

ART OF GOVERNMENTALITY IN CONSTRUCTION OF RUSSIAN WOMAN'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: Russia's heteronormative policies have been receiving substantial attention mainly from Western scholars, who condemn the gendered-based regularization of identities in Russian cultural politics. I investigate the potential of these policies in legitimizing domestic power, creating a counter-hegemony, and the potential of geopolitical influence confronting Western global hegemony.

The paper addresses the discursive construction of auto-governing subjects to illuminate the way national identity is fashioned by the art of governmentality. Methodologically it is mapped on the Foucauldian reading of Gramsci, assuming that the art of governmentality can be a way to win the consent of subjects to ensure hegemony. To examine governmentality, I demonstrate how the liberty of women is controlled in a rational as well as an affective milieu. The article demonstrates that Russian dominant discourses, such as commercials, depict viable female identity in line with traditional gender norms. However, social promotion and idealization of the female body are new aspects of a Russian woman in contrast to the USSR discourse of sexual silencing. Women in a rational milieu calculate and decide to choose the viable, rather than marginalized non-heteronormative female identity. In the affective milieu, women's identity construction is controlled by the affections produced by various discourses, such as media. Self-governing subjects consent to traditional female identity, which gives them subjectivity while legitimizing the state power. Depiction of corrupted western moralities in opposition to Russian ethics elicits a sense of threat versus promise, alien versus us. These affections secure against non-heteronormative female identity. It is concluded that delineating the borders between morally deviant West and ethical Russia has the potential of creating a geopolitical hegemony of Russia as the global savior.

Keywords: heteronormativity, national identity, the art of governmentality, consent, hegemony

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There is an abundant scholarly literature targeting Russia's heteronormative policies as the repression of civil rights (Alexandra, 2018). However, I argue that there is the potential of this policy both for the domestic legitimization of the regime and for geopolitical hegemony.

The study aims at reinforcing a hegemonic approach to the discursive construction of Russian national identity regarded as security of cultural borders. The interplay between national identity and geopolitical hegemony can be conceptualized through the depiction of ideological and discursive territory-bound identity construction of a nation against a globally hegemonic identity.

It is assumed that Russia is a neoliberal society (Rutland, 2013), where liberal subjects are controlled by the art of governmentality. It structures the milieu of subjects by transforming the liberty into a tool that conducts individuals' conduct. Therefore, self-governing, rational, subjects are directed in line with the state's desire.

I address the discursive construction of auto-governing subjects to illuminate the way national identity is fashioned by the art of governmentality. Furthermore, it concerns the way geographical identity is employed in the legitimization of domestic power and forming a counter-hegemony in the struggle for future geopolitical hegemony.

Russian dominant discourses, countering Western global hegemony, aim at establishing a common sense that buttresses domestic political regime. One of the aspects that distinguish Russian moralities and values from Western norms is heteronormative identities. Although heteronormative policies are disguised to deal with critical demographic crises (Kondakov, 2013), I assume that the established heteronormative common sense is a result of opposing Russian values to the rest of the world. Heteronormativity, as opposed to the western norm of the fluidity of identity, can be a noticeable factor defining Russian cultural borders in face of the global cultural hegemony of the West. Heteronormativity is deeply rooted in the history of Russian identity (Scheller-Boltz, 2017). The unconscious aspect of the masses' common sense can be transformed into a critical reflection under the control of elites.

The paper considers how Russian female identity is regularized based on Russian values to define Russianness confronting the alien "other". It illustrates how the Russian female identity promises hegemony to the state.

Foucauldian reading of Gramsci

Theoretically the study is mapped on the Foucauldian reading of Gramsci. The bridge between the two nexuses provides a broader socio-cultural tool to delve both into micro and macro levels. The Gramscian notion of ideology / power is incarnated as knowledge / power technology in a Foucauldian perspective. Gramscian hegemony relying on subjects' consensual submission to the dominant ideology is achieved within "civil society". Here, I demonstrate how consent can be elicited by the art of governmentality. Production of self-governing, rational, autonomous, and responsible neoliberal subjects can be implicitly compared to

eliciting consent from the subjects. While neoliberal art of governmentality regulates and controls individuals' freedom within the formatted milieu, it produces malleable governable subjects, who consent to the dominant discourse to gain viable subjectivity. According to Foucault, "the apparatus of security work, fabricate, organize, and plan a milieu. Milieu is that in which circulation is carried out" (Foucault, Senellart, Ewald, Fontana, 2009). I discuss mechanisms of governmentality in controlling both rational and affective milieu to enact security through reducing unwanted circulations.

