

СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ И ФИЛОСОФСКАЯ АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ

УДК 1 (091)
DOI: 10.17223/1998863X/41/4

Yu.V. Sineokaya

THE SHIFT IN THE VALUE SYSTEM IN RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES¹

This paper looks at the changes of values in the process of the formation of Russian identity over the past quarter century. Beginning from the collapse of the USSR (1991) Russia has been forming a new post-Soviet Russian identity, a system of priority values aimed at strengthening the unity of the multi-national, multi-confessional country with deep social and wealth inequalities. To understand what myth of the civil nation is taking shape in Russia today it is important to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of nationalism and to determine whether there is a difference between nationalism and patriotism, between civil and ethnic forms of nationalism².

Key words: *Russia, Post-Soviet identity, individualism, collectivism, nationalism, freedom, patriotism, conservative revolution, solidarity³*.

The beginning of the 21st century marks the start of an era of dialogue between East and West. This century non-Western countries are beginning to play an ever bigger role not only in world politics but also in philosophy as the center of world history is shifting to the East. Our time is characterized by two vectors of the development of values that point in different directions:

1) movement towards a single civilization and mingling of peoples. Western cultural values exert an ever greater influence on the life and culture of the East while the West opens up to and adapts the traditional Eastern values. Indeed, there is a marked trend of denying the traditional division of the world into West and East. We live in an era of the emergence of a “global civilization” when all the national and cultural differences, while not quite being erased and disappearing, recede into a marginal area that is not pivotal for the development of the single humankind.

2) The opposite trend has been observed since the second half of the 20th century mainly in the three macro-civilizational non-Western regions (China, the Arab

¹ **Заголовок (рус.):** Смена ценностной парадигмы в России начала XXI столетия.

² **Аннонация (рус.):** В статье представлен анализ изменения ценностей в процессе формирования российской идентичности за последнюю четверть века. Начиная с распада СССР (1991) в России идет формирование новой постсоветской российской идентичности – системы приоритетных ценностей, направленных на укрепление единства многонациональной, многоконфессиональной страны, полярной в социальном и имущественном расслоении. Чтобы понять, какой миф гражданской нации формируется сегодня в России, важно выявить сильные и слабые стороны национализма, определить, есть ли различие между национализмом и патриотизмом, гражданской и этнической формами национализма.

³ **Ключевые слова (рус.):** Россия, постсоветская идентичность, индивидуализм, коллективизм, национализм, свобода, патриотизм, консервативная революция, солидарность.

Muslim world and India) and may be defined as the process of the search of indigenous paths of civilization development.

In these regions the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a gradual weakening of colonial dependence and the formation of nation states. At first these regions tried to order their lives according to Western templates adapted to varying degrees to the local conditions. This is true both of the countries that chose the path of socialism and of building socialism and those which chose the capitalist West as their model. Despite the antagonism of the values of socialism and the values of capitalism during that period, both these projects were essentially Western projects of reordering life, both being attempts to fit these regions into the mainstream of a single human civilization. Today these regions witness a resurgence of nationalist, ethnic, archaic, basically non-Western values.

In the modern world the processes of modernization and archaisation proceed in parallel. Globalization is without doubt happening in the economic sphere. However, it is obvious that the emergence of a single universal system of values, world view, attitudes, the ideas concerning the goals and meaning of life, of man and his place in the world and in society, and the principles on which society is based is not taking place automatically or painlessly as “a natural consequence” of the processes of economic globalization. That is why it is so important to take a close and unbiased look at the changes of value paradigms in various areas of the modern world.

What guides ordinary people and members of the elites in choosing their values? When is the time to change value orientations in life and in culture? The moment of reappraisal and change of values comes when the old value canons fail and prove to be unviable. Friedrich Nietzsche, who first questioned the spiritual ideals that seemed to be given once and for all, and who introduced the notion of “reappraisal of values” (*Umwertung der Werte*), wrote at the tail end of the 19th century: “Where shall I get the right to new values of my own? From the right of all the old values and the boundaries of these values” (1, 736).

