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THE ESSENCE OF THE PHENOMENON OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION GEOPOLITICS

СУТНІСТЬ ФЕНОМЕНУ ВНУТРІШНЬОЇ ГЕОПОЛІТИКИ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ФЕДЕРАЦІЇ

СУЩНОСТЬ ФЕНОМЕНА ВНУТРЕННЕЙ ГЕОПОЛІТИКИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ

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Abstract. *The essence of the internal geopolitics of the Russian Federation (RF) and its influence on the foreign policy of Moscow is analyzed in the article. It was found that on the background of Russian nationalism the activation of separatist sentiments in the Russian national autonomies had occurred, particularly in the North Caucasus (Chechnia, Dagestan). Eventually, it caused two Chechen wars, as well as to the formation of dissatisfaction with the Center's actions in Tatarstan, South and East Siberia and others. However, after internal politics and internal economy shocks of the 1990-th Russia has outlined a course to restore the status of a great state. An important factor for the Russian government is the support of its foreign policy by the population. It is traced that the level of electoral support of the Russian president entirely depends on the success of the Russian Federation on the international arena. Kremlin actively cultivates and uses imperial mood of society in order to justify the return of its "unjustly deprived" great power status. Therefore, governmental expansionist geostrategy obtains active support among the intelligentsia and broad social strata.*

Key words: *Geopolitics, internal geopolitics, foreign policy, social attitudes, authoritarianism.*

Анотація. *Проаналізовано сутність внутрішньої геополітики Російської Федерації (РФ) та її вплив на зовнішньополітичний курс Москви. З'ясовано, що на фоні активізації російського націоналізму відбулася активізація сепаратистських настроїв у російських національних автономіях, зокрема в Північному Кавказі (Чечня, Дагестан), що у підсумку*

привело до двох чеченських війн, а також до формування невдоволення діями центру в Татарстані, Південному та Східному Сибірові тощо. Однак, після внутріполітичних та внутрішньоекономічних потрясінь 1990-х рр. Росією було окреслено курс на відновлення статусу великої держави. Важливим фактором для російського керівництва є підтримка його зовнішньополітичного курсу широкими верствами населення. Простежено, що рівень електоральної підтримки російського президента цілком залежить від успіхів Російської Федерації на міжнародній арені. Кремль активно культивує та використовує імперські настрої російського суспільства задля обґрунтування необхідності повернення Росії “несправедливо позбавленого” статусу великої держави. Саме тому, експансіоністська геостратегія влади знаходять активну підтримку як серед представників російської інтелігенції, так і широких суспільних верств.

Ключові слова: геополітика, внутрішня геополітика, зовнішня політика, суспільні настрої, авторитаризм.

Аннотация. Проанализирована сущность внутренней геополитики Российской Федерации (РФ) и ее влияние на внешнеполитический курс Москвы. Выяснено, что на фоне активизации русского национализма произошла активизация сепаратистских настроений в российских национальных автономиях, в частности в Северном Кавказе (Чечня, Дагестан), что в итоге привело к двум чеченским войнам, а также к формированию недовольства действиями центра в Татарстане, Южной и Восточной Сибири и тому подобное. Однако, после внутривнутриполитических и внутриннеэкономических потрясений 1990-х гг. Россией был обозначен курс на восстановление статуса великой державы. Важным фактором для российского руководства является поддержка его внешнеполитического курса широкими слоями населения. Прослежено, что уровень электоральной поддержки российского президента полностью зависит от успехов Российской Федерации на международной арене. Кремль активно культивирует и использует имперские настроения российского общества для обоснования необходимости возвращения России “несправедливо лишеного” статуса великой державы. Именно поэтому, экспансионистская геостратегия власти находят активную поддержку как среди представителей российской интеллигенции, так и широких общественных слоев.

Ключевые слова: геополитика, внутренняя геополитика, внешняя политика, общественные настроения, авторитаризм.

