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Elena N. Glazunova

School of World Politics, Lomonosov Moscow State University, lng@fmp.msu.ru

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U.S. - Russian Relations: Dissonance of Ideologies

Elena Glazunova

Abstract

This paper examines Russian and American ideologies and their influence on the foreign policies of both countries in historical retrospective and today. The paper especially illustrates the role of ideology in Russia and U.S. relations during different periods with different intensity. In the relatively “calm” periods of history ideology was not that noticeable. However, at other times, Russia and the United States have engaged in a clash of ideologies that provided a powerful impulse to the formation of new models of international relations. Despite the post-Cold War hope that there would be less ideology in international relations in recent decades the role of ideology seems to have increased.

Introduction

The current foreign policy of the Russian Federation, to a significant extent, is a historical legacy formed by tremendous calamities and immense triumphs. The Russian Empire played a major role in thwarting Napoleon’s relentless expansion. The Soviet Union subverted Germany’s advanced war machine during [the Second World War](#) and came to dominate the world scene just two decades later (Shevchenko, 2015). But during its more than 1,000-year history, Russia has had four catastrophic events which crushed it as a state: the 13th century Mongolian invasion, the 17th century “Time of Troubles” (*Smuta*), the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (after which Russia became a battlefield for civil war and foreign interventions), and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (which was accompanied by a series of civil wars in post-Soviet space, a catastrophic economic downturn, and the unprecedented geopolitical breakdown of the country). This collective history helps to explain key specifics of Russian idiosyncrasy—the sense of vulnerability, the very painful reaction to any foreign influence and foreign ideological “experiments,” and the struggle *to preserve* not only her territories and statehood itself, but her moral values also.

The notion of “statehood” (*derjavnost*) has become very important in the contemporary political discourse within Russia. This is different from the notion of “state,” which mainly refers to administrative, managerial, law-enforcement, and judicial functions. The notions of *derjava* (power) and *samoderjavie* (autocracy) point to sovereignty, full self-sufficiency, independence, and the significance of the country in international relations. Furthermore—they connote the spiritual and moral mission of the Russian state—resisting evil in the world.

That is why the first Russian political ideology, which was formulated in 1833 by the Secretary of Education Count Sergey Uvarov, included these notions. The so called *Uvarov's Triad*—“Orthodoxy, Autocracy (*samoderjavi*) and Nationality”—also known as the *Official Nationality*—was a Russian national version of an international European ideology of restoration and reaction (Yanov, 2013). Since 1833, and to the present time, this triad remains the best way to explain the specifics of Russian historic conservatism and its modern incarnation.

In contrast with universal and international ideologies like socialism and liberalism, conservatism has always represented a national phenomenon. Like K. Leontiev, a 19th century philosopher, wrote, “each nation has its own protective ideology: the Turks have Turkish one, the Englishmen—English, Russians—Russian; and liberalism is everyone’s” (Leontiev, 1885). While liberalism has not tended to find much expression within Russian identity, conservatism has.

Each time when Russia lost “statehood,” it cost her people blood, suffering, misery, fear, and humiliation. The most fresh, and for several generations a still unhealed wound, was the first post-Cold War decade which resonates with defeat, the loss of identity, and subservience to the West. Russians throughout society were inclined to blame the “de-ideologization” of Yeltsin’s failed policies for all of their disasters.

The Importance of Ideology to Guiding Social Action

Today most Russian specialists in political science (including the author of this essay) would probably characterize themselves as “inertial Marxists” (Bogaturov, Kosolapov, & Chrustalev, 2002; Manykin, 2009; Pechatnov & Manykin, 2012, Setov, 2010). To apply this term to the theory of international relations, most Russian scholars share the views of the realist paradigm which has a lot in common with Marxism (material interests are basic, ideas are “superstructure” etc.). It is interesting to note that this statement applies not only to specialists who received their education in Soviet times, but also to the younger generation of Russian scholars who embrace this theoretical position. The liberal or constructivist approaches have not yet taken strong roots in the current Russian academic community. The classical definition of ideology given by the French philosopher of 18-19th century Antoine Destutt de Tracy as “a science of ideas” (Kennedy, 1979) seems to be too broad for contemporary challenges of scientific analysis. In this circumstance, Russian scholars tend to include Marxist precepts as an element of their methodology of the study of ideology.

The key Marxist position about ideology (expressed in his famous *German Ideology* in 1846) is that it is just a “reflection” of socio-political reality: “. . . The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior . . .” (Marx 2000, p. 8). Nevertheless, we also cannot miss another famous Marx thought, expressed in

1844: “Ideas become a material force when [in the] possession of the masses” (Marx, 2000, para7).

