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**ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДИСКУРС О ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИОННОЙ  
ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В РОССИИ: ПЕРЕСТРОЙКА  
И ПОСТСОВЕТСКИЙ ПЕРИОД**

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**POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF CIVILIZATIONAL IDENTITY  
IN RUSSIA: PERESTROIKA AND POST-SOVIET PERIOD\***

*В статье анализируется политический дискурс о цивилизационной идентичности России в перестройку и постсоветский период. В динамике дискурса фиксируется несколько значимых этапов: переход от агрессивной антизападной риторики доперестроенного периода к радикальному западничеству в начале перестройки; оппозиция вестернизму славянофильства и националистических репрезентаций идентичности в конце 1980-х — начале 1990-х; сопричастие в дискурсе умеренного вестернизма, националистических репрезентаций и евразийский поворот к середине 1990-х; обращение к идее цивилизационной самобытности в конце 1990-х и попытки сформулировать интегративную, но амбивалентную идентичность, объединяющую универсальное/ западной и самобытное/ русское в 2000-х гг. В основе данной амбивалентности находятся противоречия «глобального и локального», «модернизации и вестернизации». Провозгласив строительство демократии, рыночной экономики, защиту прав человека, составляющих культурную и институциональную программу западной модерности, Россия признала глубинную взаимосвязь с Западом. Однако в политическом дискурсе данная программа реинтерпретируется и проблематизируется через утверждение «особого пути» и цивилизационной самобытности.*

*The paper focuses on the analysis of political discourse of Russia's civilizational identity since perestroika period. Political debates on civilizational identity have passed through certain turns and phases: the great passage from the Soviet aggressive anti-Westernism to the radical Westernism in perestroika; the opposition to Westernism and rise of Slavophilia and nationalistic representations in late 1980s — early 1990s; the coexistence of moderate Westernism, nationalistic representations and the turn toward Eurasianism in the mid-1990s; the proclaimed civilizational distinctiveness in late 1990s and*

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*the attempts to construct an integral though ambivalent identity which synthesizes the universal / Western with the original/ Russian in 2000s. At the core of this ambivalence one finds the contradiction of “Westernization and modernization” and of “global and local”. By building market economy, democracy and supporting human rights, which constitute the basic cultural and institutional programme of the Western modernity, Russia has acknowledged the deep-rooted connection with the West. However, this programme, though having been accepted, is constantly problematized and reinterpreted in the discourse by appeals to Russia’s “special path” and civilizational “uniqueness”.*

**Ключевые слова:** *политический дискурс, цивилизация, цивилизационная идентичность, цивилизационный анализ, западничество, славянофильство, евразийство, перестройка, модернизм, постсоветский период.*

**Keywords:** *political discourse, civilization, civilizational identity, civilizational analysis, Westernism, Slavophilia, Eurasianism, perestroika, modernity, post-Soviet time.*

### **Introduction**

With the renaissance of civilizational analysis in the last decades, studies of civilizational identity were also revitalized. Recently, particular attention was devoted to the “post-essentialist” research of discourses of civilization and civilizational identity that was termed as “the discursive turn in civilizational analysis” (Alker 2007). The article focuses on the study of perestroika’s and post-Soviet political debates on Russia’s civilizational identity. Its primary intention is to overview the political discourse of civilizational identity, i.e. to indicate the main representations and stages of the discourse correlated with the political process. The constructivist approach, which considers identities as a result of social interactions and underlines the importance of sociocultural context and historical conditions in the actualization of identification categories, is more relevant to the current study. Identity is understood “not as a *thing* but a *process*, it is not fixed, but is constantly negotiated and renegotiated” (emphasis — Mole 2007: 10). Therefore, it is preferable to consider the ‘identification’ which lacks the reifying connotations of “identity” and implies agents that do the identifying (Brubaker, Cooper 2000: 14). Discourse is viewed as a medium through which the social reality is comprehended, interpreted and constructed. Thus, identities are “constructed within, not outside the discourse”, “produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices” (Hall 1996: 4). According to the post-essentialist perspective, civilizations are better interpreted as ongoing *processes*, through which boundaries are continually produced and reproduced (emphasis — Hall, Jackson 2007: 4). Although this radical anti-essentialist approach in understanding of civilization and civilizational identity can be regarded as questionable and not well-founded, the very focus on the discourse and its role seems reasonable. Discourses of civilizational identity are inevitably involved in the construction of civilizational boundaries.

