

Modernization of Russia in the Context of Cultural Experience of the East and West

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Abstract: The problem of employing West-European experience in the process of normalization of political and economic state systems remains one of the most burning for today's Russia. This issue is probably a matter of common concern not only for Russia but for several East-European countries and countries of the eastern part of the globe as well. For instance, the question of using the liberal model of social development is still crucial. We all know that one of the indisputable merits of liberalism is the fact that it grounded the effective development of the US economy and economy of several West-European states and was generally recognized as the mechanism that could regulate legal relationships in the society. Until present liberalism remains the most powerful security of actual democratic freedoms, a conceptual base for the political culture of the West.

Key words: Liberalism • Ideology • East and West • Modernization, Russia

INTRODUCTION

This is all obviously true for the majority of West-European countries that created the liberal theory and tried it in practice. But despite some obvious achievements of the liberal doctrine, several questions still remain open. How far is this system universal? Is liberalism tightly connected to the national culture, national traditions, nation's mentality? Is an alternative concept, which will secure democratic freedoms of citizens, possible? And what are, finally, the costs of the liberal political elite and liberal ideology? How can they influence other spheres of human existence, which are out of economic and political activity?

Russian democrats and reformers could hardly imagine back in 1991 (all the more in 1985) how much the process of modernization in the countries of the ex-Soviet Union and east Europe will gain in scope. At that time, dreaming of the democratization of the society, the political elite and the radical public considered it necessary to replace the entire sociopolitical system of the state. The process turned out to be extremely painful and complicated for the majority of Russians: a totally new legal basis, economic system and structure of political power had to be created out of nothing.

But the most significant problem, which reformers and ideologists of the new Russia faced, was the question of taking cultural and ideological bearings for the state

under renovation. In post-Soviet Russia policy suffers from a fundamental lack of consensus on the choice of ideology [1]. It is no mere chance that scientific journalistic articles and periodicals abounded in discussions, seminars and round-table debates bringing up the question about "the Russian idea", "national security" and "cultural identity of Russia". This issue turned out to be extremely complicated and ticklish; and we may, probably, find its origin in the objective cultural and historical changes in Russia in the last century. Indeed, the communist policy aimed right from 1917 at destruction of Russian Orthodox traditions, at emasculation of all national, distinctive and original from spiritual and political culture of the country. In more than seventy decades Russia lost a substantial part of its cultural, spiritual, religious, ideological wealth, which can hardly be restored in a wink today. As far as the soviet ideology is concerned, it has brought enough discredit on itself and its renaissance is hardly possible in the near future.

Ideological vacuum, spiritual and moral vagueness have been mostly provoked by the modern reformers themselves. Fighting against "the communist monster", they did their best to eliminate the basis of the Soviet system, to disclose the fact that the ideals of Marxism-Leninism were absolutely speculative and unfounded. Still, destroying it, they did not care about creation and perhaps thought that ideology of anticommunism was

strategically self-sufficient. At the same time, when the destructive process entered the last stage, when the Soviet Union disappeared from the political world map and communism got totally discredited in the people's minds, Russia was in great need of a *constructive* program. The reformers were obviously unprepared for such an "unexpected" turn of events.

Lacking its own original concept of modernization of the state sociopolitical and economic system, the political elite turned to experience of foreign countries. The most radical variant of modernization and reformation was chosen out of all possible ones gained by humanity; it was the variant of the Chicago school. Why were "the Chicago lads" destined to become teachers of great Russia? Why did not the Russian reformers get interested in the phenomenon of "the Eastern breakthrough", the experience of Japanese, Chinese, or Korean way of reformation of economy and political system? Why did the Russian leaders count on the development experience of the West and not even in its continental, European form, but rather in the form of westernization in its extreme, Americanized sense? After all, the US even less than the West Europe parallels with Russia historically and culturally. Throughout the history, Russia and the United States did not possess any close economic or culture links. Why does then the political elite choose as "a guide" for Russia its recent rival and enemy against which they led a tense and fierce cold war?

The Main Part: U.S. and Russian researchers note that Western companies, even 10-20 years after the Soviet collapse, face numerous challenges in running successful businesses in Russia. This is explained to a large extent, by the problems that existed already during the Soviet era of centralization [2-5]. To a certain extent, the efforts of the modern political elite and pro-West political scientists to integrate Russia into the world community as soon as possible can easily be explained by the idea that such orientation must provide in the future an access to economic and political experience of countries highly developed in the industrial and technical sense. In this case we observe an example of bullet-proof but rather superficial logic to use the experience of the most stable in economic and political respect countries. At the same time, they no longer take into account those spiritual, moral, value and ideological costs that will inevitably make themselves felt and finally bring all economic and political accomplishments to naught.