Why is ideology so important? In contrast with *philosophy* that seeks to explain the universe, but does not offer concrete actions, the main function of ideology is to provide human beings with guidance for social actions. Ideology supplies motivation for the long-term purposes of political behavior and the methods of gaining them - as Russian eminent specialists in international relations theory point out (Kosolapov, 2002, pp.234-235; Voytolovsky, 2015). However, not all ideas can become so influential. In order to become influential, they must resonate with and address the aspirations of the masses. This “connection” best occurs in very particular circumstances and conditions of human life. Such a situation can be illustrated by examples of U.S.-Russian relations in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Ideology in Russia and United States Relations in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Ideology became a significant element of international relations at the end of the 18th century. The turning point was the French Revolution and the wars of Napoleon. This statement is generally accepted in both Russian and Western literature. However, by accepting this point we risk overlooking a very important fact: the birth of the United States as a new country in the Western hemisphere. Appearing as a first “practical” result of the Enlightenment, this new state carried a powerful ideological charge - and well before the French Revolution, it challenged the European “ancient regime.”

Alan Cassels (1996) in *Ideology and International Relations in the Modern World* writes, “Behind the revolt of the thirteen American colonies in 1776 lay political theories regarding a ruler’s obligation under a social contract and the iniquity of absolute monarchy or despotism” (p. 15). The phrase “we the people of the United States ...” officially confirmed the principle of popular sovereignty two years before it was included in the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. This could not have been to the liking of Catherine the Great. Thus, the ideology of the United States of America *a priori* had the potential for conflict with Russian autocracy. However, conflict did not develop. Just the opposite occurred: Catherine the Great in fact chose to help American patriots in their fight with Britain, first refusing to honor the request of British King George III to send Russian troops for the suppression of the uprising colonies, and later initiating the *League of Armed Neutrality* (1780-1783) to protect trade between neutral states and the countries which were involved in the war.

The Russian Empress, being an adherent of the traditional 18th century European balance of power policy, tried to weaken Britain. There were also ideological considerations. For example, several years later Russia, while actively trading with the young American Republic, was steadily waging war with revolutionary France. The explanation for this perhaps puzzling choice is that Catherine the Great did not take American free-thinking and sedition as a serious practical threat to the Russian regime. Moreover, the reason is not only the

distance involved—the American revolutionary contagion, of course, was much further away than the French Revolution. The American Revolution also did not look that bloody and radical. In comparison with the French “Peace to the shacks! War on the palaces!” the American “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” seemed pretty harmless. The concept “pursuit of happiness,” upon closer examination, turned out to be much closer to the John Locke’s triad of “life, liberty, and property” than to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s conception of property, which became even more radicalized by the French Revolution. The personality of the Empress also mattered: Catherine the Great was known for her fascination with the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which she skillfully used to disguise the most unsightly features of Russian autocracy, and for improving the image of the throne.

Meanwhile, the former colonies had to decide how to deal with the rest of the world. The founding fathers encountered a serious dilemma. Should the young republic concentrate its efforts on creating a “City upon a Hill” which would be a superior model and a lighthouse for humankind? Alternatively, should the country share its unique experience with the Old World? In many ways, making the first choice implied isolation and not adopting the idea of a noble mission, whereas making the second choice would be to step into the morass of involvement in eternal European wars and conflicts.

In 1796 in the famous *Farewell Address*, President George Washington laid out the route for future America foreign policy: “The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities” (Washington, 1796, para 38.). Thus, the decision was made to reduce involvement in any conflicts outside the American continent. This reduced the risks for Catherine the Great and her successors, who already had too much engagement in Europe.

The French Revolution was also a revolution in international relations. Before the revolution all European states were monarchies, so any diversity of concepts could not exist in principle. Afterwards, it was very different. The Jacobins revolutionary wars and later the Napoleonic military campaigns, in fact represented a struggle for a new “social project,” the spread of new liberal values and ideals. This circumstance demanded adequate countermeasures from the European autocracies. The military victories over Napoleon were not enough—powerful liberal ideas could not be stopped just by military methods.

Russian Tsar Alexander I articulated the fundamental principle of the new international system through the Holy Alliance of European monarchs which was created on September 26, 1815, with the purpose of preserving the social order. In

1820, Alexander I invited the countries - participants of the European “concert” – to sign a protocol that proclaimed the right to suppress revolutionary unrest in any country even without agreement of its government. Austria and Prussia consolidated their position with that of Russia. France and Great Britain refused to join.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the ties of Russia and the United States began to strengthen. The common interest was the protection of the rights of neutral shipping and active trade during blazing European wars (Bolkhovitinov, 1966, p. 336). There was mostly no place for ideology in U.S.-Russian relations throughout the 19th century. America was not even a part of an international system of that time while Russia was a member of “The Great Powers' Club,” one of the most significant actors of the multi-polar and mainly Euro-centric world. Ideologically, Russia remained a bulwark of autocracy and conservatism. Sometimes considerations of ideological solidarity even prevailed over Russian national interests; for instance, in 1848-1849 Tsar Nicolas I helped Emperor Franz Joseph to suppress the Hungarian rebellion.

