

## NININS 2020

### International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»

## BUILDING A NEW WORLD ORDER: RUSSIA AND THE COMPETITION OF CIVILIZATION PROJECTS

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### Abstract

After the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the whole world has experienced the lack of developmental ideas and as a consequence, the system of international relations is balancing between the unipolar and multipolar world. The situation of identity crisis is characteristic not only for Russia, but also for the USA and China. Nowadays Great Powers struggle both for resources and ideas to control peoples and civilizations and in that respect the problem of identity for Russia is one of the most acute ones. So using the methodology of civilizational and geopolitical approaches, authors aim to research the state of the Post-Soviet Russia within the contest of the Great Powers which build a new world order diluting the unipolar model. Authors suppose that Russia is doomed to lose both the information and civilizational wars in case it won't be able to offer its own comprehensive civilizational project. Taking a journey into the history, it is seen that the meanings that were offered by Russia over the millennium derive three specific contexts that are supported by the majority: a request for the great power; a request for social justice, and a request for strong central authority to bring the first two to life. The implementation of the requests is analysed from the point of view of history of Russian world-order ideas: the models by Catherine the Great and Stalin are considered more closely among others.

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*Keywords:* Civilizational project, international relations, identity, multipolar world, Russia, world order



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## 1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War and destruction of the Soviet identity that followed has not only marked Russia's defeat in the confrontation with the West: its dialectical consequence is involvement of the whole world into a crisis of further development ideas. As a result of decades, it can be stated that the disappearance of the global threat for the United States and its coalition is equally challenging to their identity, integrity and goal-setting as destruction of the Soviet system for the historical Russia. The period of uncertainty in American foreign policy lasted from 1991 to 1997–1998; the subsequent processes of a unipolar system building were constrained with the global economic crisis and the Russian-Georgian five-day conflict of 2008: those marked some limits of globalization and shift to previous models of spheres of influence. At present, the system of international relations is keeping a balance between the developing trends of the unipolar and multipolar world.

## 2. Problem Statement

After 2016 the Trump's Administration declares in its doctrinal documents that the last 25 years of the USA's foreign policy were a mistake (National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2017; Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, 2018). More often there appear ideas of a new American isolationism, though Donald Trump himself clearly avoids this term saying that he represents the ideas of antiglobalism (Moskalenko, 2018).

Cupchan (2018), the USA researcher, thinks that the reminiscence of the isolationist trends is due to the search of American exceptionalism that should give answers to challenges of time. He speaks about Isolationism 3.0, preceded by Isolationism 1.0 and Isolationism 2.0 (Globalism), connected the latter with a new foreign policy. There cannot be any return to the first variant of exceptionalism as it does not meet the challenges when the exceptionalism of globalism has brought the country to crisis. So, to get its new exceptionalism, the USA should adjust all five dimensions of the exceptionalist narrative: exceptional geographic bounty forming unparallel autonomy in its foreign and internal policy; strong belief in its messianic mission; unparallel social equality and economic mobility; exceptional nature of the Anglo-Saxon people.

China, the main beneficiary of current shifts in the international field, is also in a situation of identity crisis. From the point of view of economy, it is able to move to global expansion, which, however, was carried out by Beijing in the 15th century for the last time (Kennedy, 1989). The cultural code of China is quite a serious constraint to its global expansion as the closed space of the Celestial Empire has been built for centuries and China is a part of the civilization space of Greater China (Irkhin, 2011). In addition, the United States demonstrate some restraints to China through the strategy of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (Leksytina, 2019)

## 3. Research Questions

At the moment there are two main spaces of struggle of the Great Powers: struggle for resources and contest for ideas that give power over peoples and civilizations. Civilization is understood as a

broader cultural entity, the highest cultural grouping of people that share language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and the subjective self-identification of people (Huntington, 2011). Information wars are waged to win meanings and ideas and use propaganda means that nowadays have a character of mass destruction (Shibaev & Uibo, 2016). There is no need for an aggressor to destroy aborigines, colonize territories when one can exploit them literally unpaid. Any information warfare hits brains, not people.