Orientation to the West-European political and economic pattern was conditioned by another important factor. Moving Russia in the geopolitical sense to the West, political authorities and political scientists, who supplied them with ideology, got an opportunity to import a "ready-made" doctrine - *liberalism*. This doctrine was to replace the discredited communist concept, from the one hand and to amplify anticommunist ideology of post-Soviet Russia with a constructive program of modernization.

It is quite hard to say now, if the westernists and liberal reformers were aware of the fact that liberalism is not only a political, economic and legal ground for social relationships, but is also a cultural, ideological, moral and value system that strictly regulates people's practical activity, their lifestyle and way of thinking. And such an unquestionable fact that liberal value system resulted from a rationalistic world outlook of West-European culture of the New Time has not been taken into consideration either. Thus, choosing liberal values, the modern political elite not only directs Russia towards a certain way of political, economic, or legal development, but also dooms the country to a vital civilization choice. The question is not only about orientation to the democratic system of government but also about the choice of a certain system of values, ideology and world attitude.

The liberal structure lays down ambiguous axiological priorities. One of the most essential levers of the liberal policy used to be and remains monetarism. Invented as a mechanism of political influence, monetarism gained a meaning of *values* and this meaning, so natural for the entire development of West-European and North-American culture, gives rise to serious doubts in the context of Russian culture. Not only philosophers and political scientists, but economists as well noticed that "in contrast to rationalistic ethics of a West-European's behavior, when caring for one's own prosperity is a widely accepted norm, behavior of a Russian is mostly oriented not to reaping benefits, expressed in a whole complex of consumers' welfare, but to winning general recognition, which conforms to generally accepted norms. In the Russian social consciousness, actions only aimed at personal interest have never been universally recognized as a norm..." [6] But a weak point of liberalism is not only that it has got little common ground with traditional Russian culture, moral and value bearings for Russia, but also that even

within the boundaries of the very West-European civilization it went out of date, got obsolete not only as a political and economic doctrine, but what is more important as a system of values and ideology. Political scientists note that liberalism can develop within the limits of the so called "linear time", in which political life of Europe functions, in contrast to "cyclic time", characteristic of the countries of the East. "Still linear time", according to I. A. Vasilenko, "is a continuous evolution in one direction, when the society is steadily improving one model of development. It is a model of liberal democracy for the western civilization. Linearity of political time allowed the West to develop its cultural potential as quickly as to exhaust it <...> Due to its instrumental attitude to the world, the West managed to accelerate all spheres of culture, which are close to material production. Still in the sphere of values it is based on a primitive ideal of a consumers' society." [7].

Political, philosophic, spiritual blindness of pro-West liberal reformers results from the fact that theoretical ground of political science was imported to post-Soviet Russia from the West, which means that it was borrowed from an alien, *external* to Russia political and cultural tradition. Apologetics of own culture and political system, justification of liberal values as a *model, universal* ideology *with no alternative* is quite natural for western political science. It contains praiseworthy patriotism of West Europe, pride at its own creation. It is worth mentioning that in the 20th century political science of the West was forming in the atmosphere of critical attitude towards political system of the Soviet Union, which added an appreciable anticommunist, anti-Soviet and even anti-Russian touch to it.

We all know that until recently the West approved of liberal values proceeding from the opposition of liberalism to totalitarianism. Considering the Soviet Union as a model of totalitarianism, western political science very often simplified political problems of the 20th century, turning the opposition of liberalism and totalitarianism into the opposition of two global international systems, that were vividly represented in the USSR and USA. Americans make no secret of the fact that their national doctrine and concept of own identity were tightly connected with sovietological research. [8] Sometimes American liberalism was automatically opposed to Soviet totalitarianism and "Russian communism".

This accounts to a certain extent for pro-West and even anti-Russian vestige in many contemporary political analyses in our country. Moreover, Western political science turned out to be far from traditional Russian political culture not only in content but also in methodology. An exceptionally wide, comprehensive analysis of social processes in their correlation with all spheres of national spiritual culture was characteristic of Russian political science, while a positivist, purely utilitarian, pragmatic approach to social and political life was typical of Western political thought of the 20th century. That is why political science in pre-Revolutionary Russia was shaping in the midst of philosophic, religious and historic thought, while a tide of positivists in Europe turned political science in a narrow, descriptive, applied discipline.

