Conservative Trends In Politics And Archaization Of The Russian Society

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TENDENCIAS CONSERVADORAS EN POLÍTICA Y ARCAIZACIÓN DE LA SOCIEDAD RUSA

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Abstract

The article explores the foundations of conservative trends in Russian politics. The manifestation of conservative tendencies is seen in the very nature of the neo-patrimonial political regime prevailing in post-Soviet Russia, and in the legitimizing ideology on which it is based. The formation of the neopatrimonial regime and its ideological foundations are considered as a manifestation of the archaization of Russian society, which also manifests itself in the strengthening of the role of religion in Russian society; while religiosity itself has a certain specificity, which makes it possible to talk about the presence of archaizing tendencies within the framework of religious consciousness.

Keywords: conservatism, archaization, modernization, public administration, Russian society, neopatrimonialism, ideology, religion, culture, Orthodoxy.

Resumen

El artículo explora los fundamentos de las tendencias conservadoras en la política rusa. La manifestación de las tendencias conservadoras se ve en la naturaleza misma del régimen político neopatrimonial que prevalece en la Rusia postsoviética y en la ideología legitimadora en la que se basa. La formación del régimen neopatrimonial y sus

fundamentos ideológicos se consideran una manifestación de la arcaización de la sociedad rusa, que también se manifiesta en el fortalecimiento del papel de la religión en la sociedad rusa; mientras que la religiosidad misma tiene una cierta especificidad, lo que hace posible hablar sobre la presencia de tendencias arcaizantes en el marco de la conciencia religiosa.

Palabras clave: conservadurismo, arcaización, modernización, administración pública, sociedad rusa, neopatrimonialismo, ideología, religión, cultura, ortodoxia.

Introduction.

In the post-Soviet period, Russian society and its political system underwent noticeable changes. The 90s of the twentieth century, the period immediately following the collapse of the USSR, passed under the slogans of the formation of democratic political institutions, market economy and the establishment of liberal values. Indeed, during this period the institutional foundation for the democratic regime was laid, however, almost immediately, democratic forms of governance began to grow into informal practices that distort their essence. Development of market economy in Russia was of an equally controversial character. The course of the reforms and their results caused dissatisfaction among a significant part of Russian society, which perceived these reforms as a reason for the deterioration of its socio-economic situation, as well as the reason for the loss of Russia's position on the world stage. Discontent naturally stimulated nostalgic moods. The difficulties and contradictions of socio-economic and political development were accompanied by an increase in anomic tendencies, the atomization of society and the loss of collective identity, normative value uncertainty and sociocultural risks [Gafiatulina, et al., 2018; Shakbanova, et al., 2018; Shakhbanova, Kasyanov, et al., 2019]. All this served as an incentive for the search for new ideological guidelines, the source of which was often the idealized past - both Soviet and pre-Soviet, as well as reviving and new religions. The political regime that was forming in Russia with increasing distance from the ideals of democracy also needed ideological legitimation, which acquired a conservative character with a significant religious component. The article examines the specifics of the post-Soviet political regime and its conservative nature in the context of the process of archaization of Russian society in the post-Soviet period.

Materials and Methods.

The general theoretical framework of this article is the concept of modernization, both its classic version, and the later concept of the plurality of modernity, which has gained popularity in recent years. The classical concept of modernization implies that modernity is a universal project, first implemented within the framework of Western societies, but later globally spread. Societies that have embarked on the path of modernization under the direct or indirect influence of the West are designated as societies of secondary or catch-up modernization. Unlike Western modernization, catch-up modernization takes place in a historically short time and does not grow out of the organic development of society. In the course of catch-up modernization, Western institutions (however, not in full) are created on a different cultural basis. The results of secondary modernization are diverse, and if some countries manage to break through to a new level of social development, then others for a long time "get stuck" in the intermediate state

between tradition and modernity, while both components undergo deformation. One of the results generated by such a situation is the neopatrimonial political regime. Neopatrimonialism is associated with the problems of "recurring culture", archaization and traditionalism.

