FLICKERING CONCEPTS OF COGNITIVE-IDEOLOGICAL MATRICES

(Based on a series of sociological studies during 2015–2020)

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Abstract: The study specifies the concept of political ideology in terms of its matrix structure, in particular the "flickering concepts" of ideological attitudes, which are hard to identify by means of traditional sociological surveys. Considering the morphological approach to the analysis of ideological consciousness (suggested by Michael Freeden), the authors introduce the concept of cognitive ideological matrices, which allows us to describe the process of transition from proto-ideological to ideological concepts, especially at the level of individual consciousness. The authors studied the above-mentioned concepts of flickering ideological consciousness in the framework of scientific projects implemented by them during 2015–2019. The studies aimed to reveal the ideological attitudes of students of Rostov-on-Don. The methodology of these projects included quantitative and qualitative analysis: in the course of group interviews, based on the material

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of the discourse declared by the respondents, relevant "flickering" concepts of ideological attitudes were revealed and then operationalized in the questionnaire, and the results of the survey were later falsified in focus groups. Because of the study, it was possible to first identify the "zero level" of ideology, at which the minds of young respondents are potentially open to the influence of diverse and often mutually exclusive ideological orientations, and second, to pinpoint the changes that have occurred in the cognitive ideological matrices of Rostov-on-Don students over the past five years. These changes mean that the basic concepts of left-liberal ideology are strengthening, and the right-wing "flickering concepts" are shifting to the center-left concepts of social justice, equality, etc. In general, it is common for the interviewed students to display situational ideological attitudes and indifference toward larger ideological narratives. The results of the study can be used for comparative analysis and to forecast of the ideological attitudes of Russian students.

Keywords: ideology, morphology of ideologies, attitude, concept, narrative, young students, Russia, financial crisis, liberalism.

1. Introduction

There was a riddle that was quite popular among children in the 1980s: "There's a lighthouse on the shore. It is faded one second, dimmed the next. Why didn't the captain of the ship see the lighthouse?" Surprisingly, the majority of the respondents could not solve it. Every time the riddle was asked, people had a feeling that some important details were missed: some started to speculate about the captain's physical well-being, others tried to determine his whereabouts, and still others attempted to guess the weather conditions. The solution of this riddle, however, lies in the fact that the lighthouse was not even emitting light—both verbs used in the riddle are synonymous and mean the absence of light. Strictly speaking, the conditions of the riddle themselves are incorrect—both verbs describe a situation where the light stops shining. This, in turn, means that the lighthouse had to emit light for some time, before it faded. In riddles of this kind, as well as in politics, logic is far from playing the leading role.

This insignificant anecdotal evidence was recalled because it illustrates very well the phenomenon that is indicated in the title; namely, it describes the flickering proto-ideological concepts that either "fade" or "dim" in mass or group consciousness. For most ideological scholars, these concepts remain invisible because they do not "emit light" during the use of traditional means of studying mass consciousness — from polls to focus groups. These concepts lie in the shadow of the consciousness of the social "me" (in the terms of G. Mead (1972)), being pushed out to the periphery of this consciousness by those sociocultural norms that the individual "I" (in the terms of G. Mead) learned in the process of socialization. The essence of the problem lies in the fact that when answering the questions of a sociologist, the respondent represents his own ideas about his social "me," but personal decisions are made based on a much larger amount of information, which includes personal experience, his feelings, values, etc.

This "I" as the "other" side of "self" that usually eludes sociologists, is quite successfully studied by psychologists and anthropologists, including political and social experts (Jost, Kay, &Thorisdottir, 2009; Houghton, 2009). However, the material with which these scientists work — individual, group, and mass consciousness — forces them to take the key observable characteristics of the object of study as a premise, namely, the inconsistency, heterogeneity, and even the dissociation of this consciousness. Whereas ideology, as an objective social phenomenon, is characterized by structural integrity and consistency.

Moreover, here, one of the most interesting problems is the explanation of the transition from heterogeneous consciousness to a systematized ideology and back. If we study ideology from the point of view of mass psychology, then we face with a problem that was defined in 1964 by a group of American sociologists led by Philip Converse (2006): systematic ideologization is not characteristic of mass consciousness; mass "belief systems" combine fragments of various ideologies, which often contradict each other. Perhaps for this reason, modern social and political psychologists prefer to talk only about the "premises" and

"foundations" of ideology in mass psychology (Jost, Kay, &Thorisdottir, 2009) and not about a holistic system of attitudes and views represented in ideological systems.