Formulation of the problem. International and foreign policy of the state significantly depends on the internal processes of transformation and internal state in a whole. Thus, internal processes are known to affect proportionally the formation of international activities and implementation of foreign policy strategy. In this context, the idea of internal geopolitics, relations between territorial administrative center and the periphery was established. Thus, from the optimization and building relationships between the administrative units, the periphery and the center depends the internal stability of any state, as well as the stability of its foreign policy. Also, geopolitical opportunities of any country, of RF (Russian Federation) directly depend on public attitudes and level of governmental support. In the domestic policy of Russia we can observe significant problems while in foreign affairs and geopolitics this country shows strength defending its position and interests. Generally, the geopolitics of Russia can be regarded as imperial, primarily because the Russian people have imperial mentality, mind, character, and so on. P. Goble, famous American political scientist and analyst has noted: “Russia became an Empire before the Russians consolidated as a nation, and psychological limits of the state and Russian identity has always been problematic for Russia, as it has always been, until recently, Empire

with a center and periphery” [Goble, 1993: 11]. Russia as almost all the major states has its geopolitical special feature and identity related primarily to the specific national force that despite the transformation of ideologies actually have not changed over the centuries.

The aim of the article. To find out the nature of internal geopolitics and the impact of Russian Federation domestic policy condition on the formation of its geostrategy and foreign activity.

Analysis of the latest publications. The issue of internal geopolitics is developed by cohort of domestic and foreign scientists. In Ukraine geopolitical issues are studied by such scientists and experts as: V. Gorbulin, A. Bulvinskyi [Бувльвінський, 2016], M. Doroshko, I. Melnychuk, G. Perepelytsya [Перепенлиця, 2015], I. Pilyayev [Піляєв, 2015], L. Chekalenko, S. Shergin, M. Shulga [Шульга, 2006] and so on. Among the scientists who were engaged or are actively engaged, whether touch briefly the questions of domestic policy in their researches are Russian scientists, such as V. Dergachov, O. Dugin [Дугин, 2010], S. Karaganov, N. Narochnytska, G. Nuryshv [Нурішев, 2013], S. Panarin, D. Trenin [Тренін, 2009], V. Tsymburskyi [Цымбурський, 2007] and so on.

Finally, we can highlight the cohort of foreign scientists who touch on somehow the issues of Russia’s internal geopolitics and the impact of the internal state on its foreign policy. These are scholars: Z. Brzezinski, M. Goldman [Goldman, 2008], L. Coodrich [Coodrich, 2016], A. Kukhins, M. McFaul [McFaul, 1998], M. Nicholson [Nicholson, 2001] A. Motyl [Motyl, 2007, 2012; Motyl, 2016], V. Sperling [Sperling, 2015], A. Stent [Stent, 2015], J. Stern [Stern, 1994], J. Sherr, G. Friedman, C. Freeland [Freeland, 2014] F. Hill [Hill, 2004] and many others.

The main body. Eurasian geographical location, the vastness of the territory with its harsh climatic conditions and rich natural resources, a huge length of the borders, poor communications, low population density and a number of other factors have made a significant impact on the formation of political consciousness and RF system, and thus upon its foreign policy. Permanent centralization of political power that was aimed to neutralize foreign threats eventually negatively affected the modernization of the country on all stages of development [Лукьянович, 2004: 7].

Russia started its formation as a centralized and ideocratic state, as sacral Empire in the XVI century. This state can be described as colonial Empire with expansionist politics that started in the XVI century. It is associated with a series of conquests of Ivan the Terrible. As Russian scientist M. Ilyin had noted, “...the image frontier empire has spawned a special formula of Russian geopolitical destiny. This model has got expressed centrist character, separate regions of Russia form a kind of islands, and Russia itself is expanding, transforming the territories annexed to those islands, striving to withdraw, but within the island named Russia” [Ильин, 1997: 375-376].