The problem of the spread of conservative and archaic tendencies in Russian society has long attracted the attention of researchers. Most often, the problem of archaization is considered in the context of the analysis of Russian modernization - whether it is understood as catching up or as a specific Russian path to modernity. Conservatism and archaization appear as spontaneous reactions of society to modernization structural changes. One of the first to study the problem of archaization in relation to Russian society was A. Akhiezer (2006) In his opinion, Russian society has been functioning as a split one for many centuries of its history, regularly responding to the challenges of something new with structural complication of the reactions of simplification, and return to simpler models. In Russian sociology, the concept of periodic discharges of complexity and interruption of modernization was proposed by L. Gudkov [Gudkov, 2002].

As applied to economics, the problems of archaization were investigated, for example, by A. G. Vishnevsky in the concept of conservative modernization in the USSR [Vishnevsky, 1998]. The research of the specifics of the Russian national socio-economic and political model in the context of modernization and archaization of Russia is carried out by a team of authors led by K.V. Vodenko (Vodenko et al., 2017; Vodenko et al., 2018).

In this article, we mainly focus on the political component of Russian archaization - in connection with the problem of patrimonial and neopatrimonial regimes; this problem is widely represented in the works of such authors as S. Eisenstadt [1999], R. Theobald [2007], Hale [2005], A. Fisun [Fisun, 2007], V. Gelman [Gelman, 2016] and others. The traditionalist settings of the political elites of Russia encouraged some scholars to talk about "exploding archaism," for example, V. A. Achkasov [1997]. Much attention is paid to archaic clanism in Russian politics. For example, O. V. Kryshtanovskaya [Kryshtanovskaya, 2005], Afanasyev [Afanasyev, 2002] and others wrote about clanism.

Archaic tendencies in Russian Orthodoxy were investigated by K. Kostyuk [Kostyuk, 2002]. V. Fedotova [Fedotova, 2012] made a significant contribution to the analysis of the archaization problem. The concept of C.K. Lamazhaa [Lamazhaa, 2014] considers Russian archaization as an adaptive reaction to structural changes and explores it mainly on a regional example - on the example of archaization of the society of the Republic of Tyva in the post-Soviet period.

In this article, we consider the tendency to conservatism and archaization as a dysfunctional reaction of the society, included in the process of catch-up modernization, to the changes generated by this process.

The Results of the Study.

The post-Soviet period demonstrates manifestations of archaization at various levels and in different segments of social space. We can find manifestation of archaism at the level of everyday, mundane existence, and at the level of politics. In general, we can even talk about the structural archaization of Russian society. In this article, we are interested in mainly conservative trends in the politics of the Russian state, which, on the one hand, are a

manifestation of a broader process of archaization, and on the other hand, they themselves can act as a factor enhancing archaization tendencies.

To analyze the conservative trends in Russian politics, we turn to the specifics of changes in the state and its institutions during modernization, since it is the process of modernization that is the main force that brings to life deep structural and cultural transformations, which are followed by reactions of resistance from social groups and agents who do not have time to adapt to the dynamics of changes. In his concept of "cultural lag", W. Ogborn noted that cultural development proceeds unevenly. Elements of material culture can change faster than elements of spiritual culture. The same can be said about structural change - rapid changes at the level of social structure, institutional structure can significantly outrun changes in the structure of public consciousness [Vaskov, et al., 2018; Ponomarev, et al., 2019].

Such a situation arises, for example, when new institutions are created purposefully and in a short time, and are not the result of a long socio-cultural development. In this case, the newly created institutions can take hybrid forms. Such a hybrid is the modern Russian political regime. In addition to hybridity, the essence of which we will consider a little later, an important feature of this regime is the mismatch between its formal official side - and informal content. We turn, however, to the problems of state transformation in the course of modernization changes.

Based on numerous studies of the classics of modern sociology - from Weber to Foucault and many other authors, one can distinguish such an element of state modernization and political activity as formalization (rationalization, bureaucratization).

In the modern era, the state turns into a complex bureaucratic machine, the functioning of which is based on formal norms and rules adopted and changed in the framework of established formalized procedures. Within the framework of the formalized state machine, there is a clear distribution of functions; each segment of it, as well as each individual performs a clearly defined task. Formalization of the state means that elements of subjectivity, personal preferences and interests must be sequestered. This, in particular, is connected with the separation of management and ownership, power and property, which as Weber noted, underlies the activities of the modern bureaucracy.