Another sphere of social knowledge — research in the field of ideologies (study of ideologies) — traditionally follows the opposite path from the point of view of ideology as an objective phenomenon that affects mass consciousness. A certain progress has been made in recent years in this area of research. Particularly, there was a transition from the idea of ideology as a kind of frozen conceptual system to a much more dynamic idea of the flexible nature of ideological systems, which allows us to consider the shifts in mass consciousness and their reflection in ideologies. Thus, on the basis of the historical data about the emergence of the "new" liberalism, one of the leading experts in this field, the British political philosopher Michael Freeden (1978) showed how the shifts that occurred in the mass consciousness reflected on the morphological structure of liberal ideology. The morphological concept of ideology proposed by Freeden partially solved the problems discussed here.

However, in recent years, it was Freeden himself who proclaimed a crisis in the field of the study of ideologies (Freeden, 2019) linking it with the emergence of "ideolonoids" — ideological "ghosts" that broke all ties with reality and exist solely for their own sake. Freeden believes that one of the key reasons for the emergence of "ideolonoids" is the destruction of the balance (that is inherent in classical ideological systems) between intellectual content, imagination, and emotions in favor of the latter. Large ideological narratives become too stiff and heavy in a rapidly changing reality, requiring an immediate response to the emerging problems that are heatedly discussed in a boiling media space and immediately discarded in favor of new ones (Freeden, 2019). Therefore, we have yet again returned to the original problem of the relationship between the mosaic mass consciousness and systematized ideologies.

The purpose of this study is to clarify this problem by involving the concept of cognitive ideological matrices and relying on data from sociological studies on the youth's consciousness in the south of Russia.

2. Materials and Methods

To solve the abovementioned problem, the authors developed the concept of a cognitive ideological matrix (Konstantinov, 2018), which describes a pre-reflexive (and therefore politically neutral) environment wherein proto-elements of political ideologies are formed from the elements of a person's sedimented social experience.

This concept is an attempt to overcome the dilemma that a modern researcher often faces: he/she must either record a respondent's consistent commitment to a certain political ideology or draw a conclusion about the ideological neutrality of this respondent's consciousness. There is often another option. The respondent's consciousness is swarming with various ideologemes (and is ideologically far from sterile in this sense); however, his/her adherence to a specific ideology cannot be determined. If the researcher does not fit the actual ideological attitudes of the respondents to different kinds of "isms," then he/she needs to specify the concept of ideology as a living consciousness of living people, and not merely as a system of verbalized concepts.

The cognitive ideological matrix generates ideological meanings in different levels and stages. The level of ideologemes should be distinguished from the level of concepts in the matrix. Depending on these levels, the very idea of the matrix changes, and so does the initial metaphorical meaning that underlies this concept.

At the level of ideologemes (as conceptual "free radicals" expressed in a language but not captured by its concrete sign), the cognitive ideological matrix is interpreted by analogy with the concept of a matrix in physics — as a neutral (cognitive) medium in which isolated active particles (ideologemes as "proto-ideological" concepts) prevent their interaction with each other and with the environment. However, as the "temperature" of social interactions rises (for example, in an acute social crisis), the cognitive environment surrounding ideologemes ceases to be neutral, and another process begins — the linking of ideologemes as proto-ideological concepts with relatively stable ideological concepts and conceptual narratives. At this level, the meaning of

the cognitive ideological matrix is analogous to that of a matrix in foundry or printing, wherein the constellation of ideological concepts serves as a model for the serial production of ideological meanings (at the individual and collective levels). According to Freeden, "an ideology specifies the meanings of the political concepts it contains by assembling them in a pattern that links them together with other specific concepts" (Freeden, 2003).

However, the mentioned analogy with stereotypical production lines only partially expresses the matrix function of ideological concepts. In the morphological approach to ideologies developed by Freeden, the main characters are the concepts (conceptual constellations) and the social environment. However, the sense-making function of a narrative should be emphasized to explain the conceptual dynamics of ideologies. A cognitive understanding of an ideology should include not only the morphology of ideologies but also its subconscious level with its spontaneous imagination that generates narratives. A narrative provides a constant vibration of the ideological conceptual structure, namely,

the mentioned "flickering" of concepts as a reaction to the current socio-political agenda. In the same manner, that meaning is created not by a single word but by a sentence, ideological meaning is generated not by a simple set of concepts but by a conceptual narrative.

The cognitive ideological matrix, understood in the unity of both mentioned levels, forms what can be called a "symbolic universe" of ideology as "the matrix of all socially objectivized and subjectively real meanings" (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), and a similar concept ("a universe of discourse") was used by G. Mead (1972). The main distinguishing feature of this universe is self-sufficiency in the generation of (ideological) meanings. Thus, the cognitive ideological matrix is the "zero level," in which the ideological "protoplasm" arises through the formation of an individual's predisposition to one ideology or another, or, as is often the case, to several ideologies at once. Moreover, unlike ideology, the matrix is insensitive to contradiction, since the elements of the matrix are not subject to reflection. They are reflected only in the process of formation of proto-ideological elements.

