Hochberg point out, is that it may lead to differing conclusions about the threat and appropriate action among different populations using a variety of information sources [16].

Thus, official information sources explain and justify the existing state of affairs and actions of the authorities, while in opposition media and especially in cyberspace, in social networks, intellectuals and social movement activists declare more and more loudly that this crisis should lead to a change of the economic paradigm. Analysing which meanings are produced by the media is especially important in view of the fact that, according to specialists, information consumption has increased significantly with the introduction of restrictive measures due to restrictions on mobility and social distancing. In particular, media consumption peaked with the first measures of social distance and increased according to government reports [20;30].

International research demonstrates that countries have failed to overcome political polarisation. Affective polarisation has political consequences, such as reduced trust. Politicians were the most frequent actors in both news coverage and analysis. The official media pursued a low-key media policy aimed at promoting active and inclusive actions by the country's leaders, with little notice of different assessments and perspectives on the situation, including on the evaluation of the actions of state institutions in the context of the coronavirus infection. The media uses openly emotional, expressive headlines that contribute to a conflicting perception of the situation, raising anxiety and increasing distrust of the already compromised actions of the authorities [21;22;23].

The confrontation between civil society and state authorities over lockdown measures shows that public trust is in crisis even in countries with the strongest traditions of democracy. The coordination between the central authorities and the regions inspired a particular interest of researchers. Even systems which in normal times tend to regulate relations centrally across

the entire spectrum of political processes are now shying away from this, devolving powers to regional elites [14]. This applies in full measure to Russia as well.

Policy construction and public trust. The confrontation between the state bureaucracy and the general public, which is not ready to tolerate disproportionate political decisions and reactions, is becoming more and more active [2].

In this perspective, the limit of governability, determined by the cognitive abilities of the subject, the possibility and ability to create a rational management plan, is revealed. As F. Hayek writes: "if we want to improve the social order, we have to learn to follow the logic of complex formations, not to be rudely managed". 'Not to bend the model to the right shape, but to cultivate phenomena like plants to improve the conditions for growth' [11, p.22].

The state tries to overcome the conflict of power and the citizen in the easiest and most accessible way, by subordinating it to itself. In this case, the problem-solving tasks are replaced by the tasks of achieving static stability [5;6]. Advancing along the path of bureaucratic "pressure" preserves the problem, or social contradictions, thus creating an even greater crisis.

The governing centre solves the issue in a mechanistic way. The purpose of management is to create and implement management decisions that impose a predetermined way of behaviour on the object from the outside. Such way of management presupposes that transformations are made "from above", and the state possesses exclusive self-sufficiency in relation to the society. Therefore, there is a rejection in the public consciousness of the ideas under the banner of which transformations are carried out in society [10, p. 6-24].

Under certain conditions, potential development paths become attraction centres that contain a relatively stable state. The state bureaucracy tries to ensure the stability in society that the government seeks. This path leads to the maximum preservation of the state and its political course, ensuring the stability of society in its old capacity. Bureaucratic stabilisation is aimed at eliminating external manifestations of the crisis, but does not touch its essence. Meanwhile, the main problem of the existing antagonism of power and society, which lies in the total alienation of the citizen, increasingly reveals itself [12].

The modern status of a person (citizen) is seriously truncated, which does not allow him/her to enter effectively into the relations of information, intellectual, communicative exchange with other members of society. Alienation arises as a result of a person losing control over both the conditions of existence and the means of production. Activities in the form of political structures, modern technologies, scientific delusions, false ideologies dominate living activities. Life seems conditioned, determined not by people themselves, by their evaluations, choices, activities, relationships, but by alien forces independent of them, personified and embodied in things.

Alienation in any of its forms is a source of human non-freedom. Trying to avoid external manipulation, the imposition of this or that action or "image", a person seeks to protect himself/herself, to withdraw into himself/herself. The observed increase in the distance of citizens from the state is a dangerous trend, leading to the collapse of the social system. The attitude of citizens towards the state may have quite different consequences from the feeble grumbling of those dependent on the authorities. [2;8;9]. We are talking about the potential to create an alternative structural properties /sociality as a possible option for further existence. Such ideas are not uncommon on the Internet today.

We are just not yet used to thinking in terms of self-organization. We don't yet know what self-selection is. We still have a Darwinian understanding of "struggle of species". We still have the old understanding of systemic organisation.

The transfer of the system to a new state desired by the subject occurs naturally, without pressure from the latter [12]. In this context, the coercive model of management, based on a strict hierarchy of subject-object relations, is abandoned in favour of a model in which the subject and the object of management are linked by relations of assistance. This means that the purpose of management is to detect and implement management influences that do not impose a given way of behaviour from the outside, but rather form internal, natural mechanisms of self-organisation. The most natural resource element for creating structures that ensure the autonomous activity of society is the human being. An individual is both the creator and the creation of his/her life, including the social situation.