The concept of “civilization” exists in political discourse as a category of practice loaded with two different meanings which provoke contrasting connotations. The

singularist interpretation affirms the existence of a teleology of the historical process, the unitary universal civilizational process with a certain “standard of civilization” or criteria for which the West/Europe is considered a model or a prototype. The pluralist understanding is bound to the idea of civilizational particularism and polymorphism determined by the variability of cultures, historical experience and immanent logic of existence. These approaches set the main identity construction scenarios, the frames that define the repertoire of civilizational identity representations. In singularist-universalist scenario, identity is discursively constructed through addressing the following ideas and representations: the Western- and Europocentric / universal standard/criteria of civilization; linearity and unitarity of civilizational and historical processes; modernization, progress; civilization vs. savagery/barbarism/decivilization; opposition “we” — the “Other”, where the latter is perceived as a barbarian or the uncivilized; “*mission civilisatrice*”. Pluralist-particularist scenario appeals to the ideas of multiplicity of civilizations and civilizational processes, fundamental differences and distinctiveness of civilizations; opposition “we” — “they” through an assertion of originality derived from the historical experience, cultural logic and institutional features, “special path” and messianism. The idea of civilizational uniqueness justifies the independent development and equality of civilizations. The “Other” is constructed as a different, incompatible or even hostile but equal civilization which can be framed by the rhetoric of “clash of civilizations”.

Thus, Westernism is associated with the singularist-universalist approach (Europe/the West sets the civilizational standard; Russia’s civilizational backwardness contrasts with the advancements and prosperity of Europe/the West). The pluralist-particularist approach is represented by Slavophilia and Eurasianism.

Different frames and representations of civilizational identity may be used to indicate planes of affiliation, to evaluate and differentiate societies; ascribing one or another civilizational representation determines the “cognitive script”, mode of action and interaction with others (O’Hagan 2007).

The opposition of “we”-“they”/ “the Other” is fundamental in the logic of the group boundaries formation. Defining boundaries is one of the key components in the construction of collective identities (Eisenstadt 1998: 230). In the European discourse, Russia has always been represented as a phenomenon, which is borderline to Europe in both spatial and chronological respects, as an “anomaly” and “the main liminal satellite of Europe” (Neumann 2004: 153, 155). Since 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian discourse on civilizational identity correlates to the European civilizational representations of Russia (Voltaire, Didrot, Rousseau etc.) one of which is as an “apprentice” of the European civilization (Neumann 2004; Wolf 2003). Although Russia has been “othered” in European discourse, “Europe” itself and later “the West” appeared to be the most significant referents in the construction of Russia’s civilizational identity though playing positive related or negative antagonistic roles.

### **Perestroika: Russia “(re)turns to civilization”**

The Soviet period is marked by the construction of a new civilizational identity in which a break-off with religion was proclaimed. For several centuries orthodoxy had been the key constituent of Russia’s civilizational identity. The 16<sup>th</sup> century concept

“Moscow — the Third Rome” gave rise to the discourse of Russia’s special mission as the leader and protector of the orthodox world. In Pipes’s words, the idea of distinctiveness and the opposition to the West are rooted in Russia’s religious status (Pipes 2001).

