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## **THE RUSSIA OF “EARLY PUTIN” IN SEARCH OF A NEW NATIONAL IDENTITY: MODERN IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY IN THE SHADOW OF THE “HUMANITARIAN” “RUSSIAN WORLD”**

## **РОСІЯ “РАНЬОГО ПУТІНА” В ПОШУКАХ НОВОЇ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ: МОДЕРНА ІМПЕРСЬКА ІДЕОЛОГІЯ В ТІНІ “ГУМАНІТАРНОГО” “РУСЬКОГО МИРУ”**

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**Abstract.** *At the beginning of the XXI century the leadership of the Kremlin significantly strengthened control over the processes in the Russian state, achieved certain successes in the implementation of integration projects in the post-Soviet space. To increase the geopolitical weight of the Russian Federation and further strengthen its position on the territory of the so-called “near abroad”, Kremlin political technologists developed a new imperial ideology. Ivan Ilyin, a critic of the Bolsheviks and a supporter of monarchism and fascism, acted as an ideological guide for the Russian ruling elite.*

*A practical manifestation of the new ideological approaches was the introduction of the “Day of People’s Unity” associated with the traditions of tsarist Russia, which essentially replaced the celebration of the so called “Great October Socialist Revolution”. In the same vein, we can consider the launch of the action called “Saint George's ribbon”, which is a kind of attempt to combine the legacy of the Romanovs with the pages of the history of the USSR convenient for the Kremlin. Criticizing the federal nature of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin at the same time actively used the victory of the USSR in World War II for its geopolitical purposes. To the greatest extent, this was manifested due to the active popularization of the myth of the “Great Victory” and the hypertrophied celebration of “Victory Day” – the so-called “Pobedobesie”.*

*One of the important components of the new state ideology of the Russian Federation was the active use of the “besieged fortress” concept. Tough declarations of the leadership of Russia at that time were complemented by decisive steps. The use of radioactive substances on the territory of Great Britain to kill a former employee of the FSB, cyber-attacks on the governmental structure of a NATO and EU member – Estonia, a return to the Soviet practice of aviation combat duty, a missile strike on Georgian territory by a Russian aircraft demonstrated the readiness of official*

*Moscow to raise the stakes in the framework of the struggle for the redistribution of geopolitical “chessboard”.*

*The ideological project “Russian World” became the decoration for Russian imperialism and revanchism. During the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin, it was already possible to trace warning signals that unequivocally demonstrated that behind the “humanitarian” envelope of “Russian World” the aggressive foreign policy goals of the Russian leadership were hidden.*

*The most openly imperial essence of the Putin regime in its early stages is reflected in the framework of the so-called “Russian doctrine”. This document included provisions on the messianic role of Russia, criticism of the Bolsheviks for the division of the USSR into republics, the postulate on the historical continuity of the Russian Federation from tsarist times, etc. In the context of outlining the foreign policy goals of the Russian Federation, the doctrine refers to the creation of a multipolar world, the non-recognition of the 1991 Belovezh Accords, and the beginning of the path that should lead to the “reunification” of Russia with Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan is declared.*

**Keyword:** *Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, imperialism, foreign policy, “Russian World”, revanchism.*

**Анотація.** *На початку XXI ст. керівництво Кремля суттєво посилило контроль за процесами в російській державі, досягло певних успіхів у плані реалізації інтеграційних проєктів на пострадянському просторі. Для посилення геополітичної ваги РФ та подальшого зміцнення її позицій на території так званого “близького зарубіжжя” політтехнологи Кремля розробили нову імперську ідеологію. В якості ідейного орієнтира для російської правлячої верхівки виступив критик більшовиків, прихильник монархізму та фашизму Іван Ільїн.*

*Практичним проявом нових ідеологічних підходів стало запровадження пов’язаного із традиціями царської Росії “Дня народної єдності”, який по суті замінив святкування так званої “Великої Жовтневої соціалістичної революції”. В цьому ж ключі можна розглядати започаткування акції під назвою “Георгієвська стрічка”, яку є своєрідною спробою поєднати спадщину Романових із зручними для Кремля сторінками історії СРСР. Критикуючи федеративну сутність Радянського Союзу, Кремль водночас активно використовував для своїх геополітичних цілей перемогу СРСР у II світовій війні. Найбільшою мірою це проявилось через активну популяризацію міфу “Великої перемоги” та гіпертрофоване святкування “Дня Перемоги” – так зване “победобесіє”.*