This is why the proto-elements of various ideologies can be stored in an individual consciousness without causing cognitive dissonance.

This concept and related ones formed the basis of the two sociological studies of student consciousness in 2014–2015 and 2018–2019 carried out by a scientific team that brought together scientists from the Southern Federal University and the Southern Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Both studies aimed to discover the mentioned "zero level" of ideology – – the moment when it starts to form in a person's consciousness, and the consciousness itself is potentially open to the influence of diverse — often mutually exclusive ideological orientations. Based on the original concept of "vague ideologeme" (Bakhtin, 2000; Jameson, 2002), the research team developed the idea of "flickering concepts" of the cognitive ideological matrix.

These are the concepts that are internalized by an individual during socialization, but unlike the already reflected ideological concepts, "flickering concepts" manifest themselves in consciousness only in specific situations of a difficult life choice — liminal situations. They are "vague" because an individual himself/herself does not reflect them; unlike Bakhtin's "vague ideologemes," these are rather well formed concepts that are borrowed or migrated (Potseluev &Konstantinov, 2018) from other ideologies. Functionally, the importance of these concepts is that they themselves can become crystallization points of the protoideological substrate. In other words, an individual's mind contains already reflected, more or less ordered, and publicly declared set of ideologized ideas of reality but at the same time, non-reflected groups of proto-ideological concepts, representing the influence of others ideologies(often in conflict with the first one), can be formed in the matrix around several "flickering concepts." It is the properties of the ideological matrix as a cognitively neutral environment that allow all these concepts to coexist simultaneously without causing cognitive or social discomfort to an individual.

It is clear from what has been said that it is impossible to "grasp" the flickering concepts by means of traditional sociological surveys —an

individual will simply declare socially acceptable ideological attitudes, satisfying the expectations that he thinks his environment presents to him. That is why a reasonably large-scale case study should be comprehensive and combine quantitative questionnaire survey methods, qualitative methodology of group interviews, focus groups, and narrative analysis. In the course of group interviews, based on the material of the discourse declared by the respondents, relevant "flickering" concepts were revealed and then operationalized in the questionnaire; the results of the survey were later falsified in focus groups by means of narrative analysis, among other things, which includes an assessment of the plot of the story told by respondent, its structure, and the nature of reasoning and metaphors.

Accordingly, in the methodological aspect, the questionnaire survey in both studies was preceded by a series of free group interviews, and the quantitative results of the survey were corrected and specified on the quality material of the focus groups and narrative analysis that completed the study. The first survey named *The Ukrainian Crisis through the Eyes of Student Youth* was conducted in Rostov-on-Don universities in the period from late April to early June 2015.A total of 718 people was questioned (350 young men and 368 young women; so, the standard deviation in the selection was ± 3.7%). The questionnaire contained 41 questions, including 8 questions about the respondent's identity.

The second survey was conducted in Rostov universities in the period from the end of September to the end of November 2019.The questionnaire under the title *Russia and the World — Today and Tomorrow* contained 43 questions, including 6 questions about the respondent's identity. 816 respondents were questioned, 435 of which were young men and 381 — women. The standard deviation was ±3.4 %.

3. Results

Examination of the empirical material obtained during the study should begin with an analysis of the respondent's ideological representations. Thematic analysis of the group interviews that preceded the survey revealed 12 main ideologies familiar to the respondents, while also uncovering

