

The Role of Russia in Upholding Traditional Spiritual and Moral Values in the Context of Modern World Development

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Abstract. The article shows the transformation of traditional spiritual and moral values in the modern international situation. The author compares Russian and Western approaches and proves Russia's global leadership in preserving universal spiritual and moral values. According to the author, currently the aggressive attack of postmodern supporters on religion, family, marriage, school is clearly manifesting itself, mockery of shrines is taking place, and conflicts are being provoked. Russia, through its centuries-old history, came to the current state national policy, striving to bring to other peoples what enriched them, and not turn them into mankurts who do not remember kinship. Russia's authority on the world stage today is largely based precisely on the fact that it is perceived as a defender of traditional values. For the vast majority of the inhabitants of our planet, the common values are justice, equality, a strong traditional family, responsibility for their country, for its political and cultural heritage.

Keywords: traditional values, spiritual bonds, Russia, world order, the West, globalization, morality, principles

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Introduction

The modern world is at a turning point. It is not only about the decline of the unipolar system, which must be replaced by a more just multipolarity. Values play a major role in the conflict between these models, and this contradiction is not between democracy and authoritarianism, but between the interests of a group of states claiming global dominance and the interests of all the peoples of the world. Previous Western practices are preserved, including through assimilation - attempts to "dissolve" millions of migrants from other cultures and races in a common "melting pot" or within the framework of "multiculturalism" models.

However, it is not only about dissolving the national, cultural, religious identity of “outsiders”, but also about an encroachment on the individuality of the individual, about breaking his cultural and value code through the imposition of postulates under the guise of “universal” and “progressive”.

In his historic address on February 24, 2022, Russian President V.V.Putin gave an uncompromising assessment of the actions of the collective West: “Until recently, attempts have continued... to destroy our traditional values and impose on us their pseudo-values that would corrode us, our people, from within, those attitudes that they are already aggressively imposing in their countries and which directly lead to degradation and degeneration, since they contradict the very nature of man.”

Materials and Methods

In the article, state strategic documents, regulatory legal acts, materials of decisions of authorities of the Russian Federation, the USA, the EU, a number of Balkan countries regarding traditional, spiritual and moral values and the status of the family, as well as the results of sociological surveys of the population were analyzed. The article compares conservative and neoconservative approaches to understanding values. A set of methods was used in the study: analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, extrapolation, comparative analysis.

Results

Spiritual and moral values have been one of the foundations of the development of Russian statehood throughout the history of the country. The problem of the formation, defense and promotion of traditional spiritual and moral values both in domestic policy and in international relations is now one of the most pressing issues.

It can be argued that today a systemic crisis has arisen between traditional civilizational values and the values of the neoliberal globalizing world, which is based on the contradiction between two types of civilizational development - secular-humanistic and religious-traditionalist.

In a broad sense, traditional values are a certain set of principles and norms that have come from the depths of centuries, forming a certain “correct” form of social behavior and interaction, where, according to E. Kant, “morality determines the will”¹. In jurisprudence, it is believed that one of the sources of law is tradition, which acts as a regulator of social relations. In a narrower sense, traditional values are a set of principles and norms unique to each state and defined through ideology, culture, religion, political regime, etc.

¹ Soloviev E. Yu. Critique of Practical Reason. New Philosophical Encyclopedia / Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences; National Social and Scientific Foundation; 2nd edition, revised and supplemented. Moscow: Mysl, 2010.

Currently, traditional values are generally understood as a matrix that combines human dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the fatherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, a strong family, creative work, the priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations. This is the definition given in the draft “Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”².

Historically, the protection of traditional values was viewed by Russia as a tool for promoting and protecting its interests in international relations, including protecting the interests and rights of Orthodox Christians around the world, where after the fall of Byzantium, it was the Muscovite Kingdom, and later the Russian Empire, that positioned itself as the main defender of traditional Christian values. The idea of protecting the Slavic peoples in Europe, Orthodox Christians in the spirit of “brotherly assistance” was reflected in specific historical events.

When considering historical narratives in Russia, we are talking about the natural process of formation of traditional values within the framework of the established cultural and political community, uniting many different peoples of different faiths. The family, along with self-restraint and patriotism, was one of the foundations of the way of life of society, as was the sacrament of marriage as a union of a man and a woman, the spiritual life of the family, expressed in regular visits to religious temples, observance of religious rites, veneration of God, commandments and elders.

