

UNIVERSAL VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY FOREIGN POLICY: RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES

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This paper is devoted to one of the topical issues of the current Russian political science in the light of ongoing global changes taking place in Russia as well as in the whole world. The authors of the study make an attempt to examine Russia's changing foreign policy outlook by analyzing the values and their role in understanding contemporary Russian foreign policy. There are still open debates that Russia has a lot of problems building a strategic partnership and alliances with both the CIS countries and other foreign states and International Institutions. The emphasis of the study is particularly made on Russia's view on the role of values in foreign policy. In the course of the study the authors conclude that the lack of strong links between universal values and foreign policy is the reason for inconsistency of Russian foreign policy and problems existing between Moscow and its partners. If a state seeks to gain power and influence in the world arena, it should have such a model of development that will draw other countries to build any kind cooperation with it.

Keywords: Russia, values, norms, universal values, foreign policy.

INTRODUCTION

This essay is an attempt to give an interpretation of changing Russia's foreign policy outlook by analyzing the values and their role in understanding contemporary Russian foreign policy. Firstly, it is argued that values as a political practice and academic discipline have had some popularity in Russia's foreign policy thinking since the end of the Cold War I. Secondly, it is claimed that Russia's view on the role of values in foreign policy is based on the following two traditions - local and foreign: Neo-Eurasianism (special attention is paid on debates about a "special path" of Russia) and Western theories on universal values. Thirdly, the rising importance of religion in contemporary Russian foreign policy is emphasized.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Firstly, it is said that contemporary Russia's outlook depends on some subjective factors that do not help to predict the future developments. Lack of strong links between universal values and foreign policy is the reason for inconsistency of Russian foreign policy and misunderstanding between Moscow and its partners on the international arena. Russian foreign policy is characterized as the policy of elite, that's why it is very important to know what and how this elite thinks about

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the current world situation and what values shape its behavior and attitude. Modern Russian elite is subdivided into the following types: business elite which is liberal, pragmatic and mostly oriented to the West and is free from any ideology; ruling political elite, responsible for carrying out foreign policy is mainly conservative and close to Anti-Westernizers, less pragmatic and is also brushed off any ideology. We can assume that there are not any signs of new methodology and ideology instead of rejected Soviet ideology. The public opinion in Russia doesn't have any influence on the processes of decision-making in foreign policy, it only has to follow the decisions adopted by the elite. Ruling elite is trying to resolve all the problems that inevitably emerge between the authorities and the civil society with the help of propaganda tools. It means that elite has all responsibility defining an articulating foreign policy priorities.

Secondly, it is considered that contemporary Russian foreign policy is a policy without any moral values and landmarks. The main difference between the current foreign policy and that of the Soviet Union period is that many zigzags (turns) do not form any strategic line [Grigory Vodolazov]. Russian foreign policy is not exactly the sum of joint actions the state takes together with its neighbors and foreign partners on the basis of common values and interests. That is why Russia has a lot of problems building a strategic partnership and alliances with both the CIS countries and other foreign states and International Institutions.

Thirdly, the traditional view on Russian foreign policy debate as a "dialogue" between Atlantists (Westernizers/Liberals) and Euro-Asianists (Evrasiisty/Conservatives) is not relevant today as there are no open discussions. Liberals are responsible for economy; conservatives are in charge of political and strategic issues as well as the rhetoric ones. We are witnessing the increasing influence of the Euro-Asianists' approach in its "state-centric" version. There are no real public debates on moral aspects and values in foreign policy in Russia.

RESULTS

What are Universal values? In contemporary Russia Universal values have become synonymous to Western values. Euro-Asianists would say that Europe and America have "privatized" the concept of Universal values (Gelb, Rosenthal, 2003). Conservatives would view universal values as equal to U.S. hegemony or the American Empire. Some would claim that human rights and democracy rhetoric are used as an instrument of interference in domestic policy. The thesis about the uniqueness of Russian values is less popular today than it was 15 years ago, but is still used by the leading politicians in order to consolidate the public opinion on the specific issues. There is a chance that some day the idea of a special mission of Russia would replace the Western version of values. Today Conservatives like to contrast what they see as a Russian Orthodox Christian view on social harmony and moral rectitude with the Western emphasis on individual rights.

“Clericalization” of domestic policy and the growing role of Russian Orthodox Church is an instrument of creating a substitute to Western/Universal values.

