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RUSSIA'S ROLE IN ASSERTION TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES: NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT²

Today, we can state a systemic crisis 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-traditional.

Spiritual and moral values have been one of the foundations of the development of Russian statehood throughout the history of our country. The problems of forming, assertion and promoting traditional spiritual and moral values, both on the domestic political track and within international relations, are currently one of the hottest topics on the political agenda.

Speaking about the ideological scope of the ‘traditional values’ concept, we can note that in a broad sense, traditional values are a certain set of principles and rules that have come from the depths of centuries and have formed a certain “correct” form of social behavior and interaction, where, according to I. Kant, “a will is determined by morality.”³ Thus, a jurisprudence science supports that one of the sources of law is tradition, which in this case acts as a kind of public relations regulator. In a narrower sense, traditional values are also a set of the same principles and rules, but unique ones for each state and determined through the influence of ideology, culture, religion, political regime, etc.

Currently, traditional values are usually understood as a kind of matrix, where the human dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to homeland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, strong family, creative labor, priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historic memory, and continuity of generations. This is exactly the definition we can find in the draft “The Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”.⁴

A similar formulation, as rightly noted by the Russian researcher I. I. Gorlova: “...in general reflects the established approach to traditional values as intended to prevent

the disunity of society and preserve the unity of a multinational country.”⁵

Historically in Russia, the protection of traditional values has been viewed as a tool for promoting and protecting Russian interests in international relations, including by protecting the interests and rights of Orthodox Christians around the world, where after the fall of Byzantium it was the Moscow Tsardom, and later the Russian Empire positioned itself as the main defender of the traditional values of Christianity. The idea of protecting Slavic peoples in Europe, Orthodox Christians in the spirit of “fraternal help” was reflected in specific historic events.

Considering the historical narratives of traditional values in Russia, we are talking about the natural process of their formation within the established cultural and political community that unites many different peoples of different faiths. The family, along with self-restraint and patriotism, was one of the foundations of society lifestyle pattern, also as the sacrament of marriage as the union of one man and one woman, the family spiritual life expressed in regular visits to religious institutions, observance of religious rites, veneration of God, commandments, and elders. It should be noted that in all religious and cultural traditions, family, childbearing, and upbringing of the younger generation were one of the fundamental concepts, around which values and relationships of members of society were formed, regardless of social organization. Throughout Russian history, spiritual and moral values have been the solid foundation of the Russian state.

For the first time in the Russian political discourse, it was at the state level that the ‘traditional values’ category was voiced in 2012 within V. V. Putin’s program article “Russia: the National Question”, where the values that are “common to all traditional religions of Russia” were outlined.⁶

In the text of the Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, announced by the President at the end of 2013, the ‘traditional values’ category takes on clearer outlines in the form of “a thousand-year history”, “the spiritual and moral foundations of the civilization of each people”, and includes the values of “genuine human life, including religious life, not only material life, but also spiritual.”⁷

And today, Russian President V. V. Putin notes the need to defend and assert traditional values all over the world, where in some countries this has been forgotten.⁸ Ideologi-

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² The report was prepared on the basis of the article: *Карпович О. Г., Смагина Л. А.* Концепция традиционных духовно-нравственных ценностей в международных отношениях: российский подход // *Международная жизнь*. 2023. № 1. С. 54–65.

³ *Соловьев Э. Ю.* Критика практического разума // *Новая философская энциклопедия / Ин-т философии РАН; Нац. общ.-науч. фонд. 2-е изд., испр. и доп. М.: Мысль, 2010.*

⁴ Духовно-нравственные ценности России // *Стратегия 24*. URL: <https://strategy24.ru/rf/projects/osnovy-gosudarstvennoy-politiki-po-sokhraneniyyu-i-ukrepleniyu-traditsionnykh-rossiyskikh-dukhovnonravstvennykh-tsennoy> (accessed: 31.08.2022).

⁵ *Горлова И. И.* Традиционные духовно-нравственные ценности в нормативно-правовых документах Российской Федерации: состояние и пути совершенствования // *Культурологический журнал*. 2021. № 2 (44). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/traditsionnye-duhovno-nravstvennyye-tsennosti-v-normativno-pravovykh-dokumentah-rossiyskoy-federatsii-sostoyanie-i-puti> (accessed: 31.08.2022).

⁶ *Путин В. В.* Россия: национальный вопрос // *Этнодиалоги*. 2012. № 1 (38). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiya-natsionalnyy-vopros-4> (accessed: 31.08.2022).

⁷ Традиционные ценности — идеологическое оружие современной России // *Rambler.ru*. URL: https://news.rambler.ru/other/39596481-traditsionnye-tsennosti-ideologicheskoe-oruzhie-sovremennoy-rossii/?utm_source=copyspreading&utm_medium=social (accessed: 31.08.2022).