In general the Vienna model of international relations as well as the previous one, the Westphalian model, was based on the principle of national sovereignty, which did not require any country to have a particular type of governance or social order. European states mainly acted according to these models. In Russian-American relations, this was manifested very brightly with the outbreak of the American Civil War. The autumn of 1862 marked a most dramatic point of cooperation between Russia and the United States. In a critical time for the Union, Russian Emperor Alexander II made a very risky decision—he ordered two squadrons of the Russian Navy to sail to the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States. Neither Russian nor American historians have reached a consensus on the motivations behind the dispatch of the Russian fleets to both the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts of the United States (Bolkhovitinov, 1996; Saul, 1991, p. 339-354). The story was not as romantic as it may appear after reading enthusiastic reviews of American federal newspapers of the time. Helping President Lincoln and the cause of the North was not the first priority for Alexander II. The decision to dispatch the fleet came in the midst of a very tense time in the relations between Russian and European countries, primarily Britain and France. In January 1863, an uprising of national liberation began in the territory of “Russian Poland” (the territory Russia got after the Third partition of Poland in 1795 and Vienna Congress in 1815). After Russian troops started to suppress the rebellion, Britain and France presented to the Russian government a series of diplomatic notes demanding independence for Poland. Britain and France also demanded the convening of a European conference on the Polish question in order to discuss the future structure of the Polish state. Russia was just recovering from the Crimean War and a threat of a new European anti-Russian coalition was very serious. Emperor Alexander II declined to agree to the demands of the powers. He ordered Prince Gorchakov to answer with a firm “no” and protest against interference in the internal affairs of Russia. At the same time St. Petersburg did not want a new war. The difficulty of the situation in Russia was exacerbated by the fact that the

Russian fleet was much weaker than the united Anglo-French naval forces. In the event of war, Russia was vulnerable to the maritime operations of the European allies. In addition, there was a high probability that the Russian fleet would be blockaded inside the Baltic Sea. In this situation, the manager of the Marine Department, Admiral N. K. Krabbe, offered an exit - sending the fleet out of harm's way as a preventive measure.

The second intention at the time was to threaten to disrupt British sea trade. Russia's plan was implemented, and the calculation was accurate: the anti-Russian coalition completely collapsed. There is every reason to believe that the results of the visit of Russian naval squadrons to the United States exceeded the initial calculations and expectations of the naval ministry. Russia was able to solve the complex problems of both a political and a military-strategic nature. The mere presence of Russian warships in the U.S. ports forced England and France to abandon their intentions to intervene in the Polish question, helped to change the situation in the U.S. Civil War in favor of the North by siding with the Lincoln government, and demonstrated that the Russian fleet had once again become an effective force in international politics (Bolkhovitinov, 1994). At the same time it is important to highlight that Alexander II did not hesitate about which side of the American Civil War to support. The endorsement of the government of Abraham Lincoln was based on principles of sovereignty and legitimacy. Commenting on British-French intrigues and their plans for intervention against the Lincoln government, Russian Secretary of Foreign Affairs Prince Alexandre Gorchakov wrote to his American colleagues,

“You know the sentiments of Russia. We desire above all things the maintenance of the American Union as one indivisible nation. . . . Proposals will be made to Russia to join some plan of interference. She will refuse any intervention of the kind. . . . You may rely upon it, she will not change. But we entreat you to settle the difficulty. I cannot express to you how profound an anxiety we feel — how serious are our fears” (Taylor, 1862, p.764).

For Russians a dilemma about whom to support in this war did not exist. For the British it definitely did. Both conflicting American parties proclaimed ideas that mattered for the British liberal conscience. The Confederacy claimed the right of self-determination—the same as German, Italian, and other liberals had advanced in 1848. At the same time, Southerners in the United States also advocated for the institution of slavery, which was incompatible with liberal values. William E. Gladstone personified this liberal dilemma. Early in the war he was decidedly sympathetic to the Southern right of self-determination. It was at the worst time for the North—in the fall of 1862—that the British and French were planning intervention against Lincoln (Jones, 2011; Tarpley, 2011). Sending fleets to the American coasts was a signal to the British and French that the United States would not stay without allies if European powers make a decision to intervene in support of the “Southern insurgency”. Perhaps this partly led to the

fact that “by the close of 1865 Gladstone had been converted . . . to regard slavery as the key moral issue at stake and to switch his allegiance to the Union cause” (Cassels, 1996, p. 68). The contrasting positions of Russian solidarity and British equivocation could not be more clear. By the time Gladstone came to support the Lincoln government the Civil War was reaching its conclusion.

In the 19th century, ideology was not a primary factor in international relations. The situation radically changed in the 20th century when the struggle for the minds of people became a constant part of world politics. That is why the 20th century has been called the “century of ideology.” Different periods of this century were marked with uncompromising conflict between various ideologies. Each of them (whether the liberal-democratic internationalism of Woodrow Wilson, or the Bolshevik project of world revolution, or Nazism, or the Soviet version of Marxism-Leninism) not only proposed new types of social systems inside the countries which they represented, but sought to establish a New World Order based on their particular ideology. The wars of the 20th century were wars for “new social projects.”