*Одним із важливих компонентів нової державної ідеології РФ стало активне використання концепту “оточена фортеця”. Жорсткі декларації з боку керівництва Росії в цей час доповнювалися рішучими кроками. Використання на території Великобританії радіоактивних речовин для вбивства колишнього співробітника ФСБ, кібератаки на урядову структури члена НАТО та ЄС – Естонії, повернення до радянської практики чергувань стратегічної авіації, ракетний удар по грузинській території російським літаком демонстрували готовність офіційної Москва піднімати ставки в рамках боротьби за перерозподіл геополітичної “шахівниці”.*

*Декорацією для російського імперіалізму та реваншизму став ідеологічний проєкт “русский мир”. Вже впродовж другої президентської каденції Владіміра Путіна можна було простежити тривожні сигнали, які недвозначно демонстрували що за “гуманітарною” обгорткою “русского миру” приховуються агресивні зовнішньополітичні цілі керівництва РФ.*

*Найбільш відверто імперська сутність путінського режиму на його ранніх стадіях відображена в рамках так званої “Руської доктрини”. Цей документ включив у себе положення про месіанську роль Росії, критику більшовиків за поділ СРСР на республіки, постулат про історичну тяглість РФ від царських часів тощо. В контексті окреслення зовнішньополітичних цілей РФ, в доктрині йдеться про створення багатопольярного світу,*

невизнання Біловезьких угод 1991 р. та задекларовано початок шляху, який має довести до “воз’єднання” Росії з Білоруссю, Україною та Казахстаном.

**Ключові слова:** Російська Федерація, Владімір Путін, імперіалізм, зовнішня політика, “Русский мир”, реваншизм.

### **Introduction**

*“He’s a democrat, and he knows the West... He will continue the Yeltsin line on democracy and economics and widen Russia’s contacts ...”* [Memorandum of Conversation. Meeting with Russian President Yeltsin, no date, p. 565–566].

On November 19, 1999, Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999) and US President Bill Clinton (1993-2001) met in Istanbul in the framework of the OSCE summit. During the conversation, the Russian president described the then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, with the above words. As the first president of Russia later claimed, he was wrong in terms of understanding who Vladimir Putin is [Kasianov: Yeltsyn zhalkuvav, shcho obrav Putina svoim nastupnykom, i pid chas nashoi zustrichi meni priamo pro tse skazav]. The successor of Boris Yeltsin became the creator of another Russia, the key features of which are authoritarianism, imperialism and expansionism. The signs of Russia's transformation in the appropriate direction already became clearly visible during Vladimir Putin's second presidential term (2004-2008).

Volodymyr Horbulin, Viktor Kotyhorenko, Roman Lunkin, Hryhorii Perepelytsia, Oleh Rafalskyi, Yuriy Svidlov, Timothy Snyder, Andreas Umland, Liudmyla Shanhina and many other Ukrainian and foreign researchers in their scientific works considered various aspects of the formation of the ideological foundations of Putin's Russia, especially the issue of associated with the ideological project “Russian world”. Based on the results of their research, the authors of the article made an attempt to reveal the beginnings of the formation of the modern imperial ideology based on the ideas of Ivan Ilyin, the introduction of the “besieged fortress” concept, and the implementation of the “Russian world” ideological project into active “political circulation” during the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin (2004 – 2008).

**Presentation of the main research outcomes.** The expansion of the powers of the central authorities in the Russian Federation, the adoption of legislative innovations useful for the presidential administration and pro-presidential political forces, the switch of a number of important media resources to become Kremlin controlled, the renationalization and establishment of control over big businesses and other changes during the first presidential term of Vladimir Putin (2000 – 2004 r.) significantly strengthened his control over processes in the middle of the state [Hurak and Tsependa, 2021, p. 65] and gave Zbigniew Brzezinski the reason to call the second Russian president the “Moscow Mussolini” [Bzhezynskyi, 2006, p. 80] in September 2004. At the same time, official Moscow demonstrated increasing activity in the international arena. Initiatives related to the creation of EAEC, Eurasian Economic Space, CSTO, ignoring international agreements, playing with “military muscles” testified to the growing ambitions of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space and the desire to strengthen its geopolitical weight [Hurak and Tsependa, 2021, p. 58–59, 65–66].

At the beginning of the XXI century Putin's team demonstrated its readiness to be part of the West on the condition of recognizing Russia as one of Washington's main allies and agreeing to its hegemony in the CIS space. The reluctance of leading Western actors, primarily the United States, to such a compromise gave rise to the growing dissatisfaction of official Moscow. Ultimately, after the tragic events in Beslan and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Russia “left the orbit of the West”, choosing an alternative path of development [Trenin].