A spirit of positivism and utilitarianism in West-European political science was unconditionally accepted by a number of apologists of Russian liberalism and West-centrism. An idea that political processes are connected with ideological, moral and value bearings of the society, which was traditional for Russian intellectual thought, turned out to be completely neglected. As a result, a powerful Russian Eurasian tradition, which possessed a deep analysis of vital international political processes, got a cold welcome among Eurocentrists. Analyzing the "Eurasian" phenomenon inside West-European civilization, researchers are unable to abstract themselves from their own cultural and political environment and, at the same time, failing to overcome aberrant influence, doom themselves to biased and superficial conclusions. Thus, one essay reads, "West Europe has always been a cradle of political freedom and recognition of human dignity. Being enthusiastic over Asian components of Russia means welcoming Asian despotism and Asian scorn for an individual." [9] As is seen from an abstract quoted above, idealization of West-European political culture results from misunderstanding of the East, from ignorance about historic events of political and cultural life. Historians and ethnologists are well aware of the fact that the European "cradle of political freedom" has been shaping against a background of bloody revolutions, brutal and pernicious capitalization of social relationships and monetarization of social consciousness. And despotism itself scarcely has a strongly pronounced geographic and cultural homeland: it should always be kept in mind that various communist and national-socialist doctrines were first theoretically

formulated and widely supported exactly in Europe. On the other hand, a myth about "Asian scorn for an individual" shows misinterpreting of anti-individualist character of Eastern cultures, pantheistic achievements of East-Asian world attitude, which implies an integrity of nature and a human being, its truly cosmological and ecological spirit.

In Russia in the first half of the 19th century Pyotr Chaadayev and theorists of Slavophilism noticed that Western and Eastern civilizations perceive and assimilate the surrounding world in different ways. Starting from the New Time, Western civilization grounds on rationalism, which conditions an individualistic tendency in the questions of relationship between a human being and the world. It gave rise to a specific hierarchy of values, which is headed by existence of an individual. It also gave rise to a dynamic character of the Western society, which allowed to incredibly succeed in science, technology and material production.

Irrational mechanisms of world perception and assimilation rule in the East. Original Oriental culture was created on base of such mechanisms, where there would be no hierarchy of various elements of being, where individual existence would be oriented to harmonic coexistence with interests of an entire whole - a community, a state, a universe. Oriental world attitude grounds on completely different categories: it opposes comprehension to knowledge, penetration - to study, feeling - to consideration.

So we observe two ways of thinking and two types of culture, which very often happen to be antagonistic. Russia, according to Slavophiles, is alien neither to the West, nor to the East and thus is able to accumulate all the valuable from these two unlike civilizations. That is why Slavophiles assign a special role to Russia in the historic process, a distinctive way of social and political development.

Still, analyzing modern spiritual life, we must point out that political, legal, interpersonal relationships base today on wide introduction of rationalistic economic way of thinking. But strictly speaking, the so called "rationalistic thinking" is prevailing not only in the sphere of politics but also at all levels of human spiritual life. States implement their foreign and home policy on the principals of mutual interest. This rule turns from being essential to leading even in interpersonal relationships. In itself economic thinking is not something sinful. On the contrary, as a result of centuries-old experience, it is a

greatest creation of rational mind and, being a regulator of social relationships, is undoubtedly charged with a constructive potential. The trouble is not that economism has penetrated into our consciousness. The trouble is that, having penetrated into our consciousness, it has become an absolute prerequisite. Theoretically, economic way of thinking is only one of the ways of thinking in general and, therefore, is none other than one of displays of "abstract principles". But any abstract principle, made absolute, is doomed, due to its hypertrophy, to self-negation. Actually such self-denial can be observed today and it has become vivid that civilization of the 21st century will either exist on some other grounds, or will not exist at all.

History of the 20th century has taught a mankind a visual but tragic lesson: as long as thinking bases on the principles of absolute rationalism, the functions of politics, culture, world outlook will never include consideration and creation of a substantial part of spiritual being and therefore, a major representative of a divine Principle. One can create an economic world or a legal state, but it will never be moral or perfect. Since this is a sphere of irrationalistic.