Communist Internationalism vs. Liberal Internationalism

The first “phase” of the U.S.-Russian ideological contest in the 20th century started during World War I. Before the war, the idea of “Manifest Destiny” was limited within the Western Hemisphere. During the war, the United States broke free from the clutches of isolationism. For the first time in history, the United States tried to project a global dimension. Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States, eventually tried to realize Thomas Paine’s (1776) vision that “a cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind,” written in the introduction of his famous *Common Sense* (p.68). By the beginning of the war, the United States had become an economic giant, but primarily remained a minor player in global politics.

Relying on the growing power of his state, while preparing the United States to go to war, President Wilson, who was perceived in Europe as an idealist, formulated a new American approach to international relations: “We insist upon security in prosecuting our self-chosen lines of national development. We do more than that. We demand it also for others. We do not confine our enthusiasm for individual liberty and free national development to the incidents and movements of affairs which affect only ourselves. We feel it wherever there are people that try to walk in these difficult paths of independence and right. . . . In this we are not partisans but heralds and prophets of a new age” (Wilson, 1915, para 10).

For Europeans the most striking idea was that the American goals in war were formulated not as much in the national interest but to make “the world safe for Democracy” (Wilson, 1917, para 18). A stunning result was that the nation accepted this idea. However, having said that in April of 1917, the president could not have foretold that six months later his revolutionary approach would meet a not less powerful ideological competitor on the other side of the globe. In November of 1917, Russia offered the world another social project: the new

Soviet leadership declared its intention to spread the Bolshevik Revolution beyond the borders of Russia.

It is well known that President Wilson's *Fourteen Points* allowed Germany's new chancellor, Prince Maximilian, to end the war on dignified terms and to reach an armistice without admitting defeat. This American plan also became the basis of the Versailles peace settlement. But it is not widely known that Wilson's *Fourteen Points* actually were an answer to Lenin's most thundering proclamation—the *Decree on Peace*: “The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of October 24-25 and basing itself on the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their government to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace” (Lenin, 1917, para 1). This was the appeal of the new Russian leader to the entire world. This looked like the Bolsheviks, whom Wilson deeply despised, had seized the initiative from the country that had just declared itself the leader of the liberal world. Paradoxically, Lenin and Wilson were campaigning for the same goals—democratic peace, open diplomacy, national self-determination—but the ways of achieving them were totally antithetical.

The American vision, based on the principles of a liberal-democratic interventionism, was presented in Wilson's style—grandiloquently and in the abstract:

What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. (Wilson, 1918, para 2.)

Lenin's goal was much more concrete: “The workers' movement will triumph and will pave the way to peace and socialism” (Lenin, 1917). Both nations proclaimed a crusade. This ideological standoff predetermined not only the character of the bilateral relations, but also the nature of two international models—the Versailles-Washington and the Yalta-Potsdam (or bipolar) models.

Within a short period of postwar “Wilsonianism” (before America returned to isolationism) the United States managed to realize in practice a crusade of ideas. Notwithstanding the negative position of the War Department, Wilson responded to the request of France and Great Britain and sent American troops to Russia. The American Expeditionary Force was under the command of Major General William S. Graves. It was called Siberia, and consisted of 7,950 officers and enlisted men. Despite its stay in the Russian Far East from August of 1918 until April of 1920, the Siberia force did not take part in any battles, but the involvement of the United States in the Russian Civil War is an indisputable historical fact (McMaster, 2014).

Collective security, President Wilson's most cherished concept that found embodiment in the League of Nations, became the foundation of the new Versailles-Washington world order. From the moment of its creation, the Treaty of Versailles was doomed. The Senate of the United States never ratified it. Its distinct anti-German and anti-Soviet character - Soviet Russia was not invited to the Paris Conference; and Germany was declared the main and only culprit of the war (Peace Treaty of Versailles, 1919) - led humankind to World War II.

The specificity of this conflict for the first time since the end of the 18th century consisted of ideology in addition to the more traditional complex of factors (geopolitical, economic, etc.). The Axis powers fought not only for territories and resources—they strived also to impose on the world a certain manner of life and a distinct system of values.

There were a variety of reasons why most major Western democracies and the Soviet Union became allies in this war. First, of course, they united in their efforts to stop the attempts of the Nazi revisionist powers to establish world dominance. But there was also an ideological factor: communist internationalism with its preaching of the equality of working people all over the world had the same humane charge as the liberal system of values—freedom and equality dovetailed with it better than with the misanthropic racism of Nazi Germany and Japanese militarism.