Strengthening control over processes in the middle of the state, new initiatives in the CIS space, supplemented by a beneficial situation in the energy markets objectively contributed to the reinforcement of the international positions of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the Kremlin was convinced that in the future the “power of the word” will have more and more weight and the ideological confrontation between the countries will grow [Vladislav Surkov. Suverenitet – ehto politicheskij sinonim konkurentosposobnosti]. The creator of “sovereign democracy”,

Vladislav Surkov [Mishchenko], traditionally characterized the Soviet Union critically. However, he believed that one of the two greatest achievements of the USSR was “powerful ideological work that was deployed on a planetary scale” [Vladislav Surkov. Suverenitet – ehto politicheskij sinonim konkurentosposobnosti]. Accordingly, the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin became a period when the Russian Federation paid serious attention to the formation of a new comprehensive ideology. On the one hand, it was supposed to consolidate Russian society around the ruling elite led by Vladimir Putin, and on the other hand, to contribute to strengthening the position of the Russian Federation in the world.

Historian Timothy Snyder believes that among the thinkers of the 20th century Ivan Ilyin had the greatest influence on modern world politics [Snaider, 2020, p. 27]. In particular, it is about the influence that this Russian philosopher of the first half of the 20th century had managed to the leadership of the Russian Federation headed by Vladimir Putin. As part of the Annual Address to the Federal Assembly dated April 25, 2005, the second Russian president voiced a philosopher's quote about the relationship between state bodies and citizens [Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation]. In the following years, Vladimir Putin repeatedly cited Ivan Ilyin during his iconic speeches. Following him, Ilyin's thoughts were used by Dmitry Medvedev, Sergey Lavrov, Vladislav Surkov, and other influential Russian figures [Barbashin].

The Kremlin also took the initiative to rebury the ashes of Ivan Ilyin in Russia, who spent the last years of his life in Switzerland [Il'in den']. In October 2005, the ashes of the philosopher were buried in Moscow on the territory of the Donskoy Monastery with the participation of Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Alexy II [Prah generala Denikina i filosofa Il'ina perezakhoronili v Moskve]. In the following year as part of the presidential program “For Reconciliation and Consent”, the archives of Ivan Ilyin, which were previously stored at the University of Michigan, were brought to the Russian Federation [Il'in den']. In 2009, according to the words of Archimandrite Tikhon, who is close to Putin, the then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation financed the construction of Ilyin's grave monument with his own funds [Putin vozlozhil cvety k mogilam “gosudarstvennikoV” – Denikina, Il'ina, Solzhenicyna].

The reasons for such attention to the figure of the philosopher lie in his writings. For Ivan Ilyin, Russia is a stronghold of “universal peace and balance”. He claimed that “Western nations do not understand and cannot tolerate Russian uniqueness” and will try to divide Russia, using “freedoms”, “democracy”, and “federalism”, which he used in quotation marks [Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in. Izbrannoe]. For Ilyin, Russia has always been a victim of the European “continental blockade”. It could not do anything wrong. From his point of view, the participation of Russians in any wars was “self-defense” [Snaider, 2020, p. 32].

According to Ilyin, it is possible to prevent a negative development of events for Russia only under the condition of the formation of “the Russian national dictatorship, which will take the strong “reins of power” into its hands” [Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in. Izbrannoe]. The philosopher did not support the rule of law, but he used the definition of “law” in his works. By it he understood the connection between the whims of the leader and the subjection of all others. For the monarchist Ilyin, the leader is “a Russian patriot who will lead Russia to salvation”, who “sees the future of politics and knows what should be done” [Snaider, 2020, p. 37] and who, following the model of Mussolini, is endowed with “masculinity”. From Ilyin's point of view, the Russian masses had to shift all the whims of their leader into the language of legal obligation. From Ilyin's point of view, the leader of Russia is obliged to fight and has the right to choose in which war to fight. War, from the philosopher's point of view, is a useful thing that does not threaten, but protects the Russian “national body”.

Ilyin had no doubts that post-Soviet Ukraine must be part of Russia. For the philosopher, talking about Ukraine meant being a fierce enemy of Russia [Snaider, 2020, p. 31, 35]. He put the word “Ukrainians” in quotation marks and predicted that “imperialist neighbors” would try to take over parts of Russia, using, among other things, Ukrainian separatism to dismember it [Ivan Aleksandrovich Il'in. Izbrannoe].