The formalized state machine operates not only based on formalized rules and procedures, but also on the basis of the use of information, expert knowledge about society. Weber noted that the basis of the rule of the bureaucracy is knowledge. Foucault in his studies showed how, in the course of modernization, the dynamics of knowledge generates new forms of power, implemented not so much using violence and coercion, but through various formalized disciplinary practices of control and supervision. These practices are not possible without research on what is subject to regulation and control.

It would seem that these features of public administration are present in its current Russian model. However, as noted above, the Russian government is characterized by a mismatch between the external formal side and informal practices, while the formal side acts as a cover or backdrop for the informal ties that underlie the Russian governance model. As V. Gelman notes, "formal institutions that define the framework for exercising of power and management are a by-product of the distribution of resources within the

"vertical power" they matter as "the rules of the game" only to the extent that they contribute (or at least do not interfere) rent extraction" [Gelman, 2016, 7].

Almost all independent researchers of the Russian political regime note the role of clan and client relations, the use of power as a resource for the realization of personal interests. Turning the state machine into a mechanism to ensure the interests of the political elite is not only a moral problem, but a return to obsolete, archaic management practices, when the task of the authorities was not so much to regulate public processes as to ensure their own interests by extracting society`s resources. For premature societies, this is a normal model of the relationship between government and society, but in modern conditions, it is obsolete and ineffective, it is an obstacle to social development. In Weber's terms, this type of domination is called patrimonial. Quite a few countries of the modern world have this form of political regime, and these are countries of catch-up modernization.

"G. Heeger ascribes to patrimonialism the main integrative role in those new states in which the political center seeks to be organized around the section of "benefits" in the form of posts, economic assistance, loans, legal privileges, etc. Usually these benefits go to leaders of various groups and fractions, who transfer such resources to their followers to maintain their support. An example of this type of ties is particularly well visible in Morocco where political system is divided into a plurality of primordial groups and fractions of interest. However, like G. Roth, G. Heeger points out that the patrimonial model of elite integration is in no way limited by traditional regimes similar to the kingdom of Morocco. For G. Roth and G. Heeger, patrimonialism is characterized by bureaucracy, which is permeated by personal relationships of the client-type" [Theobald, 2007].

Many modern scholars, beginning with S. Eisenstadt, use the term "neopatrimonialism" since the Weber`s term is more often associated with traditional rather than modern societies, although Weber himself noted that elements of patrimonialism may also exist in modern societies. According to Eisenstadt, neopatrimonialism is formed as a result of the failure of modernization and combines the features of traditionalism and the modern state. At the same time, neopatrimonialism is not a transitional, but rather stable form of the political regime.

The neopatrimonial synthesis of tradition (archaic) and modernity is changing modern institutions (elections, parliament, parties, etc.) that lose their original functions and acquire others. Thus, parties, instead of expressing the interests of voters, serving as intermediaries between the government and society and ensuring the change of power, turn into an appendage of the existing executive power, more interested in interacting with it than with voters. Elections in such systems are in the nature of a regime support ritual, their results are often falsified, and therefore elections in neopatrimonial regimes cannot ensure the legal change of head of state and the formation of a parliament bound by obligations to society.

The following features are characteristic of neopatrimonial regimes:

1) All political, economic and symbolic resources of power are concentrated in the hands of the political center, which closes access to them, as well as to the main resources of society, for all other groups; gaining access to significant resources is possible only as a result of agreements with government representatives.

2) The state has become the property of the political elite - representatives of state power, privatizing the performance of socially significant and managerial functions and institutions, which serve as a source of income for the elite.

3) Modern political institutions serve as a "receptacle" for ethnic, regional, clan and family ties, which determine the way these institutions function.

4) According to Eisenstadt and other researchers of this phenomenon, the most important characteristic sign of neopatrimonialism is clientelism.

It should be noted that neopatrimonial regimes impede the formation of political nations, namely, modern states are national. The formation of nations is hindered by the lack of working institutions of political representation; therefore, the population cannot realize its political subjectivity and manifest itself as a political community. Neopatrimonial regimes do not form a single nation, but split society into a political minority - the beneficiaries of the current system, and the majority, completely alienated from the government and deprived of the opportunity to legally influence the politics and development of society. Instead of nations, neopatrimonialism conserves other types of communities - ethnic, territorial, clan-like, which also split the unity of society, as they focus on group rather than common interests and can realize them only by entering into informal interactions with the authorities.