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries the study of values, ideals, moral benchmarks, “spiritual bonds,” plays the key role in all the spheres of social and private life. What is the genealogy of the concept of “values”? It had no currency in science and in philosophy up until the 18th century. The notion did not exist in Antique and Medieval philosophy (although some precursors of these notions did exist). In the 18th century Adam Smith was among the first to use the concept, but only in the framework of his economic theory. Today politicians, sociologists and journalists write and speak extensively about a “value pivot” (*Wertwandel*). Permanent change of value paradigms, upfront “reappraisal of values,” revision of what seemed to be immutable and eternal axioms and formulas of human culture is natural and inevitable. The danger arises only when “reappraisal of values” takes the form of the loss of values, when there occurs a loss of orientations and the threat arises of the destruction of the social order and growing violence (2, 14).

My focus is on Russia, the country that combines the values of both West and East. A state with a tragic history of “internal colonization”¹. I see parallels between the process of the formation of post-Soviet identity in Russia over the past

¹ See: Alexander Etkind. Internal Colonization. Russia’s Imperial Experience. Moscow: *Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye*, 2013.

quarter century and the general trends characteristic of the change of value paradigms in the modern world.

Russia has felt a need to construct its own national identity, beginning from the second half of the 19th century. In the 20th century and today the issue engages the minds of the Russian intellectual and ordinary person alike. The recurring motive of the search for national identity is the eternal Russian question as to whether or not Russia is a European country.

Beginning from 1991, the collapse of the USSR, the officially announced goal of Russian society has been the formation of a new post-Soviet identity (the post-Soviet value system) as the foundation of the country's unity. In my opinion, the key principle of this process should be overcoming the conflict between the freedoms and rights of the individual and the ethnic group. It is necessary to harmonize the rights and interests of ethnic and social communities with the inalienable rights of the individual.

Important milestones on the way to forming the post-Soviet identity were the famous call of the first Russian President Boris Yeltsin on the intelligentsia in August 1996 to formulate a new ideology, the Russian idea and. Twenty years later, the appeal of the current Russian President, Vladimir Putin, to the expert community in October 2016 to formulae the concept of the draft law on the Russian civil nation later renamed The Law on the Main Principles of the State Nationalities Policy of the Russian Federation. While in 1996 the quest for a new Russian identity was triggered by the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the loss of the union identity, the task of forming a civil identity of the Russian nation in 2016 was prompted by the need to safeguard the unity of the Russian Federation as a complex multi-ethnic, multi-confessional state marked by substantial stratification in terms of wealth, social and educational status.

After 20 years of debates the issue of self-identification of Russians remains open¹. There is no consensus in society on what kind of identity the Russians need today: political-civic (in this case the issue of identity boils down to the pragmatic question of values stemming from Russia's national interests) or national-ethnic (to meet the demand for a new Russian ideology, a national myth).

To form a Russian identity means to determine the national values shared by all the Russian citizens. The question of identity is about the future of Russia, about whether a strong non-ethnic state can exist without an underpinning myth. Finally, it is about understanding the goal of the political system that created Rus, Muscovy, Russia, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries Russia lived through three changes of value paradigms: from Soviet collectivism of the communist era to the individualism of the era of perestroika Thaw to post-perestroika nationalism of the times of the “conservative revolution.” The vector of the transformation of post-Soviet identity during the past quarter century can be described as a shift from the formula “Russia is a European country, a branch of the Western civilization” to the formula “Russia is a civilisation in its own right distinct from the West, “the greater Russian world”. Present-day political and cultural discourse is dominated by the concept of the Russian civilisation.

¹ The situation is not peculiar to Russia. In the fast-changing world identity is not a fact or a given, but a process. See Samuel Huntington. *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. Moscow, ACT. *Transit-kniga*. 2004 (In Russian).