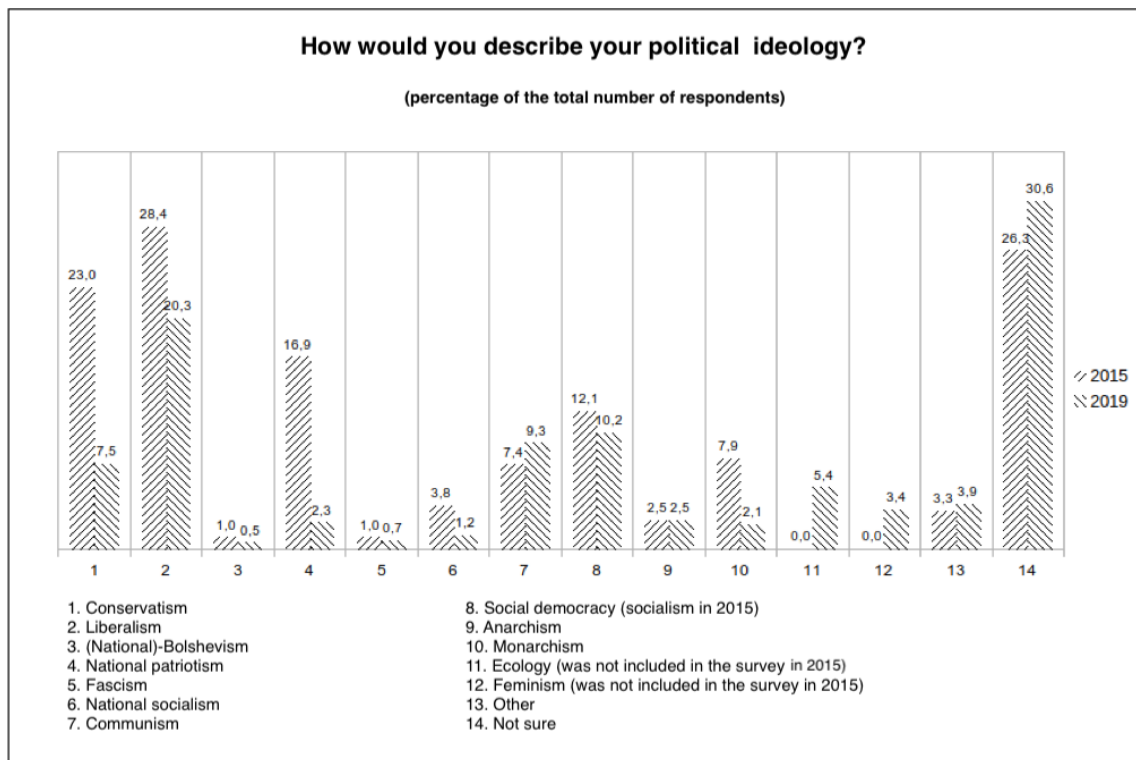significant shifts in the right of the ideological spectrum (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. The dynamics of ideological representations of student youth in the south of Russia

As can be seen from Fig. 1, only five statistically significant changes occurred in the ideological self-representations of respondents in the 2015–2019 period, four of which characterize a shift of the reflecting youth consciousness towards liberal ideology. First, the number of declarative supporters of the following ideologies has significantly decreased: conservatism (from 23.0% to 7.5%), national patriotism (from 16.9% to 2.9%), and monarchism (from 7.9% to 2.1%). The number of supporters of these ideologies had decreased from three to six times! A slight decrease in the percentage of declarative liberals can also be noted (from 28.4% to 20.3%). It could be assumed that some of the liberals have shifted towards the left ideological spectrum, but the changes in the positions of the left ideologies'

supporters do not exceed the statistical error. Therefore, it is more reasonable to attribute the decrease in the percentage of liberals to a greater prevalence of ecologists and feminists in 2019, since these positions were not included in the 2015 survey. Consequently, at the time, when answering the question, their supporters were forced to choose a liberal position closest to their beliefs. In other words, the position of the liberals has not actually changed.

A narrative analysis of the respondents' texts allows us to make certain conclusions regarding their ideological self-representations. As part of the study, 70 Rostov-on-Don students were asked to write an essay on the topic of *History of Russia: Past, Present, and Future* after disclosing their political views and ideological preferences. The results can be grouped into the following categories based on the correlation between ideological self-identification and identified preferences:

1. The respondent's idea about the history of Russia as a whole corresponds to the stated ideological orientation (52.9%)

2. Some deviations are observed (14.3%)

3. Denial of ideological preferences in self-evaluation, but presence of signs of a certain ideology in the narrative (11.4%)

4. Judging by the narrative, the author's self-identification conflicts with the stated ideology (21.4%)

These findings prompt the need to uncover the reasons behind the ideological shifts noted above. Historically, in studies on ideologies, group ideological positions tended to be associated with the financial factors. Accordingly, shifts in ideological positions may be associated with changes in respondents' financial situation. To determine whether this is true, the authors of the presented studies asked the respondents to describe their financial situation. Unfortunately, the questions in the questionnaires of 2015 and 2019 were not identical. In 2015, respondents were asked to choose the social category that most accurately described their position. However, in 2019, the respondents were required to assess their financial situation. Nevertheless, the substance of these questions is similar, allowing comparison of the answers provided in 2015 and 2019 (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Which social category do you attribute yourself to? (2015) --- *How would you describe your financial situation today?* (2019)	2015	2019
Wealthy people: enough money to satisfy all needs, including luxury goods	5,3	-
Very well	-	3,8
Sufficiently rich people: enough money for food, accommodation, clothing, education, leisure, durable goods	63,1	-
Well	-	15,9
Adequate	-	48,9
Poor people: enough money for food, accommodation, basic goods	23,5	-
Unfavorable	-	19,9
Struggling people: not enough money for food	1,3	-
Very unfavorable	-	4,8
Not sure	6,8	0,0

Table 1. Assessment of one's own financial situation

(Percentage of the total number of respondents)

As can be seen from the results reported in Table 1, respondents' financial situation has not changed substantially over the past five years. It is still worth noting that the number of respondents who rate their financial situation unfavorably has slightly decreased, whereas a smaller percentage of respondents deemed their financial situation to be very unfavorable in 2019. However, as these changes barely exceed the statistical error of ± 3.4%, ideological shifts cannot be attributed to financial factors.