Since early 1990’s Russian foreign policy formation was held in the conditions of economic crisis and political transformation. “Sick Man of Eurasia” and “grey area breaking threats” such terms could describe that political, economic and geopolitical position of Russia on the international arena. As the British politician G. Sherr said: “...in the 1990s Russia did not resemble the state, but rather the arena of struggle between the influential groups for wealth and power, often at the expense of the country” [Шерп, 2013: 54]. In late 1993, when the conflict of Russian President Boris Yeltsyn and the Duma turned into an armed suppression of the anti-president block it became obvious the first signs of post-Soviet democracy will disappear soon. Such tactics of Boris Yeltsyn can be regarded just as the first step to the establishment of authoritarianism in Russia [McFaul, 1998: 13]. At that time liberals and reformers, were defeated, and those who benefited from these events were the statesmen, who wanted to see Russia a great state

again. However, in spite of this alarming bell of authoritarianism West generally supported Boris Yeltsyn, as in the actions of the State Duma it saw rematch of August coup in 1991 and the danger of communists' restoration, which could facilitate the full or partial revival of the USSR. In this situation, the United States relied on RF rapid liberalization in the context of structural and functional political formation of the CIS [Стент, 2015: 44].

Awakening of Russian nationalism ultimately served to intensify separatist sentiments in the national autonomies, in particular in the North Caucasus (Chechnia, Dahestan), which eventually led to two Chechen wars, as well as to the formation of discontent by center's activities in Tatarstan, Southern and Eastern Siberia and others. Alarming for Russia can be Volho-Ural region where practically all deposits of energy resources are concentrated. Thus, in the 1990-s nationalist groups in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and so called Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus announced the formation of its own armed forces, its own currency and so on. Tatar nationalists keep the idea of creating Turkic (Tatar-Bashkir) Idel-Ural republic. In the beginning of 1990-s Tatarstan introduced its own emblem, anthem and constitution, and the idea of realization of state sovereignty in this country is still very relevant even though the latter is in complete incorporation of Russia and has no external, out-of-Russia boundaries unlike Chechnia or Dahestan. Besides, under the slogan "Enough to feed Moscow!" can be actualized the project of Siberian Republic, even though the viability of this Republic is under question [Stern, 1994: 57, 60]. Thus, we can conclude that there is a risk of separatism within so called Turk wedge "Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Yakutia, the Far Eastern Republic", although the Far East has no distinct signs of separatism at present.

One can say about so called. "quiet German annexation" of Kalininhrad territories, as the number of German population is constantly growing from 1.5 thousand people in the beginning of 1990-s to 10 thousand in the beginning of 2000s. Dependence on German investment projects and loan programs is increasing. There is the possibility of a referendum of the ethnic Germans. EU enlargement to the east, is gradually transforming the Kalininhrad exclave to the enclave, surrounded by Poland and Lithuania and located 400 km away from the main Russian territory. From 950 thousand of its inhabitants 425 thousand live in Kalininhrad. According to various sociological data 80% of young people living in Kaliningrad have not been to Russia and the exclave itself is surrounded by more developed countries. In short, the population of Kalininhrad region is looking rather to the West than to Russia [Neymysheva, 2003].

Russia's strategy to transform Kalininhrad to European Hong Kong with a special international legal status has failed. That is why Russia has no other options as to transform Kalininhrad region to the naval base, which gives it a certain geopolitical prerogatives, as this territory is geographically close to the developed European countries. Also, being on the joint of EU/NATO and the Eastern Europe this region became a place-based of Baltic Fleet. After all, Russia took over Soviet ethics in order not only to consolidate their statehood and territorial integrity, but to unite different territories along its environs [Coodrich, 2016]. These traditions that have gained importance in the heyday of Eurasianism, were based primarily on common Slavic and Orthodox identity. Recently Russia finally abandoned expectations of universal values of freedom, democracy and human rights. Dogma of national idea for Russia became actually patriotism and belief in the special missionary of Eurasian civilization [Сурков, 2006: 6–7b].

However, there are different types of Russian nationalism, the most radical of them seems to be the concept of creation of purely national state – Russia only for Russians. The expressions – "stop to feed the Caucasus!", "bloody foreigners!" became the indications of such public mood. Nationalists of this kind do not reject the collapse of the federation for the sake of the Republic, what will prevent the onset of the Caucasus and Central Asia. In turn, orthodox communists

just as Eurasians on the contrary are trying to assert the revival of Empire in its “natural borders” including former socialist countries. For all, the struggle of Eurasians, Imperials and statesmen with Russian nationalism is seen as a struggle for the Russia’s integrity and preservation [Гаджиев, 2013: 52].