The Cold War Paradox

Following the defeat of Germany and of fascist ideology the world entered into a new epoch—so called “bipolarity.” On one hand, the Cold War seemed to represent the quintessential and most complete form of the U.S.-Russian ideological conflict. The military power and “soft” power of both states were called upon to serve the spread of moral values, the world-views, and the legitimacy of the two “superpowers.” In the big picture this represented a rivalry between two social systems and alternative ways of life—capitalism and socialism. The ideological component of international relations was acknowledged even by the pillars of realistic theory. Hans Morgenthau, by way of example, argued that “. . . the struggle for the minds of men” needed to be added to “the traditional dimensions of diplomacy and war” (Morgenthau, 1966, Preface).

There has been no period in the history of international relations when such number of ideological conceptions, doctrines, and theories were invented. From George F. Kennan's “containment” to Ronald Reagan's “evil empire,” from the proclamation of Marxist-Leninist ideology with the reference to the old Bolsheviks' principles of proletariat internationalism to Mikhail Gorbachev's new political thinking with its priority of universal values over class, national, religion, etc.—all this diversity fitted into 45 years of the bipolar confrontation.

On the other hand, in the worst period of bilateral relations—the Cold War - ideological disputes were not that meaningful. During the almost half century of bipolar confrontation each of the two countries tried to stick to rational approaches to bilateral relations. It meant balancing interests with values and avoiding

extremes. Of course there were periods when the ideological messages in the rhetoric of both countries dominated. For instance, during the Eisenhower years, United States foreign policy seemed to be highly ideological. But in practice the famous John Foster Dulles concept of “immorality and short-sightedness of neutrality” - countries had to take sides in the ideological struggle because neutrality was not a moral option - had to be implemented in concert with the geopolitical and geostrategic interests and intensified American involvements in Third World countries with the purpose to change uncomfortable regimes or vice versa—to support “the right” ones (Dulles, 1956). By way of example, cooperation between the United States and the most odious Latin American dictatorships continued throughout the Cold War. While the priority task of Soviet foreign policy in the Third World remained the support of “friendly regimes,” the decisive criterion for making decisions to grant aid (military, economic, technical) was the amount of practical and geostrategic benefit that the U.S.S.R. could obtain.

It is also hard to say whose foreign policy was more ideological—the American or the Soviet. Shortly after World War II, despite the flows of ideological rhetoric, Josef Stalin approached foreign policy from the point of view of balance of power. For him, Eastern Europe belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence. Ideology was not his priority. Even if at the beginning of his revolutionary activity he shared the belief that working masses in their hearts are internationalists, the Polish-Soviet war of 1920 convinced him otherwise. The Polish proletariat and peasants did not support Lenin’s idea of overthrowing the bourgeois government and the “sovietization” of Poland. Stalin built his foreign policy on the principles of *raison d’état* and political realism. He did not support Greek communists, in fact leaving Greece for the Western sphere of influence. After 1947-48, when early post-war hopes that communist parties in Europe would strengthen their positions disappeared, Stalin started to enhance the “security belt” along western borders of the U.S.S.R., increasing the pressure on Eastern European governments. One of the measures to get their loyalty was “sovietization.” However, the determining factor of this politics was, of course, the presence of the Red Army. Stalin’s successors mostly continued this policy. For instance, Nikita Khrushchev rhetorically supported China’s claims to the islands of Taiwan but rejected any military action. Sometimes ideological rhetoric practically disappeared from the dialogue of both countries. This occurred when the opportunities for mutually beneficial partnership overpowered ideology—like in the first half of 1970s, during the *détente* era. Leonid Brezhnev, in spite of widespread opinion, did not give real assistance to the government of Salvadore Allende in Chile because he did not want to overly upset *détente* with the United States. A little detail can illustrate the Soviet approach: the cost to the Chilean government for leasing its Moscow Embassy was actually increased. Brezhnev too cherished the *détente* to expose it to risk for the sake of supporting the socialist experiments of the government of a distant Latin American country (Glazunova, 2017).

Generally, the Americans accepted these rules and played mostly the same game: not to challenge the vital interests of the other. Thus, American reactions to

events in Hungary in 1956 and during the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were not more than diplomatic protests and verbal condemnations. The same was true for the Soviet reaction to the American invasion of Grenada in 1983. Only once were the rules of this game roughly violated—in the fall of 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis could have resulted in a nuclear catastrophe, but at the same time it paved the way for the future *détente*.

The ideological aspect of the Cold War was more noticeable in the superpowers competition over the Third World. The term itself had very deep ideological connotations: in 1952 French sociologist Alfred Sauvy used it to refer to the former colonial countries, comparing them with the third estate of French society on the eve of the 18th century revolution - unfairly exploited and potentially revolutionary (Sauvy, 1952). As Odd A. Westad (2007), one of the founders of the “new Cold War history concept,” wrote, that it also assumed “the refusal to be ruled by the superpowers and their ideologies, the search for alternatives both to capitalism and Communism . . .” (p.2). But this alternative was difficult to achieve. The Third World became an arena of ideological and geopolitical competition. During almost five decades of “Cold War” American administrations—Republican and Democratic - both “officially took the view that adherence to Marxism-Leninism not only made governments internally repressive but also—through their presumed subservience to Moscow—a threat to the global balance of power” (Gaddis, 1992, p. 13). John Gaddis (1992) argues “there was never very good evidence to support this claim” (p. 13).