It is worth emphasizing that not all of Ivan Ilyin's views are openly popularized in Russia. In particular, his followers deliberately avoid the facts that the philosopher was a supporter of fascism, that he was inspired by Adolf Hitler and saw in Benito Mussolini a hope for the betterment of the world [Snaider, 2020, p. 27–28]. Interestingly, Ilyin remained true to his views even after emigrating from Germany to Switzerland in 1938 and the defeat of the Nazis during World War II. In 1948, Ilyin argued that fascism was right despite the fact that it made many mistakes [Mishchenko].

Ivan Ilyin's views formed the ideological basis for the Putin regime. Regardless of how openly they are declared by the Kremlin adepts, the facts demonstrate attempts at their systematic implementation into practice, starting from the period covered in the work. In particular, on January 1, 2005, changes to the Labor Code of the Russian Federation, which related to public holidays, entered into force. According to the innovations, the “*Day of agreement and reconciliation*” became a working day; instead, one of the main Russian official holidays became the “*Day of People's Unity*”, which is celebrated on November 4 [Pchelov, 2005, p. 138; Zabuttiu pidlihaie. Yak “Velykyi zhovten” stav malym]. The new holiday, which from 1649 until the Bolshevik coup in 1917 was the day of honoring the Kazan icon of the Mother of God, was timed to the liberation of Moscow from Polish troops in November 1612 [Odin noyabr' odnoj strany. Chto my vsyo-taki prazdnuem 4 i 7 noyabrya]. In order to understand the essence of the proposed change, it is worth recalling one of Vladislav Surkov's interviews, which he gave already after leaving the post of assistant to the President of Russia. So, in June 2021, the long-time assistant of Vladimir Putin, revealing the goals that led to the appearance of a new holiday, frankly noted that “This day has become a day of Russian nationalism in its essence. There was a task to speak about the empire, about our desire to expand, but at the same time not to offend the world community” [Ukraina i Russkij mir v interv'yu s Vladislavom Surkovym; Vosstanie poddannikh...].

2005 was marked by another innovation. During the large-scale celebration of the 60th anniversary of the victory of the USSR in the so-called “*Great Patriotic War*” [Inostrannye delegacii na yubileyakh Pobedy v Moskve] on May 9, at the initiative of one of the leading Russian propaganda channels – “*RIA Novosti*”, the “*Saint George's ribbon*” action was launched in the Russian Federation [Chto oznachaet Georgievskaya lenta?]. After the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the so-called “*Saint George's ribbon*” became one of the symbols of the aggressive policy of the Kremlin. It should be borne in mind that this ribbon, which Russian propagandists associated with World War II and the “*Order of Glory*” introduced in 1943 and was called the “*Guards ribbon*” in the 1940s. Instead, the real “*Saint George's ribbon*”, which looks similar to it, was introduced by Catherine II in 1769 as an addition to the Order of St. George and during World War II was used by Russian military formations such as General Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army, which fought alongside Nazis [Heorhiivska strichka...].

Considering the approaches of Putin and his entourage to the Soviet heritage, it is worth noting a pronounced dualism. On one hand, on April 25, 2005, as part of the Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, Vladimir Putin said the well-known phrase that “the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century” [Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation]. It is worth emphasizing that the aforementioned address was not the first public speech in which the second Russian president openly demonstrated that, in his opinion, the collapse of the USSR was harmful to Russia and Russians. The topic of “*unity*” also occupied one of the central places in Vladimir Putin's interview for the leading Ukrainian TV channels on October 26, 2004 [Hurak and Tsependa, 2021, p. 60–61]. Then, among other things, he emphasized that Russians and Ukrainians were the most affected by the collapse of the USSR, asserted that the inhabitants of the post-Soviet space are doing the right thing when they worry about “the loss of the Soviet Union”, etc [Interview on Ukrainian Television Channels UT-1, Inter and 1+1].

For the second Russian president, who tried to accumulate international efforts in order to form a multipolar world with the Russian Federation as one of the centers of gravity, the USSR was a role model in terms of influence on the international arena. As a result, one of the ways of increasing the international authority of the Russian Federation, which was used by the Kremlin's

political technologists, was the popularization of historical moments related to Soviet themes, primarily the victory of the Red Army over fascist troops during World War II. However, Vladimir Putin has traditionally been critical of the essence of the Soviet Union [Putin rasskazal uchenym o podryvnoj roli Lenina v rossijskoj istorii]. For the second Russian president, the creators of the USSR were short-sighted politicians who, dividing the USSR into republics, laid a “delayed action mine” under the “construction of a unitary state, which was called “Russia” [Vladimir Putin. Vechernij razgovor (1991, 2002). Ch. 2]. During his first two presidential terms, Vladimir Putin made considerable efforts to turn the federal basis of the Russian Federation into a fiction. It is clear that according to such approaches, the unitary Russian Empire was a model to emulate, and not the Soviet Union, which consisted of 15 republics.