The period of 1995–1998 was marked with the aggravation of separatism and economic crisis – better known as the currency default. On this background the internal politics situation was getting worse and the rating of the President Boris Yeltsyn fell to an unprecedented 3%. Revenue of funds to the federal budget actually has stopped, and the promised aid package from the IMF Russia did not receive due to total corruption in higher and middle echelons of authority. In general, Russia was on the brink of collapse [Coodrich, 2016]. The difficult situation in the state eventually forced Boris Yeltsyn and his surroundings run the mechanism of power transmission to chosen successor and the chief of the FSB/FSS (Federal Security Service) – Vladimir Putin. On the background of a collapsing economy, Russian society was in need of a strong leader. Vladimir Putin gained his popularity being on the prime minister post. He stated: “Russia was and will remain a great country ...Russia is experiencing one of the most difficult periods in its long history. Perhaps, for the first time in last 200–300 years it is facing a real danger of being in the second or even third tier of the world”. The response to this threat, according to Vladimir Putin, had to be the idea of providential mission and specific identity of RF. The idea of Russian exclusivity served to strengthen personal power factor [15]. However, according to L. Shevtsova, this policy promotes its transformation into “a lonely state” and these actions do not contribute to the credibility and image in the international arena [Шевцова, 2010].

Vladimir Putin after the official coming to the Kremlin in March 2000, from the first years of his presidency had to focus primarily on the internal problems of Russia – carrying out radical political and economic reforms to overcome the problems of separatism and others. As a result new Russian leader quickly obtained the image of a leader, who turned the destruction of the state in the opposite direction, passing a number of program ideas, among them the revival of Russia as a great power [Nicholson, 2001: 870]. On May, 27, 2002 “The New York Times” had noted: “49-year-old Vladimir Putin two years ago became the President thanks to Boris Yeltsyn. The new leader of the country is too popular, however, remains a mystery... After 15 years of chaos that prevailed during the reign of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsyn, Russians like the sense of order that Vladimir Putin has brought” [Rukavishnikov, 2005: 801].

Active emergence of free associations of citizens and civic organizations to some extent contributed to the public discussion of Russia’s foreign policy, world politics, the modern world and the place of Russia in it. However, the establishment of liberal democratic institutions was short. In fact, since the beginning of 2000-s the process of liberalization collapsed and transition to permanent centralization of power started. That was despite the fact that during the 1990-s Russia has strived for integrating into Euro-Atlantic institutions. For example, before the strengthening of authoritarianism in 2000 about 55% of Russians believed that Russia should join the EU, while about 30% had the opposite opinion [Пилев, 2015: 89]. But now Russia no longer considers itself as part of a European or Western liberal-democratic society. The evidence of it became permanent declarations of Russian establishment to set a special kind of liberalism – based on authoritarian principles. Also, more than half of Russians consider impossible Russia’s friendship with leading European countries.

So, nowadays Russia has got actually one-party system, as the only political force is political party “United Russia”, which practically turned into a pocket party of present regime. In turn, Russian President has authority similar to General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had and the FSS is just a branch of the Soviet security structures – KGB/CSS (Com-

mittee of State Security). O. Motyl, American political scientist, Professor of Rutgers University marked that Vladimir Putin had started the final dismantling of democratic institutions and the formation of an oppressive, hyper national regime [Motyl, 2016]. De facto there was a restoration of the authoritarian regime in the form of nationalist kleptocracy. Some scientists compare it with fascist Italian-style authoritarianism (Z. Brzezinski, A. Zubov) interspersed with Soviet totalitarian heritage or call it protofascism – as a “soft” form of fascism in comparison with European fascist regimes of the 1920-s – 1930-s. (O. Motyl, V. Inozemtsev) [Иноземцев, 2016]. After all, Western scientists have started to name RF a fascist country since 2007, preferring “to call things by their names rejecting the illusion and complacency”. However, some analysts predict two scenarios for Russia: the full consolidation of society and the transformation into a purely classical fascist state or its transformation into an authoritarian country with an unstable regime [Motyl, 2007].