The U.S.S.R. did try to use ideology to gain its objectives in so called “developing countries” of Asia and Africa. Both Moscow and Washington experts identified these areas as containing “vital” interests - security, strategic, economic, and political. Both the United States and the Soviet Union aspired to be a global power, with influence and presence across the globe as benefits a superpower. As former Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko used to say: there is no question of significance that can be resolved without the Soviet Union (Saivetz, 1989, p. 211). Furthermore, the Third World served as a testing ground for both sides for their competing ideas about the nature and direction of historical changes.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union marked a new historical crossroads of international relations and the beginning of a new era. In comparison with the Cold War’s “clarity,” the post-war transitional phase seems to be much more muddled, dangerous, and unpredictable. To a large extent, this complexity can be explained with the growing role of the ideological factor in world politics. The present main confrontation between liberal ideas of a universal world and increasingly conservative antiglobalistic tendencies give a powerful impetus to the process of formation of a new international model. It is clear that U.S.-Russian relations in the present continue to be a testing ground for any global system.

Present U.S.-Russian relations are surviving hard times. European and American media blame Russia. Putin’s Russia is called revisionist, aggressive, nationalistic, authoritarian, etc. Experts (mostly Western, but a few Russian also), trying to understand the overwhelming support and popularity of President

Vladimir Putin in Russian society, sometimes make conclusions having nothing to do with reality. For example, in 2015 Senior Associate and Chair of the Carnegie Moscow Center A. Kolesnikov published an article titled “Russian Ideology after Crimea” (Kolesnikov, 2015), where he expressed his distinctive opinion:

Following the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the Russian public has embraced an increasingly conservative and nationalistic ideology. . . . The new ideology is based on a deliberate recycling of archaic forms of mass consciousness, a phenomenon that can be termed the sanctification of unfreedom. Confined to a besieged fortress, surrounded by external enemies, and faced with a domestic fifth column, the people of Russia have begun to experience Stockholm syndrome and have thrown their support behind the commander of the fortress, President Vladimir Putin. . . . This sacralization of unfreedom gives birth to militarism.

In this long citation there are only two words which are supported by evidence: “conservative and nationalistic.” The rest of the judgements—especially the existence of the “Stockholm syndrome” and the “sacralization of unfreedom”—are groundless assessments.

Conservatism (in both meanings—as a system of moral values, and as a political ideology) definitely dominates in Russia today. In 2016, among 75 registered political parties (Spisok, 2016) about 20 directly declared conservative values and principles. At least another 15, according to their program rhetoric, can be named “near-conservative.” Two of the four parties represented in the Duma openly declare their adherence to conservatism (United Russia) and nationalism (the Liberal-Democratic Party). A third party in the Duma—the Communist Party of Russian Federation—also appeals to historical traditions and cultural roots—the views that are the main definition of all kinds of conservative thoughts. The ideological credo of the Russian President is expressed by the notion “conservatism.” A favorite concept of Premier Dmitry Medvedev is “conservative modernization” (Shirinyants, 2014). To paraphrase Russian philosopher Konstantin Leontiev, one can say that being a severest conservative in Russia today is profitable and easy like it was in the 1990s to be a liberal (Leontiev, 1885).

“Conservative-preservative” thinking, which shapes current Russian foreign policy, did not appear after Crimea. Practically all experts conclude that it is a product of the shaping of several hundred years. However, there is not enough attention to the role of the more recent period of Russian history—the 1990s. There is no doubt that the current way of thinking in Russia emanates from the top. Nevertheless, a most important and interesting consideration is not this circumstance, but why there is such a strong request for it from the bottom. Why are Russians ready to sacrifice their well-being to support President Putin’s politics, in particular his anti-Western and anti-American course?

Examining the First Post-Cold War Decade

The answer to why Putin is supported by the Russian people is found by examining the first post-Cold War decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disastrous consequences for the people of Russia. A frame for this ill-fated period of time is the negative attitude within the country to what was perceived widely as the “de-ideologization” and “Westernization” of Yeltsin’s domestic and foreign policies.

Of course the “de-ideologization” of Yeltsin’s foreign policy is only a myth. The ideological credo of Yeltsin’s first foreign minister, A. Kozyrev, was expressed very clearly: “Our choice is . . . to progress according to generally accepted rules. They were invented by the West, and I’m a Westernizer in this respect—the West is rich and we need to be friends with it. . . .” (Stent, 2014, p. 24). Throughout the 1990s Washington’s policy toward Russia was conducted out of a traditional conviction that the internal socio-political regime shapes the international behavior of a country. In the view of American experts, Yeltsin was a guarantor of liberal and democratic reforms in Russia, and of not returning to some kind of totalitarian or authoritarian regime that could jeopardize U.S. interests. So the West had to support it financially. Money was given in the format of “structural adaptation”: Russia had to provide the conditions for democratization of its internal life, and to follow the rules that were dictated by the single “superpower”—the United States—in its foreign policy. Throughout the first half of the decade Russia was obedient, accepting the status of America’s junior partner and subsequent moves towards NATO expansion, cooperating with NATO in the Balkans, and listening to Western criticism of the Chechen war.

