

“RUSSIAN DOCTRINE” – NATIONALIST IDEAS OF THE RIGHT-WING CONSERVATIVES OF RUSSIA

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Who created the “Russian Doctrine”, and why?

The “Russian Doctrine”¹ or the “Sergius’ Project” was started at the beginning of 2005². Its authors are people well-known in the Orthodox conservative milieu – writers, publicists and various scientists gathered at the Centre for Dynamic Conservatism. The group was headed by an economist, the editor of *Russkiy predprinimatel’* [*The Russian Businessman*] journal A. Kobiakov and a conservative philosopher V. Averyanov, while the expert and the editorial committees consisted of regular contributors to the Orthodox analytical Internet website: I. Brazhnikov (editor-in-chief), Y. Butakov, Y. Kholmogorov, V. Karpets and others.

About forty people worked on the doctrine for more than half a year, united by “a shared attitude, based on the ideals of Orthodox patriotism and dynamic conservatism”. It was decided to name the doctrine after St. Sergius of Radonezh, who is considered to be “the eternal protector and patron of Russia at times of hardship”.

Much was written in Russia after 1991 on how to rebuild Russia and what Russians should do³. The main task for the authors of the “Russian Doctrine”

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¹ “Русская доктрина” (November 5, 2005) [Parts I and II], <http://www.politklass.ru/cgi-bin/issue.pl?id=336>

² For more, see M. Тюренков, “Русская доктрина” (December 14, 2005), <http://www.pravaya.ru/idea/23/5895>

³ The authors of the doctrine single out A. Solzhenitsyn’s reasoning in his *Rebuilding Russia* (1991) which was “in many regards prophetic” and largely ignored. They give importance to the future scenarios and the methods of resistance against the anti-Christian globalisation, proposed in the books by the popular “neo-Eurasian” philosopher A. Panarin (*Pravoslavnyaya civilizaciya v global’nom mire* [*Orthodox Civilization in the Global World*], 2002). They also refer to M. Nazarov’s book *Vozhdiu Tret’yego Rima* (*To the Leader of the Third Rome*) (2004), controversial among the Russian Orthodox Church, in which he attempts to present “a positive

was to create a basic document which in the nearest future could serve as a “unified ideational, methodological and strategic platform for building a broad social coalition of patriotic forces”.

The “Russian Doctrine” should be viewed as a programmatic document of the right-wing conservative “patriotic” forces in Russia, which aims at shaping the public space and influencing the consciousness of the Russian people⁴.

The presentation of the “Russian Doctrine” took place at the round-tables, conferences and public discussions in Russia and the Greek island of Corfu in late 2005 and early 2006.

The “Russian Doctrine” attracted substantial interest among Russian experts, scientists, writers and Orthodox hierarchs, as well as various public organisations and business associations. A famous political scientist A. Tsipko noted the distinctiveness of the “Russian Doctrine” in one of his presentations⁵.

Arguing that the Russian society and state is in a deep crisis, the authors worked out a “project for potential reconstruction of all the areas of Russia’s life”. The authors of the doctrine believe that, during the last fifteen years Russian scientists and thinkers were driven by consciousness, and not fear, in mustering up their spiritual and intellectual powers “to create new types of weapons and defences against the invisible aggression”. They are convinced that the “Russian Doctrine” is turning out to be one of the first collective works that seek to empower the Russian nation with its own “mental weapon” and the instruments that would prevent the destruction of its national mentality.

This review will present an analysis and interpretation of the two parts of the “Russian Doctrine” worked out by Russia’s right-wing conservatives and published on the Internet. Analysis of the “Russian Doctrine” is important in order to grasp the contemporary developments and trends in the Russian social thought.

political programme at the background of an extremely pessimistic eschatological forecast”. The said authors had some influence on the beliefs of the founders of the “Russian Doctrine”.

⁴ Not to be confused with the reformist Union of Rightist Forces of Russia.

⁵ A. Tsipko wrote that “the ‘Russian Doctrine’ should be regarded as a spiritual, social philosophical product and considered in two contexts: from the viewpoints of the Russian social thought and the patriotic movement of the last 15-20 years. The doctrine is an important landmark in the history of the patriotic movement. It witnesses the transition from the patriotism of the heart and feelings to the patriotism of the mind and high quality”, <http://www.pravaya.ru/idea/23/5895>

The social political background of the appearance of the “Russian Doctrine”

During the last seven - eight years, Russia experienced three significant waves of political activity. All of them were directly related to the main subject of the “Russian Doctrine” – what Russia’s place in the world is.

Political upheavals divided the Russian cultural and political elites, the right wing of which undertook to develop this doctrine as a unifying national strategy (at least that is what its authors expect).