The dangers of infodemic. Modern technical-technological methods have expanded the physical capabilities of human beings, but at the same time, greater freedom has attracted those who wish to use them to their advantage. There is a medium for this - the communicative space and the means - information technology. There are also ways to understand the mechanisms of influence, both spontaneous and specially organised. The main actors affected by the media are citizens.

These outcomes cannot be discussed without taking into account the general framework of social responsibility theory [24;25]. The media must accept and fulfil certain obligations to society and must meet high professional standards of accuracy, truthfulness, objectivity and balance. Consequently, journalists and professionals should be accountable to the public, reflecting and respecting diversity, pluralism as well as different viewpoints and rights to reply.

Thus, one of the main requirements is to present scientifically sound news from the right perspective, without sensationalising or alarming.

In addition, it is the authors' understanding that the pandemic has been heavily politicised. This result, highlighting the importance of the political factor in news presentation, suggests the need for more comparative research, analysing media portrayals in different contexts and how different media embedded in different political and cultural contexts have reacted. In particular, the current crisis, with its global reach and impact, could be an ideal occasion to compare media behaviour in different countries to see if there are similarities and differences and to what extent different political cultures and political systems change the response to the state of affairs. Moreover, renewed collaboration and greater communication between the media, health experts, academia and policy makers is essential to improve the quality of news. To do this, academic institutions, bodies and organizations involved in scientific research need to improve their interaction with the media, while understanding the need to explain research results, policies and trends to media professionals who are responsible for "translating" and distributing them to citizens. On the other hand, the media must rely on competent scholars from a wide range of disciplines interacting, evaluating and maintaining a dialogue with journalists in order to provide readers and, ultimately, civil society with an understanding of the issues.

4.   Summary

Many eminent scientists have dreamed of a time when the greatest synthesis of sciences would come, the subject of which would be the human being as the most complex object. The human being is a functioning, biosocial, reproductive being with values. And, most importantly, it is possible to develop spirituality in a human being. Today there is almost no understanding that the soul, the orientation of human feelings, needs to be shaped.

The crisis of contemporary culture is connected with the breakdown of the necessary connection between "external" progress (in economics, technology, education) and the spiritual perfection of man. Having lost the connection with ethical ideals, culture has lost its mission - to promote the spiritual and moral elevation of man and humanity.

The fatal thing for modern culture has been that its material side has developed much more actively and has achieved more than its spiritual side. The equilibrium was broken. Unprecedented discoveries in the natural sciences have radically transformed the lives of peoples and states, the material and technical capabilities of man have increased tremendously, and the conditions of his existence have changed. Advances in science, technology, material achievements have transformed over time the overall concept of culture. The material prevails over the spiritual, humanity, fascinated by the idea of power, control, achievement, transformation, attaches greater weight and importance to the material. It is this overestimation of the material component of culture that has largely led to the current conflict - the problem of human uniqueness. A culture that develops only the material side without corresponding spiritual progress can be compared to a ship that has lost its steering wheel, loses manoeuvrability and rushes uncontrollably towards catastrophe.

According to the philosopher A. Schweitzer, "the main thing in culture is not material achievements, but that individuals comprehend the ideals of human perfection and improvement of social and political conditions of life of peoples and all mankind and are constantly guided in their views by these ideals. Only if individuals, as spiritual forces, work to improve themselves and society, it will be possible to solve the problems posed by reality and ensure universal progress that is beneficial in all respects" [13, p. 98].

Material achievements, the successes of science and practice alone, without a parallel spiritual growth, do not constitute the development and improvement of culture. And here we must come to the problem of social order.

5.   Conclusions

Thus, we can speak of man proper only when he or she overcomes the biological and biosocial levels of his or her being, rises to the spiritual and moral level, realises the principal incompleteness, "openness", instability, variability and potentiality of his own essence, accepts responsibility for his fate, the fate of others and the world as a whole.

Man is largely a product and construct of various sociocultural technologies. Constructing a human being according to one pattern is, I think, both dangerous and ineffective.

A creative and responsible person is in demand in the rapidly changing society. At the same time, the social order, as before, forms, constructs a non-self-sufficient, conformist, passive and stressed person with fragmentary and unstable knowledge and, most importantly, with an unformed worldview.

6 Acknowledgements

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Shammazova Ekaterina Yurievna, the candidate of philosophical sciences, associate professor, Department of conflictology, Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications. Research interests: transitional period, crisis, politicization of modern society, infodemic, principles of self-organization, political institutions, disinformation. Scientific project: «Health policy in the transition period: specifics, subjects of formation and implementation» (RFBR and EISI grant, 2020-2021).

Tereshina Elena Alexandrovna, the candidate of political sciences, associate professor. Research interests: conflicts, security, prevention of extremism and terrorism, social partnership. Scientific achievements: RFBR grant No. 20-011-22054 «Managing regional conflicts in the context of digitalization of modern society: methodology and implementation practices» (2020). About 45 scientific publications on conflict topics.