⁸ Послание Президента В. В. Путина Федеральному собранию РФ. 21 апреля 2021 г. // Президент России: [website]. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/65418> (accessed: 31.08.2022).

cally close to Russian traditional values, conservative ideas of the countries of the Christian (Catholic) West currently tend to be erased from the socio-political discourse, being recognized as marginal and inconsistent with the 'progressive' neoliberal agenda.

In the modern world, the so-called 'collective West' considers traditional values using a secular-humanistic approach to civilizational development, in which they are given oblivion along with traditional society and the state. At that, to accelerate the blurring of the concept of gender, family and marriage values, programs are being implemented to promote LGBT rights and spread the ideas of radical feminism.

Thus, under the auspices of the Administration of US Presidents D. Biden, acts were adopted aimed at protecting and promoting the rights and interests of sexual minorities around the world.¹ In Germany, the concept of promoting the LGBT community is also becoming one of the conceptual directions of foreign policy. At that, citizens, scientists, journalists, artists, religious and public figures and politicians who disagree with this approach experience enormous pressure and discrimination, in some cases reaching the so-called 'cancel culture'.²

At another point, Russia advocates, considering traditional values as one of the fundamental markers of civilizational and national identity. Modern Russia is one of the few modern states, where narratives of traditional values are reflected in normative legal acts, including in the higher order one – the Constitution.

If in the Western world, we can observe the process of erasing traditional values not only from public consciousness, but also from various documents, then in Russia, there is a reverse trend, which is most clearly visible on the example of the adopted amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Thus, definitions were included in the main law of the country, consolidating the institution of marriage as the union of one man and one woman, preserving the heritage and ideals of ancestors, historically formed state unity, and faith in God. The rules adopted as part of the relevant amendments to the Constitution reflect the basic values of the tradition-based approach and are based on historically established moral principles, and reflect the basic values of the absolute majority of Russian society. It can be stated with confidence that the topics, related to the support of the traditional family, spirituality, motherhood, fatherhood, are penetrating deeper into the political discourse of modern Russia.

In addition, the Russian legal field has acts prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality among minors and the dissemination of relevant information, and a number of international treaties and conventions regulating the legal status of the LGBT community have not been signed or ratified by the Russian Federation.

Traditional spiritual and moral values are also reflected in a number of conceptual documents of strategic planning, namely:

¹ Обама объявил защиту прав сексуальных меньшинств приоритетом внешней политики США // Интерфакс : [website]. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/220625> (accessed: 31.03.2023).

² Васильева М. А. Культура отмены в современном обществе // Вести научных достижений. 2020. № 10. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kultura-otmeny-v-sovremennom-obschestve> (accessed: 01.03.2023).

– The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (2023);

– The Concept of Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad (2022);

– Russia's National Security Strategy (2021);

– Information Society Development Strategy (2017);

– The Strategy of Development of Education in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2025 (2015);

– The Strategy of the State Cultural Policy for the Period up to 2030 (2016).

The variety of documents, which engage with the concept of 'traditional values' to one extent or another, indicates a conceptual understanding of the need for systematic work, the activities of relevant authorities, and civil society institutions to form an appropriate pedagogic, educational, and cultural policy in the country in general.

Despite the rather pronounced trend that we discussed above, a number of actors of the domestic political spectrum, primarily the so-called representatives of the 'non-systemic opposition', persons who perform foreign agent functions, take a frankly pro-Western position formed by overseas and Western European 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, the change of socio-cultural stereotype of behavior, gender diversity, the ideas of radical feminism, sexprosvet (sexual education), the legalization of prostitution, the inculcation of abortion, consumption cult development, by positioning these in the form of a pattern of progressive European values.

At that, Russia's assertion of traditional values, both in foreign policy and within the country, is positioned by such actors as an archaic vestige, a rollback to the totalitarian past, or analogies are drawn with the political regimes of a number of Arab states.³

Realizing that such ideas do not directly find understanding and support in Russian society, as evidenced by various sociological studies⁴, agents of Western influence, among whom there are not only politicians, but also individual figures of culture, art, public figures, video bloggers, use soft power tools, promoting such an agenda through mass culture, education sphere, and pseudoscientific research.

Thus, there is a latent ideological and psychological impact on the minds of Russian youth and society as a whole, consisting in the imposition of behavioral stereotypes of denial of state patriotism, service to the homeland, procreation, selfishness, immorality and permissiveness that are historically alien to them. Such activities targeted at replacing moral guidelines in Russian society, primarily in the youth environment, should be considered as one of the main threats to public and social security.

