

RUSSIA FOR USA: A PARTNER OR A POTENTIAL ENEMY?

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN VALUES IN RUSSIAN SOCIETY AND THEIR ROLE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

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Today the relations between Russia and the USA it is one of the most widely-discussed subjects. There are a lot of facts which influence the situation. We are going to pay attention to one of them: social norms and values, which regulate actions and relations in the country and its international relations. During the Cold war this role belonged to ideology. It was ideology that determined the actions and attitudes of one country to the other. After the collapse of the USSR the communist ideology was ruined.

Let us consider the values which appeared in Russia to regulate social and political relations at the beginning of the 90s. Were those values real aims or were they just some kinds of myth intended to provide the ruling power with public support? And the most important question for our discussion: how did those values determine relations with the USA as with a former enemy.

One of the main preconditions for the development of Russia-USA relations in the 20th century is the difference between original social and political structures of the two countries. N. Kosolapov says in his article "Russia, the USA and the world's development"¹ that there was "a collision of the Russian historical and the western modern models of development." The essence of the first is domination of "redistribution relations" and "economy of appropriation". The main feature of the second one is "domination of productive re-

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¹ N. Kosolapov "Russia, USA and world's development" // Pro et contra / Moscow Carnegie center, 2000.

lations connected with market and democracy." This led to the competition between the two countries. Each of them aimed to introduce its model in other countries. The first one proved to be lacking vitality. Looking for a new way, Russia tried to establish the second one.

Gorbachev introduced the myth of democracy. It was just a myth because the establishment of the democratic regime demands some special conditions. The main aim of Gorbachev was to let Russia enjoy a positive image and achieve prosperous international politics. Good results in international relations could bring him public support. He decided to tackle international relations, because it was impossible to gain quick achievements reforming the domestic policy.

Gorbachev started the politics of "idealism". This meant that any relations could be regarded either as friendship or as hatred. The main expectation of the politics was that organizing some democracy institutions in Russia would bring about perfect friendship between Russia and the USA.

Such politics were continued under the regime of Eltsin. At this stage, the most important role belonged to the idea of liberalism. It influenced Russia's relations with the USA a lot. The USA government were giving Russia credits. It was declared that they were given to support its modernization. But in reality those relations weren't that perfect. Some actions of the USA weren't in line with Russia's expectations. During that period NATO expanded. Germany was incorporated in it. Then USA went on influencing the former socialist countries: Bulgaria, Poland etc. That meant that the USA continued acting within the politics of "realism", following pragmatical interests. The USA were after neither absolute friendship nor after absolute opposition. Russia, in its turn, treated such actions as a real threat.

But in any case at that time it was important for Russia to choose the way of further development. Scientists admitted that it mattered a lot, whether the country would be able to make the right choice or not. It was a significant thing not only for Russia but also

for its close partners, especially for the members of the former USSR. Huntington says in his work "The future of the democratic process: from expansion to consolidation."²: "Eltsin's Russia can either become or not become a democratic country. The situation in Russia will influence political development of other post-soviet republics, Mongolia, Eastern Europe a lot."

In the middle of the 90s it became obvious that the democracy in Russia had to take a different path from that of the USA.

T. Alekseeva says in her article "Liberalism as a political ideology"³:

"...that what we have got in Russia it is a very strange kind of liberalism, without respect for the law, the personality and civil responsibilities..."

Why did it happen? There are more than one answer to it. There was a tendency to blame the government, which was accused of being inconsistent, mercantile and dishonest. Anyway, at that stage it was impossible to establish ideology of democracy and liberalism in the society, which had been brought up with socialistic values.

The economy crisis of 1998 year proved it. "There was a mass realization of miscarriages of Russian variant of liberal reforms"⁴

The idea of changing the regime was widely spread in the society.

Another problem was connected with self-identification of Russian people. It was an especially touchy subject for the elderly. A large majority of people used to consider Russia a Great Power. They couldn't even realize that this status had been lost.

"In the sphere of international politics a painful reaction was connected with the collapse of the bipolar world and loss of status of the Great Power."⁵

² Huntington S. "The future of the democratic process: from expansion to consolidation." // World economy and international relations. 1995. №10

³ T. Alekseeva "Liberalism as a political ideology" // Politiya, 2000.

⁴ L. Bizov "Russia before the parliament elections in 1999 year"/Moscow Carnegie center/1999

L. Bizov suggests in his article that a large majority of people believed that the role of the government in economy had to be strengthened, order had to be maintained even by means of hard measures, Russia could not follow the example of the USA. Ideas of "social justice", "national revival" dominated.

At the end of 90s the values of freedom, democracy and liberalism were supplanted by demand for hard politics, order and a tough leader. (Corruption in the government and the situation in Chechnya also played role in it)

Of course the democratic regime was not overthrown in Russia. On the contrary, some of its values were accepted and regarded by the society as an unalienable part of it. The survey made by RNIS and NP shows: the statement that democratic procedures are very important in 1995 was supported by 56% of those questioned, in 1997 - 51%. It means that those procedures have been acquired by the society. " They weren't treated as something unusual"⁶

The election of Vladimir Putin was in line with public expectations. He managed to gain the image of a tough leader. His policy in Chechnya and hard measures against oligarchs made people believe that he is able to maintain order. Already under Eltsin's regime Primacov had started acting independently from the USA. Putin continued that line. The increase of oil prices in 2000 year played a good role in that policy.

All of that could not but effect between Russia and USA.

Us government criticized Putin's actions concerning Chechnya. Russia was accused of infringement of human rights.

It doesn't mean that relations between the two countries became worse at that period. It was rather a step back from the policy of "idealism" and "americentrism".

Russia started realizing what its interests were. International policy of the new government

⁵ Lebedeva M. M. "Formation of the new world's political structure."

⁶ V.Petukov " Democracy in the perception of Russian society"// Moscow Carnegie center, 2001.

became more pragmatical. It is rather to introduce the policy of "realism" and be able to see the strong and week points in the relations with any country.

So, we conclude that it's impossible to regard relations between Russia and USA as perfect friendship or as hatred. During the cold war enmity was declared because of the hostile ideologies. At the beginning of the 90th the situation changed. But it proved to be impossible to maintain entire friendship, as well as entire enmity. Dogmatism is unacceptable for international politics.

Russia and the USA have their own interests. Their relations are aimed at finding common interests and ways of mutually beneficial collaboration.