At the same time, obvious changes have occurred in the structure of "flickering concepts" of cognitive ideological matrices, in which the structures of the "ripening" left-liberal ideology are becoming more defined. Coincidently, the right-wing "flickering concepts" of chauvinism, racism, sexism, etc., are shifting to the left of the ideological spectrum and their meanings are (re-) decontesting (Freeden 2003) in the context of the concepts of social justice, equality, etc. Hence, this very shift in the structure of "flickering concepts" explains the changes in

ideological self-representations much better than financial losses and gains.

It appears that the increased flickering intensity of the far-right concepts recorded in 2015 (Potseluev, Konstantinov & Lukichev, et. al., 2016) as well as the shift to the "left" revealed in 2019 have occurred while the respondents' financial situation remained virtually unchanged. Therefore, the factors that influenced the intensity of the flickering of concepts are associated either with intra-ideological processes, or with fleeting changes in social consciousness as a whole under the short-term influence of propaganda. It cannot be denied that the joining of Crimea to Russia in 2014 was perceived by the Russians as an opportunity to rediscover the meaning of the country's political existence, as a kind of compensation for the disorder and humiliation of the 1990s. However, a significant percentage of Russian youth was disappointed in these ideas because of the ensuing economic woes and political isolation of Russia.

Predictably, the diagram reflecting the dynamics of respondents' views on the imperial past and the future of Russia shows a sharp "Europeanization" of students' perceptions of Russia's place in the international context (see Fig. 2).
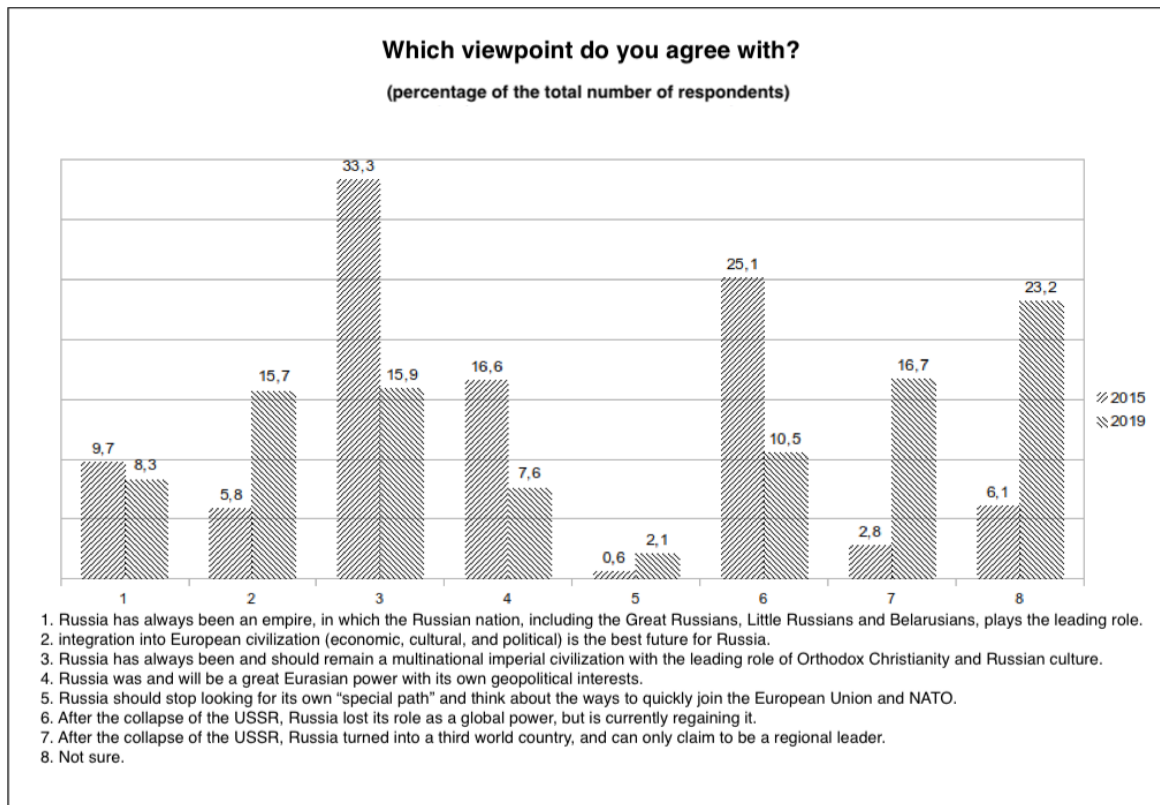
Fig. 2. Dynamics of respondents' perceptions of Russia's place in the world politics