Contemporary economic crisis has reinforced the position of Conservatives, making popular the view that globalization is the “Americanization” or less radical view – “globalization is the spread of Western values (equal Universal values)”. The Euro-Asianists fear that embracing Universal values would mean acknowledging the superiority of the Western political systems. Conservatives argue that real globalization should respect cultural diversity and Universal values do not help to deal with the current crisis. One can find it in the text of the new concept of Russian foreign policy: “Their attempts [Western countries] to interfere in the internal affairs of the States and impose their “own scale of values” caused instability of the modern world”, says the concept. This is the first time since 1991 when differences in values have been mentioned in an official document of the Russian Government.

Universal values are usually communal and shared by the international society in general. Thus, if there is no agreement among members, no values will be established.

Universal values are the values of peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights and human dignity (the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights).

The question is whether all these values are precious. Is Democracy a universal value? This is the most controversial question often asked by the critics of Westernizers. Does there exist any driving force which can create a secure world and international society based upon universal values? Conservatives would say that real Universal values should come from within us. They are acquired but not learnt from an educator (Lapin, 2009). International society does need to be bound together by some common values. The role of these values is essential. But every actor should know what to expect from others and how to deal with them in case of violation of these principles.

In order to have universal values such as freedom, human dignity, etc. we need horizontal connections with equal agents (Buchanan, 2002.). Vertical connections encourage the values of security and self-interest, so vertical connections are correlated to superiors and subordinates. Until the majority in Russia view the spread of moral Universal values along vertical connections with the leading role of the US and “hard power” position, conservatives in Russian political elite and public would be stronger.

As former UN Secretary General K. Annan once mentioned: “Values are not there to serve philosophers or theologians, but to help people live their lives and organize their societies. So, at the international level, we need mechanisms of cooperation strong enough to insist on universal values, but flexible enough to help people realize those values in ways that they can actually apply in their specific circumstances.”(Kofi, 2003).

Russian view on values in foreign policy (Kagarlitsky, 2012). Throughout Russia's history, its foreign policy concept has changed many times. But since the establishment of Saint Petersburg in 1703 the struggle for hegemony in trade of raw materials may be seen as a pivotal element of Russian foreign policy. But what about the role of values? What values can we talk about? A sudden catastrophic defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) generated the discussion among scholars about the role of Russia in the European balance of power system. It was the period of the development of some philosophical and geopolitical principles: Nikolay Danilevskiy, Evgeniy Trubetskoy, Pitirim Sorokin, Konstantin Leonetiev, Petr Savitskiy are the "representatives" of Euro-Asianist concept. One of its key postulates is that civilizationally Russia has never been a part of Europe. Therefore, it should choose the "third way" somewhere between the West and the East. Globally, Russia should be a bridge between these civilizations. Spiritual impulses (a special role of Russian Orthodox Church) play a very important role in Russian policy and so on. But after the two wars (Russian-Japanese War and World War I) and disintegration of the Russian Empire a spiritual component in Russian foreign policy disappeared.

The Soviet period of foreign policy might be characterized as an ideologically based period. The ideology of Marxism-Leninism provided the main landmarks for regional priorities and principles of creating alliances and political blocks. Marxism-Leninism used the historically determined values and norms making this ideology suitable for such a state as the USSR. The leaders of the USSR were forced to rely on the state interests of the USSR. It was the period of a compromise between class ideology and state interests, which were interpreted in a more pragmatic way.

It is a well-known fact that Russia is a collectivistic society. Russians traditionally consider their obligations to the state as a priority. First and foremost, – serve your Homeland; protect state and society interests. Unlimited discipline and self-sacrifice are important characteristics of Russian political culture. This is a very different mentality from that is found in the West. Most Russians would not even think about mass protests such as in Europe in response to social or economic difficulties or governmental mistakes. It is easier in Russia to mobilize public support to stand for state interests and well-being. But the problem is different - the rest of the world (mainly the West) cannot build its foreign policy without common values and ideology. So here is a controversy – the new Concept proclaims *economization of foreign policy as the main priority*. Foreign policy is the resources for modernization, innovations and economic development. Even the reform of an educational system is oriented to foreign standards (rating system), scholars and teaching methodology. The question arises - is it realistic to expect the positive reaction from the West on such a demand without any adaptation of the system of values and norms in Russia to what is known as universal values?

Ruling elite once again uses nationalism to fill the gap left by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Nationalism in Russia is a reliable tool for mobilizing the population (Brudny, 1999). That's why we are witnessing the increasing role of religion in Russia. Russian authorities are interested in reinforcing the position of the Moscow Patriarchate in the worldwide Christian community in general and in the former Soviet republics in particular. Russia effectively uses its status in the Organization of Islamic Conference to protect its own interests.

