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# Patriotism as a Moral Position of the Political Elite in Modern Russia

**ABSTRACT**

The current political conditions dictate a necessity to revise the public opinion of Russia's role in the world. The situation generated by the Ukrainian events has caused patriotic feelings in the Russian society. These feelings combined with the current prospect of mutual relations between Russia and other countries have set the scene for reorientation of both the society and the Russian state machinery to protection of national interests. A key role in this process belongs to the Russian political elite. At this stage, the issue of comprehension and assimilation of moral bearings of patriotism by the Russian establishment is the issue of transformation of the elite. Over the recent twenty-five years, the generation of those who came to power on the wave of perestroika was largely replaced by those who are focused not on work to the benefit of a particular leader, but on implementation of the national idea. However, this process is going on, and now we can speak about nationalisation of the socio-political, as well as economic, elite. The theses presented show how this process is developing in the light of the current situation in the foreign policy. We analyse the possibility of construction of a Russia-centric geopolitical project of development of the state in the conditions of redirection of economy from the West to the East. In particular, we show how the issue of geopolitical choice becomes an axiological issue for the domestic elite. We bring up an issue of a necessity to develop a new type of patriotism that would fully meet the present challenges if included not only the idea of love for the Motherland but also service to it.

The current political conditions dictate a necessity to revise the public opinion of Russia's role in the world. The situation generated by the Ukrainian events has caused patriotic feelings in the Russian society. These feelings combined with the current prospect of mutual relations between Russia and other countries have set the scene for reorientation of both the society and the Russian state machinery to protection of national interests. A key role in this process belongs to the Russian political elite. At this stage, the issue of comprehension and assimilation of moral bearings of patriotism by the Russian establishment is the issue of transformation of the elite. Over the recent twenty-five years, the generation of those who came to power on the wave of perestroika was largely replaced by those who are focused not on work to the benefit of a particular leader, but on implementation of the national idea. However, this process is going on, and now we can speak about nationalization of the socio-political, as well as economic, elite. This paper is to analyze how this process is developing in the light of the current situation in the foreign policy.

**Key words:** *patriotism, elite nationalization, Russia-centric economy.*

Radical transformation in the vector of the foreign policy of the Russian state has caused a necessity to revise the public opinion of importance of Russia for the world and the world for Russia. Reconsideration of realities is a problem of the level supposed to be solved by the national political elite. In the period of reforms of the early 1990s, experts did not dare to treat the Russian establishment, which consisted of party functionaries, semi-legal business owners and adventurers, as the elite. However, there has been an expressed generational change at all power levels over the recent quarter of the century. Has the ruling layer's consciousness changed? Is it now possible to speak about emergence of the political elite on Russian power Olympus?

Let us proceed from common knowledge: the elite is not only a group of subjects having power, but mostly the people whose credo is service to national interests, patriotism, civic consciousness, spacious intellect, professionalism, honour and dignity. Some of the qualities listed can be seen as idealistic, but service to national interests of the country and patriotism should be critical for those who make political decisions on behalf of the state. Therefore, it was no mere chance that recent years witness emergence of the term of elite nationalization.

Here is a citation from V. V. Putin's Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. "Being a patriot means not only to treat one's national history with love and respect, although, of course, that is also very important, but first and foremost to serve one's country and society. According to Solzhenitsyn, "Patriotism is an organic and natural feeling. A country, especially a multinational one, cannot exist without a nationwide responsibility in much the same way as a society cannot survive without civil

responsibility.” These remarkable words hit pretty close to home.

Responsibility for the country is not generated by slogans or appeals. It emerges when people see that the power is transparent and accessible. Moreover, it works hard for the sake of the country, the city, the region, the settlement and every citizen and takes public opinion into account. The power cannot be an isolated caste. This is the only way to build a strong moral foundation for creative work, affirmation of order and freedom, morality and civic solidarity, justice and truth, and nationally oriented consciousness”.

Not only the upper tier but also the society began speaking about patriotism as a value of the Russian state after long years of silence. And while every person can have a subjective and even personal attitude to such ideas as justice, human rights and liberties, security and worthy life, everybody unequivocally defines patriotism as love for the Motherland. This statement is confirmed by the survey carried out among Rostov-on-Don students.

No state can do without values as generators of objectives of its development. The matter is its axiological choice, the mechanisms of translation of the values to the society, their open or latent nature, conformity to the civilizational codes of the nation and the legal form of their fixation. As a rule, the supreme values of the state are understood as desirable conditions of the factors most important for its steady existence and development. Supreme values are not artificially devised or invented. They emerge in the course of functioning of each particular society.