Neopatrimonial regimes, like any form of state power, need legitimation. Since the essence of neopatrimonialism is the fusion of traditional elements of social and political life with deformed modern ones and since neopatrimonial regimes are not interested in changes, they seek legitimacy based on the past, loyalty to which justifies the current state of affairs.

The current political regime in Russia cannot be based on liberal ideology as the only system of ideological legitimation of a state of a modern type. At the same time, like any political regime, it seeks self-preservation. Hence, there is an inevitable bias towards conservatism.

Conservatism, in contrast to liberalism, does not have a clear ideological core. Representing an ideologically designed protective attitude of consciousness associated with the rejection of change, conservatism is able to use any ideological material related to a positively understood past. The orientation to the past is already somewhat archaic in itself, since modern society is oriented toward the future, which is one of its characteristic features. Modern Russian conservatism is eclectic. It includes several components. Firstly, this is an idealized view of the Soviet past, secondly, an equally idealized view of the past imperial, thirdly, a set of ideas about the special Russian way or special Russian civilization, almost always associated with the recognition of the special role of Orthodoxy. The latter is inextricably linked with the new role that Orthodoxy plays in legitimizing the existing regime and more broadly - the socio-political order that was developed in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

The increased role of religion and the use of religion for ideological purposes is also one of the manifestations of the archaization of Russian society.

In Soviet society, religion occupied a marginal position, was virtually absent in public space, adherence to one religion or another could become a reason for social exclusion. It is

not surprising that most secular people, especially urban and educated people, might not have encountered religion at all in their biographical experience and, as a rule, did not have any knowledge on religion. The dominant ideology, claiming to be an all-encompassing interpretation of reality, did not allow worldview competitors alongside it. At the same time, this ideology formed a holistic picture of reality, which was difficult to go beyond in an informationally closed society.

The collapse of the Soviet model of reality and Soviet ideology caused a deep ideological and value crisis, the loss of ideas about the goals and meaning of not only individual existence, but also of society as a whole. One of the results of this was the search for a new worldview, which almost inevitably caused an increase in interest in religion, first of all, religions dominating historically on the territory of Russia - Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Since Islam is professed by a minority localized in a certain region, Orthodoxy is more suitable for the role of a nationwide "ideologized" religion. The majority of Russians identify themselves as Orthodox, although faith is almost never reflected in their behavior. Nevertheless, during the post-Soviet period, the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church constantly increased, not so much due to an increase in the number of believers, but due to increased contacts with the government and the use of its resources and mechanisms to protect the interests of the Church as a corporation.

Ideologemes professed by many official representatives of the church are consonant with the conservative vector of state ideological policy with its inherent opposition to liberal values and "Western influence", emphasis on Russian cultural specificity explaining the supposedly existing model of the political regime, appeal to "traditional values", and conviction of a special mission of Russia in the world. None of the ideologemes listed has a clear meaningful content, but they construct a certain discourse, the constant reproduction of which through the media creates the effect of persuasiveness, especially since the public space for expressing other points of view is constantly narrowing. Internet appeared to be almost the last refuge of public, albeit very quantitatively limited discussions, which provokes new attempts by the authorities to control it.

In an ideological vacuum and limited space for public discussion of philosophical problems, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church is constantly increasing. The Russian Orthodox Church works closely with law enforcement agencies - the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergencies. The Church interacts rather closely with the armed forces, although a full-fledged institute of military chaplains did not arise in Russia, which is rather strange in the general context of the benevolence of the authorities and the Church and their constant cooperation.