The contemporary proponents of this theory use its principles to consolidate the economic, political and security ties among the CIS countries. A new concept of Russian foreign policy gives priority to the ties with the CIS countries and especially the Customs Union (Rykhtik, 2011). But the lack of values in Russian foreign policy does not help Moscow to gain a new role in the World. Even current dislike for the West in the developing world does not contribute to greater affinity for Moscow. Russia is still seen as a reactionary rather than progressive country and the lack of values in Russian foreign policy is one of the reasons for such a state of affairs.

New concept of Russian foreign policy and lack of values. In February 2013 President Vladimir Putin signed a new Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. This is the fourth document of this kind in post-Soviet Russia (the last one was released in July 2008).

The new ideas are:

- a pessimistic assessment of international trends due to economic crisis and its unpredictable development;
- a conditional offer of strategic partnership with the West in order to counter common threats;
- increasing significance of cultural and civilizational dimensions in global competition today;
- a fundamental change in the balance of power on the international stage:
- weakening of the Western world and the growing power of Asia;
- Moscow is ready to use 'soft power' to a greater degree than it did before. But Russia's understanding of soft power differs from that of the West (Lagon, 2011).

Foreign policy elite. The new concept has proved the well-known thesis - what little influence society as a whole has on the conduct of policy. Foreign affairs have remained in the hands of the elite. The paradox is that reaching pragmatism and rationality in business and politics, the Russian elite has failed to understand the logic of Western mentality and accept universal values. Some experts say, ruling elite has failed to put decision-making under some sort of public control. This is also the reason for the spread of conspiracy theories of all kinds in contemporary Russia.

The Concept indicates that the Russian ruling elite perceives the West as an important source of increasing instability in the international system. It puts a blame for the global economic and financial crisis on Western economic policies. Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov criticizes the way the West responds to regional crises. Traditionally the Russian elite opposes the technologies of “soft power” to interfere in the political life of sovereign states. The Russian Foreign Ministry is very critical of any attempt to manipulate the public opinion. Unfortunately, perceived differences in values continually prevent us from integrating more closely into the West. Ironically, even the decision of German and Luxembourgian governments to agree on no visa regime for the holders of Blue Passports (Official passports) is criticized by some experts as an instrument of discriminating the majority of Russians. Such a non-liberal approach is very unexpected from the liberal EU. Is it a double standard policy or a very complicated tactical struggle?

The role of a religious factor is ambiguous. On the one hand, the activity of Church as an institution might be considered as a challenge to foreign policy. When religion artificially (used by state or any other actor) becomes a central issue of contention, therefore, it poses a potential threat to both domestic and international order. When government and religion are mixed in the countries with the weak civil society institutions there is a high risk of the development of religious fundamentalism and/or authoritarianism.

On the other hand, it provides a new opportunity, creates a new structural environment for dealing with ethnic separatism, extremism and terrorism in the region. The Commonwealth of Independent States space is a unique one, because here religion has all the possibilities to reinforce the ability of state to bargain. The CIS as a foreign policy priority will be the arena for the growing role of Church in the near future. Christians and Muslims are traditional actors on this landscape; they have a long history of relations, possess a different legal status and a different level of popularity and influence in the region, but there are no unsolved issues both dogmatic and social. The strongest actor in the region is the Orthodox Church. Muslims, Georgian Orthodox Church, Armenian Apostolic Church and Vatican in Ukraine also play an important role here.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Considering the Russian foreign policy prompts there arises the following question - how can we contribute to the formation of a new system of international relations with such foreign policy? The appearance of new centers of influence and changes of the structure of the international system have altered the attitudes to traditional problems. Globalization, in particular, diminishes the possibility of countries and regions to develop in their own ways. As borders between states are becoming more and more penetrable, the movements of capital, information, technologies and values are becoming more and more intensive and harder to be controlled. All

these factors reduce the capacity of society to choose its own path of development consciously.

Much of this is bitterly resented, especially in Russia. Globalization is associated with the destruction of national identity and ethnic belonging. In a country still seeking its identity, globalization tends to elicit a fiercely negative reaction.

The paradox is that in reaching pragmatism and rationality in business and politics, the Russian elite has failed to understand the logic of the Western mentality, which is not merely content with the feeling and belief in the benefits of broader cooperation with Russia, but actually needs to understand clearly what benefits could be acquired from such cooperation. Nearly all the discussions about Russia's soft power lead to the conclusion that if a country wants to gain influence in the world, it must have an attractive model of development in order to offer it to other countries. We would agree with the statement that the current conservative trends in Russia do not represent the final destination, but only the first step in a long journey (Lukyanov). To be a leader requires some sort of universality.

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