Despite the multitude of interpretations born by the question of Russia’s role in the world during the last two centuries, the question itself may be formulated quite simply. According to the historian A. Yanov⁶, one of the most perspicacious researchers of nationalism, it may be put in the following way: is Russia an integral and organic part of liberal Europe, ready to not only join but also share its fate, or is it a unique (and authoritarian) “civilisation”?

The first wave of political activity is related to the upsurge of the “patriots” in 1999. At that time, a significant part of the cultural and political elites suddenly identified Russia’s interests with S. Milosevic’s ambitions of the Greater Serbia and succumbed to rather primitive anti-Americanism. In other words, the “nationally oriented” Russia did not perceive itself as a part of Europe during the conflict between Europe and dictator S. Milosevic.

The second important event took place in the autumn of 2001. Straight after the September 11, President V. Putin declared his support to the US in the fight against terrorism. Seized by a “patriotic” hysteria, A. Prochanov⁷ was firmly convinced that “the steely glove of G. Bush is tightening its grip on A. Putin’s

⁶ For more, see A. Л. Янов, *Русская идея и 2000-й год* (New York, 1988); A. Л. Янов, *Патриотизм и национализм в России 1825–1921* (Moscow, 2002); A. Л. Янов, “Отделим овец от козлищ”, in *Западники и националисты: возможен ли диалог? Материалы дискуссии* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 345–373.

⁷ A. Prochanov is a Russian writer, the deputy editor-in-chief of *Zavtra* [Tomorrow] newspaper and a publicist of the radical left-wing, who speaks for the Eurasian, imperial model of Russia’s development.

cowardly neck”⁸. The “nationally oriented” patriots of Russia began criticising the foundations of the new liberal political course – the establishment of good relations with the US. It was argued that European liberalism is a “regress”⁹ that does not correspond to the Russian political tradition and psychology and that “the greatness of Russia requires ‘national’ orientation and does not constitute part of the liberal multifaceted Europe”. The famous statement of S. Vitte¹⁰ – “we are Russian Europeans” – was entirely forgotten.

The third wave of political activity is not directly related to any particular event abroad or in Russia. It is rather an upheaval resulting from various factors, which nevertheless can be defined in time and which reveals some important things. It refers to the increasing critique of the curtailment of democracy and growing authoritarian tendencies in Russia, the upcoming elections to Duma of 2007 and the presidential elections of 2008, as well as the project of “constructive patriotism” constructed by political technologists and selectively supported by the Kremlin.

In 2005 and early 2006, and especially on the eve of the G8 Summit in St. Petersburg in July 2006, there was a noticeably increased (and sometimes particularly bold) critique by the global community and some of Russia’s opposition forces of the strengthening authoritarian tendencies in Russia.

Some of Russia’s political elites find it unreasonable to discuss Russia’s movement from Yeltsin’s “democracy” to V. Putin’s “autocracy”. They claim that Yeltsin’s regime was not so much democratic as anarchic and oligarchic, while there is less anarchy and oligarchy in contemporary Russia. Therefore, as the Russian critics of the Westerners emphasise, the problem in the relations between the Western leaders and V. Putin is that the Westerners do not find any friends and fellows at the top of the Russian government.

Russian liberals and conservatives agree that it is problematic to talk about democracy in Russia. While both groups understand democracy totally

⁸ А. Проханов, “Полковнику Путину никто не пишет” (March 5, 2002), <http://zavtra.ru/cgi//veil//data/zavtra/02/433/11.html>

⁹ See А. Л. Янов, *Патриотизм и национализм в России. 1825–1921* (Moscow, 2002), p. 14–15.

¹⁰ S. Vitte (1849–1915) was a famous statesman of Russia, serving as Minister of Finance in 1892–1903 and as Prime Minister in 1905–1906.

differently, both see it as a political value and therefore regret its decline in Russia. The conservatives acknowledge the sad reality: the “orange revolution” in Russia has already taken place. This happened in 1991. Its results were not impressive.

Other forces of the Russian political spectrum – communists, socialists and left-wing radicals (the “Reds”), nationalists and various right-wing radicals (the “Browns”) are also active in these discussions about Russia’s choice and its place in the world.

The stagnating Russian Communist Party headed by G. Zyuganov is not the most radical critic of the government and democracy in comparison to the younger and far more aggressive (fanatical) radicals, for whom the Kremlin-loyal political party “Rodina” prepared a more favourable soil (the when it was chaired by D. Rogozin). These include the Movement against Illegal Immigration, the followers of the neo-Eurasian A. Dugin turned radical and other participants of the “Rightist March”, as well as a broad coalition of national-liberals, ethno-nationalists and racists, who united in the spring of 2006.