Yeltsin's American honeymoon did not last long. By the middle of 1990s, many Russian people already perceived that Yeltsin's domestic and foreign policies were a betrayal of the national interest. At the beginning of 1996 Yeltsin's popularity was at a historical low point, with only an 8 percent approval rating. He was in fifth place among presidential candidates, while the Communist Party leader G. Zyuganov was ahead with 21 percent. It compelled new Russian oligarchs, scared about the looming prospect of a communist victory, to join together their financial resources in order to re-elect the incumbent President (so called *semibankirshchina*—seven bankers). Still, Yeltsin’s victory would not have been possible without American support. In February of 1996 the International Monetary Fund, urged on by the United States, granted a \$10.2 billion loan to Russia (Russia and I.M.F., 1996). These huge sums not only allowed Yeltsin’s team to pay off long-owed wages and pensions to millions of Russians shortly before the June election, but also deploy a massive “black arts” campaign against Zuganov. American political technologists played an important role in the re-election.

Yeltsin’s victory, however, did not change public assessment. The period of 1996-1999 was characterized by growing domestic criticism of Russia’s weak and defeatist foreign policy and leading to the more nationalistic mood.

In 1990s, listening to endless speeches about democracy, freedom, etc., and in reality observing misery, crime, cheating, major corruption, and the aggression of a cheap mass culture, Russians realized that notorious “common human values” do not mean much in the absence of “freedom from need” and “freedom from fear.” In this time frame several generations of Russians, including very young people, got a very strong vaccination against the liberal system of values, Western ideology, and Western culture. The “syndrome of the 1990s,” which created a fertile soil for the growth of conservative ideology, did not mean disease. On the contrary, for many Russians, it meant recovering.

The first bright manifestation of this “recovering” related to the U.S.-Russian interactions was the famous “Primakov loop” in March of 1999. Russia’s new Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was on his way to Washington, D.C. to negotiate with Vice-President Albert Gore the next tranche of IMF monetary aid. After being informed about the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia, which was to commence a few hours later, Primakov ordered the government official plane to return to Russia. This case went down in history under the name “Primakov’s loop”. This choice of action by Primakov was not just a gesture—it was the beginning of a new foreign policy consensus within Russia. “Primakov loop” had several key messages: Russia is a partner, not a client of the West; Russia is in a unique position being both a European and an Asian country, and its national interests lie between those two worlds; Russia is a competent actor in a multipolar, not a unipolar world; and in foreign policy Russia values realism (real deals), not some abstract ideas and dogmas.

Putin’s Russia and Prospects of U.S.-Russian Interactions

By the time of Putin’s coming the public mood in Russia was quite different from what it had been a decade before. Clinton’s policy facilitated an anti-Western and anti-American mood within Russia. Outwardly benevolent and friendly, it was in fact anti-Russian, especially because it supported NATO expansion. In the eyes of the Russian people by “expanding democracy” in Russia the United States actively supported the creation of a new socioeconomic regime of “criminalized capitalism.” In general, the experience gained from dealing with different American administrations brought Russians to the conviction that it was easier to find a common language with Republicans than with Democrats. Russians considered Republicans less dogmatic and more maneuverable. They used to be closer to the *realpolitik* concept, which is closer in turn to Russian conservatism. Republicans are more inclined to prefer equilibrium in world politics. Democrats are more exposed to the influence of ideology and strive to pursue reforms, transformations, and crusades.

According to Henry Kissinger (2005), “This is why crusaders have usually caused more upheavals and suffering than statesmen” (para 13). During the last years of President Reagan’s administration, and during the presidency of George H. W. Bush, American policy toward Russia was generally cautious. Then

Democrats came to the White House and started a policy based on liberal-democratic ideas coupled with a reformist activism. First, came Yugoslavia and the 1999 NATO expansion, then more active involvement in post-Soviet space—all this Russia at first was watching in silence, but gradually became more and more wary. To paraphrase Prince Gorchakov's famous words: "Russia was not only concentrating. Russia was getting angry" (Glasser, 2013, para 1.). Russia was preparing to counter-attack.

Putin understood this public mood very well. It corresponded with his own convictions. The period of Russian-American partnership that was shaped after 9/11 was short. Soon Putin announced his opposition to the U.S. "war on terror." Russians viewed American criticism of the wars in Chechnya and human rights policies as an interference in its internal affairs. That deterioration of relations occurred because of at least two big issues: the use of military force to effect regime change in Iraq, and the illegitimacy of Western military intervention without UN sanction. At the same time, Americans became more and more disappointed in Russia's lack of democratic reforms. Meanwhile, rising oil prices strengthened the Russian economy and the socio-political situation within Russia became more stable. The Kremlin needed Washington less and less. Moscow increasingly accused Washington of undermining a systemic balance, be it via NATO's eastward expansion or via humanitarian intervention into countries formerly known as the Third World.