So, in the 1990s–2010s Russia positioned itself in foreign policy as primarily a European power wedded to universal human values. Inside the country the priorities for most Russians were private life and the quality of private life. Mythologisation of freedom of the 1990s gave way to mythologisation of material wellness in the 2000s. The spiritual crisis of the 2010s was largely caused by the value of freedom being replaced by the value of stability. The priority of ethical ideals was replaced by the priority of material success and social status. The consequences of exchange of freedom for material well-being turned out to be in many ways destructive of the Russians' value orientation.

The attempt to formulate a new Russian ideology or idea was drowned out by disputes and arguments as to whether Russia needs an ideology or a clear-cut identity at all. Public opinion was obviously leaning towards ideological and value polyphony. I would like to sum up the arguments for and against the formation of national priority values for Russia in those years.

The arguments for working out basic values for Russians:

1. Ideological vacuum spawns such anti-values as nihilism, anarchism, fascism and separatism.
2. Society should be one, a foundation needs to be found for national unity and social peace.
3. The people must be mobilized, movement towards a certain goal is embedded in the Russian mentality

Arguments against the above propositions:

1. Any idea addressed to a whole nation inevitably develops into a totalitarian ideology.
2. Any national idea is destructive of the unity of a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state. Those who reject the values of the common Russian identity will automatically become dissidents.
3. A national ideology is fraught with messianism and, consequently, aggressiveness with regard to the rest of the world.

In the spiritual atmosphere of arguments, conflicting opinions and the struggle to improve daily life at the turn of the centuries, the idea of creating a nation state in Russia was not as prominent as in other former Soviet Union countries. However, the situation changed significantly towards the end of the first decade of this century. Messianic ideas began to be revived in Russia. Our country began to assert itself in the world as a distinct Russian civilization, the greater Russian world that extended beyond the state borders of Russia. Inside the country the process of creating a new Russian mythology was launched. The values that came to the fore for the peoples of Russia were ethnic affiliation, cultural uniqueness, national and ethnic identity. The problem of national and ethnic self-determination became predominant, tending to conflict with individual rights and freedoms. The process is complicated by the practical absence of political and power competition in Russia.

The priority value in today's Russia is patriotism, based on the policy of historical memory and a return to the sources. However, the peoples of the multi-ethnic Russian state have different roots. Looking back to the past and calls to return to the roots tend to divide rather than unite Russian society.

The policy of memory and idealization of history do not always indicate growing respect for the past. Let me cite just one example. Because of official propa-

ganda overkill the Day of the Victory of the Russian people in the Second World War is turning from the day that brought peace to the day celebrating the victory of war. The memory of war is used as the main, indeed the only motive for the cohesion and mobilization of the people. As a result people's happiness is fueled by hatred while dissent is seen almost as high treason.

A new value that is gaining popularity in Russia is nationalism based on the idea of solidarity. It is important to understand the nature of nationalism, to reveal its strengths and weaknesses, to understand whether there is a difference between patriotism and nationalism. First of all, it is necessary to make up our minds as to whether nationalism is a value or an anti-value, or, more helpfully, in my opinion, whether the phenomenon should be considered to be axiologically neutral.

I propose to distinguish three paradigms of Russia's post-Soviet identity: liberal, great power and nationalist.

1) The aim of the liberal project for Russia is integration with the West that would make the country part of the Greater West. Since the second half of the 1990s liberal views were sidelined and have had little traction.

2) The realist advocates of the strong state who dominated Russia's politics in the first decade of the 21st century sought to project Russia as an influential center in the multi-polar world.

3) The third strand is nationalist and it can roughly be divided into three subgroups: imperialists, ethnic nationalists and the new right (ideologists of right-wing globalism). The latter trend has been gaining ground recently. Its advocates speak about protecting traditional values and seek an alliance with the traditional right in Europe. The nationalist paradigm rejects liberal values and has anti-Western views.