Particularly noteworthy is a significant decrease in the respondents' perceptions of the imperial nature of Russian civilization from 43.0% to 24.2% (judging by the clauses 1 and 3 of the diagram), and the decrease in its Eurasian nature from 16.6% to 7.6%. At the same time, the number of students who agreed with the need to integrate Russia into European civilization increased from 5.8% to 15.7% and included an increase in its status as a regional power from 2.8% to 16.7%.However, the number of respondents who supported the viewpoint that Russia regains the role of a world power sharply decreased from 25.1% to 10.5%.The data shows that the concepts of empire, sovereignty, and greatness in foreign policy, which burned in the student consciousness with the light of a "supernova" in 2015, gave way to some other concepts.

As can be seen from the diagram shown in Figure 3, it is the skew towards foreign policy that causes the most irritation among the respondents.
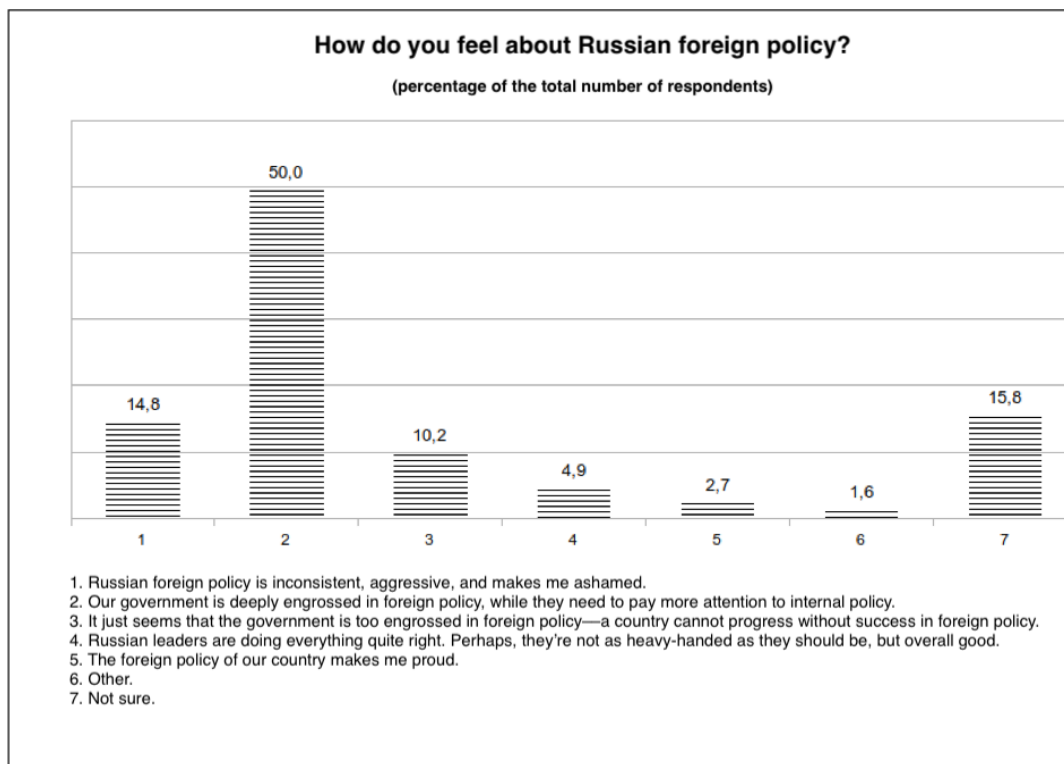
How do you feel about Russian foreign policy?

(percentage of the total number of respondents)

1. Russian foreign policy is inconsistent, aggressive, and makes me ashamed.
2. Our government is deeply engrossed in foreign policy, while they need to pay more attention to internal policy.
3. It just seems that the government is too engrossed in foreign policy—a country cannot progress without success in foreign policy.
4. Russian leaders are doing everything quite right. Perhaps, they're not as heavy-handed as they should be, but overall good.
5. The foreign policy of our country makes me proud.
6. Other.
7. Not sure.

Fig. 3. Respondents' attitude toward Russian foreign policy

The same goes for the concept of the *Russian world*. In 2015, when asked what a Russian world is, the respondents answered fairly confident and only 31.5% were not sure. However, in 2019, only 36.3% of respondents supported the idea of the Russian world in one form or another, others were either completely indifferent (47.2%), or had hostile opinions about this ideology (14.7%). And in response to the question of what events in Russia in the near future could lead to protests, more than a quarter of respondents hypothesized that the protests could be caused by the intervention of the Russian government in political processes of other countries at the expense of domestic economy.