In 2005 in his Second Inaugural Address, President George W. Bush stressed that in order to protect the American people and defeat terrorism America had to spread its values to other countries: "The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world" (Bush, 2005). The Bush Freedom Agenda was just another reincarnation of liberal internationalist ideology. Moscow perceived it as a justification for any American involvement in the internal affairs of other countries. In contrast to the United States, Russia firmly advocated the principle of noninterference.

In 2003, and again in 2005, Washington supported "color revolutions" in the Russian "backyard." Ukraine was the most sensitive for Russians. Angela Stent (2014) identified the magnitude of support for the "Orange Revolution" by referencing the fact that Ukraine had become the third largest recipient of U.S. aid after only Israel and Egypt (p. 111). This approach inflamed U.S.-Russian relations. The result of this ideological confrontation was Putin's legendary Munich Security Conference speech of 2007. The Munich speech marked a new phase in Russia's relations with the United States and the world, which is continuing until the present. The basic construct of Putin's Munich speech was the idea of "sovereign democracy," which refers to a "form of political life where political power, the authority from which power is derived, and decisions are taken by a diverse Russian nation for the purpose of gaining material welfare, freedom and fairness for all citizens, social groups and nationalities and for the people that formed it" (Surkov, 2006). Of course the key word of the construction was "sovereign," not "democracy."

There were several core ideas in the speech: neither the United States (nor any other nation) can teach Russia about democracy; Russia would no longer accept an agenda dictated in Washington; and Russia's political system meets the needs and expectations of the Russian people. The concept was more than just an ideological response to Bush's Freedom Agenda: it challenged the universality of the Western value system and proved that Russia's ideology and policy choices are derived from its own unique history and are as legitimate as that of the United States or Europe. Strong "conservative/preservative" evocative appeals to ideological and political traditions became dominant in Russian domestic and foreign policy theoretical discourse and practice.

Conclusion

In the 19th century Uvarov's triad did not become an official ideology. At the time it was not understood and rejected. It cannot be said that the creators of today's Russian ideology understand it better, but it is impossible not to see them attempting to revive all three postulates and adjust them to current reality. As Uvarov denied the godlessness of the 18th century and its mockery of faith and church, today Russia seeks to reverse the atheism of the Soviet era as well as the dissoluteness and permissiveness of the liberal 1990s. According to the revived ideology, the authority of the state must be based on the dominant religion, and only by being sanctified in the beliefs of people will it be strong and legitimate. As Uvarov preferred constitutional monarchy over a republic form of government, today Russia is promoting Putin's model of a "strong state" which is based on the idea of "managed democracy." The most complicated element of the triad—nationality—is also very relevant for today's political tasks. Like Uvarov counterposed this notion to the French revolution's *fraternité* (which has international meaning declaring that all people are brothers), modern Russian conservatism appeals to nationalism to oppose globalism which implies Western, primarily American, dominance.

Crimea became the culmination of implementation of these concepts. In 2014 Putin returned national pride to the Russian people. For this, most of them are ready to forgive him shortages of his domestic politics, the falling standard of living, and the deterioration of the Russian image abroad. The degree of his popularity in society is still high ([Reitingi "Edinoy Rossii" i Putina dostigli maksimuma. \(2017\)](#)). The "Crimea consensus" is a very important factor of Russian political life. And it is going to stay this way in the 2018 election.

The Crimea annexation and following Russian participation in the war in eastern Ukraine ultimately damaged relations between Russia and the West, in particular with the United States. In this period, we have been watching probably the most serious split between the ideological mainstreams of the two countries in the history of their relations: Russian "conservative/preservative" ideology versus American "liberal globalism." This confrontation is being aggravated by the fact that the Russian internationalism of the 20th century - in all its forms - is now

changed to nationalism. One can say that the same trend is visible in America today. But it is clear that nationalism in the United States does not have fertile soil since it is a country of immigrants. Today's rhetoric of nationalism may be considered as an ideological deviation, which will not live very long.

Despite the divergence of ideologies Russia and America have several key concerns that demand cooperation. One example is fighting Islamist terrorism. At this time one should not overestimate President Donald Trump's sympathies to Russia and his aspirations for cooperation. Even if he has such aspirations, the American system of checks and balances will not let him act alone. Therefore, the question of the future of U.S.-Russia relations may well depend upon broader social views of practical well-being and moral ideas, ideologies that both countries, at different times and with different intensity, have shared in common.

In the longer term, it is more likely that both countries will come to see that, in this globalized interdependent world, there are few great problems that can be solved without their active cooperation. And their national interests compel it.

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