The federal government of Russia sought to join the debates and presented its view on the political situation in the country. Deputy head of the President’s administration V. Surkov, who is responsible for information and analysis of internal politics, claims that Russia is developing a “sovereign democracy”: Russians want to be an open nation among other open nations and co-operate with them according to just rules, rather than be governed from outside. He believes that Moscow did more than Washington and London in democratising the Eastern and Central Europe¹¹. “Sovereign democracy” might mean strengthening of the Kremlin’s power and state authority with regard to the subjects of the Federation and the civil society. There is already a special emphasis on a greater role of the state in the economy, especially in the exploitation of natural resources (oil and gas). Moreover, since any foreign policy requires domestic consensus, there is evidence to suggest that the idea of “sovereign democracy” is contrary to the idea of individual rights and associated rather with the tasks of promoting national self-consciousness. This is also

¹¹ Т. Становая, “Владислав Сурков презентовал ‘суверенную демократию’” (July 3, 2006), <http://www.politcom.ru/article.php?id=2999>

confirmed by some of the statements in the “Russian Doctrine” (more on this below), as well as the thoughts of the chairwoman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian Duma N. Narochnitskaya¹².

Russia’s political forces and public political organisations stepped up preparations for the 2007 Duma elections and the 2008 presidential elections, which will determine the configuration of Russia’s political forces during the next 4-5 years.

In preparing for the elections and fighting for the sympathies of the electorate, the “nationally oriented” cultural elites formulated a strategic goal: Russia needs “constructive patriotism”. It is required already in the spring and the summer of 2006. Otherwise, the mass of fighters for the “greatness of the Russian man” will get its chance to seek for the Russian national identity in radical way¹³. The Kremlin is in agreement with this as well. Even G. Zyuganov recently declared that “the Russian topic will be important in the next 20-30 years”¹⁴.

However, the key question is not how the elections will change the political configuration of forces (even if a new generation of politicians is to come to power) but whether the reforms necessary for the modernisation of Russia will be implemented by preserving and developing democratic institutions and procedures. The stereotypes of political dynamics in Russia show that the counter-reforms of the “rightists” or the “leftists” are determined by the failures of reforms, rather than by attempts to overcome uncreative application of the Western models or ignore the peculiar Russian political tradition.

After seventy years of dominance of the communist ideology and nearly a decade of “anarchy”, contemporary Russia, endowed with a “strong power vertical”, is increasingly turning to the right. Recent public surveys in Russia indicate that Russians, almost half of whom previously supported B. Yeltsin and Y. Gaidar’s reforms, are rejecting the illusions of perestroika with its pro-

¹² “Учимся быть самими собой (Беседа Е. Колядиной с Н. Нарочницкой)”, *Литературная газета* 28, July 2006, pp. 12-18.

¹³ See А. Еременко, “Перехват патриотизма” (March 27, 2006), <http://www.globalrus.ru/comments/781023/>

¹⁴ “КПРФ в ближайшие десятилетия вплотную займется ‘русским вопросом’” (March 25, 2006), <http://palm.newsru.com/russia/25mar2006/zzy.html>

Western tendencies and that there is a growing belief that “Russia has its own independent path”¹⁵.

In this context, there is a noticeably increased activity among the “rightists” (liberal and radical, “rightists” and conservatives), as well as their attempts to consolidate Russia’s public political activities and social political thought. It is not surprising then that the “Russian Doctrine” prepared by Russia’s right-wing conservatives was presented publicly in 2005-2006.

The main theses of the “Russian Doctrine” and their critique

One of the main founders of the doctrine Y. Kholmogorov initially presented seven key theses of the doctrine which laid the “foundation for the creation of an organic document”. A summary of his arguments is presented below:

1. Future restoration. Today’s Russia is a country without future and without a future project. Russia must rebuild and restore the future. The future belongs to Russia. This is the purpose of the “Russian Doctrine”.
2. Russians are the nation of the sacred history. The Russian nation is a unique ethnic, cultural and historic singularity, significantly different from other modern and historic nations¹⁶. The amalgamation of the Orthodox Church and the glorious history is the basis of the unique Russian identity. Therein lays the Russian mission and the Russian cross.
3. Sensocracy (Russian – смыслократия) is the path to rebuilding culture. Power over ideas must be attained. Facts must be seen in the manifestation of an idea and skills must be acquired for the creation

¹⁵ Э. Паин, “Империя в себе. О механизмах возвратных процессов в современной российской политике”, in *Ab Imperio. Исследования по новой имперской истории и национализму в постсоветском пространстве* 1, (2006), p. 310.

¹⁶ This indicates that the authors of the doctrine conceptualise the Russian nation as a political and not just an ethnic community.

and destruction of ideas. Sensocracy is that power over ideas, which will underlie the development of culture in the new phase.