Certainly, domestic patriotism is not demonstrated with such enthusiasm as it used to be in the Soviet period. However, the citizens of Russia need a possibility to be proud of their country in the same way as they used to. It was vividly manifested by the enthusiasm about reunification of the Crimea. However, subsequent events connected with the Ukraine highlighted the aspect of patriotism of the Russian elite.

Economic sanctions against Russia connected with its firm position towards the Ukraine cause the danger of new isolation of the country. And if that happens, it won't be a fault of Russia, whose leaders repeatedly declare that Russia remains an open country. There used to be an opinion that isolation of the country is impossible because financial capitals and families of the Russian establishment are abroad, which makes them uninterested in spoiling relations with the West. However, the sanctions show that this circumstance does not stop western politicians but even gives them more tools to press on Russia.

However, opinions about a possibility of generating patriotism in the current Russian elite differ. Some experts believe in successfulness of elite nationalization. Others think that our elite has already shown its irresponsibility towards the Russian state and is only able to care about the interests of their own, i.e. any attempts to nationalize it are almost completely hopeless. “Nearly all representatives of the present elite are hopeless as far as channeling towards a constructive position is concerned. <...> They already have everything but a feeling of responsibility.” There is a need for a radical decision to replace the elite. To be more exact, to replace the today's effective managers with service-class people who are still to be bred. M. Hazin is of the opinion that the service-class people would be that very elite that was always the basis of Russian statehood. Replacement of the previous elite with a new one seems to be quite simple. “It is necessary to take a group of people who do not belong to the current elite, bring them up in a right way and put into proper places.” There are enough historical examples: when Charles de Gaulle came to power, he replaced government officials with graduates of military colleges. At the same time, the disciples of the Catholic Church became mayors of hundreds of Sicilian cities, which largely reduced criminality and corruption. The supreme power should display a political will to disregard the relations of kindred or friendship or clan interests and dismiss corrupt officials instead of soft-peddling them, which takes place now in the sensational criminal cases connected with larceny in the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Agriculture. According to the former head of Singapore, who still managed to largely reduce corruption, “unless you put a few of your close friends into prison, nobody will believe that you take this warpath seriously.”

To mitigate state security risks, a law prohibiting the political elite, including deputies, senators, ministers etc., to have accounts in foreign banks was adopted in 2013. The law does not use the word elite but lists the highest-rank officials, i.e. the political elite, whose activity is directly connected with homeland security of the Russian Federation. Article 1 of the Law runs, “To provide homeland security of the Russian Federation, control lobbyist activity, expand investment of funds in national economy and increase efficiency of corruption counteraction, the present federal law forbids the officials supposed to make decisions affecting sovereignty and homeland security of the Russian Federation to open and maintain accounts/deposits, keep cash and values in foreign banks located outside the Russian Federation, own and/or employ foreign financial instruments and establishes the categories of persons liable to this prohibition, the procedure of control over observance of this prohibition by the persons specified and the measures of responsibility for violation of this prohibition.”

Several measures aimed at deoffshorisation of national economy were also taken. “Our business people are often reproached of non-patriotism. The offshore nature of Russian economy has become the talk of the town. Experts treat this phenomenon as escape from jurisdiction. According to some estimation, nine out of ten material transactions made by large Russian companies, including companies with state participation, are not regulated by domestic laws. What we need is a comprehensive system of measures on deoffshorisation of our economy”, said President in his 2012 Address. According to his 2013 Address, half of \$50 billion of Russian investments passed through offshore countries, thus causing real losses to the Russian budget. If such companies want to use the information of technical intelligence and Russian scientific developments, or get state orders, they will have to replace their offshore jurisdiction with the Russian one. As a result, nationalization of the political elite is going along with nationalization of economic elite. The primary idea was that the elites should be national and serve their country, which is an obvious condition of homeland security. Comprehension of a necessity to nationalize the elite appeared even before western governments froze the foreign accounts of key figures of the Russian administrative and business elite. With blossoming of capitalism in Russia, many of them ceased to connect their future with Russia. Their capitals are kept in western banks, families live in London residences and French castles, and they only go to Russia for work. However, that condition of the Russian elite did not emerge out of nothing but rooted in the Brezhnev time, when access to the pleasures of capitalism was a privilege of Communist functionaries and their children. That is why contempt to everything domestic and orientation to the West is an inherent property of the current Fronde. After all, many of them are children of parents successful under different regimes: K. Sobchak is a daughter of the Mayor of St Petersburg, A. Sobchak; A. Nosik is a son of the Soviet writer, B. Nosik; A. Makarevich is a son of the famous Moscow architect, V. Makarevich etc.