Realizing these risks in terms of the demographic situation in modern Russia, with its low birth rate, at various venues and round tables, politicians and public figures demand to ban the propaganda of not only homosexuality, but also transsexualism, abortion, the child-free movement,

³ Проект Минкультуры разбередил «пятую колонну» // Царьград. URL: https://tsargrad.tv/articles/proekt-minkultury-razberedil-pjatuju-kolonnu_486969 (accessed: 31.08.2022).

⁴ See, for example: Отношение россиян к ЛГБТ // Левада-Центр. URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2021/10/15/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-lgbt-lyudyam/> (accessed: 01.09.2022).

and other behavior that affects the consciousness of the oncoming generation and ultimately as a result, the birth rate.

In this regard, it seems obvious to develop mechanisms to counteract the erasing of traditional spiritual and moral values in Russian society, primarily in the youth environment. After all, a conniving attitude to this problem inevitably leads to a weakening of the unity of the multinational people of the Russian Federation, which means a weakening of Russian statehood.

The unprecedented international pressure that the Russian Federation is currently under, as well as the ideologues of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine based on values such as service to the fatherland, patriotism, mutual assistance, justice, have actualized the public discourse around values related to state patriotism. The strategy of promoting spiritual and moral values and guidelines in foreign policy that will contribute to the formation of a new, just world order, dispute resolution and conflict prevention, has been enshrined in the new edition of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation in 2023. This was done in a timely manner.

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

Russia's assertion of traditional values in the international arena has become one of the stumbling blocks 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 the ideological formation of tendencies to discredit religion, primarily Christianity, as the basis of the traditional state and the traditional family. It is this time interval that is associated with the emergence of the theory of overpopulation of the earth and the need to regulate quantitative indicators of population in the world. Also, the ideas of political globalism related to the restriction of national state interests, state sovereignty, the transfer of part of state functions and powers to supranational and non-governmental bodies to make consolidated decisions based on certain 'common interests' are being significantly developed.

With the neoliberal conception of 'world politics' formulated by the American international scholar J. Rosenau, the main actors, along with states, are numerous non-state actors entering into relations with each other that have a completely different nature than interstate relations. At that, the actor interaction is formed regardless of the states and is beyond the control of their central authorities.¹ Declining role of state institutions in political governance, economic life, and public relations is one of the basic values of liberalism.

The famous Austrian philosopher and economist Friedrich August von Hayek, considering the state functions in his works, put forward theses about the need to transfer a number of such functions to the private sector.²

¹ *Розенау Дж. Н.* Управление без правительства: порядок и изменения в мировой политике. URL: http://www.worldpolit.ru/dl/gwg_rus.doc (accessed: 08.07.2012).

² *Hayek F. A.* Law, Legislation and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy. L. : Routledge, 2012.

Similar ideas were also expressed by the Austro-American economist, philosopher and historian L. von Mises, who spoke about the need to decline the role of state property in favor of private property as the main principle of "organizing human society life"³.

R. C. Cornuel, an American libertarian writer, developed the concept of the so-called 'third sector' that was based on the possibility of more efficient implementation of a number of state functions by non-state structures.⁴

As part of the attack on the traditional state in the Western world, an attack began on the traditional family. In 1952, the International Planned Parenthood Federation was formed, which, declaring the seemingly harmless goals of family planning and preparing parents for childbirth, began actively promoting various mechanisms for restriction of birth.

At the level of state policy, these proposals included the reduction of social benefits and preferences for large families, pregnant women, young mothers, and the ideas of voluntary sterilization, decriminalization, and moral justification of abortions, as well as depathologization of homosexuality were promoted in society. The latter aspect seems to be the most significant in terms of the attack on traditional values, because it is the exclusion of homosexuality from the list of mental diseases and pathologies that has allowed deploying in full the tools of its propaganda as a norm.

As the Russian researcher N. S. Semenova noted, "Of course, same-sex relationships, like other 'non-traditional sexual relations,' have been known for centuries, but until the 20th century no one tried to equate them with the traditional family relationships, presenting them as the same norm. Moreover, in most countries that have legalized same-sex relationships, children are beginning to be accustomed to their 'normality' and 'naturalness.' Parents who try to prevent children from obtaining such knowledge, facing the responsibility from the administrative penalty to criminal penalties."⁵

Today, we can observe the implementation of such an approach in the 'progressive' Western world in terms of depathologization of bestiality and decriminalization of pedophilia. This is due to the fact that traditional European conservatives openly surrender their positions to the neoliberals, their party ideology is becoming more and more distant from traditionalism. As the Russian researcher M. A. Burda noted, "As an example, we can cite the attitude of conservative parties to the legalization of same-sex marriage, migration policy, the depth of European integration, etc., which does not fundamentally differ from the ideas of the liberal wing."⁶

However, not all European political forces follow within the framework of the paradigm of values set by the Neo-

³ *Мизес Л. фон.* Либерализм в классической традиции / пер. с англ. С. Г. Каменского, Ю. В. Кочетыговой. М. : Начала-Пресс, 1995.