4. Autocracy – the necessary concentration of the Russian power. The principle underlying the development of the Russian statehood must be Autocracy (with the capital letter). This does not merely refer to the monarchy. This means the concentration of all power in space and in time in the hands of Russians, independence from any external forces, and the self-government of Russians in Russia itself. The power in Russia must belong to the Russian Nation.
5. National economy instead of global economy. A fully-fledged national economy geared towards realisation of the long-term material interests of the Russian nation is required, rather than a Russian segment of the global economy. Russia must preserve and increase its assets and, therefore, its wealth must be for itself and not for someone else.
6. Demographic nationalism. The main task is to preserve the composition of the Russian nation quantitatively and qualitatively. The depopulation of civilised nations is related to the fact that childbearing became a private matter or even an entertainment for human beings; its social significance must be restored. Russia needs new Russians. The new non-Russians are not needed by Russia (and straightforward non-Russians even less). Their own countries need them.
7. New civilisation. Russia is already a civilisation for itself; however, it must become a civilisation for others too, based on the new ethos and new culture. This civilisation – the “Northern civilisation” must replace the global dominance of the West and lead the world to the eschatological boundary, to the threshold of the final events.

It does not seem that the authors of the doctrine argue for a global order dominated by several civilisations or superpowers. They tend to believe that there will be a new “Northern civilisation”, which will form on the basis of the

existing Russian “civilisation” in the near future. Furthermore, they are convinced that this new civilisation will not only present an alternative to the West but that it will replace its dominance in the world. This not only serves as a potential reason for the strengthening of the Russian sovereignty but may be and, partially, has been used to justify the diplomatic pretences of Russia as the continuator of the USSR in Eastern Europe or the authority of the Kremlin.

The conservatives see Russia as the last centre of the world until the end of the history of humanity. They reiterate the old idea that Russia has been raised above other countries by God and, therefore, the God demands more from the Russian nation than from other nations. Many medieval European states dreamt of the uniqueness of their nations. This was also characteristic to the intellectual history of Russia during the Kiev and Moscow periods (until Peter the Great). This idea was formulated at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the famous religious philosophical theory of Moscow as the Third Rome by Pskov’s monk Filofey, transfused with absolute providentialism and eschatology. Some of the modern Russian conservatives see themselves as heirs to “Moscow – the Third Rome”. However, in contrast to the Russian monk’s theory, which sought to glorify the Russian Church and the Russian Orthodoxy, contemporary conservatives primarily emphasise the political significance of this idea. They stress Russia’s special mission in the world and, internally, seek to resuscitate the monarchical principles – the “national autocracy” and the state ruler.

Later the conservatives announced their systematically developed ideology and programme. The authors of the doctrine grasp the fact that Russians are closer to the unification of their nation than ever before. They argue for the building of the civic Russian nation based on respect for ethnic diversity and the principle of integration of religious and ethnic minorities. A strong national consciousness is the best way to reach the strategic goals raised in this doctrine. In the absence of the threat of a large-scale war (at least on the Western side), there is no sense to talk about the conflict between “us” and “them” comparable to the ones that took place in the Western Europe in the 17th-19th centuries and Russia in the 19th - 20th centuries. This stimulates various projects aimed at building the Russian nation and a national state. Doctrinal experts conceive of

this possibility to build a national state as a counterbalance or even a certain alternative to the globalisation of economic relations. They exalt the need for a peaceful, non-revolutionary continuity of the Russian culture and society and put special emphasis on its idiosyncrasies.

The authors of the “Russian Doctrine” think that the Russian state has experienced a deep crisis of goals in the modern period. Everyone in Russia, from an ordinary inhabitant to a high official – shares in the belief that state affairs are unduly administered. Despite the stabilisation efforts since 2000, the universal nature of dissatisfaction indicates that the situation cannot be improved by technical means (administrative reforms, strengthening of the state vertical, restructuring of the political field) and that the principles of the current long-term policies must be replaced and the erroneously chosen strategic goal abandoned.

One of the strategic goals of the contemporary Russian Federation is strengthening of democracy. The conservatives opine that, regardless of the benefits or harms of democracy as a form of government, the strengthening of democracy is an absurd goal. If democracy is a procedure for making decisions in the state, then the improvement of the procedure cannot be a strategic goal of the state but only a means for achieving it.

Competitiveness is another goal that aspires to be a strategic one. Without denying its value, the authors of the doctrine maintain that competitiveness, understood as an axiom of the rules of competition in a certain international game, is externally imposed and, therefore, an “anti-value”. It is a model of development and a scheme of consumption of lifestyles and welfare imposed by other subjects of the world.