It should be noted that in all religious and cultural traditions, family, childbearing, and raising the younger generation were what formed the values and relationships of members of society, regardless of social organization. Throughout Russian history, it was spiritual and moral values that were the solid foundation of the Russian state.

The Soviet political system, which for a certain time excluded religion from the list of traditional values, in the era of the “mature USSR” also formed the values of the “Soviet man”, which were influenced by the ideology of opposition to the Western world in the context of the fight against colonialism, racial segregation and the advantages of the socialist system as a whole, as more progressive. It was based on the same ideas of patriotism, service to the fatherland, justice, equality, collectivism, humanism, etc. The system of traditional Soviet values became one of the instruments of foreign policy ideology.

For the first time in the Russian political discourse at the state level, the category of “traditional values” was heard in 2012 within the framework of V.V.Putin’s programmatic article “Russia – the National Question”, which outlined the values that are “common to all traditional religions of Russia”[4]. Conservative ideas of the Christian (Catholic) West, which are ideologically close to Russian traditional values, are currently tending to be erased from the socio-political discourse, being recognized as marginal and inconsistent with the “progressive” neoliberal agenda.

² Stragedy 24. Available from: <https://strategy24.ru/rf/projects/osnovy-gosudarstvennoy-politiki-po-sokhraneniyu-i-ukrepleniyu-traditsionnykh-rossiyskikh-dukhovnonravstvennykh-tsennostey>.

This allows using traditional values as a soft power tool for the purpose of establishing constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with conservative, pragmatically minded political forces and politicians of the West, defending the national interests of their countries in the fight against ideological and political globalism, a unipolar world that denies national interests and political sovereignty of the state, which can become an effective mechanism for countering attempts to implement ideas about the international isolation of our country. In the modern world, the so-called “collective West” views traditional values through a secular-humanistic approach to civilizational development, within which they are forgotten along with traditional society and the state.

In order to blur the concept of gender, family and marriage values, programs are being implemented to promote LGBT^{3*} rights and spread the ideas of radical feminism. Under the auspices of the administration of US Presidents B.Obama and later D.Biden, acts were adopted aimed at protecting and promoting the rights and interests of sexual minorities around the world⁴. In Germany, the promotion of the LGBT community^{5*} is also becoming one of the conceptual directions of foreign policy. Citizens, scientists, journalists, artists, religious and public figures and politicians who disagree with this approach are subjected to enormous pressure and discrimination, in some cases reaching the so-called “cancel culture”[2].

On the other side is Russia, which considers traditional values as one of the fundamental markers of civilizational and national identity. Modern Russia is one of the few modern states where the ideas of traditional values are reflected in regulatory legal acts, including the Constitution.

If in the Western world there is a process of erasing traditional values not only from the public consciousness, but also from various documents, then in Russia there is an opposite trend, which is manifested in the example of the adopted amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The main law of the country included definitions that enshrine the institution of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, the preservation of the heritage and ideals of ancestors, historically established state unity and faith in God. The adopted amendments to the Constitution reflect the basic values of the traditionalist approach and are based on historically established moral and ethical principles and reflect the basic values of the absolute majority of Russian society. It can be stated that support for the traditional family, spirituality, motherhood, and fatherhood is penetrating deeper into the political discourse of modern Russia.

The Russian legal field has acts prohibiting the propaganda of homosexuality among minors and the dissemination of relevant information, and a number of international

3 * Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18+

4 Obama Declares Protection of Rights of Sexual Minorities a Priority of US Foreign Policy. Available from:

5 * Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18+

treaties and conventions regulating the legal status of the LGBT community^{6*} have not been signed or ratified by the Russian Federation. The diversity of documents touching upon the concept of “traditional values” speaks of a conceptual understanding of the need to conduct systemic work, the activities of relevant authorities and civil society institutions aimed at forming appropriate educational, upbringing and cultural policies in the country. Despite the trend we discussed above, a number of actors in the domestic political spectrum, primarily the so-called representatives of the “non-systemic opposition”, persons performing the functions of foreign agents, take an openly pro-Western position formed by external curators, and continue to focus on the need to promote the ideas of spiritual secularization, discrediting traditional religious confessions expressed in the promotion of LGBT values^{7*}, changing the socio-cultural stereotype of behavior, gender diversity, ideas of radical feminism, sex education, legalization of prostitution, popularization of abortions, development of the cult of consumption, positioning this as a certain pattern of progressive European values.

Russia’s defense of traditional values, both in foreign policy and within the country, is positioned by such actors as an archaic rudiment, a throwback to the totalitarian past, and analogies are drawn with the political regimes of a number of Arab states⁸.