⁴ *Cornuel R. C.* Reclaiming the American Dream: The Role of Private Individuals and Voluntary Associations (Philanthropy and Society). N. Y. : Transaction Publishers, 1993.

⁵ *Семенова Н. С.* Традиционные ценности vs «прав ЛГБТ» в рамках реализации права на образование: международно-правовой подход // Вестник РУДН. Сер. «Юридические науки». 2016. № 4. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/traditsionnye-tsennosti-v-prav-lgbt-v-ramkah-realizatsii-prava-na-obrazovanie-mezhdunarodno-pravovoy-podhod> (accessed: 01.09.2022).

⁶ *Бурда М. А.* Миграционные процессы в Европе и феномен роста влияния правых политических партий // PolitBook. 2017. № 4. С. 123.

liberals. The attack on traditional values carried out in the United States and the European Union also does not find unconditional support in society, which is reflected in the inculcation of a number of political forces that were considered marginal ten years ago.

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

Even broader groups of society in Eastern European countries (Hungary, Serbia, Poland, Bulgaria) support politicians who are ready to oppose 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 them an LGBT-free zone.

We can state that the shift away from traditional spiritual and moral values monotonously undermines the previously seemingly unshakable European unity. In such a situation, traditional values, which still remain significant for the Christian states of Southern and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and their support become an element of constructive and mutually beneficial interaction between Russia and nationally-oriented political forces of European states opposing the secular-humanistic approach of globalism, which makes a hybrid war against modern Russia.

This, in turn, requires the intensification of Russian diplomatic activity, including within the implementation of existing mechanisms of soft power and people’s diplomacy. It is obvious that the anti-Russian hysteria fueled in the West makes it difficult to use formal channels of interaction with political allies in Western countries, but this only actualizes the importance of informal channels.

Modern Russia, which has assumed the role of one of the main defenders of traditional values and the traditional family as their most important component, has a significant potential for coordinating relevant work among all actors sharing this approach.

As we said above, modern globalism opposes not only the traditional state, its political and economic independence, but also opposes the traditional family. It is the family and childbearing that is 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 the promotion of the concept of spiritual and moral values in international relations, it is necessary to take the following steps.

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

Secondly, to 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 EAEU, and the Union State of Russia and Belarus, as well as BRICS.

Thirdly, to initiate discussion and adoption of international documents protecting the life and rights of a child from the moment of conception, as well as protecting him from sexual assaults and LGBT propaganda.

As part of improving national legislation:

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

Secondly, at the legislative level, further expand measures of social and credit and financial support for large families, young parents, parents with two children, including in the field of educational opportunities on a budgetary basis, additionally protect the legal status of pregnant women and young mothers and fathers in the Labor Code, increase the number of nursery groups in preschool institutions.

Thirdly, to initiate the introduction of the subject “The Basis of Family Culture and Interaction” that is based on traditional spiritual and moral values, into the school curriculum.

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

Firstly, the availability of relevant information content in the media, culture, art, commercials of a traditional family – dad, mom, and several different-sex children.

Secondly, to hold thematic socio-political forums and conferences, the main task of which will be the formation of a positive image of modern Russia as a state actively promoting and protecting traditional spiritual and moral values.

Such events can become a platform for effectively countering the attempts of the “collective West” to isolate Russia, as well as for cooperation with all political forces that share a religious- and tradition-based approach, including in unfriendly countries, focused on combating modern political globalism.

The result of the work of such social and political discussion platforms can be declarations, memoranda, agreements, conventions of various kinds, any formats of declared international cooperation that can influence the promotion of the concept of traditional spiritual and moral values in international relations.

In conclusion, it seems necessary to note that the Ministry of Culture has formulated the goals and objectives of Russia’s state policy “in the sphere of traditional values.” Among them: “to ensure Russia’s moral leadership in international relations as a guardian of traditional universal values” and countering “destructive ideology”. The emphasis is placed on the fact that “the activities of extremist and terrorist organizations, the actions of the United States and its allies, transnational corporations, and foreign non-profit organizations pose a threat to traditional values.” Thus, traditional values act as a means of improving world politics and the crisis economy. During a serious economic crisis, even cynical politicians seek salvation in traditional values, religion and moral foundations and speak of traditional values as a “life ring”, using which a global market economy devoid of morality can float out. This idea is not new for Russia. Russia has long asserted the need to

strengthen moral principles in international relations, seeking to reject double standards. The issue of the possibility of combining traditional values and modern politics in the West and East is already in the focus of progressive Rus-

sian diplomacy, and the task of preserving, strengthening, and promoting traditional spiritual and moral values is becoming of crucial significance to the preservation of civilization as a whole.