The ideas of the Russian conservatives are not entirely original. They reiterate the thoughts of some of the old Eurasians and the nationalist statement of the twentieth century (e.g., A. Solzhenitsyn, I. Shafarevich, and A. Zinoviev). However, the conservatives are distinguished by a fresh attitude and a “youthful fervour”. They are not depressed by the collapse of the USSR. They exhibit a post-soviet vigilance and peculiar talents, feel the moods wide-spread among the Russian youth and the middle generation that have experienced the collapse of

the USSR and an economic recession, as well as provide an ideological renewal of the “rightist” instincts.

However, the conservatives should not be identified with the ordinary “rightists” of Russia (e.g., the Union of Rightist Forces). The conservatives are no primitive or archaic restorers who would like to mechanically restore some of the Russian traditions from the Soviet times or the deeper past. They feel that important processes are taking place in the world and that new opportunities are open for Russia. They declare the priority of culture over “instrumental” politics. They state that the Russian question is nowadays more spiritual and cultural and not just a political one.

The founders of the “Russian Doctrine” have the following strategic goals: the “spiritual sovereignty”, the “social truth”, and efforts to create a “belligerent civilisation of justice and compassion” in Russia. The formulation of the ideal goals of the doctrine reveals the unconventional means to reach them. This brings us to the peculiarities and the weaknesses of the “Russian Doctrine”.

Critique of the West and an instrumentalist approach to democracy

The conservatives’ view of the West is hostile and may be characterized as a modernised anti-Westernism. Although nationalism is the product of the modern historic age, a closed national life is impossible in the global era. All the nations are involved in global exchanges and there is a transfusion of Eastern and Western cultures. A new universalism is emerging. However, the conservatives are hostile towards any universalism. They promote a statically insular, Russian cultural historic type (this is an old, traditional leitmotif of the nineteenth century thought, especially that of N. Danilevsky’s or a “civilisation of justice and compassion”. They want to remain “patriotic” and nationalistic, staying away from Europe and hostile to it (this is also an old leitmotif of the Slavophiles and the Eurasians). They thereby deny the universal relevance of the Orthodoxy and reject the nineteenth century “Russian idea” about Russia as a prominent Eastern and Western world that connects these two flows of the world

history (A. Khomiakov, F. Dostoyevsky, N. Berdiayev). Thus, they are unfaithful to the “Russian idea” and move away from the best traditions of Russian religious national thought.

The conservatives’ view of the West is outdated and provincial. They are convinced that the success of the Cold War strategy of the West has been achieved by using destructive technologies. Their target was not so much the communist worldview as the “spiritual-legal bases” of the Russian social system.

The “Russian Doctrine” states that “the following destructive technologies were used against the USSR:

- Encouraging and control of consumer stereotypes;
- Promotion of post-industrial informatization as surrogate of ideas, aimed at technical intelligentsia of the USSR;
- Promotion of the idea of repentance, aimed at humanitarian intelligentsia;
- Promotion of individualistic hedonistic values, aimed at the youth;
- Promotion of liberation from imperial oppression, aimed at national minorities.”

Authors of “Russian Doctrine” states “having gradually assimilated the Western standards of life, our society absorbed the erroneous ideas of such propaganda”. The anti-Western positions of the conservatives is partially related to their view of democracy, which they interpret one-sidedly (it is a product of the West and an instrument for the US national interests in the world) and instrumentally (it performs a function of the state government). The “Russian Doctrine” argues the following:

“Democracy is a particular procedure for making decisions in the state. An improvement of a procedure cannot be a strategic goal of the state. On the contrary, this procedure, democratic or some other must serve the strategic goals formulated by the state. When the United States declares its goal to strengthen democracy, this refers to democracy outside the US. In this case, it is an

instrument for the fulfilment of American national interests and an instrument for the establishment of the American way of life as a multicultural ideal”¹⁷.

This approach to democracy is essentially based on the unrealistic perception by authors of the “Russian Doctrine” of the state. To recall N. Berdiayev’s words about Eurasians, it may be regarded as a “utopian statism”¹⁸.

The authors of the “Russian Doctrine” do not accept democracy as a strategic goal of the Russian Federation. In their opinion, the democratic procedure is just a means to achieve a goal. They emphasise that Russian citizens have a very pessimistic view of the democratic election system¹⁹.

The conservatives maintain that, in creating a state based on the “social truth” and the Russian political traditions, Russia needs a harmonious blend of democracy, aristocracy and autocracy. The political doctrine of the conservatives argues for a unique Russian democracy, which would not tear at the “vital tissues of the state organism”. The demand to pay more attention to the “plebiscite forms” of decision-making is put forward as an example of new democratisation. The highest authorities in Russia must make sure that a referendum becomes one of the regular means to legitimise government decisions. The practical application of the ideas of the “Russian Doctrine” would not decrease the level of democracy in Russia but, on the contrary, would encourage creation of independent, strong and effective forms of democratic procedures.