Starting with the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin, the celebration of “Victory Day” with the “Saint George's ribbon”, the “Immortal Regiment” movement and other initiatives became an important component of spreading narratives useful for the Kremlin. The hypertrophied celebration of “Victory Day” – the so-called “Pobedobesie” – became a way to return to Russians a sense of pride that Russia is a country of winners [New York Times: Rosiia skoiuie novi zlochyny cherez nevyznannia starykh], which, as Vladimir Putin claimed in 2010, could defeat fascist Germany without the help of Ukrainians [Putin vvazhaie, shcho Rosiia u Velykii Vitchyzniani peremohla b i bez Ukrainy]. The myth of the “Great Victory”, in which there is no room for uncomfortable moments, such as the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Russian propaganda will later also in a certain way tie to the war against Ukraine, justifying its aggression by opposing the “neo-Nazis” [New York Times: Rosiia skoiuie novi zlochyny cherez nevyznannia starykh]. At the same time, taking into account that as a result of the World War II, the sphere of influence of the USSR covered half of Europe, the myth of the “Great Victory” objectively generates and retransmits updated imperial ideologies [Potapenko, 2015, p. 115–116] to geographically much wider spaces.

One of the important components of the new state ideology of the Russian Federation was the introduction of the “besieged fortress” concept into the political mainstream, which gradually acquired a pronounced anti-American orientation. During Vladimir Putin's first term as president, official Moscow's criticism of the West was usually voiced through representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. The President, on the other hand, showed restraint in his statements at that time [Menkiszak, 2003, p. 218; Menkiszak, 2004, p. 211–212].

After Putin's re-election for a second presidential term, the situation changed. Already in May 2004, during a speech before the Federal Assembly, Vladimir Putin emphasized that not everyone in the world wants to deal with an independent, strong and self-confident Russia [Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossijskoj Federacii, 2004]. After the tragic events in Beslan in early September 2004, the president's rhetoric became even tougher. Immediately after the end of the operation in North Ossetia, Vladimir Putin, without pointing at anyone, emphasized that “some would like to tear from us a “juicy piece of pie”. Others help them They help, reasoning that Russia still remains one of the world's major nuclear powers, and as such still represents a threat to them And so they reason that this threat should be removed...” [Address by President Vladimir Putin].

Shortly after the Supreme Court of Ukraine annulled the results of the second round of the Ukrainian presidential elections published by the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin on December 7, 2004, alluding to the leading countries of the West, expressed his dissatisfaction, pointing out that there is a situation where “good, but a strict uncle in a pith helmet ” indicates who in which way “must live”, and those who argue are punished “with the help of a bomb rocket baton”[Putin ob Ukraine: “Nedopustimo, chtoby shli ugrozy v adres lyudej”].

In May 2006, as part of the Message to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, speaking in his usual sarcastic manner, called the USA a “wolf” that “knows who to eat, as the saying goes. It knows who to eat and is not about to listen to anyone, it seems” [Annual Address to the Federal Assembly]. In the future, the United States, which was the main addressee of

the official Kremlin's foreign policy [Menkiszak, 2007, p. 178], became the main target of Russian criticism on the international stage.

Starting from the second half of 2006, the introduction of sanctions by the American side against the *Sukhoi Company* and *Rosoboronexport* in July of 2006 and January of 2007 in connection with the supply of weapons by Russia to Iran, Syria and Venezuela became a significant irritant for official Moscow in terms of relations with the United States [Menkiszak, 2007, p. 179]. Russia's position in the American direction became especially edgy when the official Washington's initiative to place elements of the American anti-missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic acquired real outlines. On February 1, 2007, Vladimir Putin held a press conference in the Kremlin, during which he expressed doubts that the mentioned system is directed against threats from Iran, as it was declared by the official Washington [Putin – Argumenty za razmeshchenie sistemy PRO v Evrope nesostoyatel'ny]. In the future, the issue of placing the anti-missile defense system in Central-Eastern Europe, which, with the planned installation of ten interceptor missiles, did not pose a threat to the Russian nuclear potential in general [Amerikanskaya sistema PRO v svete ritoriki i faktov], was a traditional topic for discussion at almost all events with the participation of Vladimir Putin [Ezhegodnaya bol'shaya press-konferenciya; Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossijskoj Federacii, 2007; Stenogramma pryamogo tele- i radioehfira].