Two concepts developed by the nationalists merit a closer look. The first argues that Russia must be an independent great power, a bulwark of all the conservative forces opposing revolutions, chaos and liberal ideas promoted by the USA and Europe. The second idea is the existence of a great Russian civilization different from the Western one and spreading beyond Russia's borders. The ideological vacuum in the wake of the collapse of official communism and the 1990–2000 crisis strengthened the Russian national-patriotic opposition. By 2000 the situation in Russia had changed. Unlike in the mid-1990s, the supporters of traditionalist, neofascist and national-communist theories ceased to be an intellectual fringe and gained recognition as an ideology. They staked a credible claim to a place in the context of modern culture.

Today conservatism is looked to as the foundation of Russian identity. Those who seek the meaning of the Russian civilization turn to conservatism: "A conservative revolution from the top shored up by demand for conservatism from the bottom may bring about huge changes in the socio-political system of Russia and remove the things that are at odds with the national code and impede the country's development" (3, 1). The main attraction of the conservative idea is that it holds the promise of a national path of Russia's development as non-Europe that would prove to be effective in the modern competitive world.

Russia today sees a stark confrontation between the civil and ethnic forms of nationalism manifested in the argument about what kind of identity Russia needs – political or ethnic. This is an argument about values.

Ethnic nationalism¹ was the subject of a massive controversy in the 19th and 20th centuries. Debates on civil nationalism are relatively new.

The best known examples of practical theories of political nationalism are the concept of constitutional patriotism by Jurgen Habermas² and Republican patriotism of Maurizio Viroli³. Michael Ignatieff in his book *Blood and Belonging* defines a civil nation as a community of equal franchised citizens who are one in their patriotic dedication to a common set of political practices and values (4, 11).

A civil nation is the legacy of Enlightenment. It is a community created by the choice of individuals in favor of a certain political worldview. Unlike the ethnic form of nationalism which draws its strength from the past and harks back to history, monuments and cemeteries and expresses a kind of tribal solidarity, civil nationalism looks to the future.

Russian ideologists of the civil, ie political nation⁴ see their main task in identifying the values that characterize the belonging of every Russian to a single supranational community of peoples united within the Russian Federation. It is a daunting task. One can hardly fall back on foreign experience in solving it. Direct analogies with the EU and the USA do not work. The new European identity conceived as an alternative to nationalism which brought about the disaster of the Second World War is not seen by United Europe ideologists as a national identity. The Europeans are categorically opposed to nationalism as the basis of the common European identity, to the phenomenon of all-European nationalism. The European myth (the unity of European nations) is above nationality and above ethnicity: every European knows that he is not only French or German, but also a European who embraces the European legal system of values. The EU today is a stable community in spite of the current crisis of rising nationalistic and separatist sentiments and in spite of Brexit. According to the Institute Chatham House (5, 25), 81% of the European elite and 58% of ordinary Europeans are proud of their dual (national and European) identity, moreover, 6% of the elite and 8% of ordinary citizens are proud of their European and not ethnic identity. As for the opponents of the EU, they are comparatively few: 9% of the elite and 17% of ordinary citizens are proud of their national and not European identity⁵.

To bolster their position the advocates of a civil identity in Russia also turn to our own Soviet past. Indeed there is a certain analogy with the Soviet internationalist identity which prevailed over the ethnic identities of the peoples constituting the Soviet Union. However, the experience is largely negative: the ideal of internationalism was never translated into reality: the USSR always had Russians as the titular ethnic group.

¹ See: Jack Bernard. Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of a Community. Moscow, Gaidar Institute Press, 2017. Some modern opponents of the idea of an ethnic nation are inclined to see the very concept of an ethnic nation to be a contradiction in terms (cf. Schnapper, Dominique. *La Communauté des citoyens, sur l'idée moderne de nation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

² Habermas, Jurgen. Citizenship and National Identity // Democracy. Reason. Morality. Moscow: Academia, 1995.