Taking into consideration the necessity to strengthen the power in Russia the former first deputy head of the Presidential Administration V. Surkov, the author of the “sovereign democracy” concept suggested the idea of three features of the Russian political practice: the desire for political integrity through the centralization of government functions, idealization of purposes of political struggle, the personification of political institutions [Сурков, 2006а]. Referring to the rejection and unwillingness of Russians to accept democracy of the Western type, as well as on the background of the debates among elites who arrived to rhetorical question: “Who lost Russia?” this concept of “sovereign democracy” has become a kind of appeal to the national characteristics and historical traditions of Russia as a great state [Латина, 2009: 19]. Harvard professor R. Pipes notes that since 1991 Russia creates a mixture of tsarist regime, communism and Stalinism mainly by strengthening the authority system and its institutions. On his opinion, Putin’s Russia is a return to the dictates of the all-mighty state and society where anti-liberal attitudes prevail [Pipes, 2004: 13-15]. His opinion was also confirmed by British politician George Sherr: “Vladimir Putin has resorted to the old method, tested by Stalin – the restoration of the “vertical power system “as a way of returning to Russia its rightful place in the international arena, especially in the former Soviet Union” [Шерп, 2008]. It should be added that more than 50% of Russians consider Stalin an outstanding political leader.

After a series of arrests, including Mikhail Khodorkovskiy, the Russian leader has become less popular on the West, however, he improved his rating in Russia. For the confirmation of the image of a strong leader, apart from the defeat of disloyal group of wealthy statesmen, Vladimir Putin actively limits the influence of regional leaders and demonstrators actions. In short, through a series of internal transformations Vladimir Putin strengthened international and geopolitical status of RF. In Russian society Vladimir Putin has got the reputation of a leader who brought Russia out of chaos, overcame Russian oligarchy and returned its rightful place on the world stage [Шерп, 2013: 54]. Moreover, Vladimir Putin appealed to Russian concept of a “state”. This situation contributed Putin’s strategy for Russian unification and the strengthening of the identity of society in the context of its consolidation around a strong leader who represented law and order man now.

On the pages of authoritative British newspaper “Financial Times” we could find a brief description of the Vladimir Putin regime. In particular, the publication stated that Vladimir Putin and his entourage from the former KGB along with the loyal support of wealthy statesmen were able to renew a “soft” version of authoritarianism after the collapse of the USSR. Moreover president and his entourage have significant financial preferences and business opportunities. The discussions about compliance of Putin’s surrounding with state and private interests, which actually controls the Russian economy are ongoing. The President’s entourage tries to demon-

strate that their own interests and state interests intersect at the point of stability and sustainable development. After all, high oil prices in the last decade showed the desire of the Russian elite to enrich and transform Russia into a powerful state. On this background, Vladimir Putin spins cult of nationalism for cohesion of Russian society in front of “rise of pressure” and “aggression” of the West, and the government tries to show it as a new challenge. Recently, Russian nationalism started to obtain alarming signs of political and mass hysteria. However, the situation in the Russian economy can cause strong dissatisfaction with Putin’s entourage, which has privileged access to natural resources of the country and accumulates capital in Western banks by selling these resources. The latter is due to the fact that reduced oil price does not bring the dividends to Russian big business as it was before the crisis [Freeland, 2014].

Putin’s power gets the features of the imperial signs, extreme centralism and bureaucracy. This situation was an internal Russian security challenge that exceeds the overall external challenges. Well-known Russian economist and Mikhail Cherkasov on this occasion said: “The enormous concentration of power in the hands of the ruling elite, inevitably leads to its decay, a huge bureaucracy, inevitably generates large scaled corruption, conflicts between different peoples of the empire, caught in an unequal position, claim to world domination – an objective basis of Empire’s death” [Черкасов, 2008: 33]. For example, only during the 1991–2007 number of officials in Russia increased from 950 thousand up to 1 million 750 thousand people, despite the fact that the total population of Russia for this period decreased to 6 million people. As at all times, the key figure of imperial state remains unchanged, the supreme ruler, sovereign, and in fact “a good king”, who creates and is responsible for the fate of domestic and foreign policy. Thus, in recent years Russian government completed the implementation of the concept of “il-liberal” or “managed democracy” [Бульвінський, 2016: 139].