The construction of viable subjectivity in contrast to repressed bodies delineates the border between those who can live and those who are silenced. Biopolitics, as the apparatus of governmentality, regulates bodies, giving subjectivity to some, while excluding the others. This differentiation is a modern manifestation of sovereign power. Control of sexuality as a "means of access to both the life of the body and the life of the species" is the control of both the body and the population as the fleshy capital of society. For Foucault population as "manpower", becomes an "economic and political problem", "at the heart of (which) was sex" (Foucault, 1978). Regulation of sexuality to differentiate the procreative and non-procreative relations construct viable heterosexual subjects as opposed to abject homosexual minorities. Putting to death is transformed into marginalizing the unintelligible subject. Biopolitics entails the exercise of sovereign power to maintain the security of viable subjects and at the same time to legitimize its power. The tie between sovereign and governmentality can be compared to Gramscian understanding of hegemony as the dialectical relationship of consent and coercion, or in Anderson's terms as the "synthesis of consent and coercion" (Anderson, 2017).

Discourses compete to normalize common sense to secure a state of political hegemony. According to Gramsci, common sense is a "relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given time and place" (Gramsci, 1971). These "assumed certainties structure the basic landscape within which individuals are socialized and chart their individual life course" (Crehan, 2016). The already-existing self-evident truth among subalterns is forged by elites.

Based on the Gramscian philosophy of "praxis", "everyone is a philosopher", denoting that everyone unconsciously has a conception of the world based on what she has inherited from common sense. Intellectuals materialize the theoretical consciousness in a way that their practical-theoretical position is articulated in viable social relations pictured as natural. As Gramsci maintains, "that is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making critical and already existing activity" (Gramsci, 1971). Theoretical consciousness articulated to the practical-theoretical position will be the materialization of the already existing value of heteronormativity directing subjects' will toward consensual subordination. The manufactured consent assures hegemony.

Literature review

The world is politically partitioned into bounded groups of people called nations. The sense of belonging to a territory with a cultural heritage renders the group the national identity. The collective nature of national identity can be compared to the material geographical borders.

Russian collective national identity faced individualism and fluidity of identity after the collapse of the USSR. Embracing European liberal values soon led to the situation when "an increasing number of people started to blame individualism and Western values for the country's problems". While they assumed the West as the source of corruption and decadence, a return to traditional norms promised an overcome of difficulties (Scheller-Boltz, 2017). Today, Russian common sense is based on conservative traditional values (Romashko, 2018). Edenborg investigating the politics of homophobia in Russia proves culturalization of intolerance as a return to traditional values is a boundary-making move, delineating Russia from West (Edenborg, 2021). In another study, the same author conducts a qualitative text analysis of Russian news coverage of the homosexual propaganda bill between 25 January 2013, establishing that while one story narrates homosexuality as sterility, the other is a rhetoric on morally decadent West, against which Russian heterosexual civilization is invoked (Edenborg, 2015). In his recent study, Edenborg (2021) suggests a framework for analyzing interconnections between fundamentally different discourses on the protection of traditional values at the level of domestic, international, or transnational whose shared anti-gender stories pave the way for common cooperation.

My study establishes the same perception of Russian heteronormativity as the civilization border to defend the country against western cultural imperialism. However, I undertake the exploration of art and rationality behind the construction of the Russian female identity.

Constructing a Russian Female identity

Materialization of bodies as fe/male through the incorporation of naturalized feminine or masculine essence to bodies assures heteronormative social structures. Heteronormativity as a pivotal element of the Russian state's cultural policy in the production of identities (Dogangun, 2020) is mobilized through various discourses such as commercial, medical, and religious discourses to produce and stabilize the power.

Here, I discuss how instead of rules of a sovereign or disciplines, the art of governmentality relying on the creation of consent rather than coerce and subjugation, directs women toward heteronormative roles. I examine some Russian market advertisements, especially the literature on them to demonstrate the role of the market in the regulation of female identity in Russia.