The Soviet political discourse was constructing an ambivalent civilizational identity of the USSR. On the one hand, the Soviet project was presented in the pluralistic frame as a new distinct civilization of socialism. The USSR was constructing a self-identity creating the “Other”, the capitalistic and hostile West as a civilizational antagonist. However, a more clear contrast was set between “the Homo Sovieticus of the future and the morally outdated inhabitants of the old world of the bourgeoisie and the feuds” (Neumann 2004: 56). On the other hand, the USSR evened the score by positioning itself in a universalist vein as existing in the avant-garde of the global civilizational process and progress, approaching communism, the highest stage of the historical evolutionary process according to Marxism.

Socialism was a “higher” or “more advanced” stage of development, and one that promised to vault Russia into the first rank of nations. By industrializing in a socialist way, moreover, the USSR would not only “catch up” with Europe and the United States but at the same time retain its supposed moral superiority (Kotkin 1995: 29).

Soviet modernization planning committed to ‘development, the acclaimed universal goal of civilization, and a grounding in science, the supreme language of modernity’ (Ibid: 30) The transition from capitalism to socialism was interpreted as a civilizational leap. By means of the anticipated world revolution the USSR planned to spread civilization, the destinations included the anti-world — capitalistic “rotting West”. The image of the USSR as a new civilization that embodies the universal standard of the global civilizational process is closely bound to the idea of progress, leadership. In the preface of the second edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, undertaken in 1947 on the personal initiative and under the patronage of Stalin, it was stated that “the Soviet Union is now rightfully the centre of world civilization” (Bogdanov 2010: 406). The Soviet political discourse disputed the European/Western self-concept as a protagonist of human civilization.

It was the Gorbachev’s perestroika when the cardinal discursive turn in understanding Russia’s civilizational identity took place. In the mid-1980s, the Soviet civilizational project was undergoing a deep crisis. The Soviet version of the USSR’s civilizational self-identity as the embodiment of the most progressive stage of global civilization had been discredited and marginalized. Identity is based not only on the difference from others, but on the positive contrast (Moles 2007: 9). In the background of objective socioeconomic problems, the positive distinction of Soviet socialism was challenged, which required a transformation of the civilizational identity. The politics of perestroika had problematized the Soviet civilizational status, had made the discussion possible and had activated the debates. At this time, the Westernist ideas on Russia’s civilizational role as a participant of the single civilizational process were actualized while the political discourse was changing gradually, overcoming the powerful ideological inertia.

In 1985, at the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU congress, it was still proclaimed that the modern era is “an era of transition from capitalism to socialism and communism, of historical competition of two global sociopolitical systems...” (Programma... 1986: 137). In Gorbachev’s words, socialism “has become a powerful moral and material force, showed the possibilities that are opened for the modern civilization” and that in some respects (particularly, in international relations) the results of CPSU’s work are “prominent achievements of socialism that has enriched the global civilization” (Gorbachev 1986: 8). In the resolution of the Congress it was stated, that “socialism, originally becoming a reality in our country, <...> became firmly established on a vast territory of the Earth, hundreds of millions have chosen to follow the constructive path of communist civilization” (Gorbachev 1986: 128).

However, after the collapse of USSR in 1991, Gorbachev wrote “why destroy the Union that is turning towards civilization? Why reject the democratic Union aimed at cooperation with everybody in the framework of the ‘new thinking?’” (Gorbachev 1992). Here, one can already see the discursive passage that confronts the image of Soviet civilization as the “best practice” of global civilization in favor of the new identity of Russia as a part of universal civilizational process where Western liberal values dominate.

Perestroika with its goal of “democratization” was a period of critical non-apologetic revision of Soviet socialism and reconsideration of Western capitalism without the previous antagonistic mode (e.g. Gorbachev 1989). In 1980s, the idea of a “common European home” appears and begins to dominate in political discourse. The year of 1987 was recognized as “the year of Europe”. The idea of the “common European home” has been stated by L. Brezhnev, but underwent further development during Gorbachev’s time. More clearly the discourse that accommodated the construction of a new (well forgotten) civilizational identity of Russia as a part of Western civilization is represented in Gorbachev’s programmatic book on perestroika and a novel paradigm of “new thinking”, in which he states:

Some people in the West are trying to “exclude” the Soviet Union from Europe. Now and then, as if inadvertently, they equate “Western Europe” with Europe [...] We are Europeans. Old Russia was integrated with Europe by Christianity. The history of Russia is an organic part of the great European history [...] peoples of our country made a significant contribution into the formation of the European civilization. They fairly consider themselves its lawful successors (Gorbachev 1988: 200).