Even if reduced to a voting procedure, democracy should offset aspirations of the bureaucracy and the elites and enable citizens to participate in the government of the state by making decisions that are important to everyone. Moreover, co-ordination of the democratic procedure with other political principles (aristocracy and autocracy) must take into account presumable Russian political traditions.

¹⁷ “Русская доктрина” (November 5, 2005) [Parts I and II], <http://www.politklass.ru/cgi-bin/issue.pl?id=336>

¹⁸ Н. Бердяев, “Утопический этатизм евразийцев”, in *Россия между Европой и Азией: Евразийский соблазн. Антология* (Moscow, 1993), pp. 301–306.

¹⁹ The “Russian Doctrine” claims that “Each year an increasing number of Russian citizens realise the absurdity of the current system of elections, in which the alienation of the electors from the elected is becoming catastrophic. The elections are becoming a formality, a self-imposed ritual of appropriateness for both the authorities and the people”.

Hence, democracy is just one of the three political principles or a correct method for making political decisions in this vision of the state. Democracy is not rejected but it is not considered to be the only important political ideal.

Sociological surveys in contemporary Russia indicate that Russians have a peculiar understanding of democracy and judge it in distinctly pragmatic terms. Russians prioritise solution of social problems and the defence of the national interests against the oligarchs. They would prefer a society based on social equality rather than personal freedom²⁰. Russians do not ascribe special significance to personal freedom, however, not because they find it unimportant. Russians conceive “a freedom” rather as a possibility to be “one’s own master” and lead a “spiritual life”, rather than as the realisation of some political rights.

The concept of statehood

The conservatives believe that, in achieving a full-fledged statehood, democracy must be combined with other political principles – aristocracy and autocracy. According to them, each of these principles has its role in the Russian “system for expression of the national political will”. Democracy expresses this will in “absolute numbers” through the opinion of the voters. The aristocratic principle ought to show the qualitative expression of the national will, when people endowed with the best qualities of a certain kind participate in activities of various political institutions and suggest considered and intellectually mature opinions. Finally, the autocratic principle ought to express the concentration of the national will in one person, who would be able to make and implement decisions without intermediaries.

It is interesting to note that already in the nineteenth century the Russian neo-conservatives (L. Tichomirov) conceived the statehood as the unity of everything, which the authors of the “Russian Doctrine” admire²¹.

²⁰ Fifty-four per cent of respondents spoke for it. See A. B. Сергеева, *Русские: стереотипы поведения, традиции, ментальность* (4th edition, Moscow, 2006), pp. 247–252, 267.

²¹ See И. А. Исаев and Н. М. Золотухина, *История политических и правовых учений России XI–XX вв.* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 272–276; М. В. Назаров, “Принципы

Thus, the doctrine of the “organic” state is based on optimistic reasoning and the notion of the “honour of the great power” (Russian - *честь державы*). The thinking of the founders of the “Russian Doctrine” is based more on the category of necessity rather than freedom. It aims at subordinating the individual to the collective and does not value politics in terms of morality. Perhaps this is the source of the conservatives’ belief that moral judgements of history (e.g., the crimes of the Gulag and the occupations of neighbouring countries) and politics (e.g., evaluation of individual behaviour) upset the “organic” work of contemporary state-building and are essentially imposed by the West on the Russian society, which is unusual to it and even traumatises the historical consciousness of Russians. The “Russian Doctrine” noticeably lacks an individual moral imperative. It seems that the idea of individual freedom is tentatively included under the notion of the “honour of the great power”, which primarily emphasises the will of the nation expressed by “one single man” or “the best people” serving the nation and the state.

Collective experience and the search for the “social truth” are more important to the conservatives than individual truths. An individual may acquire moral authority only in the society and only by serving it. This line of thinking of the conservatives relates to the traditional Russian thinking and, especially, V. Solovyov’s theocratic utopia²².

Another shortcoming of the “Russian Doctrine” is that it represents what may be called a “utopian statism”. In the conservatives’ view, the government of Russia must be strong, effective, and responsible. The power itself may not be something given once and for all times. Thus, the conservatives are not legitimists. They do not argue for the entrenchment of just any regime in place at a given time. In their opinion, the essence of the doctrine of the “organic” state is “national autocracy”. “National autocracy” is based not so much on independence from some other sovereign power but on the positive experience coming from the long historical work of the Russian state and the Russian

жизнеустройства и православный идеал”, in *Западники и националисты: возможен ли диалог? Материалы дискуссии* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 312–323.