³ Viroli, Maurizio. *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism*, Oxford University Press Clarendon Press, 1995.

⁴ See, for example, Tishkov V.A. *The Russian People. The History and Meaning of National Self-Consciousness*. Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 2013.

⁵ The sample of respondents is highly representative, with people from Austria, Belgium, the UK, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Germany, Greece, Poland and France taking part.

Having read more than a hundred publications I summed up the arguments for and against building a civil nation in Russia most frequently adduced in scholarly literature and in journalism.

Arguments against the civil nation:

1) "Living world" arguments¹ (criticism from the right):

– *Russian nationalists*: the concept of the Russian nation rejects the Russian ethnos and all the other ethnoses inhabiting the Russian Federation. The civil interpretation of the Russian takes us back to the constitution which speaks of a multi-national people. If we are a multi-national people Russian culture cannot be said to have primacy over the other cultures.

– *Ethnic minorities in the RF*: During the course of Russian history cultural change often preceded political change. There is a danger of an easy transition from a civil political nation to an ethnic nation prompting the Russian nationalists to "purge their ranks."

– *Members of ethnic diasporas in Russia*: Russia has a large number of ethnic diasporas whom other Russian citizens consider to be aliens. Xenophobia runs high, especially with regard to people from the Caucasus when they come to Central Russia.

2) Academic arguments (criticism from the left):

– *Civil solidarity* is a source of ideological intolerance and aggressiveness.

– *The problem of loyalty*: if adherence to certain political principles is the criterion of legitimacy and trust, their authenticity may be suspect. During calm times the problem may be barely noticeable, but in turbulent times it may lead to chaos, denunciations and victimization on grounds of ideological disloyalty.

– *The feeling of national identity is ignored*: deep attachment of an individual to his ethnic group is inherited and not chosen rationally.

Arguments for the civil nation:

1) *Mutual choice* made by the individual and the national community. Because the civil nation is based on freely and rationally chosen shared political principles and values, the individual consciously chooses the nation whose values he/she shares and the national community in turn chooses the individuals that meet the nation's basic values.

2) *Free choice*: we do not choose our place of birth. People are often irritated and aggravated by the contradictions in customs and roots. Citizenship should be granted not by the right of birth, but as a result of conscious choice.

3) *Ethnic solidarity* is fraught with nationalistic and chauvinistic aggression and hostility towards the world outside one's own ethnic group.

So, we have a dichotomy of polar approaches: 1) nations are constituted by politicians, they are free communities in which political solidarity is based not on the cultural heritage, but on freely chosen political principles and 2) we inherit nations from our ancestors, these are forms of cultural inheritance for which intergenerational links, mutual care and loyalty are critical.

In analyzing these approaches it is important to bear in mind that ethnic and political communities are given to change and adapt themselves to the changing

¹ Edmund Husserl's term.

realities. Treating them as absolutes is as much of a fallacy as ignoring the strength of the inner links within them.

The main danger arising from ethnic solidarity is usually thought to be its predisposition to ressentiment. The main obstacles in its way can be inalienable rights and freedoms of the individual, universal human rights and values. However, civil (political) communities too are not immune to ressentiment. Love of universal freedoms which easily crosses national borders may also morph into solidarity fraught with irritated pride and hostility to aliens and dissenters.

What is the way out? I would like to do my summing up in the shape of answers to the two eternal Russian questions: "Who is to blame?" and "What is to be done?"

"*Who is to blame?*": The argument between the advocates of civil and ethnic identities can be resolved by mutual recognition of the danger stemming both from treating civil solidarity as an absolute and from idealisation of ethnic idiosyncrasy. In my opinion, worship of both civil and ethnic nationalism is equally devastating and fraught with violence and destruction.