In the same book, Gorbachev has formulated a paradigm of the “new political thinking”, which is oriented towards the reduction of confrontation in the Cold War and the probability of a nuclear conflict that might “put an end to the global civilization”. To substantiate this concept, Gorbachev employs humanitarian rhetoric, noting its necessity for the sake of humanity and global civilization. Gorbachev acknowledges that there are “the capitalist world and the socialist world, there is the enormous world of developing countries”, noting at the same time that socialist and capitalist worlds are equally developed, but “stay different in the respect of social choice, ideological and religious views, lifestyle” (Gorbachev 1988: 141). Gorbachev criticizes the point of

view that states that “socialism is a historical contingency that has to be scrapped” (Gorbachev 1988: 138).

Gorbachev’s work reflects the contradictory positions that were taken in political discourse. On the one hand, the idea of a common European home is accepted; the USSR historically and culturally is a part of Europe and belongs to the European civilization. On the other hand, the coexistence of the equally developed socialist and capitalist worlds is acknowledged (which is a discursive innovation in comparison to the previous image of “the rotting West”). While the first position states the beginning of the reformulation of the USSR’s identity as a part of the European civilization, the second one demonstrates the affirmed civilizational distinctiveness of “the socialist world”. However, it can be seen that in this position the accents and modalities have changed — the socialist world is mentioned as one of the worlds in existence, without ambitions to interpret it as the most progressive one. Gorbachev mentions the diversity of the worlds, systems that have different interests but which are becoming more interdependent in the global world. They are brought together by the common problems and challenges of modernity. Gorbachev proposes the worlds not to compete but to coexist and states that the ‘socialist world is moving towards the goals common for all humanity within the universal civilization, but retains its own values and priorities’ (Gorbachev 1989: 31).

The coexistence of two points of view characterizes the transitional stage in the formation of Russia’s civilizational identity in 1980s-1990s: from the previous socialist to the new European-Western. At that moment, the USSR’s identity stays opened. The Soviet political elite demonstrated readiness to acknowledge the crisis of socialism and the necessity to “return to the bosom” of the European civilization. However, this acceptance of Western values was mediated by the recognition of the “socialist democracy” based on the Lenin’s formula. This democratic re-orientation was considered as a legitimate return to the heritage of the socialist ideologues perverted by Stalin. In this manner, the continuity and uninterrupted nature of the Soviet socialist experience was being demonstrated.

At the First Congress of People’s Deputies that took place in 1989, statements on the dead-end character of the former political way, on the underdevelopment of various fields and the necessity of drastic reforms were distinctively expressed. Perestroika acquired a status of a policy that brings the country to civilization, this transition was accompanied by a critical reevaluation of the Soviet past and present. “What have we discovered upon waking up from self-deception? [...] We discovered that we are a sort of a weakly developed superpower that is losing capacity for development” (deputy A. Adamovich) (Perviy s’ezd... 1989). “Perestroika is not a narrow gauge of a delineated road, but a wide river that will lead our country to the riverbed of civilization” (deputy L. Arutunian) (Perviy s’ezd... 1989).