²² For more, see A. Ф. Замалаев and И. Д. Осипов, *Русская политология: обзор основных направлений* (St. Petersburg, 1994).

nation. This demonstrates a principled monism in the understanding of relations between the nation and the state. The state is understood as a function and an institution of the Russian Nation (with the capital letter). The state acquires exceptional importance. A principled dualism between the state and the nation (society) is basically rejected, as it has often been the case in the political history of Russia. This is one of the old temptations of the Russian society leading to various utopias. Historically, utopias used to emerge in different shapes in Russia – from the imperial theocracy of the Third Rome, Leninist communism, Eurasianism, to the ideas of the contemporary conservatives in the “Russian Doctrine”.

It is obvious that, if the basic interests of the state and the nation always correspond, the state will have to cover and shape all areas of life, which is very typical to the Russian state tradition. That is the principled monism, which leads to the absoluteness of the state and the conception of the state as an embodiment of the truth, including the “social truth”. The authors of the doctrine maintain that “a dictatorship and an authoritarian rulership, as well as other autocratic forms may have to be experienced in rebuilding the monarchical institutions of Russia. This should not present a big problem for the monarchists because the formalisation of a political regime is merely an approximation to the ideal of the state in any case”.

The founders of the “Russian Doctrine” do not provide guarantees for civic freedom. The regular institutions of democracy (referendums, councils, and Zemsky Sobors) remain on paper and may not function in practice. Everything is decided by the “supreme leader” and the “aristocracy”. The conservatives do not call this an ideocracy but a “national autocracy” or a “great power” (Russian – держава). Formally, the political doctrine of the conservatives is similar to ideocracy. This doctrine means the rule of a chosen prudent leader and selected advisors who aspire to express, formulate and implement vital interests and the national ideology for the Russian nation. The authors of the “Russian Doctrine” believe that there are three ways of selecting the head of the state – the highest state official (president, sovereign etc.) in the ideal constitution of the Russian state: from the Romanov dynasty; through direct elections in the Zemsky Sobor;

or by means of education in a special school from the young age. The Senate (or the State Council) would consist of four parts: the military, the clergy and the academia would delegate a quarter of representatives each, while another quarter would be appointed by the head of the state. (The formation of this institution, although not its authority, somewhat reminds of the Russian Public Chamber recently established in Russia). The head of the state and the Senate would rely on various social, occupational and corporative groups. All of these would function alongside and, somehow, above the existing political and party system, which, in the opinion of the authors of the Doctrine, is a product of the industrial society and is turning obsolete in the “supra-industrial pharmacy”. The legislative, judiciary and executive powers would be concentrated in the hands of the head of the state, and the Senate would have legislative and executive power, as well as their control. Zemsky Sobors would consist of the delegates of local communities. Zemsky Sobors would merely approve laws and not initiate or prepare them. This is an ideal model of state government for the conservatives, which has not yet been tried in Russia’s history. However, it is clear that it fails to meet the two fundamental principles of a modern democracy – the universal suffrage and the election of representatives authorised to pass legislation²³.

The current constitutional order of the Russian state is essentially different: it is based on the principle of separation of the legislative, executive and judiciary powers and the universal suffrage²⁴. The actual application of these principles in contemporary Russia is a different matter. During the recent years, the application of the standards of democracy in Russia has become a subject for debates, and critics are not unfounded in discerning the Kremlin’s authoritarian

²³ For more on contemporary democracy and the practice of its ideals, see R. Dahl, *On Democracy* (Yale University Press, 1998).

²⁴ There is one exception. Members of the Russian Public Chamber established in 2005 are appointed or delegated by the president, public organisations, and regional associations. Establishing of the Russian Public Chamber as a consultative body was something of an attempt of the Russian authorities at direct communication with the people selected by the president, social elite groups and regions. However, this body has not had any more substantial role in the government of the state and it is not entirely clear how it will encourage the citizens to support state policies, discuss draft laws, and control the executive power. Moreover, the activities of the Russian Public Chamber partially duplicate the functions of the Duma and the central and regional executive authorities. This in turn raises doubts as to the purposefulness of this institution.

tendencies (the strengthening of the federal government, curtailment of the power of federal subjects, restrictions on the activities of free media and non-governmental organisations, etc.). The “Russian Doctrine” essentially argues for the replacement of Russia’s constitution in line with the ideological principles of the conservatives, which they hope will be endorsed by other patriots and that part of the society which is not indifferent to the future of Russia. What is clear is that the theoretical suggestions of the conservatives regarding the potential political order and the political institutions of Russia differ from Russia’s current formally democratic constitutional order and significantly differ from the way the liberal West sees democratic values and criteria.

The “Russian Doctrine” provides an interpretation of the history of the imperial and the soviet Russia of the last three hundred years and the post-soviet present with regard to the interests of Russia and the Russian nation and not from the perspective of imperial statehood or the people. “It all didn’t start today”, write the authors of the Doctrine, clarifying the cause of the “Russian catastrophe”. The “Russian catastrophe” at the end of the twentieth century was not so much the collapse of the USSR as the fissuring of the “spiritual - legal” foundations of Russia’s social order. The conservatives are not nostalgic towards the soviet past and do not argue for the restoration of the USSR on the basis of their visions.