According to experts, Russia needs to win in local conflicts in order to maintain the current authoritarian regime. For example, it is traced that Putin’s rating is growing during the acute confrontation with internal or external enemy, or in front of threats to national security. Putin’s actions on the post of prime minister in 1999 were supported by 80% of Russians. It allowed him to win in the first round of the presidential elections in March, 2000. In the early years of his presidency Vladimir Putin had to put all his efforts in order to prevent further deterioration in the political and economic sphere, and to prevent the disintegration of the state [Goldman, 2008: 323].

Another reason for such a sharp rise in the rating of Vladimir Putin has become a tough response to the bombings of apartment buildings in Moscow, Buynaksk and Volgodonsk in 1999. These events activated the counter-terrorist operation in the North Caucasus, known as the Second Chechen War. The active phase of this war began in October, 1999 with the invasion of federal troops in the Chechen Republic. Finally, economic growth due to high oil prices allowed to pay pensions and to increase salaries in various industries, as well as in the budgetary sector, which also contributed to the support of Putin’s policy. All this ensured the rising of popularity of the new Russian president, whose rating fluctuated between 70–80% [Hill, 2004: 15-18]. Another such example was the special operation in Georgia in 2008 after which the level of Putin’s support came to an unprecedented 88% (Vladimir Putin was on the Prime Minister’s post for the second term) that helped him to get ahead of Dmitriy Medvedev, the President of Russian Federation [32].

Russia’s rejection of liberal-democratic model can be partly explained by the complexity of managing the largest country in the world. Administrative division that includes so many regions with cultural and ethnic diversity only complicates public administration of such large state as RF¹. The problem is that main territories of modern Russia (77%) are located in Asia,

¹ Nowadays Russian Federation consists of 83 federal subjects: 21 republics, 46 oblasts (regions), 9 krai (regional administrative unit), 1 autonomous oblast, 4 autonomous regions and 2 federal cities.

where only 20% of its population live [38]. Being afraid of disintegration and separatism because of excessive powers of federal institutions, Vladimir Putin has consistently implemented a course to curtailment of democratic institutions and strengthening of presidential power. Putin's aim was centralization by strengthening political and financial control over the Russian regions. After all, centralization was necessary for administrative structures and for consolidation in making decisions concerning foreign affairs. The significant moment was minimizing participation of regional elites in this process. Thus, in 2004 the election of governors of RF was abolished. In this regard, the institute of authorized representatives of the President of Russia – “povpredov” was established. Obviously, their main objective was to monitor the situation in the regions on behalf of the Russian President and to inform the federal government about the local situation. In short, the appointed envoy had to determine the ability of governors to lobby interests of Moscow in regions [23].

In 2006 the activities of civic organizations were legally restricted in Russia. According to the report of the “Freedom House” organization in 2013 Russian press freedom index was at 176-th position from 197 countries [Бульвінський, 2015: 83]. In 2015, according to the organization “Worldwide Press Freedom Index” Russia was on 152nd place out of 180 possible in the world rating of countries in terms of press freedom. Apparently the level of centralization of power and curtailment of democratic freedoms in Russia is one the highest in the world, thus it directly effects on the formation and implementation of RF foreign policy strategy [33].

Therefore, Russia's population is actually excluded from the political and social processes and has no influence on key decisions. In this regard, Russians as well as the population of other former Soviet countries stand out by virtue of low self-organization and say they have no influence on the decisions of the authorities. Thus, they remove the responsibility for the events in their own country and its politics in the world arena. However, as noted above, an important aspect of Russian policy is the support of the first person and its actions inside and outside the country by the society [Перепелиця, 2015: 103]. Overall, the impact of public opinion on politics can be traced not only in the government's pressure on the society, but also manifests itself in political parties and organizations, through the media, during the electoral process. Today foreign policy issues and security problems are not the prerogative of top officials, as they are “being discussed by the press and the street” [Рукавишников, 2005: 818].

