



Are the Sociologists Well Prepared to the Modern War?

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Abstract

This article is one additional indication that a new realm of multi-sided and trans-disciplinary sociological studies is emerging within the interrelated scope of social, technical and natural sciences. How Russian sociology will respond to this world challenge of the new times? Do the sociologists and political scientists well prepared to the modern cold or hot war, to a variety of small and middle-scale wars under conditions of globalization and the development of the IT technologies, on the one hand, and separatism and a tough global struggle for resources and political domination, on the other? Are the new political subjects that have emerged as a result of such wars legitimate? The article presents the author's reflection on these and other critical 'turning points' of the world and Russian sociology and practice.

Keywords

interdisciplinary research, legitimacy, modern war (MW), society of all-embracing risk, socio-ecological metabolism, sociology, wasted people, wasted culture, Russia.

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The study is based on 'all-embracing risk-society paradigm' and relied upon the 'real politik' approach.

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1. Introduction

The history of mankind is a history of wars. According to some approximate calculations (Zaitsev, 2013) in the run of 40 years after the end of the WW II there occur more than 250 wars of low and middle intensity and in the run of last 10 years – more than 150. If one looks back in the human history the only 300 years were absolutely peaceful.

The face of the modern world is rapidly changing, and in some countries and regions these changes are dramatic. The globalization process is accompanied with a re-division of the resource areas and living spaces giving way to profound changes in a social order and habit of life of states, their alliances and local communities. The overall social and political scene is dominated by instability and unpredictability burdened with the emergence of new social and political actors. To use Alain Touraine's expression, a new wave of the 'return of the actor' (1988) has come. Moreover, the world social order established by the winners in the WW II has been recurrently undermined by the newly emerged regional and global collective social actors. This leads to the unprecedented tension both in public and one-to-one relations between those who have and who have not, between those who sees the established social order is just and who is not. The problem of a melting pot acquires the world and all-embracing character. Taken together, all this has made the population aware that the values of existed world are threatened.

Nevertheless, the mainstream of the current world sociology is presented by the variation of an idea of sustainable development (see, for example: Shmelev and Shmeleva, 2012). In other words, the paradigm of the peaceful reconstruction of the world community (and not as its critical state and mass calamities) is still dominates. To my mind, it means a growing gap between what is going on (i.e. the real processes) and its reflection (and dominant interpretation) in social sciences. Having screened two leading international periodicals in sociology in 2010-2014 (International Sociology and Current Sociology) I revealed that there were only one issue on violence and two articles on military sociology and civic wars. I have found no special thematic sections (monograph issues) on the modern wars.

2. Limits, notions, and frames of a research

I limit my study by the modern wars of low and middle intensity in which the adversaries used conventional arms only. For this reason I use the notion 'modern wars' more often used in the literature related to the processes in the developing or transition countries (Myrdal, 1968; Soto de, 1989; Shilova, 1999, Soto de, 2000; Yanitsky, 2000; Rukavishnikov, 2005; Bobrova, 2014; Chekinov, 2013; Zaitsev, 2013; Pastukhov, 2014; Pavlovski, 2014; Sundar, 2014; Yanitsky, 2014, 2014a). Than to use the terms like the 'post- or even post-postmodern wars. The study is based on my 'all-embracing risk-society paradigm' (details see below). The study relied upon the 'real politik' approach, therefore the discursive aspects of the issue are not considered here. I am the adherent of an activist paradigm in modern sociology and political science, both theoretically and politically (practically). The study is mainly restricted by the wars in urban spaces (so called guerilla wars) but some experience of the armed conflicts in the times of 'colored revolutions' has been also used. In origin I'm an urban sociologist from the mid 1960s (see, for example, Yanitsky, 1982) therefore I'm quite familiar with this field of knowledge. Finally, the major theoretical frame used in this study is a continuous of the state-of-art of an urban community within two theoretical poles: 'normal' and 'total destruction'.