From this point of view, Russia's position is quite marginal and uncertain. Russia cannot generate or offer its clear view in the course of media or, let it say more broadly, civilizational struggle: we see just logics of defense and secondary identity when it is stated that "We aren't the West" or "We aren't the East."

After the purposeful destruction of the Soviet project, the problem of identity for Russia as a society and Russia as a state is very acute. We cannot say that there were no attempts to build new Russian identity. Former communist leaders forgot their atheism, turned into deeply religious people and went into for wild capitalism, implementing reforms to denationalize the Soviet economy. So, the New Russia adopted Western-style democracy as its dominant ideology (Kara-Murza, 2011). All this was accompanied by large-scale robbery of the Russians, radical rewriting of history and introduction of various information technologies and reforms to destroy society and remnants of the state that lost the Cold War. Then there were attempts to build a special form of Russian "sovereign democracy", as if it were Western, but with Russian peculiarities. As a result, Russia found itself literally split between the two irreconcilable ideologies: that of the White and the Red Russia.

At the current stage the Red and the White projects may be referred to the Russian conservatism, nevertheless only external open aggression would be able to reconcile them as there is no any interior field to compromise. Those who support the white project tend to return the state to its prerevolutionary stage of development of the century before last when church, czar and motherland were cornerstones of the Russian Empire. Those supporting the Red project stand for the Soviet model of development, claim to revise the results of Yeltsin privatization and bring the officials that are responsible for transition, to justice. The adversarial position of the Russian elite and the Russian people is one of the reflections of the contest of the two projects, as one of the main questions is the question of distribution of economical goods. So, Russia is in the state of the civil war when the White and the Red elites have opposite interpretation of history basic for the ideology. The marking points of interpretation are: the Great October Social Revolution or the October Coup, Stalin as Father of the Peoples or as a bloody tyrant, collapse of the USSR as a geopolitical catastrophe or as an inevitable crash of the Evil Empire.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Authors aim to research the state of the Post-Soviet Russia and its ways of identity shaping within the contest of the Great Powers which build a new world order diluting the unipolar model and using logics of the spheres of interest thus objectivating regionalization.

## 5. Research Methods

The methodology is based upon systematic, civilizational and geopolitical approaches. The systematic approach preconditioned the creative application of such methods as analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction, as well as the principles of dialectics in scientific research of the historical process and international relations. The authors adhered to the principle of historicism and objectivity in the study of the stages of the genesis of Russian historical meanings of development.

## 6. Findings

In case Russia doesn't offer any civilizational project, it is doomed to lose both the information and the civilizational wars as the former and the latter correspond as a part of the whole. Any, let them be unlimited, material and technological resources that would be used to form positive image of Russia in the world, will not work effectively, as any Russian *soft power* won't work under the circumstances. As researchers underline, "Russia had to regain its footing and sought to redefine its own national identity prior to being able to build and project its soft power" (Slobodchikoff & Davis, 2017, p. 19). Even in the Third World periphery of world capitalism, where the level of anti-Americanism is quite high due to the robbery system built by the United States, Moscow can only play on anti-American attitudes, but it cannot offer anything in return, being the material and ideological periphery of the United States. And as Russia lacks subjectivity in relation to the West, any anti-Western and pro-Russian choice for foreign elites is reckless when they face such a choice.

So, at the stage of the remaking of the world order Russia cannot demonstrate any clear identity and is torn between the Red, White and Liberal projects thus barring chances for internal consolidation and making the visible part of the external policy uncompetitive.

Both directly and indirectly, the White elite acts in favor of a liberal pro-Western project. After all, it was liberal politicians and historians who discredited the achievements of the Soviet period. At the same time, the opposition between the White and liberal projects in Russia looks clumsy as they have almost similar points of view slightly differing, on all key issues of the history of the XX century.