Finally, a shift in the youth's value system is evident in relation to popular political slogans (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Slogans	Strongly agree		Tend to agree		Strongly disagree		I don't care		Not sure	
	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019
Personal freedom and human rights are inviolable!	74,0	75,5	15,5	16,3	1,5	0,7	1,9	1,6	7,1	5,9
*"Our hearts demand changes!"**	-	50,7	-	25,2	-	4,0	-	6,7	-	13,4
All the troubles in Russia are caused by Judeo-Masonic conspiracy	8,1	15,4	10,6	15,6	40,9	28,3	9,9	13,1	30,5	27,6
Stop feeding other nations!	10,9	38,5	23,3	23,0	30,2	13,8	15,0	7,7	20,6	16,9
*Free the Internet!**	-	58,1	-	21,2	-	3,3	-	6,1	-	11,3
*Let us save nature for our children!**	-	76,2	-	11,8	-	1,0	-	3,4	-	7,6
Russia is only for Russians!	8,2	11,4	25,6	11,6	45,1	50,1	10,2	12,5	10,9	14,3
Down with the oligarchs! ("Eat pineapples and chew fois gras, your last day is coming, accursed bourgeois!" in 2019 survey)	20,5	25,6	37,6	17,8	9,1	17,6	18,0	12,0	14,9	27,0
For the Slavic brotherhood! ("Slavs of the world, unite!" in 2019 survey)	35,4	22,2	24,2	19,9	6,7	20,0	12,1	15,2	21,6	22,8

*these slogans were not included in 2015 survey.

Table 3. Respondents' attitude toward significant political slogans

(In percentage of the total number of respondents)

From the data given in Table 3, it can be seen that the students' attitude towards liberal slogans of personal freedom and human rights has not changed over the past five years. However, if in 2015 student consciousness seemed to be heterogeneous and torn because it combined contradictory attitudes and values (Potseluev et. al., 2016); in 2019 we observe

solidification of left-liberal values in the cognitive ideological matrix. This can be seen in the decrease in the relevance of the far-right and far-left attitudes that contradict liberalism, with a shift of the entire structure to the center and somewhat to the left. However, at the same time, the well-known form of chauvinism — "welfare chauvinism" (Andersen&Bjørklund, 1990) — had retained its significance. In particular, this form of patriotism is manifested in a sharp increase in support of the slogan "*Stop feeding other nations!*"— from 34.2% in 2015 to 61.5% in 2019 (in summation of *strongly agree* and *tend to agree* responses). Furthermore, there is no escaping the fact that the slogan "*All the troubles in Russia are caused by Judeo-Masonic conspiracy*" became more tolerable (an increase of 12.6%).

Therefore, it should be recognized that the cognitive ideological matrix in student consciousness remains open to the influence of far-right ideas, and the frustrations generated by the "chilling" of the political regime might very well strengthen these negative values and attitudes. However, it is impossible to predict the direction of crystallization of these concepts in the next cycle of their flickering. Considering the fact that the slogan "*Stop feeding other nations!*" is more about social justice than about the resentment against other nations and races (the latter is refuted by the clear antipathy to the slogan "*Russia is only for Russians!*"), the far-left crystallization of the conceptual frame of this flickering concept is entirely possible. Nevertheless, now, these concepts are in the shadow of student consciousness, increasingly giving way to liberal concepts.