Vladimir Putin voiced the most completely and comprehensively anti-Western foreign policy approaches of the Russian Federation during his second presidential term during the “Munich Speech” on February 10, 2007. Then he condemned the “an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations... a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law”, attempts to resolve a given questions, “according to so-called issues of political expediency, based on the current political climate”. Also, denying sovereign states the right to choose the means of their defense, Vladimir Putin harshly criticized the North Atlantic Alliance for its willingness to expand. The Russian president devoted a significant part of his speech to the United States. It was to the actions of the USA that Vladimir Putin linked most of the international problems existing at that time [Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy].

The readiness of the Russian leadership to raise the stakes in the context of confrontation with the West can also be traced through the prism of concrete practical steps. The November 2006 poisoning by Russian special services in London of Alexander Lytvynenko, a former FSB employee and critic of the Putin regime, for which polonium-210 was used, demonstrated the transition to new forms of the Kremlin's defense of its interests, which included the use of radioactive substances on the territory of NATO and the EU [YeSPL: Rosiia vidpovidalna za vbyvstvo Lytvynenka u Brytanii; Zhyttia i smert Oleksandra Lytvynenka]. In April – May 2007, during the transfer of the so-called “Bronze Soldier” in Tallinn, cyberattacks were carried out on state institutions of the member of NATO and EU from computers belonging to Russian government departments, and activists of pro-Kremlin youth movements blocked the Estonian embassy for several days in Russia [Hensek NATO vyslovyv pidtrymku Estonii].

As part of further raising of the stakes in the international arena, in the summer of 2007, Russia carried out a number of demonstrative and provocative actions. In particular, in July, a decision was taken to suspend Russian participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. During August, training of the Russian military was conducted on the Elbrus massif at an altitude of 4.5 km, flights of the Russian strategic aviation over the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic oceans were carried out, Russia's return to the Soviet practice of aviation combat duty was declared. On August 6, 2007, a Russian aircraft violated Georgian airspace and launched a missile attack on a newly installed radar located near the border with South Ossetia [Menkiszak, 2008, p. 192–194].

It is interesting that Vladimir Putin, while gradually increasing his criticism of the USA, resorting to demonstrations of force and provocative steps, at the same time maintained close relations with the American President George Bush. The situation did not change even after the “Munich speech”. Official meetings of the presidents of the Russian Federation and the USA were traditionally accompanied by informal family dinners. It came to the point that George Bush drove

Vladimir Putin to the presidential residence in Novo-Ogaryovo in the personal car of the head of the Kremlin – a rare 1956 “Volga” [Putin nauchil Busha vodit' “21-yu VolgU”], and Vladimir Putin was the first head of a foreign state whom George Bush hosted at his parents' villa in Kennebunkport [Vstrechu Putina i Busha v SSHA soprovozhdali demonstracii protesta].

Also, expressing critical remarks about the USA during the “Munich speech”, Vladimir Putin simultaneously called George Bush his friend and a decent person [Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy]. In April 2008, the last meeting between Vladimir Putin and George Bush as the heads of the Russian Federation and the United States took place in Sochi. George W. Bush's national security adviser, Stephen Hadley, later emphasized her “warm and somewhat nostalgic” tone. He also drew attention to the fact that after British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the 43rd American president met Vladimir Putin most often, and such meetings were always accompanied by frank conversations [Bush i Putin zalozhili osnovu dlya dal'nejshego sotrudnichestva dvukh stran].

The imperial ideology and the besieged fortress concept, promoted by the Kremlin, could not be openly declared and serve the promotion of the Russian Federation on the international arena. In order to spread narratives useful for the Kremlin abroad, Russian diplomacy resorted to the active use of “humanitarian” means of influence. As a result, the leadership of Russia began to systematically work on the realization of its geopolitical goals, emphasizing the support of the Russian language, literature, theater, and music in countries near and far abroad. The ideological project “Russian world” was used to ideologically strengthen integration initiatives under the patronage of the Russian Federation and create its own global value space by official Moscow [Ukraina ta proekt «russkoho myra»: analit. dop., 2014, p. 52]. He became a decoration behind which the true essence of Putin's regime was hidden.

The very phrase “Russian world” was first proposed in 1998 by the philosopher Pyotr Shchedrovsky as part of the preparation for the Russian government of the concept of the policy of the Russian Federation towards the CIS [Russkij Mir: vosstanovlenie konteksta]. The first steps related to the introduction of the “Russian world” project into wide “political circulation” were taken during the first presidential term of Vladimir Putin. In particular, in February 2004, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Igor Ivanov, speaking about “fellow Russians in the countries of the near and far abroad”, used the term “Russian world” during a speech at VIII World Russian People's Council [Vystuplenie ministra inostrannykh del Rossijskoj Federacii I.S. Ivanova...].

