

## CHINA AS A TOPIC OF NEW RUSSIAN DEBATES

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**T**he scope of the Russian debates are changing before our eyes – and they are changed by two tightly coupled circumstances, they are the emergence of the ‘modernisation’ topic in Russia and the phenomenon of a rapidly developing China. It would be simple and something usual if China just became like the West, if its modernisation could be seen as a synonym of Westernisation as it was in the case of Japan and the ‘East Asian tigers’. Meanwhile, the contrary is actually the case. Not long ago, China was treated scornfully by our Westernists for its poor manufacturing quality, but then China suddenly rushed ahead, greatly outpacing the ‘liberal tigers’ in terms of its growth rate. Its rapid progress was also due to its extremely authoritarian political system, strict state control of the financial sector, and understated social standards of the population. It would more or less fit the usual ideological coordinate system if China really was a systemic alternative to America, a unique symbol of technocratic Asian ways. However, observers have identified a strange symbiosis, deprived of any value aspect, between post-industrial USA and industrial China has emerged, otherwise deemed Chimerica (according to a definition posed by Niall Ferguson) or an ‘American-Chinese balance-beam’ (according to a metaphor cited by Evgeny Yasin) and there is foundation to see this as the new geo-economical axis of the modern world order.

The debates on modernisation have inevitably hit one obstacle – do we indeed want to follow the path of China and will we accept a reduction in wages and consumption proportionally in order to capacitate our own industrial breakthrough?

The discussion of this matter has not, in fact, gotten underway in Russia yet. It has not been started because it is not possible to answer these questions, not from the usual Westernist standpoint, not from the orthodox liberal one, and not from the commonplace conservative one. There is a chance that our wish to be similar to the West is exactly what is moving us away from the West. I equal force, **a kind of Chinasation of Russia may very well be the only way to find some state of covenant with the United States of America.** Are we ready to, at least, set the stage in regards to this question? Has our public opinion come to take such a common position that can serve as a starting point from which every rational person could formulate his or her very own standpoint?

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**All Russian ideologies – with few exceptions – date back to the quarrels and disputes between the Westernists and Slavophiles of the 1830s.** Russian social ideas have progressed from the state of affairs when, for the first time, Russia felt that it was either something more or something less than the stronghold

‘*Conservative Westernists*’ – demanded that Russia reject nationalism and, uphold the Holy Union, and continue to be the protector of a Catholic and noble Europe. ‘*Liberal Westernists*’ such as Timofey Granovsky, admitted that it was necessary to give up false originality in order that it be replaced by establishments of the West, which would guarantee personal independence. ‘*Conservative Nationalists*’ believed that Russia needed to break off with German monarchic courts and especially with the Catholic church as the eternal opponent of the Slavic culture and Orthodoxy. They wished to embrace ‘traditional’ Slavic, as opposed to European principles. Finally, ‘*Revolution Nationalists*’ such as Alexander Herzen, in emigration period, called on the original, Slavic and communal Russia to stand at the forefront of a European socialist revolution.

**In all our ideological disputes of recent times, all four of these positions have been more or less reproduced.**

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In this issue of ‘RJ: standpoint of the week’, we decided to orchestrate an independent series of analyses of the ‘Chinese matter’. We hereby present articles by experts that hold two presumably opposite standpoints about China as a model for today’s modernisation of Russia and asked the rest of the participants of

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of conservative monarchic Europe in its deadly confrontation with the ideas of the French revolution. The Russian intelligentsia then divided, more or less, into four segments. Some of its representatives – the

the modernisation debates to put forth their views on this topic. I think it will impossible to keep silent about this topic in the near future. Russian society is in need of and awaits a new ideological self-determination. ■