Challenges of Russian Archaic Society

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Abstract: The article is an attempt to consider modern state of Russian society and those challenges (internal and external) which hinder modernization of the economy and society. Russian society can be characterized as society with archaic, out-of-date relationship which is recognized even by our government. The problems and contradictions which have been accumulated for years retard real modernization. Society can not respond quickly to the challenges of constantly changing environment. The authors show the ways to minimize effect of those challenges.

Key words: Archaic society • Modernization • Corruption • Economy • Social sphere • Policy • Management • Catastrophe

INTRODUCTION

Wallerstain quite reasonably argued that in XXI century the mankind has entered the era of uncertainty [1]. It is confirmed by many proofs. The World not only failed to solve any of old global problems, but new problems have emerged, as serious and dangerous as the old ones which threaten mankind with catastrophic effects. In our present-time post-industrial society we observe decline of social relations and the growth of what is usually called individualized [2]. The topic of “challenges” is very popular, it is discussed at numerous conferences and forums, in monographs, numerous articles, this topic is in the focus of many leading politicians of the world. But if we assess current situation world community is not ready for solution. Moreover, appearance and aggravation of some challenges is facilitated by activity of some states. The world entered bifurcation zone, or uncertainty, unpredictability and increased risks. Not only one decade can elapse in conditions of such phenomenon. Russian society is developing together with other countries and can not be isolated from such problems. It is interlaced with them as one of the leading countries of the world. But besides global challenges our country has its own, specific problems as well. Most of them relate to outdated, archaic character of our society and all its spheres [3].

Main Part: In the sphere of economy these challenges, first of all, relate to its resource-based character. Our government confessed that continuation of such course leads to nowhere, it will deprive us from future. We need diversification of the economy and finding new sources of development. But we have not reached meaningful results in this sphere yet. Mass corruption is another serious challenge. Corruption has become the most dynamically developing industry of Russian economy and political decision-making mechanism. It threatens sovereignty of the country, aggravates the stratification of our society, makes state and municipal management inefficient, leads to estrangement of people from each other and from social institutions. Unfortunately, there exists a myth in mass consciousness of our citizens that corruption is inevitable and specific feature of any state and state employees. The result of this myth is the following conclusion: we have to tolerate this negative phenomena, nothing can be done about it. And in order to give grounds to this idea we are provided with data about corruption in other countries and a gap in information about those countries where the level of corruption is minimal. The corruption is aggravated by high level of black economy and illegal labour market. The measures undertaken by the government and society to minimize these and other phenomena have not brought positive results yet. Moreover, in spite of measures taken the corruption is still growing instead of reduction and the same situation is observed with black economy and illegal labour market. By now there are few politicians who are worried with the fact that in 10-15 years illegal employment will create for society more problems than now. Illegal employees will demand pensions from the state.

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In the political sphere Russia also faces a number of challenges. The key challenge—low quality of management in all levels of the state and local self-government. This characteristic manifests itself most distinctly in numerous targeted programs, in distribution of budget money. At one of the meetings the President of Russia V.V. Puting severely criticized the situation observed in this sphere. Some target programs and their separate measures are not implemented at all, they are not financed: they are still in “paper” form and the budget money lie without use [4]. Good intentions of the government often are not based on real calculations and actions. For example, the announcement by the government of organization of 25 new high-tech well-paid working places in the nearest future is considered as bluff. If we shall look at newspapers and other sources of information we shall not find there any calculations to solve this very actual task in practice. Such working places will demand new staff (it must be properly trained), organization of new production capacities and modernization of the old ones; new modern social infrastructure must be formed including houses and facilities for living. Big organizational work is necessary, apart from financing. It is huge work and we can imagine this by one example. 3-4 years of training of the worker at Russian college in XXI century will cost about 30 000 US dollars [5]. It is pointless to argue that most intellectual and technological professions will demand more money than this amount. In conditions of current budget deficit, low quality of management such task, by our opinion, is nothing but one more wannabe of the government. The same can be said about perspectives of modernization of the economy and society. They talk much and do little. V.V. Putin has pointed out at one of the workshop for Governors that "most part of managerial staff is still lacking skills which are practiced in world community of professionals" [6]. Partially it explains low level of labour productivity in our country in comparison with developed countries, including low level of state officials’ work on all levels including municipal level. By this and other reasons our citizens still do not trust governmental bodies and institutions of all levels. This is demonstrated by low appearance of people at elections, passivity of the most part of population in solution of important local and whole-state problems, etc. Formal deepening of democracy is taking place in conditions of social apathy and concentration of power in the hands of old elites and new classes which believe that their own interests are more important than public well-being. Sh. Wolin points out that "this is a sign of political attack of the corporate power century and political de-mobilization of people" [7]. All this hinders formation of strong civil society greatly. Its current weakness does not allow to control efficiently our state, its institutions, the resolutions and their realization. The system of power structures, as it was precisely formulated by well-known scientist A. Zapesotsky, is in fact privatized by individuals [8].