The Orthodox Church is regarded as an institution capable of maintaining stability in society and moral values associated with the traditions of Russian culture. The Church from its side considers itself as the guardian of morality and traditional values. This is natural for a religious organization, but modern societies cannot be guided by religious morality, which, being formed in the distant past, does not meet the realities of modernity. This discrepancy is most pronounced in the field of family protection. Protecting the idealized "traditional family", (the meaning of the phrase is by no means unambiguous), Church representatives almost completely ignore the changed position of women in modern society, social factors that naturally lead to a decrease in the number of children in the family, etc. Receiving the unspoken support of the authorities, Church representatives often

publicize points of view, which cannot be called anything but obscurantist. This applies not only to family matters, but also to other issues - for example, Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov, a prominent public representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, has repeatedly stated publicly that "AIDS does not exist", therefore it is not necessary to treat it. Moreover, the epidemic of this disease is officially registered in Russia, and ignoring the fact of the disease leads not only to the death of the patient himself, but also to the spread of the disease. Therefore, the public activity of some religious speakers directly harms society.

Examples of the growing influence of religion on the life of Russians is the introduction of a number of courses ("Fundamentals and Values of Orthodoxy", "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture", "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture and Morality", "Church History") in secondary school. However, more important is the fact of the demonstrative commitment of representatives of political power to Orthodoxy, their participation in religious rites, broadcast by state media. The growing influence of religion on everyday consciousness was reflected in the content of materials published in periodicals. Church hierarchs often speak out on pressing social and political issues; their opinions are taken into account and regarded as significant.

The Russian Orthodox Church is notably active in public space. Its official representatives often make statements about the leading role of Orthodoxy in the formation of Russian culture and national identity of Russians, the need to strengthen the foundations of statehood, increase fertility, the importance of patriotism and other issues not directly related to religion. The official documents adopted by the Russian Orthodox Church, for example, "Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church", "Fundamentals of the Teachings of the Russian Orthodox Church on Dignity, Freedom and Human Rights", as well as public speeches by the Patriarch and other representatives of the Church contain significant political and ideological components. Created under the auspices of the Church, the public structure "The World Russian National Council" was directly intended for the interaction of the Church, believers with various political forces. This Council, claiming to be representative of the Orthodox, adopted a number of documents relating to purely secular issues.

Thus, in 2011, the XV World Russian People's Council developed a version of the "basic values" of Russian society. In 2014, the XVIII World Russian National Council adopted the "Declaration of Russian Identity". Thereby, representatives of a separate confession claim to form a system of values and collective identity for society as a whole, despite the fact that Russian society remains secular - one of the most secular in the world.

A very popular topic of public statements by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church is the criticism of liberal values and the need to confront harmful external influences, that is, the rhetoric of cultural isolationism and the rejection of universalist modern values, in particular human rights. All this justifies the anti-liberal course of modern Russian political regime, which sees itself as the successor of "centuries-old traditions of the Russian state", for which the interaction with the Church was normal. However, this ignores what this interaction led to - the loss of all independence by the Church, and, ultimately, its catastrophic position in the Soviet period, the change of which was connected precisely with liberal values, which are so actively criticized today by the authorities and the Church.

A number of Russian researchers have already noted the futility and fundamental impossibility of restoring the Orthodox identity that cannot fulfill a civilizational-forming role in modern society [Akhiezer et al., 2008, 418]

Archaization is manifested today not only in the fact of turning to religion, since religion is a dynamic phenomenon that can exist in modern societies, adapting to its realities. However, speaking about modern Russian Orthodoxy, one can note the growing archaization of this religiosity itself. For most modern believers, religiosity boils down to ritualism - i.e. magical practices, not including a practically conscious approach to faith, religious reflection. Reflexivity and attempts at a conscious approach to both faith and the role of the Church are generally not welcomed by the modern leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church. This is related to recurring conflicts with the intellectuals of the Church - both secular and religious.

In addition to enhancing the influence of Orthodoxy, other archaic tendencies associated with religion are emerging in Russian society. Russia is a multicultural and multiconfessional country. In different regions, archaization processes have their own specifics. In particular, in Russia, there are regions with a compactly living Muslim population, and in the post-Soviet period, the influence of Islam on the lifestyle in such regions is constantly increasing.

Thus, Ch. Lamazhaa notes, "In the North Caucasus, a model of social living arrangement is trying to assert a widely revived Islamic cultural system. For example, a characteristic phenomenon in some regions of Dagestan, mainly mountainous, was the restriction, sometimes a complete rejection of general education for girls, due to the high degree of religiosity and the priority of Muslim cultural values. Dagestanis with a high degree of Islamic identification condemn the joint education of children of both sexes and interpret the modern system of general education as not being in accordance with Islamic standards. The spread of the practice of polygamy in the region also refers to the influence of the religious factor" [Lamazhaa, 2014, 358]. The almost complete Islamization of life in the Chechen Republic is a well-known fact. Islamization is less widespread in regions with a mixed population, but even there this tendency is very noticeable.