The plethora of studies on Russian advertisement discourses all concedes upon the subsistence of traditional female stereotypes in various advertising discourses. Recent research on the images in car advertisements maintains that

while men are represented as "myth heroes", women are "caregivers", "silly girls, femme vamp" and "objects" (Medvedeva, 2019). Volkova identifies some stereotypical roles attributed to women in Russian TV advertisements such as sexual objects, heroes of housekeeping, mothers, and wives while climbing the ladder of professions. She confirms that women are represented as limited creatures whose main concerns are marrying an intelligent successful man and then sincerely caring for the well-being of the family (Volkova, 2020). Shkrabak and Golodova maintain the patriarchal nature of Russian advertisement discourse illustrating that a woman most often acts as a housewife mother, while a man acts as a breadwinner, a serious person; men should be decisive and show leadership qualities, while women should be respectful and dependent, beautiful, caring (Shkrabak, Golodova, 2020). Iepuri proves that Russian advertisements have positive attitudes toward traditional family structure" (Iepuri, 2017).

A survey on neo-maternity images in Russian advertisements, also indicates that house-located advertisements represent a family where the woman is running the house. The presentation of a man appeals to higher growth, a leading and supportive role when he shakes hands, teaches something, or feeds a woman with a spoon. However, the researchers admit that the modern image of the ideal Russian woman, while not departing from traditional procreative maternity and promising propagation and thereby future Russian race still follows a social-economic role (Vereshchagina, Kovalev, Samygin, 2018).

The discussed market advertising examples prove the dominance of heteronormativity in Russian market discourse with the idealization of traditional gender norms along with valuing nuclear family and abjection of the queer body. While on one hand the biological process of birth rate is regulated, on the other hand, the reconciliation of maternity and career welcoming women as labor force perpetuates the productive potential of women as part of the population.

There are pieces of evidence indicating different measures taken by the Russian Federation to pave the way for women's social and economic empowerment. Indeed, encouraging the population to conduct their conduct, does not exonerate the state from its responsibilities. The state provides the population with the essential facilities contributing to the fulfillment of desired goals. The maternal capital program, increase in the number of full-day state nursery schools, promotion of free prenatal health care and services. As a result, the number of abortions has decreased (Osmanov, Prokopov, 2020). On the other hand, it is proved that unlike the possible contradiction between interest in family and social activity, Russian women have managed to reconcile them (Mazzarino, 2013). According to 2020 statistics, female labor force rates 55.13 %¹. Temkina, confirming mothering as the "stable identity" of Russian woman believes that Russian women balance the double burden of work and family (Temkina, 2010).

¹ Russia: Female labor force participation. *The Global Economy*. Available at: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Russia/Female_labor_force_participation/# (accessed 10 April 2023).

Idealization of hetero, double-income nuclear family defines a conservative heteronormative milieu where the circulation of queer bodies is secured against. Russian women, as liberal rational auto-governing agents of neoliberal society, allocate their time, body and in general, their human capital to choose rationally among the activities that allow them to achieve approved subjectivity, based on the normalized image of a Russian woman. I can interpret such subtle conduct of women's conduct as a rational milieu where autonomous responsabilized women rationally calculate, choose, and decide, trying to reduce the risk. Self-monitoring subjects compete to achieve what is defined as the standard.

The current idealized female identity differs from the traditional one due to the neoliberal social context. While working mother was the fixed identity of the Soviet Russian woman, today based on her consumption, each woman claims her special way of life. Thus, I logically face a variety of working mothers each competing to manage their human capital, such as time, skill, ability, or body in a way that she rationally chooses. She is no more a simple worker, but an entrepreneur of herself.

Investing in aesthetic aspects of body is a feature of the current Russian female identity. Russia women more than men are obsessed with physical beauty as a capital (Buana, Pratiwi 2020). Neoliberal consumerist principles have idealized beautified bodies. Women enjoy democratic choices of marketized beauty, which guarantees them the pleasure of social and sexual visibility. Essentialized feminine beauty voices the gender binary border.