The vast majority of the Russian political and economic elites are fully integrated into the Western project, therefore, by its nature, they are liberal: they siphon off their money to the West, buy real estate, send their children to study and live abroad. The very model of the Russian modern economy, despite the beginning of a cold confrontation with the West, contributes to the fact that Russia is a subsystem of the Western economy and is peripheral to the Western core (Kagarlitsky, 2009). Under such a model confrontation with a competitor cannot be won. This bifurcation of Russian military-political and economic interests is the reason why there is no definite project. It also gives rise to a confrontation between the elite, which is trying to preserve its resources, and the Russian people, who after two and a half decades of humiliation are trying to return Russia to its former glory of a great power.

That's why history becomes the main ideological field of war (Dibirov & Belousov, 2014) for the minds and hearts of Russians. History emerges in all areas of information war. For example, in 2015 the attitude towards the victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War became a dividing line between Ukraine and Russia. Any great nation needs symbols of victory. In Russia, this symbol, the Victory Day,

May 9, 1945, is now almost the only one. Moreover, this historical fact is unifying for the peoples of the USSR. But in Ukraine the fact of victory is blurred by information and political technologies. The 24 years of transcoding of the Ukrainian people culminated in the Maidan of 2014. At the same time, there was no information policy of Russia in Ukraine since the collapse of the USSR. Russia lost the information war in Ukraine almost “in the dry,” including the historical dimension of this war: any historical fact from the Old Russian period to the present has at least an anti-Russian interpretation.

What are the fundamental reasons of the fact that Russia has lost the battle? The basis is Russia’s loss of the civilization battle within the country. Having abandoned the Soviet project, the Russian elite accepted Western-style democracy as the dominant ideology, without offering anything of its own.

History and its interpretation are the pillar of the definition of civilization as the highest cultural community. In this context, the historical segment of the new Russian meanings will have to unequivocally interpret the facts of Russian history and the history of international relations under the developed political ideology, avoiding the possibility of ambiguous judgments.

That is why at the current stage of historical development Russia has to offer conceptually rich, on the one hand, and clear from the point of view of meanings, on the other hand, project that should give answers both in the country and abroad. The questions are: Who we are? Where are we going? What for? A Russian concept of the world order is necessary to build successful international policy and its informational dimension when the Western civilization is building a new world on the backs of the part that lost the Cold war.

The analysis of meanings that Russia has offered over the millennium allows us to derive 3 specific contexts in which they exist and are in demand among the vast majority of the population:

- 1) a request for a great power;
- 2) a request for social justice;
- 3) a request for a strong central authority that would be able to bring the first two requests to life.

As it’s seen from the course of history, Russia is mobilized only for absolute, large-scale and universal meanings. There were some of ideological outbursts and they were mainly associated with an external threat and were a response to it. Under the influence of an external existential challenge, the Russian elite put forward functional world-order ideas that mobilized and united all social groups. Over the past 1000 years, these have been the ideas of:

- “The Sermon on Law and Grace” by the Kiev Metropolitan Hilarion;
- “Moscow, Third Rome” by the monk Philotheus;
- strong central authority and oprichnina during the time of Ivan IV;
- the Greek project of Catherine the Great;
- the unity of the Tsar and Fatherland and Orthodoxy;
- Bolshevik Red project with a central concept of social justice.

The latter meanings provided all the components of the electoral expectations of the population of Russia. By the way, these requests are timeless and live in the Russians and Russian consciousness through centuries and various political regimes.

The first request is preconditioned not only by desire, but also by reality: Russians are the only nationality among the East Slavic peoples who created a stable state formation to transform it into a great

power later. The second request is connected with geography: Russia was formed under unfavorable Eurasian conditions, when the total economic product was lower than in Europe and Asia. These conditions contributed to a community-led developmental landscape. And it was precisely these conditions that showed the greatest efficiency: the Stolypin reforms were not a panacea for solving the agrarian question as they rather froze the surplus of the peasant population, and the collective farm forms of production, in fact, restored the peasant community of the late Tsar and Old Russian times multiplied by the mechanization of labor. It was the implementation of the latter that ensured the food security of the state.