3. All-embracing Risk as a Sociological Maxima

To begin with, basing on the screening of current literature on the topic (both academic and public), I tried to synthesize the major theoretical prerequisites of relevant sociological analysis. To my mind, they are as follows: (1) the globalization as such theoretically means a mutual interdependence of all parts and functions of the global community. But the diversity in the level of economic and social as well as in cultural development provoke a tension and conflicts among these parts (I think that this phenomenon may be called as inherently contradictory glocalization); (2) but this glocalization is now a double-sided process in another sense: in parallel with the trends of integration and global mobility of all (Urry, 2012) the processes of des-integration, shadow and criminal economy growth, local armed conflicts, decay of traditional communities, desertification and rise of social inequalities are going on; (3) the speeding up the pace of public life has two dark sides: a growing pressure on natural environment and the growth of wastes production; (4) the major reasons of the emergence of the MWs are a steady growth of world population accompanied by the rise of its aspirations and living standards, even more tough struggle for access to natural and human resources, destruction of global social order established after the end of WW II; (5) the MWs and generated by them the critical states of human communities and their infrastructures (CS) are the unavoidable features of a global social dynamics (Yanitsky, 2014); (6) risks engendered by these CSs embrace institutional systems, societal and technical infrastructures, natural and social ecosystems, and mode of living of affected people; (7) the CSs have a dynamic character. Emerging as local conflicts they may acquire the character of armed conflicts between the states and their alliances (blocks or clusters); (8) the processes of socio-ecological metabolism (SEM) generate the risks which have no space-time limits; (9) a programmed media is a powerful weapon of MWs; (8) the MWs as well as the CSs are the sources of 'energy of decay'; (10) in sum, it seems to me that the my concept of transformation of 'global risk society' (Beck 1999) into 'all-embracing risk society' is confirmed (Yanitsky



2011, 2011a, 2010, 2010a, 2000, 2000a, 1998). The notion of 'turbulent times' is a simply multi-cultural and politically accepted version of the concept of the 'all-embracing risk society.' Further, I'd like to present my comments on some topic in more details, especially related to the problem of the MWs.

4. On Socio-ecological Metabolism (SEM)

There are a lot of theoretical and field works related to various forms of social exchange (of resources, goods, labor power, information, culture, etc.). Though, there are relatively scarce research findings concerned with *socio-ecological metabolism*, i.e. with forms of exchange between the social activities and their natural and human milieu (Boyden et al., 1981; Boyden, 1992; Edelstein, 1988; Fisher-Kowalski and Haberl, 2007; Gibbs, 1992; Martinez-Alier, 2009; Perrow, 1984; Radkau, 2008; Thomas et al., 1956; Thomas, 1955; Wilson et al., 1988; Wolman, 1956, 1965; Yanitsky, 2013). I mean the modes and forms of physical-chemical exchange between man and his environment.

To begin with, a metabolism is the notion borrowed from biological sciences. It means the exchange of matters accompanied by chemical reactions from the moment of entering the nutrition matters (including solar and other energy) into living organism till the moment when the end products of this process are excreted into an outer milieu. As it became obvious today, a mankind by means of its social and political forces and institutions has been actively participated in such processes. That is why the notion of the SEM has been introduced. Nowadays, a study of the SEM is rapidly developing branch both of environmental sciences and an essential part of the study of social change of any society at large. The last point should be stressed because up to the 1960s the structural-functional analysis does not take into account the metabolic aspect of any social changes. The study of the SEM now became even more important for such reasons as the globalization, the mass growth of products constructed by chemical and biological sciences and global warming.

The SEM is always multisided process. Therefore, epistemologically it could be interpreted in several ways:

- (1) The SEM has its historical phases which depends on the dominant mode of production and of mastering the virgin lands, rivers and even oceans for human needs. It should be taken into account that in the human history there were a great agrarian states and empires which had nevertheless the great cities. Therefore, I restrict the following considerations by the industrial and postindustrial cities involved in a global context only;
- (2) The SEM may be comprehended as a direct impact of social phenomena and processes on the life and sustainability of natural ecosystems, and vice versa. This reverse process may be called as 'boomerang effect' (U. Beck) or 'change of sign' engendered by the overcoming the threshold of carrying capacity of the natural and social environments. As a result, it is transformed from the absorber of risky wastes into producer of harm to human communities and natural ecosystems;
- (3) In the third case, the SEM appears as a set of transformations of matters of non-natural origin, that is designed and constructed by man, in various types of natural environments (in the water, air and soil). These chains of transformation are mostly the result of market economy which is disinterested in the 'faith' of wastes of its activity and its 'boomerang effects';
- (4) Fourthly, models of various SEM may be used as integral measure (indicator) of changes in the living environment (living area) under the influence of the abovementioned phenomena and processes. It is the most difficult case for a scientific investigation for the reason of the SEM cumulative effect and uncertainty of time, space and force of impact of the said processes. In the last case the temporary or final change of social order and habit of daily life is happened accompanied by social and political conflicts and social tension;
- (5) The modern wars greatly intensified the production of social and material wastes, be it human beings, chemical substances or cultural artifacts (Bauman, 2004);
- (6) Finally, one should keep in mind that the SEM of a city has a variety of forms and manifestations. Let me name the major of them: (a) direct clash of natural and social forms and processes; (b) as a result, the former changes the latter, and the way round; (c) long-term and unseen process of transformation of natural landscape under the impact of social activity/cultivation of new types of plants and animals; (d) chemical reactions of the wastes and other alien bodies and substances with natural systems and processes; (e) destroying the human communities under the influence of natural anomalies and disasters; (f) transformation of communicative structure of a city which in turn depends not only on the IT technologies development but on cultural and ethnical structure of its dwellers.

All these processes and transformations have in their basement the social and economic as well as the mechanical, physical or chemical processes. The run of evolution of the 'nature-society' system has been accompanied by such form of their interaction as an ousting, a full destruction of one of them (say, a desertification), and the emergence of qualitatively new environments with earlier unknown qualities and forms, and in the end a slow and peaceful shaping of new 'nature-society' systems.



The analysis of physical-chemical processes in the CSs is rather important for a comprehension of social changes in these zones and around them. The following variants of socio-ecological metabolism should be considered: a direct impact of wars and/or natural disasters on the consciousness, health and behavior of affected people; a direct and postponed (overt) impact of socially and scientifically constructed physical-chemical substances on the consciousness and behavior of affected population; and an all-penetrating negative impact of the toxic chemicals produced by modern industry and then spread across the globe by the atmospheric processes.

5. Participants and victims of modern war: in situ and beyond the critical zones

In order to understand a machinery and evolution of the MWs one needs to reveal and interpret not the taxonomy (age, sex, education, and income and other taxonomic indicators) but the composition of acting groups and the overall disposition of social and political forces involved in a particular war.

Basing on my field and desk-research (screening the Russian media during 2012-14), I revealed the following groups. The first group is, as a rule, the disabled, retired and mothers with small children. It is about 30-45 per cent of those who were involved or/and affected. The second are refugees and forced migrants who were temporary settled along the border of neighboring countries. It counts about 8-10 per cent of the same strata. The above people are immobile as well but potentially they are repatriates. But when and how they could return back to their homes is an open question. The third group (about 15-20 percent) consists of the industrial workers, representatives of low service class and students. They are bread-winners for two above groups. They are concerned about the survival of their families and neighbors. The fourth group (about 1-3 per cent) it is a small high-risky but very profitable group of businessmen who supplies the affected residents with food, fuel, medicine and means of transportation (to hospitals, relatives, abroad, etc.). The fifth group consists of criminals, including thieves, marauders and traffics (no figures). The sixth group it is people's voluntary corps (according to various sources, it counts about 12-15 thousands of armed people). This group is the most active politically and socially in the conflicts and wars under consideration. These combatants are volunteers recruited both from local residents and civilians from a particular country and from abroad.

The seventh group is the paid civilians (i.e. it is the private armed troops financed by local and national oligarchs and probably from abroad.) who are fighting against the 'popular uprising'. As a rule, this group is rather diversified. Within it could be ideologists, radical nationalists, free riders, and criminals. The eighth group is the regular national army. The ninth one consists of local academics, postgraduates and other university staff. After the beginning of armed conflict the majority of this group left this war area.

6. The key question

Both for the MWs theorists and practitioners the question of how and when the residents are becoming combatants of various kinds or/and their assistants is of a key importance. Unfortunately, this is the least investigated process by sociologists. According to Selye (1956), Stokols (1978) and their followers, the stressors are the factors of a psychological origin. But under conditions of the MWs *the stressors are of a social nature* as well.