According to the conservatives, the first deviations of the authorities from the presumable strategic interests of Russia can be traced back to the times of Peter the Great. Enormous changes began during N. Khrushchev’s rule. N. Khrushchev forced Russia into an unequal fight against the West at the time when the clash had to be avoided. Russia’s playing by foreign rules lead to havoc (Russian – Смутное время) at the end of the twentieth century, which threatens the “spiritual sovereignty” of Russia.

The authors of the “Russian Doctrine” believe that since the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century Russia became a “voluntary hostage”, when many things were denied and forbidden to it, including those which were permitted to the main players of the world politics. In their opinion, Russia was deprived of the right to use unique political cultural instruments – nationality,

imperialism, monarchism, sovietism, and the Orthodox worldview. All of these are advantages over the West accumulated by Russia over centuries. Upon the collapse of the USSR, these instruments came to represent backwardness with regard to the leading Western states in Russia, thereby disregarding and belittling Russia's distinctiveness.

The "Russian Doctrine" builds a new messianistic national myth, which demonstrated its vitality during the crisis periods in Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and which was rejected in the eighteenth century due to the changes that took place in the Renaissance period. During the soviet period, the myth of national messianism was adjusted to the needs of the communist internationalism. In a certain sense, Stalin was a Russian nationalist and, as British historian G. Hosking notices, perhaps even the most successful one. At the same time, Stalin contributed most to degrade Russian nation by wiping out peasant communities, destroying the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional churches, smothering the best Russian literature, art and music, and forcing millions of Russians away from their roots and into the "melting pot" of industrial cities²⁵.

The future of Russia

The "Russian Doctrine" develops the idea of the distinctiveness of Russia, based on ideal civic Russian nationalism, "utopian statism" and messianism. The conservatives aspire to the "spiritual sovereignty" of Russia, dissociate themselves from the "others" (first of all, from the West) and invite to build the "Northern civilisation" on the foundations of the existing Russian civilisation. The conservatives dream to replace the Western dominance in the world with the "Northern civilisation" created on the basis of the idiosyncratic Russian civilisation (other civilisations could merge into it), the universality of the mind with the uniqueness of the Russian nation and the wisdom of its elect people, and political freedom with the spiritual one. In other words, the new Russian

²⁵ Дж. Хоскинг, *Россия: народ и империя (1552–1917)* (translated from English by S. Samuilova, Smolensk, 2000), p. 501.

nationalism, which was called the “Russian Doctrine” by its proponents, counterpoises the myth of Russia’s uniqueness to the myth of Europe’s domination in the global world. This is the old idea of the “special path” advocated by a group of prominent Russian intellectuals and dissidents, known as Slavophiles; this is the Russian Sonderweg taken over from the German Romantics and adapted to the Russian conditions after the routing of the Decembrists and the ideological revolution that took place during the ruling of Tsar Nicolas I.

Once more they claim that Russia is not Europe but a different “civilisation” with its own cultural values. Its culture is more spiritual, purer than the culture of consumerist and hedonistic Europe. Russians are “part of the sacred history”, the “holy nation” (not chosen from the beginning but unfolding in history). The “amalgamation of the Orthodox Church and the glorious history” is the basis of the unique Russian identity. Therefore, the power in Russia must belong to the “Russian Nation”. Subsequent to a “cultural recast”, the Russian nation must include all those who want to be Russians and not just the ethnic Russians. Despite its distinct messianism, the contemporary “Russian Doctrine” is suffused with a bitter disappointment with freedom, progress, the development of the world history and, generally, rationalism as a means to understanding and shaping the world.

The question is whether the “Russian Doctrine” is the path that would bring more welfare, social justice and “spiritual sovereignty” to the Russian society and state. Another question is whether the combination of Russian nationalism, state absolutism leavened with the ideas of democracy and aristocracy, and messianism will not turn into a new “great power” ideology, which may prevent the much-desired consolidation of the Russian nation again, as it did in the soviet times. In other words, what are the guarantees that Russian nationalism will not turn into an imperial one, which it was in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, and that a free and great Russia will remain the dream of the Decembrists and Russian liberals alone.

It is not clear whether contemporary Russia is recuperating from the cruel singleness that lasted for nine generations or it is mustering up for its revenge by resuscitating the

idea of the Russian civilisation and dreaming about a new, better and anti-Western “Northern civilisation” built upon it. So far, the answer was not provided by either Europe or Russia, which flourishes its economic ambitions and its own standards of “democracy”. However, today Russian “patriotically” conservative forces show signs of increased political activity and urge Russia to opt for a unique and, one might argue, disastrous path of development once again.