In 2006, Vladimir Putin joined the popularization of the project. For the first time, he spoke about “Russian world” on October 24, 2006, during a speech at the World Congress of Compatriots. Remembering the “Day of People's Unity” introduced in 2005, the Russian president emphasized that it unites “the whole so-called Russian world”. Vladimir Putin included the “multinational people of Russia” and “millions of our compatriots abroad” in this definition [Nikakie granicy ne pomeshayut nashemu edinstvu...].

In the following year, the concept will be supplemented with new political aspects. In particular, as part of the Annual Address to the Federal Assembly dated April 26, 2007, Vladimir Putin noted that the Russian language, which is the “living space of the multi-million Russian world”, is the language of the “historic brotherhood of nations”. At the same time, he emphasized that “care for the Russian language, the growth of the influence of Russian culture is a very important social and political issue” [Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossijskoj Federacii, 2007]. Exactly one month before that, Vladimir Putin approved the “Review of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which among the tasks of the state was defined “permanent worldwide assistance in strengthening the ties of compatriots with the historical Motherland, the formation of the “Russian world” as a unique element of universal human civilization” [Obzor vneshnej politiki Rossijskoj Federacii].

The definition “Russian world” was also included in the new version of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved at the beginning of Dmitry Medvedev's presidential term in July 2008. In the paragraph devoted to international humanitarian law and human rights, it



was noted that Russia is considering – “the multimillion Russian diaspora – the Russian world – as a partner, including for expanding and strengthening the space of the Russian language and culture” [The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation]. It is worth emphasizing that the relevant provisions were included in a significantly wider context in which it was said about “international cultural and humanitarian cooperation as a means of building intercivilizational dialogue, achieving concord and ensuring mutual understanding between peoples” and also about “counter manifestations of neofascism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, attempts to rewrite the history, use it for instigating confrontation and revanchism in the world politics, and revise the outcome of the World War Two” [The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation].

To implement the goals of the “Russian world” project in practice, on the basis of the Order of the President of the Russian Federation dated June 21, 2007, the “Russian world” Foundation was established [Shanhina, 2012, p. 92–93]. Through the prism of its activity, it is possible to clearly trace steps that are difficult to match with the foundation's statutory goals. In particular, along with the financing of projects related to the maintenance of the Russian language and culture in the world, financial support for initiatives dedicated to the World War II, topics related to the “friendship”, “unification” of the Slavic peoples is a common phenomenon. Is also worth noting the fact that the central event of the year, which sums up the results of the foundation's work – the “Russian world” Assembly is tied to the above-mentioned “Day of People’s Unity” [Masiienko, Zahryvenko, Koval and Tereshchenko, 2022, p. 44–45, 49–50].

The general aspects that characterize the meaning of “Russian world” are well known. At the same time, in search of an answer to the question of what meaning was invested in the “Russian world” project at the beginning of its formation, we consider it necessary to turn to the so-called “Russian doctrine”. During 2005 – 2007, the relevant document was exceptionally actively popularized by the Russian Orthodox Church, including personally by the then Patriarch Alexy II and the head of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Kirill [Vsya khronika, no date]. The juxtaposition of the universally recognized fundamental role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the development and dissemination of the “Russian world” [Kotyhorenko and Rafalskyi, 2013, p. 61–62; Lunkin, 2018, p. 166–167] project, the presence in Russia of “mutually beneficial cooperation” and even a “political alliance” between the church and secular authorities [Hurak and Kobuta, 2021, p. 35, 45], the repetition of many of Ivan Ilyin's ideas in the document, and the use of key provisions of the “Russian doctrine” by the Kremlin leadership provide grounds for assumptions about its special importance for the formation of a new ideological foundation of the Russian Federation.

The document is imbued with messianic approaches to Russia's place in the development of humanity and its special place in world history. The Russian Federation is defined in the doctrine as a continuation of “historical Russia”, which includes the Tsardom of Muscovy, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union [Russkaya doktrina Chast' VI. Puti preobrazovaniy, no date]. It criticizes the Communist-Leninists, who, contrary to Joseph Stalin's position, granted Ukrainians and Belarusians sovereignty within the Soviet state. The document also contains the thesis that in this way a “delayed action mine” was laid under the USSR [Russkaya doktrina Chast' III. Russkoe gosudarstvo [1], no date]. The foreign policy goals outlined in the doctrine seem especially interesting to us. According to the approaches of the document’s authors, Russia as the “demiurge of harmony” should focus on creating a multipolar world. At the same time, the document emphasizes that by rejecting the “civilized separation” of 1991, Russia is embarking on the path of “the ideology of the return and reunification of those territories of historical Russia to which it has a historical and moral right”. In this context, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan were mentioned in the doctrine [Russkaya doktrina Chast' III. Russkoe gosudarstvo [2], no date].