There are also great challenges in social sphere of Russia. The key problem is surplus social stratification. Developed countries, especially in North Europe are characterized by absence of distinct social polarization. In spite of some positive changes in the quality of life of our people there have been no significant shifts for the best during 20 years of transformation of Russian society. Even official data shows that 10-11% of our people are still below the poverty level [9]. Independent experts believe that this indicator can be multiplied by 2-2,5. And situation with stratification of society will not change in conditions of budget deficit.

The most important institutions which characterize the state of social sphere are family, education, science, health care, culture. These institutions need more attention from our state and society. We observe a real demographic catastrophe and crisis of values because of unfavorable conditions is family sphere, health care, socio-economic environment, attitude to the people. The causes and effects of these catastrophes, their social consequences were described in numerous sources of information. The same situation is observed with education and science. The Chairman of the Mercury club, academician E. Primakov, in 2010 the USA spent on education (per one person) more than 10 times more, in Japan-4 times more, in Brazil-1,5 more than Russia. The same situation is with financing of science. In Russia expenditure for public health care amounts to 3,6% of GDP, in the USA-1,6% [9]. These examples demonstrate underestimate of human capital role in development of economy and society.

The challenges in the sphere inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations becomes more serious. It gets more difficult to avoid conflicts in this sphere every year. This is confirmed by data of sociological interviews and real situation. In our country even special forces are formed for the fight with ethnic criminality. It is understood that only police actions are not enough to respond ethnic criminal world. It is necessary to increase the culture of international communication, to improve migration policy and law-enforcement practice.

Side by side with challenges of internal character Russia faces the external challenges. Processes which go on in the world become more complicated, contradictory and instable. Developed countries become less tolerate and more aggressive. We observe return to old geo-political struggle, the competition for natural...
resources, products and territory aggravates. Latent phenomena start to dominate over visible ones. It has become obvious that some countries, first of all, the USA want to push Russia out to periphery of world arena. In some cases this country directly interferes into internal affairs of out country. The competitors of Russia do not want another strong state in Eurasia to appear. They do their best to prevent Russia from come back into power. The USA which has to fight serious crisis effects in their economy are concerned with growth of influence of some countries, first of all, China. Trying to counterbalance this influence the USA are going to create new coalitions. It must be recognized that in conditions of fierce competition in the world nobody is interested in having strong opponent and no one will “bring up” strong competitor. No one western country will sell Russia brand new technology, new factory.

Another thing-to become a participant in the corporation, to buy license. World practice shows that the last measure is most effective. Unfortunately our country buys 27 times less licenses than EU, 9 times less than the USA, 6,5 times less than Japan and 4 times less than South Korea. [10]. By means of licenses it is possible to get access to newest technologies. The reality is as it is. We must accept this reality and use all accessible ways to move Russia in direction of social progress.

CONCLUSION

In order to respond challenges adequately and proactively we need objective unbiased analysis of real situation in Russian society, all its spheres and industries. We need scientifically grounded step-by-step strategy of its development. This strategy has not formed yet. The reason for that is dissociation of power elite and scientific community. Current and historical world experience testifies that use of this strategy will allow Russia to solve appearing problems and respond in pro-active way to all challenges of our time. The most dangerous challenge to overcome is the feeling of people that life has become quite normal. This “normality” relaxes, calms down and eliminates thoughts about necessity of changes. The situation is worsened by the position of federal and regional power which are striving to calm down the population and persuade it that everything goes well. This intention is seen in the reports of Governors and mayors of big cities published in official sources, including the Russian newspaper. After reading them a man will have a feeling that there are no serious problems in the regions, only small faults but they are not for long-just wait a little and they will be eliminated.

The same thing goes on with innovations and modernization of economy. If we believe TV programs, we already have all innovations implemented: innovation exhibitions, innovative screw-drivers, electric bulbs, innovative products, even innovative City councils. In reality it is not so, the problems increase in all spheres of society and the state. It is well-known that no reform which was announced by federal government has been solved completely in our country for the last 20 years. Everything is in the state of “mistakes corrected mode”. Real modernization gives birth to significant cultural shifts which facilitate autonomy of personality and democracy [11]. In conditions of our archaic society we have to admit that real modernization of economic and political foundations has yet to come.

Inference: Modern Russian society and political elite do not realize completely the size and effects of the challenges observed. Economic foundation is still raw-material economy, political foundation is imitation of political struggle and competition, spiritual foundation is combination of patriotism, religion and individualism. To a great extent it is supported by illusory idea of non-exhaustibility of Russian natural resources (human, territorial, natural). But they are exhaustible.

In the nearest future we should not wait for significant success in modernization of the economy and policy. But without this modernization it is not possible to respond efficiently to actual challenges.

REFERENCES