In recent years, the support of Russian leadership course contributed to the emergence of such a phenomenon as “krymnashyzm”. In general, the Crimea has the exclusive/sacred significance for Russia, especially for the imperial code and to support sentiment in society. Russian Imperial thinking and increased support of the regime, as it is proved, is shown with a “small victories” of Russia. According to sociological data to 2011 the number of disgruntled with RF policy was over 60%. During 2008–2012 Vladimir Putin has lost the third part of his electorate and it looked like Russian regime is in deadlock. After all, there is the assumption that presidential elections in March, 2012 Vladimir Putin had won with the use of fraud. If in January, 2014 for the current president were ready to vote only 29% of Russians, with the annexation of the Crimea, according to Russian Center for Public Opinion (RCPO), Putin's rating increased from 60.6% in February to 82.3% at the end of March, 2014 up to 89.9% in October, 2015 [Sperling, 2015].

Simultaneously with the annexation of the Crimea, even against the background of deteriorating of economic situation, rising prices and the depreciation of the ruble, there was improvement of social attitude to the majority of public institutions [Немцов, 2014]. Therefore, it should be noted that the annexation of the Crimea acquired mainly domestic policy content and was necessary for the Russian President to improve his rating among Russian society, who ex-

pressed in such a way “pride for their country”. The latter also allowed Vladimir Putin to regain the status of the leader who saved Russia from collapse and total defeat on the international stage. According to J. Friedman statements, Putin’s image is based on a rigid foreign policy and the economy indicates that before intervention to Ukraine his ratings were not too high [*Фрудман*, 2015]. In addition, an explanation of the high rating of Vladimir Putin is a forcing media propaganda in society that there is no alternative choice of leader. Also, media uses existing people’s complexes and phobias, most of which were formed during the Cold War. Along with active participation of the media the illusions of social stability are created. In general, Russia’s domestic policy that defines its foreign policy depends on to the same extent from the president, and actually from the Russians itself [*Волков*, 2015].

On western experts opinion, Vladimir Putin built albeit authoritarian regime in its essence, however unstable in its content. The first sign of fragility and ineffectiveness of Putin’s regime, according to Alexander Motyl, was a series of mass demonstrations in Russia at Bolotna Square and Sakharov Avenue after the elections to the State Duma in December 4, 2011. The reason for the mass public discontent became apparent fraud during the electoral process. After these elections the ruling party “United Russia” “won” the most votes – 49.3%. Quite a large scale public disturbance has also been (the mass meeting “March of millions”) after the presidential elections in March, 2012. As a result Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitriy Medvedev made another imperious castling and Vladimir Putin exchanged post with Dmitriy Medvedev [*Motyl*, 2012]. Particularly active was Russian middle class and young people, who do not agree with the results of elections in which Vladimir Putin won 71.31% of public support though his popularity fall by an average of 20%. According to L. Shevtsova from 2011 after events at Bolotna Square and Sakharov Avenue Russian government took a course on further strengthening of authoritarianism in Russia. Such actions of Kremlin influenced on Russia’s foreign policy that eventually resulted in the geopolitical expansion [*Шевцова*, 2014]. Another signal for government became mass anticorruption meetings in more than hundred Russian cities on March 26, 2017 after exposing by Alex Navalny the corruption schemes of Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev. In all, Russian experts argue that there is no alternative way for RF apart from authoritarianism and “managed democracy” and the only replacement of authoritarianism in this situation can be chaos and anarchy.

Conclusions. Thus, Russia became totally authoritarian state, where the power institutions took under strict control the formation of geostrategy, its implementation and decision-making of foreign policy in general. The coming to power in 2000 the former head of the FSS – Vladimir Putin marked the beginning of systematic alignment of autocratic authority, based on the support of a narrow circle of statesmen and colleagues from the CSS, which actually became a social and political support of the current regime. Over centralized organization of power that is completely closed on the president and his surrounding often promotes false strategic algorithm of actions in the international arena and doesn’t help to make smart decisions concerning protection of national interests. The current Russian society is characterized with imperial consciousness, caused by the nostalgia for the superpower of the Soviet Union. Due to it, the Kremlin actively cultivates and uses imperial mood of society in order to return to RF the “unjustly deprived” great power status.

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