**Weekly Seminar – Monday, 8 April 2018**

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**Demographic Measurement of Nationalism: Contemporary Russian Pronatalist Policy in Comparative and Historical perspective**

Over the last decade, state intervention in private life has greatly increased in Russia. Demographic policy became a part of a larger plan to control industry, labor, culture, society and family by the state institutions and their affiliated agencies. Post-Communist Russia makes an attempt to re-patriarchalize gender and family through a number of pronatalist and pronuptialist state initiatives closely connected to nationalist goals.

This policy replaces the liberal family policy characterized by the non-interference of the state in the affairs of the family and the relationships between people in the private sphere, and that took place in the short period from the collapse of the Soviet regime in the early 1990s and until the establishment of authoritarian power of President by the mid-2000s and the further development of the political regime in Russia in the direction of totalitarianism. This corporativist totalitarian program characterizes Putin’s political regime in the same way as other autocratic and totalitarian regimes which existed in Europe in the last century. The example of pronatalist family policy confirms that Vladimir Putin and the political and business elite around him in today’s Russia do aspire to create a new variant of a totalitarian regime or to rehabilitate the previous one, that has already been experienced in this large part of the world.

In President Putin’s political address to the Federal Assembly (May 2006) the demographic theme occupied the central place. Putin listed the top demographic priorities for Russia as: a reduction in mortality, increasing migration into Russia, and an increase in birth rate. At the same time, the main accent was placed on the necessity to stimulate fertility and popularize families with many children. Thus the increasing fertility became the long-run “idée fixe” of top authorities, regional administrations, and some civil movements under the Kremlin’s control.

The Orthodox Church does not remain on the sidelines. The Church, in contrast to the Soviet period, has played an active role in the ideological formation of domestic and foreign policy. The social and family policies are not exclusions. The traditional, fundamentalist views on gender relations, family and procreation inherent in the Moscow Patriarchate are actively broadcasted to the population by all available means of communication, including governmental or other electronic and printed channels of official information.

For the first time in a long while, political rulers in Russia have taken the liberty of setting goals, within a set timetable, for definite quantitative parameters of fertility, mortality, migration and population change in general. In such a directive form, the Russian government has never before declared a pronatalist policy and has never taken the full responsibility for the growth of the population, neither in the days of the Empire, nor in Stalin's time, nor in the late Soviet period. Previously, pronatalism was presented only in a latent form in the Russian social and family-oriented policy. Then if we look at the experience of other countries, the demographic goals of Putin’s Russia sound remarkably ambitious even in the worldwide historical context. It seems that only the demographic policies of Benito Mussolini in Fascist Italy could possibly compete with Putin's efforts in its scope and grandeur of its goals. Following the great book of Carl Ipsen (1996), who studied the demographic policy in Fascist Italy, we have good reasons to apply the term "Dictating Demography" to those political decisions that are taken on with respect to the demographic system in Russia in the last decade.

At the same time it must be noted that the family as an institution, gender roles within the family, social norms and ideas about the birth control and education of children are always in the focus of ideology and social practices of all political systems, whether authoritarian or totalitarian or democratic. The modern, nation-styled state of the first half of twentieth-century Europe, in both its democratic and fascist forms, employed eminently authoritarian policies to extend rule over the domain of domestic life by regulating the family, sexuality, reproductive behavior and parenting (Glass 1940, 1949; Teitelbaum and.Winter 1985; Quine 1996 and others). Personal choices become political issues of critical importance to politicians seeking to safeguard the national interest by altering fertility. ‘Pronatalist family policies are an integral part of the mythology of nationalism’ (Albanese 1995:190).

The totalitarian regimes are necessarily characterized by more pronounced nationalist and fascist traits which, in turn, as the international experience shows, closely linked with the ideas of pronatalism and population growth. Apparently, no country faced with totalitarianism at a certain stage of their historical development, has escaped the temptation to actively implement political measures to regulate the family, marital relations and procreation of their citizens based on ideologies of traditionalism and pronatalism. And those measures of “social engineering” were reinforced by populist rhetoric of national leaders and by diverse systems of enforcement, including institutions that were integral elements of such regimes. Populistic appeals to traditional family values, followed by institutional changes favouring the mobilization of the society by the state, encouraged people to give their allegiance to the national leader-dictator. Here we can refer to the numerous testimonies of the well-known experiences of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Franco's Spain, France before and under the Vichy regime, and militarist Japan, but also of less known practices in Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal, Brazil, Chile and others in the time of dictatorships (see Teitelbaum and Winter 1985; Nash 1991; De Grazia 1992; Ipsen 1996; Quine 1996; Pine 1997; Passmore 2003; Albanese 2006, Baloutzova 2011 and others).

Some countries in their history have experienced not one, but several periods of active paternalism and dirigisme relating to the behavior of individuals in the sphere of family life and procreation (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Germany (Nazi and GDR). Russia put herself among such countries. In the period of advanced Stalinism, and in the late years of Brezhnev’s rule, and today, under 'Putinism', one can discover an increased reflection of demographic problems and challenges, and, in the latter case, very painful reactions, close to the pathologic agitation among the political elite and top administrators. These trends of aggressive propaganda are pushing Russian society into a mass psychosis about human reproduction and population growth. Populationist rhetoric in Putin’s Russia assumed a very anti-modernist tone when focusing on the alleged demise of the family. In this sense, pronatalism can be characterized as an organized right-wing reaction against the modernization of the society that started with the political and economic revolution in Russia in the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s.

At current stage of my project, I explore the experiences of several countries that had strong pronatalist policies in the 1920s - 1940s, namely France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. I focus my attention on the list and timing of policy measures and demographic results of these policies. I am analyzing the results with help of two indicators of fertility level, namely Period Total Fertility Rate (PTFR) and Completed Cohort Fertility (CCF). In order to have a kind of “control group”, and provide a comparative control of changes in fertility in the countries under study, I include in demographic analysis some European countries that could avoid the official rhetoric of pronatalism and had no policies of this kind within the same historical period. These countries are Denmark, England & Wales, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. As regards the methodology of demographic analysis, I follow the recent works of J.Van Bavel et al. (2010, 2013), who deal with the "baby boom" phenomenon of the 1940s-1960s. The results of my comparative analysis will be presented for discussion at the seminar.

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