Feminine beautification, as a modern gender performance, is opposed to Soviet feminine norms. Some experts assert that the Russian state is struggling to construct a Russian national identity based on USSR values, which stressed: the "rationalization of production, (...) and a utilitarian view of the body that saw it as a tool of production, separated from any aesthetic or sexual pleasure" (Davydova 2019). The Soviet ideology of the working mother was not for the social promotion of women; rather it was simply based on the consent of the masses (men and women) to the ideology of devotion to the needs of communist society. The common motto of "we have no sex in the USSR" implies the silencing of sexual discourses and desires in the soviet era. In a study of the genealogy of sexuality in Russia Lalo elaborates on the idea of the "discourse of silence" of Russian sexuality throughout Russian history. He maintains the absence of eroticized literature or architecture or any confessions at churches, or sex pathological discourse in different eras as silencing the discourse of sexuality (Lalo, 2011).

The discourse of control and not silence highlights the beauty of the female body. Russian advertisements depict a sexy image of the female body (Edwards, 2012). Eroticized representation of the female body along with the appreciation of the beautified female body in Russian commercial discourses produces the truth about the essential beauty of women.

Women as rational subjects conduct their corporeal conduct in a way that they can get subjectivity by investing in their bodies. Competing to get the standard of femininity as socially and sexually visible subjects is not sexual objectification. It is a new subjectification of a Russian woman.

The liberty of women is controlled in a rational milieu as discourses such as commercials shape subjects' knowledge of what sustains and advance life, and what accepted female identity is like. In a rational milieu, women calculate and decide to choose the viable, rather than marginalized female identity as socially active, academically educated, physically beautified and well-groomed, socially, and sexually visible mothers and devoted wives.

Regimes of governmentality are not only rational but also affective milieus (Kantola, Seeck, Mannevu, 2019). They manage the affective milieu, as well to produce maximum efficiency of the population. "Differentiating good circulation from bad circulation," maximizing the first one at the expense of the second, maintains security (Foucault, 2007). The affections produced by various discourses such as media, "increase or diminish, aide or restrain" (Spinoza, 1994) women's power of actions. Threatening affections producing a sense of danger, alarm, and fear discourage individuals from acting in a certain way while promising affections encourage other actions.

Basulto argues that western media has depicted an aggressive and ruthless image of Russian identity (Basulto, 2015). Confronting the prevalent Russophobia, Russia uses media for its objectives of national security and foreign policies. It demonstrates "Western policies as threats to Russian national security" (Zakem, Saunders, Hashimova, Hammerberg, 2018). Russian media highlights fragmented Western individualism, fluidity of identity, tolerance of non-heteronormativity, and families all in contrast to Russia's traditional values of heteronormative identities, nuclear family, and essential gender roles. A stable and peaceful picture of Russia is opposed to unstable morally corrupted West. In contrast to "spiritually rich Russia", the West is morally decayed, especially in sexually distorted identities. Instilling fear of western values as corrupted and threatening moralities can discourage westernized non-heteronormative self-fashioning. Indeed, threat narratives arousing feelings of risk and fear restrict deviations from traditional Russian norms, the "bad circulations", conducting the population to govern themselves in state-desired ways.

On the other hand, the affective milieu is governed to create a sense of hopefulness promised by Russian moralities. The sense of promise encourages the subjects (here, Russian women) toward gender-based actions in harmony with the Russian female identity. Russian values affect a sense of promise, rather than risk and threat, construct and bolster a sense of belonging to our own national and cultural identity in contrast to "the otherness of the alien" (Scheller-Boltz, 2017). The positive emotion of Russianness and its traditional values forges a national female identity, which is neither West, nor east, but just Russian.

Art of governmentality has conducted women's self-fashioning conduct toward Russianness. Such "intellectual and moral leadership of masses", according to Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971), wins the consent of the masses and creates hegemony. Therefore, the state legitimizes its domestic power by eliciting the consent of subjects through the art of governmentality. According to Butler's performativity, as long as women perform their gender roles, they gain viable subjectivity, meanwhile assuring the sustainability of heteronormative discourse by their gender performances (Butler, 2006). The constructed image of the ideal Russian woman by different discourses as well as a sense of belonging consent women to Russian female identity values, assuring state hegemony.