Relying upon an analysis of media including social networks the following types of actors conditioned the transformation of residents (ordinary people) into combatants can be distinguished: (1) socio-cultural (i.e. dominating type of religion and confession); (2) economic (sharp decline of living standards, jobless); (3) political, especially, so called constructed actors from abroad; and (4) personal (her/his prevailing system of values and social norms).

As it well known, the battlefield of competing stakeholders represents a mixture of chaos and order. Nevertheless, the actual outcome of any MW is usually different from previous discursive practices of politicians. The MW as a *modus vivendi* of a particular community or a society is irreversible. It is impossible to return back to the point of departure. Therefore, the 'input' and 'output' of any combatant's habit are different as well. All participants of an armed conflict have been learning by doing, i.e. socialized in the run of a conflict. At the end of it some of its participants become public figures, others – volunteers, still others – become refugee or, on the contrary, – wild ducks, etc.

With these general 'stressors' a number of situational, i.e. environmental, ones have come into being. It may be total local jobless, highly polluted immediate milieu, natural disasters and harmful technological accidents, etc.). At the same time, a sensitivity of combatant to the above 'stressors' ate varied greatly. Besides, the cumulative effect of the above 'stressors' depends on the degree of the inclusion of a particular community and/or a social force in the globalization process. Basing on media surveys and on research findings carried out in Donbass (Ukraine) I'd offer the concept of the *critical factor*. It means a totality of outward and inward social and psychological 'stressors' which are forced individuals and groups (the both in situ and abroad) to transform sharply their behavior from being the objects of outward pressure and manipulation to the subjects of emigration or active resistance. In terms of social ecology the critical factor means a 'point of bifurcation' (or the overcoming the level of individual or group carrying capacity).



7. Are the emerging social institutions legitimate?

It is rather disputable question. On the one hand, the mankind history is full of examples when new social institutions had emerged as a result of revolutions, civil wars and protest movements (Tilly, 2004). On the other hand, the very essence of the precedent legitimacy, that is the making a situational decision into a law or the political principle is contradictory to the law of mutual interdependence as a fundamental principle of existence of the global sociobiotechnosphere.

The history of mankind is the history of continuous process of emergence and decay, integration and disintegration of empires, states and other political institutions. In this sense the XXI century has much in common with the previous historical periods. The opposition of 'sovereignty' and the 'right of nations to self-determination' has been never resolved peacefully but by sheer force only. For example, the Kiev Maidan (Ukraine) being initially the emerging democratic institute has been gradually transformed into a critical zone of armed clashes with wounded, killed and many other forms of bitter violence (Vorozheikina, 2014). At best, short-lived 'peaceful agreements' usually resulted in a set of 'frozen conflicts'. At worst, a total desertification of earlier existed social institutions is coming. Moreover, in-between the 'normal' and 'critical' zones the 'grey zones' are mushrooming. These zones have zero 'legitimacy', i.e. it is the zones of social and political chaos. As a result, the total living space of the Planet is shrinking whereas its 'critical areas' are expanding. What is legitimate and what is not is still the right of a violent (powerful). As concerns to the Kiev Maidan, it is clear now that it had been the local social protest politically constructed and supplied from abroad. Then, this protest had been gradually transformed into the civil war.

8. A Humanitarian Catastrophe?

I interpret this catastrophe as the utter form of a critical state of some social organism featured by total destruction of natural, technical and social milieu coupled with conditions of lack of guarantees of basic human rights and freedoms. This state is marked by mass panic flight (or on the contrary, a depression and helplessness), fear, hunger, physical and mental exhausting, epidemics, lack of medicine and medical aid. In the final analysis any catastrophe is humanitarian one. In this very case the major problem for sociology and political sciences is unintended changes of social order: critical at the epicenter of a zone of disaster or/and armed conflict, and high-risky at the neighboring territories. The uncertain and unpredictable social order does not permit to render humanitarian aid. As the Ukrainian, the North African and many other armed conflicts clearly showed, today the official humanitarian organizations as International and national Red Crosses are too bureaucratized for the rendering a necessary aid at a due time. At the same time, voluntary (i.e. civic) organizations are capable to render humanitarian aid quickly and to meet rather diverse individual requests. Moreover, the affected residents are not passive as well. A humanitarian catastrophe does not mean full dependence from an 'outer world.' The population of critical areas uses any possibility for active resistance and for her/his participation in the processes of rehabilitation of their neighbors and living environment.