In the regions of Russia that have retained elements of traditional folk beliefs, there is a tendency for the revival of shamanism, while in the revived shamanism the memory of the past is intertwined with innovative practices, that is, in this case we are talking not only about rebirth, but also about construction, the combination of archaic and modernity. Shamanism turns into one of the significant elements of collective and regional identity; therefore, we can say that in this case, as in the case of Orthodoxy and Islam, religion takes on secular ideological functions.

In addition to paganism, which has some support in folk memory and even elements of preserved rituals (shamanism), such a phenomenon as neopaganism is observed in Russian society. The most noticeable is its segment, which is associated with attempts to reconstruct the Slavic tradition. In terms of content, Slavic neopaganism is a bizarre mixture of remnants of knowledge about Slavic beliefs gleaned from scientific and pseudoscientific works, fantasies of the neopagans themselves and often various conspiracy theories. This diverse and constantly changing content, is not so much curious as the anti-modern vector expressed in it, as well as the attempts of neopagans to form an alternative collective identity, built not on the recognition of Orthodoxy as the core of Russian culture,

but on a rather aggressive rejection of Orthodoxy as a "foreign faith" imposed on the Slavs by external forces and knocked them off the historical path.

Neopaganism is associated with a revival of belief into magic, and in this regard, it is part of a wider wave of revival of magism and occultism in various forms, which has swept Russian society and is often encouraged by state-run media. Psychics and sorcerers have become a familiar part of the Russian media landscape, but also the everyday life of Russians, because they formed a specific "professional" group, whose activity is mainly commercial in nature. It is explained by the demand for magical practices and the willingness of Russians to pay for them. It is interesting that many "notable" or aspiring to fame occult figures as well as representatives of "traditional religions" tend to declare their allegiance to power. A typical comic example of such behavior is the recent "prayer service" conducted by some "Russian witches" to support President Putin. However, a more alarming trend is the influence of the occult on a certain segment of the Russian political elite.

The examples of archaization of Russian society, discussed above, indicate that the conservative orientations of the Russian political elite are not only the result of a pragmatic choice, but a manifestation of some trends in the dynamics of public consciousness, which to one extent or another affects all social groups. The conservatism of the political elite acts as a consequence of these trends, but at the same time, a factor in their strengthening and spread, since this is in the interests of the political elite. As noted in the introductory part of the article, archaic tendencies can be considered as a result of failures in modernization, as a defensive reaction to structural transformations.

Some researchers, in particular, C. Lamazhaa, see this as an adaptation mechanism, that is, they tend to reveal something functional in archaization. From our point of view, Russian archaization is rather dysfunctional, since it affects not only some particular aspects of life, but also such a system-forming element of society as the political regime. The conservative orientation of this regime blocks the development of society and is a brake on the path of further modernization changes, without offering any real alternatives to modern society, except for maintaining the existing model of neopatrimonialism with its deformed pseudo-modern institutions, presented as a special model of statehood.

Conclusion.

The political regime that has been formed in Russia is characterized by many modern scholars as neopatrimonial. This type of regime is not unique - similar regimes arise in the course of modernization of unsuccessful changes and have a hybrid character, combining elements of traditionalism and modernity. At the same time, modern political institutions are inevitably deformed.

The essence of neopatrimonial regimes boils down to the fact that the political elite concentrates in their hands all the significant resources of society, restricts access to them of other social groups and blocks any legal attempts to change the government and legal political participation of the population, as well as its independent civic activity. Obstructing modern forms of political activity and political governance, neopatrimonial regimes need ideological legitimation, which inevitably tends to conservatism, which justifies the current situation with references to tradition and rejects any attempts of changes in which the political elite is not interested. The emergence of the neopatrimonial

regime in Russia is not a prerequisite, but a consequence of conservative and archaic tendencies in public consciousness. However, having been formed this regime contributes to the strengthening and conservation of these trends, thereby blocking the process of modernization of society.

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