The construction of Russian female identity based on traditional values reinforces heteronormativity which not only guarantees nation duration but also, building a civilization order against western values evokes the nation's emotion of belonging to heritage and their detestation of "the other" West to guard the country against ethical imperialism. Delineating the borders between the non-heteronormative morally deviated West and Russia as a "guardian of traditional values" (Cushman, Avramov, 2021) creates a counter-hegemony confronting global western hegemony. This alternative hegemony relies not on material sources, but on cultural policies, forging a Russian female identity based on moralities faded in the West. To surpass the universalized western values of modernity, Russia has undertaken to universalize traditional values. Russian agenda of heteronormativity as the frame of human rights in the UN (Chaney, 2018) is an evident example of Russian international policies in disseminating their ideas. Moreover, the expansion of narratives of heteronormativity has the potential of soft power in countries, mainly Asian or Islamic countries where heteronormativity has the centrality in defining visible viable relations.

Globalization of the idea that western fluid identities will collapse the societies have the potential for the creation of new hegemony. Russia invests in traditional ethics and values. This policy guarantees domestic power and national security meanwhile rendering the state the possibility of geopolitical hegemony, and even soft power.

Conclusion

Traditional gender-binary values have been the core point of current Russia's cultural policy, constructing a national identity based on conservative Russian ethics. Based on the biopolitical construction of identities, raw bodies of the population are materialized as gendered bodies ascribed with naturalized essence. These gendered-based value, which already exists in the masses' consciousness regularize bodies, defining heterosexuality as the only norm of sex to maintain procreation. On the other hand, differentiating Russia from the non-heteronormative West, the state fortifies the national bonds to ensure national security and legitimizes domestic power. Moreover, the constructed Russian female iden-

tity based on traditional Russian values produces a counter-hegemony against Western global hegemony. It paves the way for future geopolitical hegemony whereby Russian ethics and moral values can be the savior of the world from non-heteronormative corrupted values.

The state needs not only coercive subjugation of the masses but also depends on the consent of the subjects to heteronormative values, which assures hegemony to the state. To win the consent, the regimes of governmentality, control rational and affective milieus where women develop auto-governance in line with the desires of the state to create a conservative female identity. Good circulation of Russian female identity is secured against fluid Western identity by women's heteronormative performances, which produces and reproduces the state power.

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ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННОСТЬ В КОНСТРУИРОВАНИИ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ РУССКОЙ ЖЕНЩИНЫ

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Конфликт интересов: Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Аннотация: Гетеронормативная политика России привлекает значительное внимание, главным образом, со стороны западных ученых, осуждающих гендерную регуляризацию идентичностей в российской культурной политике. Я исследую потенциал этой политики в легитимизации внутренней власти, создании контргегемонии, а также потенциал геополитического влияния, противостоящего глобальной гегемонии Запада.

В статье рассматривается дискурсивная конструкция субъектов автоуправления, чтобы пролить свет на то, как национальная идентичность формируется правительственностью. Методологически это основано на фукодианском прочтении Грамши, предполагающем, что правительственность может быть способом завоевать согласие подданных для обеспечения гегемонии. Чтобы исследовать правительственность, я показываю, как свобода женщин контролируется как в рациональной, так и в аффективной среде. В статье показано, что доминирующие в России дискурсы, такие как реклама, изображают женскую идентичность в соответствии с традиционными гендерными нормами. Однако социальная пропаганда и идеализация женского тела являются новыми аспектами русской женщины в отличие от дискурса сексуального замалчивания в СССР. Женщины в рациональной среде выбирают не маргинализированную негетеронормативную женскую идентичность. В аффективной среде построение женской идентичности контролируется чувствами, вызываемыми различными дискурсами, например средствами массовой информации. Субъекты самоуправления соглашаются на традиционную женскую идентичность, что придает им субъективность и легитимизирует государственную власть. Изображение испорченной западной морали в противовес российской этике вызывает ощущение дуализма угроза-обещание, чужой-свой. Эти привязанности защищают от негетеронормативной женской идентичности. Делается вывод, что разграничение границ между морально девиантным Западом и этической Россией потенциально может привести к созданию геополитической гегемонии России как глобального спасителя.

Ключевые слова: гетеронормативность, национальная идентичность, искусство управления, согласие, гегемония

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