Finally, some remarks about the terms which sociologists and politicians regularly use. They often use the term humanitarian catastrophe which means that these areas are totally dependent on the aid from the outer world. This term is truly applicable to the cases under consideration but it is not sufficient. The matter is that the critical areas are the places of long-term depression or even actual economic and social catastrophes as well. Therefore, the long-term plans and scenarios of rehabilitation of these areas are urgently needed.

9. Self-preservation under conditions of modern war

It is well-known that a self-protective behavior is a norm of social order of any society. It is the norm which has been shaped genetically and maintained socially. Crisis, critical state, modern war and revolution are the particular forms of social order which determine the specific forms of self-protective behavior. In general, this type of individual or group behavior may be defined as a couple of peoples' efforts aimed at the preservation of their life, health, property and accumulated social capital. A protection of an immediate social milieu of an individual (I term this milieu as her/his primary socio-ecological structure) is one of the most important targets of this type of behavior. Self-preservation is a powerful mobilizing motive that generates the energy to cope with the variety of extreme stresses in the critical areas and other high-risky situations. Two major forms of active self-protective behavior have been revealed. The former is an involvement in active political and armed struggle, that is, the transformation of peaceful residents into the combatants. The latter is the transformation of a part of local population in civil volunteers. Many social institutions and first of all services aimed at social aid are accustomed to work in 'normal condition' and turned out absolutely unprepared to work in an extreme environment, that is, in high-risky, atomized and forcefully organized social milieu.

It is well understandable that the self-protective behavior depends on the phases of way out from the critical state. In the run of field research the following phases has been revealed: 'neither war—no piece', dialogue between adversaries, their competition for power, 'bulldozer phase', and authoritarian stabilization. It is a short list only, and it cannot be considered as omnipresent. The main outcome is that the survived citizens will never come back to the former mode of living, they



unable neither to fully restore the former living milieu nor adapt to new conditions of life. For the restoration of a 'cultural humus' a couple of decades are needed.

10. Wastes: Domestic, Technical and Cultural

I state that the wastes, domestic, material and virtual, are not only the unavoidable garbage of any type of social conflict or a MW but a type of culture as well. A 'waste culture' is one more product of the society of all-embracing risk when production, accumulation and decomposition of wastes have become a prevalent mode of production. The 'waste culture' is a culture of people and their communities who live in a wasted environment and perceive it as a social norm. Due to the processes of socio-ecological metabolism the wasted environment is the mix of risks which final affects are not predictable. Therefore, any garbage is a potential threat. The prevalence of processes of decay of human culture over its accumulation, development and protection I qualify as cultural catastrophe. In the time of warfare and shaping the critical zones the processes of transformation of goods into wastes and matters are accelerated. In essence, a war is a machine which turns goods into wastes. If the critical situation aggravates the majority of local residents as well as their living environment will be turned into wastes and in the final analysis into a desert unfit to any form of life. Besides, this process means the shift of socio-professional structure towards the pre-industrial times which burdened with 'human wastes'. The wasted people are existed at the expense of accumulated of emergency ration and/or at the expense of gifts of nature. In this very case, the producers of wastes could be the poor and rich, rank-and-file people and political figures, social groups and institutions, etc. Therefore, the wastes are not the mountains of garbage but the type of culture inherent to a particular society. In sum, the concept of human wastes and wasted culture allow us to analyze and understand better the processes of our 'turbulent world'.

11. 'What we have learned about Modern Wars?'

I am summing up the major research findings. To begin with, there is a need for new accents in the theory that describes the current phase of the globalization process. The basic principle of my version of a risk theory is that not only particular communities and states but the world as a whole has been transformed into a *community of all-embracing risk*. Risk production affects institutional systems, everyday life and the biosphere alike. Frequently emerging critical areas (zones) across the world are the nodes (or focuses) of all-embracing risk production and dissemination.