Therefore, the request for social justice was closely connected with a strong central authority regardless of its form: a prince, tsar, emperor, party general secretary, or president.

Giving credit to all the world-order ideas mentioned above, we think it necessary to pay close attention to the Red project. The Red Bolshevik project in the space of meanings met all the socio-political expectations of the vast majority of the Russian population. It froze the national problem, resolved agrarian and labor issues. In fact, the Bolsheviks rebuilt the Russian Empire on the basis of new meanings. The modernization of Russia was carried out: modern Russia is nowadays using the inertia of that technological breakthrough of the 1930s. In the last 25 years there has been a negative mythologization of the Soviet period, however, in fact, in historical terms, it repeated the development curves of Russia under Ivan IV (Graham, 2019) and Peter I, when Russia made significant breakthroughs in its development caused by external threats and the need to preserve its state.

Well, what meanings are required by the modern Russian society? The data of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center of 2013 give some answers:

- changes must be carried out “from above,” “a firm hand” is necessary, the authorities must show their strength and determination – 62.8 %;
- changes must be carried out “from below”, relying not only on power, but on initiative people, healthy forces within society itself – 29.7 %;
- Russia needs a “firm hand,” which will restore order in the country – 69.2 %;
- political freedoms and democracy are the core elements that cannot be abolished under any circumstances – 23, 1 %;
- the role of the state in all spheres of life should be increased, the largest enterprises and industries should be nationalized, corruption should be fought down, the export of capital and the consumer appetite of the elite should be restricted – 70.7 %;
- liberalization of all spheres of life, the liberation of business from the power of officials, increased competition, the release of citizens' initiatives is necessary – 21.8 %.

Thus, only a little more than 20 % of Russians support the liberal trajectory, and a clear majority of 70 % stand for rather radical way of development that would offer mobilization of the resource to achieve strategic imperatives and dramatic renewal of the Russian political class (Byzov, 2014).

It is noteworthy that the data are referred to the period before the return of Crimea, so we can assume that the request for authoritarian, socially just, conservative evolution of the society is higher nowadays. But it should be borne in mind that ideas work when they have material support. And here the

analysis of the successes of Russia's foreign policy is connected with the two historical approaches: that of Catherine the Great and of Iosif Stalin.

The model of Catherine the Great shows that Russia can successfully confront the West, being its economic periphery and return the Russian lands, provided that the West is divided, and the greatest effect is achieved when it is solving internal conflicts between the leading powers of Western civilization as in the "long eighteenth century" (Lupanova, 2008). The system of ties, unions and colonies of the West was webbed with internal conflicts, which was the main reason for the success of Catherine the Great. Although, under the Great Empress, Russia had meanings that it carried beyond its borders: the Greek project, which had a high level of identity within the state.

The Stalin's model is characterized with economic, military-political, technological, cultural, spiritual and semantic autarchy (self-sufficiency) and, as a result, a greater opportunity to realize country's interests in independence, or, at least, making it less dependent on strength or weaknesses of other centers of power, which are simultaneously civilizational centers of development.

## 7. Conclusion

So, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet system that followed led to a crisis of further goal-setting of the world development for all the leading powers, especially for the United States and the coalition led by them. China, being the main beneficiary of international changes, moved to global expansion (the latest experience of which is dated by the XV century).

However, Russia experienced the most dramatic consequences of the end of the Cold War, confirming the law of geopolitics that new systems of international relations are created at the expense of the resources of the loser. Russia not only lost geopolitical spaces that had exploited for centuries, but also lost its national (imperial) identity. In the near future, the authorities of the Russian Federation should offer a civilizational project for the development of Russia. This project should be understandable within the country, attractive to the closest circle of allies and identify Russia among the great world powers.

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