Realizing that such ideas do not directly find understanding and support in Russian society, as indicated by various sociological studies (for example: Attitudes of Russians to LGBT^{9*}. ANO “LEVADA-CENTER”^{10**}), agents of Western influence, among whom there are not only politicians, but also individual cultural figures, artists, public figures, video bloggers, use the tools of soft power, promoting such ideas through mass culture, education and pseudoscientific research.

Thus, there is a latent ideological and psychological impact on the minds of Russian youth and the whole society as a whole, consisting in the implantation of historically alien behavioral stereotypes of denial of state patriotism, service to the fatherland, procreation, egoism, immorality and permissiveness. Such activities aimed at replacing moral guidelines in Russian society, primarily among young people, should be considered as one of the main threats to state and public security.

Recognizing these risks in the context of the demographic situation in modern Russia, with its frankly low birth rate, at various venues and round tables, politicians and public figures are demanding a ban on the propaganda of not only homosexuality, but also transsexualism, abortions, the “child-free” movement and other behavior that influences the consciousness of the younger generation and, ultimately, the birth rate.

6 * Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18+

7 * Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18+

8 Tsargrad. The Ministry of Culture’s project has stirred up the fifth column. Available from: https://tsargrad.tv/articles/proekt-minkultury-razberedil-pjatuju-kolonnu_486969.

9 * Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18+

10 ** Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18+

In this regard, it is necessary to develop mechanisms to counteract the oblivion of traditional spiritual and moral values in Russian society, primarily among young people. A permissive attitude to this problem will inevitably lead to a weakening of the unity of the multinational people of the Russian Federation, to a weakening of Russian statehood.

The unprecedented international pressure to which the Russian Federation is subjected, the ideologies of the special military operation in Ukraine, based on such values as service to the fatherland, patriotism, mutual assistance, justice, have updated the public discourse around the values related to state patriotism. This requires the development of a strategy for promoting spiritual and moral values and guidelines in foreign policy that will contribute to the formation of a new, fair world order, dispute resolution and conflict prevention.

In the modern conditions of the development of international political processes, the religious-traditionalist approach based on traditional spiritual and moral values, which is characteristic of Russia, for Russian society, can become a systemic determinant of modernization and a factor of global competitive advantage in the international arena.

Russia's defense of traditional values in the international arena has become a stumbling block in international relations between Russia and the West. The second half of the 20th century is characterized as the time of the emergence in Western Europe of trends to discredit religion, primarily Christianity, as the basis of the traditional state and traditional family. Theories about overpopulation of the earth and the need to regulate quantitative indicators of the world population are emerging. Ideas of political globalism are also developing, associated with the limitation of national state interests, state sovereignty, the transfer of part of state functions and powers to supranational and non-state bodies in order to make consolidated decisions based on certain "common interests".

In the neoliberal understanding of the concept of "world politics", formulated by the American international scholar J. Rosenau, the main actors, along with states, are numerous non-state entities entering into relations with each other, which are of a completely different nature than interstate relations. At the same time, the interaction of actors is formed independently of states and is beyond the control of their central bodies.¹¹ Reducing the role of state institutions in political governance, economic life, and social relations is one of the basic values of liberalism.

The famous Austrian philosopher and economist Friedrich August von Hayek, examining the functions of the state in his works, put forward theses on the need to transfer a number of such functions to the private sector [6]. Similar ideas were also expressed by the Austrian-American economist, philosopher, and historian L. von Mises, who spoke of the need to reduce the role of state property in favor of private property as the main principle of "organizing human life in society"[3]. R.C.Cornwall, an American libertarian writer, developed the concept of the so-called "third sector", which was based on the possibility of more effective implementation of a number of state functions by non-state structures [5].

¹¹ Rosenau J.N. Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics. Available from: http://www.worldpolit.ru/dl/gwg_rus.doc.

As part of the attack on the traditional state in the Western world, an attack on the traditional family began. In 1952, the International Planned Parenthood Federation was formed, which, while declaring seemingly harmless goals of family planning and preparing parents for childbearing, began actively promoting various birth control mechanisms. At the level of state policy, proposals included reducing social benefits and preferences for large families, pregnant women, and young mothers, while in society, ideas of voluntary sterilization, decriminalization and moral justification of abortions, and depathologization of homosexuality were promoted. The latter aspect is especially significant in the context of the attack on traditional values, since it was the exclusion of homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses and pathologies that allowed its propaganda to be developed as a norm. Today, we see the implementation of a similar approach in the "progressive" Western world in the context of the depathologization of zoophilia and the decriminalization of pedophilia.