"*What is to be done?*" To look for a balance of values, to build a concept of national accord, to harmonize the rights of the individual on the one hand and the rights of ethnic and political communities on the other. Russia can overcome its identity crisis relying equally on the rationality of macro-civilizational non-Western regions and on the experience of forming identity of the Western type of rationality. For me personally, the problem of identification is not associated with the questions, "What is your citizenship?", "What ethnic group do you belong to?" or "What is your nationality?" To me the question of identity is the question "What culture do you belong to?"

References

1. Ницше Ф. Сочинения: в 2 т. М.: Мысль, 1990. Т. 1. Гл. 4. 99.
2. *Philosophie heute* // hg. von Ulrich Boehm. Fr.a/M., N.Y, 1997. S. 14.
3. Яковлев П. Зеркало русской идеологии [Электронный ресурс] // Взгляд: деловая газета. URL: <http://www.vz.ru/politics/2014/5/17/687154.html> (дата обращения: 25.02.18).
4. Ignatieff, M. (1951) Blood and Belonging: Journeys Into the New Nationalism. N.Y.: Macmillan.
5. *Le Monde* 20.06/2017, Elites et public face aux fractures de l'Europe. P. 25.

Sineokaya Yulia V. Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russian Federation)

E-mail: jvsineokaya@gmail.com

DOI: 10.17223/1998863X/41/4

THE SHIFT IN THE VALUE SYSTEM IN RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

Key words: Russia, Post-Soviet identity, individualism, collectivism, nationalism, freedom, patriotism, conservative revolution, solidarity.

This paper looks at the changes of values in the process of the formation of Russian identity over the past quarter century. Beginning from the collapse of the USSR (1991) Russia has been forming a new post-Soviet Russian identity, a system of priority values aimed at strengthening the unity of the multi-national, multi-confessional country with deep social and wealth inequalities. The milestones along that path were Boris Yeltsin's famous appeal to the intelligentsia (August 1996) to formulate a new ideology, a Russian idea and, twenty years later, Vladimir Putin's appeal (October 2016) to the expert community to formulate the concept of a law on the Russian civil nation later renamed The Law on the Basics of State Nationalities Policy. Without doubt, at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries

Russia saw a change of value paradigms from individualism to nationalism. Until the first decade of the 21st century Russia positioned itself as a European power embracing universal human values. For the majority of Russians the priority was the quality of their private lives. Freedom and stability were the fundamental values of that era. In the early years of this century Russia began to assert itself as a power independent of the West, a distinct Russian civilisation, “the Greater Russian World,” spreading beyond the state borders of the Russian Federation. The values of isolationism, the issues of ethnic identity and the problem of national self-determination came to the fore. Today the dominant value in Russia is patriotism based on the policy of historical memory and a return to the sources. However, it is obvious that the peoples of a multi-ethnic state have different roots, so a return to the sources divides rather than unites. A new value gaining popularity in Russia is nationalism based on the idea of solidarity. To understand what myth of the civil nation is taking shape in Russia today it is important to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of nationalism and to determine whether there is a difference between nationalism and patriotism, between civil and ethnic forms of nationalism.

References

1. Nietzsche, F. (1990) *Sochinenie v dvukh tomakh* [Works in 2 vols]. Vol. 1. Moscow: Mysl'.
2. Boehm, U. (ed.) (1997) *Philosophie heute* [Philosophie Today]. Frankfurt am Mein; New York: [s.n].
3. Yakovlev, P. (2014) *Zerkalo russkoy ideologii* [A Mirror of Russian Ideology]. [Online] Available from: <http://www.vz.ru/politics/2014/5/17/687154.html>. (Accessed: 25th February 2018)
4. Ignatieff, M. (1951) *Blood and Belonging: Journeys Into the New Nationalism*. New-York: Macmillan.
5. Kauffmann, S. (2017) Elites et public face aux fractures de l'Europe [Elites and public facing the fractures of Europe]. *Le Monde*. 20th June 2017. pp. 25.