The emergence and mushrooming of the critical areas is a feature of a new phase of global development. In parallel with the processes of globalization, integration and accumulation of mutual social capital, the processes of disintegration, loss of social capital and emanation of energy of collapse are going on. Critical areas are the causes and the outcomes of this energy emanation at once. Taken together, these processes and areas are gradually reducing the diversity and sustainability of the global societal system at large. The permanent emergence and multiplication of critical zones has become the social norm of the all-embracing (and all-encompassing) risk society. Therefore, the concepts of the 'turbulent' and/or 'unequal world' don't match the current phase of the global societal evolution.

The major features of a critical zone in urban areas are the following: (1) a temporary and quasi-chaotic social order; (2) an uncertain socio-professional structure shifted towards the pre-industrial epoch and burdened with 'human wastes'; (3) the emergence of temporary risk-solidarities of socially and culturally adversarial individuals and groups (I called them negative risk-solidarities); (4) an overall domination of ad hoc types of behavior; and (5) a sharp des-urbanization of everyday culture of these areas with the elements of behavior typical to biological species; (6) in sum, the longer an armed conflict is developing within a particular area, the more chances for its full desertification.

The modern means of communication and information are playing the leading role in shaping, deepening and dissemination of critical areas all over the world. This happens as a result of replacing (both in theory and practice) the humanist concept of information society (information and knowledge as an undisputable common good) with the concept of information society as a tool for forceful instilling of images of the 'proper social order'. These images are created by global image-makers and then imprinted into the minds of the 'underdeveloped' and/or developing world. In essence, this forceful process is one of the main causes of the emergence of critical areas and decreasing of cultural diversity of the so called underdeveloped world. In this respect, the critical areas are both the sources of 'programmed' information and the outcome of its potentially risky production.

It is hard to offer a recipe for the treatment of this illness of the world societal system. The sanctions imposed by a group of western countries on Russian society have already showed their 'boomerang effect' and may provoke the emergence of new critical areas across the western world. Therefore, the best medicine is not sanctions but trust, multisided talks and disarmament.

12. What kind of sociology we are needed for the comprehension of the above trends?



The sociology of *modern wars* is still a relatively new branch of current sociology. It has not already been successful in developing new prospects and concepts, in developing trans-disciplinary approaches, stimulating of long-term empirical research, etc. The core domains of modern sociology still not recognized the regular military troops, combatants as well as civil protestors as the full-fledged collective actors.

First, in my view, the sociology of modern wars should be a *global*, i.e. which takes into account the interdependence of global, regional and local trends at once. Second, it should be an *all-embracing*, i.e. the sociologists of any country should investigate every critical situations and military operations as carefully as they did it the time of piece. Third, this sociology should be an *activist-oriented*, that is, it should study all open and overt actors involved in a (military) conflict. Four, it should be *dynamic*. It means that in the run of a conflict process some actors gain power, whereas others loose it. The methods of building scenarios are useful here. Five, this sociology must be an *interdisciplinary*. Accordingly, subject approach usually practiced in education system should be decisively overcome in favor of problem approach. A sociologist should be simultaneously capable to conduct its own research and to interpret sociologically the data gained by other scientists and besides not to forget that any environment is also a social actor. Six, a key notion here is *socio-ecological metabolism*. Seven, the results of interdisciplinary research should be *understandable* to public and *convincing* to politicians. Eight, this sociology should be resource-oriented. A special attention should be given to a 'space-time' resource as well as to the moral and psychological resources of adversaries. Nine, the joint efforts of various scholars are needed for more deep investigation of the *emergence of new social and political subjects* and for the means of their legitimation. Ten, the sociology of modern wars and critical situations should *combine* the top-down and bottom-up analyses. The insiders are as important as the outsiders. We should consider every 'hot point' as the crossroads of global and local processes. I am in favor for a tight cooperation of sociologists and journalists especially if these journalists are well educated in sociology. Finally, a rehabilitation of the movement for peace and democracy on the new (network) basis is not only but substantial instrument for the struggle against the 'war parties' and extremism of all kinds. Apathy, fear and phobias are well overcome by the solidarity actions. And the potential for the re-birth of such social movements still exists.

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