Traditional European conservatives are openly surrendering their positions to neoliberals, their party ideology is becoming increasingly distant from traditionalism. As Russian researcher M.A.Burda notes: "As an example, we can cite the attitude of conservative parties to the issues of legalizing same-sex marriages, migration policy, the depth of European integration, etc., which is fundamentally no different from the ideas of the liberal wing"[1]

However, not all European political forces follow these ideas. The expansion of traditional values in the United States and the European Union does not find full support in society, which is reflected in the popularization of those political forces that were considered marginal ten years ago.

Taking into account the still existing demand for traditional values in Western society, the empty niche is occupied by European right-wing parties, which are the only fighters defending traditional European Christian values. It is also necessary to take into account the exponentially growing Muslim population of Europe, which has a strong traditionalist base and, in connection with this, is very critical of depopulation propaganda.

Even wider groups of society in Eastern European countries (Hungary, Serbia, Poland, Bulgaria) support politicians who are ready to speak out against the destruction of their people in this "melting pot" of modern global Europe. Thus, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention, which "teaches gender diversity." In Poland, more than 80 city councils have signed the "Family Charter," declaring themselves LGBT-free zones^{12*}.

Discussion

Thus, the departure from traditional spiritual and moral values undermines the seemingly strong European unity. Traditional values still remain significant for the

¹² * Included in the register of non-profit organizations performing the functions of a foreign agent, 18

Christian states of Southern and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, their support is becoming an element of constructive and mutually beneficial interaction between Russia and the nationally oriented political forces of European states, opposing the secular-humanistic approach of globalism, waging a hybrid war against modern Russia.

This requires the intensification of Russian diplomatic activity, including within the framework of implementing soft power and people's diplomacy. It is obvious that the anti-Russian hysteria fueled in the West complicates the use of formal channels of interaction with political allies in Western countries, but this only actualizes the importance of informal channels.

Conclusion

Modern Russia, having assumed the role of one of the main defenders of traditional values and the traditional family, has great potential for coordinating work among all actors sharing this approach.

Modern globalism is not only against the traditional state, its political and economic independence, but also against the traditional family. It is the family and childbearing that are the basis of sovereign demographic policy, which is one of the key elements of ensuring national security, and therefore, preserving state sovereignty.

Speaking about the formal and legal aspect of the implementation of spiritual and moral values in international relations, it is necessary to take the following steps.

First, conduct a legal analysis of international documents ratified by the Russian Federation for their compliance with the Constitution and denounce individual provisions or documents as a whole if they are aimed at promoting a destructive agenda of reducing the birth rate, terminating pregnancies and promoting non-traditional sexual relations.

Secondly, initiate the development of international documents (agreements, conventions) on the protection of the family and traditional values, including at the level of the CIS, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Union State of Russia and Belarus, as well as BRICS. Thirdly, initiate the discussion and adoption of international documents that protect the life and rights of the child from the moment of conception, as well as protect it from sexual abuse and LGBT propaganda^{13*}.

To improve national legislation:

Firstly, introduce the institution of accreditation (licensing) of the activities of non-profit organizations dealing with issues of demography, migration, intergender relations, to identify and close organizations engaged in destructive activities aimed at countering traditional values.

Secondly, at the legislative level, expand measures of social and credit-financial support for large families, young parents, parents with two children, including in the field of obtaining education on a budgetary basis, additionally protect the legal status of a

¹³ * Banned in the Russian Federation, 18+

pregnant woman and young mother and father in the Labor Code, increase the number of nursery groups in preschool institutions.

Thirdly, introduce into the school curriculum the discipline "Basis of Family Culture and Interaction" based on traditional spiritual and moral values.

As part of the formation of a positive image of a traditional family, a large family and traditional relations, ensure:

Firstly, the availability of appropriate information content in the media, culture, art, commercials of a traditional family - a father, a mother and several children of different sexes.

Secondly, to hold thematic socio-political forums and conferences, the main objective of which will be to form a positive image of modern Russia as a state that actively promotes and protects traditional spiritual and moral values. Such events can become a platform for effective counteraction to the attempts of the "collective West" to isolate Russia, a basis for cooperation with all political forces that share the religious-traditionalist approach, including in unfriendly countries focused on combating modern political globalism. The result of the work of such socio-political discussion platforms can be various kinds of declarations, memoranda, agreements, conventions, any forms of international cooperation capable of influencing the promotion of traditional spiritual and moral values in international relations.

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