The strengthening of the reflected liberal ideology is also indicated by the increasing relevance of the ideas of the legal order and legal justice. As can be seen from the diagram in Figure 4, the maxim "*One should defend one's interests by means permitted by law*" has significantly strengthened in student consciousness over the last five years, while in 2015 respondents' emphasized *peaceful* means. In addition, even though the number of respondents that are willing to take up arms in 2019 has not changed at all, the shift in emphasis from just peaceful means to legal means is significant by itself.
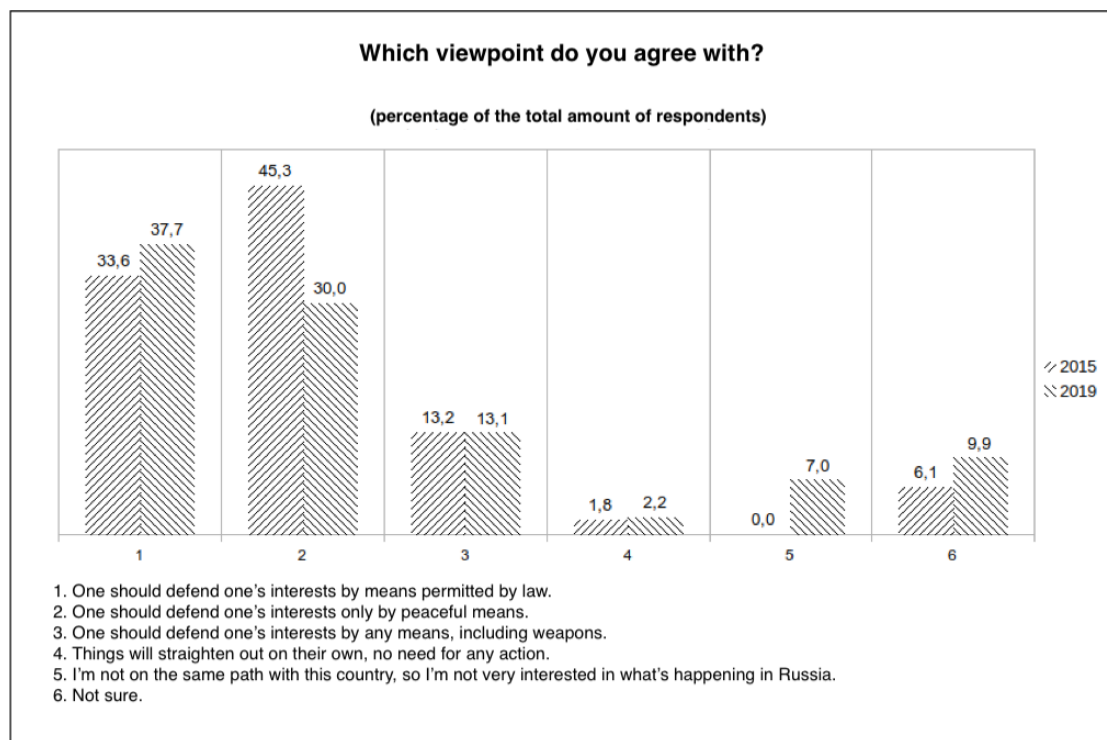
Fig. 4. Students' preferences in means to achieve political goals

4. Discussion

Over the past few years, Russian sociologists have recorded a general increase in protest moods, primarily among young people (Monitoring of Changes, 2019; Protest Activity, 2019; Protest Potential, 2019; Galanina, 2019; Vnukova, 2015; Lukichev, 2018). However, the data presented above indicate that ideologically significant grounds for protest activity are, on the contrary, losing their significance. Students do not feel a significant deterioration in their financial situation; therefore, we do not observe a sharp increase in the importance of the concepts of social justice and equality. Furthermore, a certain tilt to the left is explained by the respondents' concerns about the socio-economic situation in the country (46.7% noted that the country is experiencing an economic crisis, and another 7.8% expect it in the near future). In contrast, the ideological foundations for the potential activity of right-wing radicals among students are diminishing— the concepts of chauvinism, anti-Semitism,

racism, and sexism are losing the intensity of their flickering.

No less important are the data obtained by Russian sociologists on a steady increase in emigrational moods among young people aged 18–24 years (from 22% in 2014 to 53% in September of 2019) (Goncharov& Volkov, 2019). However, here we do not observe changes in student consciousness either.

In general, in 2019, respondents were most concerned about the domestic issues, with socio-economic issues considered the most important, followed by quality of life issues with particular regards to environmental issues (27.3% consider the environmental disasters caused by the climate change as the main threats to Russia, second only to the threat of a new world war (28.3%)). Most respondents think the economic crisis is caused by inefficient government and poor quality of administration (28.7%), including a high level of corruption and crime (38.4%). Despite this, students are only concerned about internal migration to large cities, with the most respondents (41.4%) relating to emigration situationally, and have no such desire to leave Russia.

5. Conclusion

The goal of the conducted sociological research was practical testing and correction of the author's concept of cognitive-ideological matrices based on the obtained empirical material. In general, the heuristic potential of this concept was confirmed––it not only explains the specifics of the impact of ideology on individual and group consciousness but also describes the crystallization processes of logically ordered ideological concepts from conflicting accounts of individual experience. Accordingly, this concept allows one to explain the empirically observed ideological contradictions in individual consciousness by distinguishing between two levels of the cognitive matrix—pre-reflective (the level of "vague" ideologues) and already reflected (the level of ideological concepts). One of the most important categories of the above-mentioned concept is the "flickering concepts." The empirical material obtained from the study made it possible to explicate these flickering concepts from student consciousness and identify factors that affect the intensity of their flickering.

The five-year-long systematic study of student consciousness presented in this article showed a decrease in the degree of intensity in concepts such as chauvinism, racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism, but an increase in the degree of intensity in the concepts of social justice and equality, as well as legal order and legal justice.

6. Acknowledgments

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