Betrayal of national interests of the countries by the elite cannot but have catastrophic consequences, e. g. the Russian Empire of the early 20th century, the post-Soviet Ukraine. That attaches paramount importance to nationalization of the Russian political elite.

It was an uneasy and time-consuming decision to come to. President B. Eltsin was influenced by the team he built. The team pursued a shock-therapy policy under direct control of American advisers from M. Friedman Chicago School. The new elite unconditionally adopted the Western outlook. In the years to come, the West was making geopolitical influence in the post-Soviet area through the ideological toolkit. Such verbal markers of the liberal theory as democracy, human rights and liberties etc. allowed and allow the West to interfere with internal political affairs of countries in the post-Soviet area, make reports on the condition of democracy and human rights in other countries and fix the ideological constructs with legal obligations. Russia was denounced for the Chechen War and its role in the Crimean events. At the same time, if Russia dared to denounce American actions in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya, the West would recognize that as inadmissible.

During his first two presidential periods, V. Putin was gradually getting rid of external control. When this process was almost over and Russia came back to the battlefield, i. e. to the world politics, there was an attempt to make a colour revolution in the country with subsequent plunge into turmoil. That scenario worked well practically worldwide, including the post-Soviet area. But that was not the case with Russia.

Another efficient stereotypic measure is economic and political isolation of Russia. The same method was applied in the early 20th century, when the young Soviet state had to survive in a hostile environment. The isolation organised by Western states was a reaction to an unsuccessful attempt of geopolitical partition of Russia. The current encirclement of Russia with hostile states repeats the scenario created against the Soviet state. Under those conditions, we had to create our own industry, food basis, science and technology. "However, nothing of these deeds would be possible in absence of the axiological alternative to the values of the external world adopted by Bolsheviks on the basis of reconsideration of Marxism. The bourgeois ideas of life organization were replaced with different outlooks. That was the key of the USSR's success at the first stages of the Soviet project. It began losing to the West due to latent refusal from the axiological alternative and devaluation of Communist ideals. It is lack of an alternative axiological project or ideals of an alternative model of life that makes the current power team vulnerable", thinks V. Bagdasarian.

Russia has to select from several ways of further development: go on following the Western vector; redirect its raw materials to the East and bring back goods from there; or build self-sufficient Russia-centric economy. The first way will be welcomed by the Russian establishment, who have got used to having two comfortable homes. The second way will involve some costs, but under the model of provision of Oriental industrialists with raw materials, the Russian parasitic class will preserve the basis of its parasitism, viz. mediatory functions.

The Russia-centric model of development means mobilization of the country. "However, it is the mobilization that the current elite do not wish at all. This attitude on the part of the elite is the cardinal difference between the historical and the current situations of isolation. A hundred years ago there was a great ideological project offering an axiological alternative to the peoples of the world. Today there is only the ideology of unlimited consumption. At that time, there were passionary fanatics ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the idea. Today there is a group of corrupted pragmatists. The issue of new mobilization, viz. ideology, drive belts, human resources, is the high issue on the agenda of historical revival of Russia."

Judging by the recent events, including the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in September, 2014 in the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Russia has to select both second and third ways. The summit made an important decision to establish a single structure to struggle against terrorism. Actually, that meant establishment of a military alliance with joint troops under sole command. It also means that the NATO has stopped being a single military alliance now. There is an alternative whose power exceeds that of the NATO. The countries of the non-European world are ready to protect themselves against dictatorship of the EU and the NATO. Russia has become an initiator and an intermediary of consolidation of forces towards this aim.

The geopolitical choice has become axiological for the Russian political elite. They have to either serve the Motherland or watch over their private interests. Judging by some people's deputies' decisions to resign, they were presented with a dilemma and made up their minds. The elite nationalization process is going on as a component of the general process of revival of Russia.

A necessary condition of development of the Russian state is preservation of its territorial integrity and unity of the peoples living in it. Successful accomplishment of this mission depends on targeting the ideological course of the country at development of Russian and regional patriotism. It is to be a new type of patriotism combining traditional cultural senses with new aspects reflecting the changing world system. Globalization has not cancelled national states, but changed the modes of communication between them. Emergence of a brand new type of world culture makes the Russian society reformulate the basic definition of patriotism. The theoretical and well-known concept of "patriotism as love for the Motherland" should give way to the effective idea of "patriotism as service to the Motherland."