**Conclusions.** Vladimir Putin’s team establishment as the unopposed ruling political force in the Russian Federation at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century led to the growth of its geopolitical ambitions. To justify its rights to being on one of the key places among influential international

actors and to secure Russia's "exclusive rights" in the post-Soviet space, the Kremlin leadership needed an ideological base. The reaction to the corresponding request was the introduction of modern imperial ideology. Ivan Ilyin, an uncompromising critic of the Bolsheviks, a supporter of monarchism and fascist ideology, acted as an ideological guide for the Russian ruling elite. Since 2005, the original "state ideas" of the philosopher occupy a key place in the rhetoric of the Russian ruling elite.

A practical manifestation of the new ideological approaches was the introduction of the "Day of People's Unity", associated with the traditions of tsarist Russia, which essentially replaced the celebration of the so called "Great October Socialist Revolution". In the same vein, we can consider the launch of the action called "Saint George's ribbon", which is a kind of attempt to combine the legacy of the Romanovs with the pages of the history of the USSR convenient for the Kremlin. Criticizing the federal nature of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin at the same time actively used the victory of the USSR in World War II for its geopolitical purposes. To the greatest extent, this was manifested due to the active popularization of the myth of the "Great Victory" and the hypertrophied celebration of "Victory Day" – the so-called "Pobedobesie".

One of the important components of the new state ideology of the Russian Federation was the active use of the "besieged fortress" concept, which gradually acquired a clearly expressed anti-American orientation. In contrast to the first presidential term, after the tragic events in Beslan and the Orange Revolution, Vladimir Putin has been increasingly harsh towards the West, primarily official Washington. The rhetoric of the Kremlin leadership became especially sharp after the US initiative to deploy elements of the American anti-missile system in Poland and the Czech Republic acquired real outlines.

Tough declarations of the leadership of Russia at that time were complemented by decisive steps. The use of radioactive substances on the territory of Great Britain to kill a former employee of the FSB, cyber-attacks on the governmental structure of a NATO and EU member – Estonia, a return to the Soviet practice of aviation combat duty, a missile strike on Georgian territory by a Russian aircraft demonstrated the readiness of official Moscow to raise the stakes in the framework of the struggle for the redistribution of geopolitical "chessboard".

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that by gradually intensifying criticism of the USA and resorting to demonstrations of force and provocative steps, the Kremlin leadership left room for maneuver. A good example of this state of affairs is the preservation of close relations between Vladimir Putin and George Bush. The facts show that these relations have not undergone significant changes even after the decision of the White House to place elements of the American anti-missile defense system in Central-Eastern Europe and the "Munich speech" of the Russian president.

In their speeches, both Vladimir Putin and representatives of his team quite often appealed to the ideas of Ivan Ilyin. At the same time, a significant part of them, which has an imperialist, anti-democratic, and pro-fascist orientation, could not be voiced naturally. The Russian authorities needed ideological postulates that objectively had to be positively perceived both in the Russian state and outside its borders. Over a certain period of time, the function of scenery for Russian imperialism and revanchism was entrusted to the ideological project "Russian peace".

During the second presidential term of Vladimir Putin, it was already possible to trace alarming signals that unequivocally demonstrated that behind the "humanitarian" envelope of "Russian world" aggressive foreign policy goals were hidden. In particular, in the framework of the Annual Address to the Federal Assembly in 2007, the second Russian president called the Russian language an element of the "historical brotherhood of peoples", and described the care for it and the growth of the outpouring of Russian culture as an important "political issue". In the following year, "Russian world" was included in the new version of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. In this document, it is mentioned in the context of "establishing an intercivilizational dialogue", "countering manifestations of neo-fascism... revanchism in world politics".

The most openly imperial essence of the Putin regime in its early stages is reflected in the framework of the so-called "Russian doctrine". This document included provisions on the messianic

role of Russia, criticism of the Bolsheviks for the division of the USSR into republics, the postulate on the historical continuity of the Russian Federation from tsarist times, etc. In the context of outlining the foreign policy goals of the Russian Federation, the doctrine refers to the creation of a multipolar world, the non-recognition of the 1991 Belovezh Accords, and the declaration of the path that should lead to the “reunification” of Russia with Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

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