Certainly, neither thinking, nor any other activity in general is possible without logic or common sense. It will be insane to call for irrationalism as a method of implementing politics. It is out of the question. Still, politics can not be grounded on extreme rationalism, on unconditional prevalence of logic and common sense. Indeed, fascism had not only its own ideology, but also its own logic, sometimes very persuasive. Stalin's repressions and concentration camps were in their own way a logical realization of a "scientific" theory of class struggle strengthening. But morality can never be understood logically, rationalized ethics will inevitably degenerate into the law, which never is, as is proven by the experience of social and political life, a perfect regulator of interpersonal and international relationships. We have to admit that the most important events of human existence are irrationalistic. Being ignorant of the fact has already become the reason for a number of global crises. Needless to say that policy based on rationalistic, economic way of thinking turns separate individuals as well as entire states and continents into parasites.

Economic way of thinking results from extreme rationalism. Whole layers of people's spiritual life inevitably turn out to be neglected if reality comprehension and its creation are approached in such a

way. Since politics plays an important role in the organization of social life and can directly influence the spiritual climate of the society, it is essential to make a right choice of a certain way of political thinking. Inadequate, one-sided analysis of real processes and a political program based on it are fraught with unpredictable and often irreversible consequences. Economic rationalism, as any extreme rationalism, has never achieved desired aims whatever iron arguments supported it. It has always been sort of slipping inside out, carrying the policy of "common sense" to absurdity. There are numerous examples of this in history.

We all witnessed a paradoxical, at first sight, thing. There was created a theory of communist reorganization of the society. As to humanitarian orientation - it had no equal. According to it, an individual, his spiritual and physical perfection was made a major objective and a value, at the same time. Thousands of books were written to prove this theory, to justify its logic. In practice, this theory cost millions of ruined lives, led to degradation of people's spiritual and material life, to incredible cruelty, to disappearance of an individual. And it is not a matter of logical fallacy and depravity of Marxist ideology. The crisis we observe today exceeds the limits of a certain social system. Even there, where the material level of life is pretty high, where everything seems to be done for a person's well-being, even there the degree of interpersonal alienation has become threatening, the number of suicides is growing, the state of general depression and solitude is considered to be normal, moral nihilism has been restored to life. A worldwide process of spiritual impoverishment is underway.

At the same time it would be misleading to think that the modern world is steadily moving towards its collapse and it would be absolutely inappropriate to fill the historic process with eschatological meaning. The Western civilization is as far doomed as it is a purely economic civilization. But who said that the Western way of development is the only one possible? We have just had a look at the West, now let's take a look at the East.

Oriental culture is based on irrationalistic world perception; one-sided rationalization of thinking and, all the more, making it economic, as its extreme form, has always been alien to a person of this culture. If any conflict arises between an individual and environment, Oriental philosophy gave a clear answer: alter yourself. Such a directive, encouraged throughout the centuries, cultivated in people a sense of social passivity. But not only that. It stimulated self-improvement, unbiased attitude to nature, society, people. While the Western

rationalist science was accumulating its knowledge potential, the Oriental culture learned to understand the world. While the West was developing in the direction of "postindustrial society", destroying everything on its way, the East was attentively and patiently penetrating into the existence, trying to comprehend its significance at the irrationalistic level. As a result, when it was necessary to reform the economic structure of the society, the East managed to achieve fantastic results, without taking a long and painful way of the West. It is not mere chance that economic breakthrough was possible in Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, that is, in the countries with untraditional world attitude. Preserving and increasing of irrationalistic and non-economic methods of exploring the world allowed the East to make use of the achievements of the world civilization's development without those enormous costs, which would have been inevitable in case of simple copying of the Western model. Japan, for instance, did not undertake to raise the economy by all means (as it was in Europe, or is happening now in Russia). As a result, material well-being is incredibly growing against the background of reverence towards national culture, nature and an individual. A tendency of dehumanization in culture has wonderfully transformed into real humanity of the society.

What is, indeed, in store for us in the future, if we continue to orient to the West and, therefore, keep making our mind economic? It is obvious that we will then doom ourselves to a long and painful way, we will not avoid further embitterment of the society, moral and esthetic values will lose their significance. A great distance between the West and us will be inevitably preserved and, therefore, any economic competition with it will make no sense. We run the risk of entering the 21st century, the century when cultural rather than economic values will prevail, as an economic country. We run the risk of remaining for a long time the embodiment of the past. According to the current study, the respondents tend to the opinions (Russia is a great power and / or nostalgia for the lost Soviet power), which serve as the leitmotif of authoritarian tendencies [10].

CONCLUSION

The way of thinking should become more *universal* and *organic* in the 21st century. It has to integrate with a single sociocultural environment, to ground on the general picture of the world, which is not simply reduced to the rational and economic sphere. Truth can not be separated from axiology, all the more - truth of a practical political act.

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