On the eve of the USSR’s collapse and throughout the early years of the new post-Soviet reality, the ideas of unitarity and universality of the Western modernity project were dominating. Institutional forms and values of modernity that were synthesized and tested in the large-scale laboratory of the West, have gained a status of a civilizational panacea ready to be exported through globalization. In the late 1980s, with the politics of perestroika in the background, the discourse on the possibility of

implementing the Western capitalist model in Russia comes into the picture. The assertion of a non-antagonistic and even integrative relationship between socialism and capitalism was a crucial step in this direction. In Gorbachev's words with a reference to Lenin, these formations in some organizational forms are very close to each other and share the "general civilizational mechanisms" (Gorbachev 1989: 17). This discourse was also legitimized by the idea of a 'common European home'. Thereby, the "turning towards civilization" acknowledged that Russia belonged to the worldwide civilizational process through the Western-type modernization.

In 1990, the USSR signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Having signed the charter, the USSR had expressed a formal adherence to the liberal Western values and positioned itself as one of the participants in the construction of a new Europe (Parizhskaya hartiya... 1990).

In 1980s, the discourse of the liberally-oriented politicians in Gorbachev's milieu became clearly expressed and was strengthening the pro-Western course that was previously stated in the concept of the "new political thinking". "A moral superiority over Europe was not ascribed to Russia. Rather, it was represented as equal, and, in some aspects, temporarily falling behind" (Neumann 2004: 214). Speaking at the First Congress of People's Deputies, Gorbachev noted that "we are still learning democracy" (Perviy s'ezd... 1989).

As Neumann notes, the Western discourse offered two scenarios of establishing the USSR's relations with Europe and the West and two formulas of identity: 1. "The return to civilization", in which Russia possess a status of an apprentice; 2. The return to the slogans of "Eurasia" that will gain support from the electorate and will facilitate a closer cooperation with Europe (Neumann 2004: 219-220). However, the mentioned scenarios have to be supplemented with the third one. This scenario describes perestroika not as a simple transition to civilization, but also stipulates Russia's right to retain its civilizational specificity. In his Noble lecture in 1991, Gorbachev (1991) said that one could not expect that in the result of perestroika a "copy" of something would be produced. "We want to be an organic part of the modern civilization, to live in harmony with the universal values, according to the international law, obey the "rules of the game" in economic relations with the external world, bear the burden of responsibility for the destiny of our common house with all the peoples. However, Russia has "its own way into the 21<sup>st</sup> century civilization, its own place in it", "it is impossible to "jump out" of one's own thousand-year history" (Gorbachev 1991: 6). The idea of Russia's 'own way and place' is a reminiscence of the old concept of 'special path' revitalized in late 1990s-2000s.

In late 1980s — early 1990s the universalist Europocentric understanding of civilization had established itself firmly in the Russian political discourse. According to the concept of the "three worlds", the industrially developed West represents the First World, the communist countries represent the Second World, and the rest represent the Third World. This division correlates with the "civilization — barbarianism — savagery" scheme (Neumann 2004: 145). Thereby, having acknowledged the necessity of modernization according to the Western standards, Russia has returned into the bosom of civilization. Therefore, the image that dominated the 18<sup>th</sup> century, once again appeared in the Western discourse — an apprentice adopting the Western

political and economic practices. For this reason, Russia is constantly perceived through the metaphor of a “transition period” (Neumann 2004: 149–154).

In my opinion, it would be an oversimplification to limit the perestroika’s political discourse with the idea of Russia’s movement towards the Western civilization and its identity of an apprentice. In Gorbachev’s official statements, in the very concept of the ‘new thinking’ and ‘perestroika’ it was stressed that the USSR is an initiator of a new politics of convergence between the East and the West and a construction of a new global reality without a threat to the world civilization. In this respect, Russia acted as a peacekeeper and a builder of a new world order. “Should there be a success to perestroika in the USSR — there would also be a real opportunity for a new world order” (Gorbachev 1991). Russia’s policy on integration with the West was considered as a new relationship format on the global scale. Russia was positioned as an initiator and a key participant of the new movement towards the civilization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to “a single international democratic space”. So has the “apprentice” overcome the “teacher”.

### **Post-Soviet discourse: from European “apprentice” to Russian “unique civilization”**

The collapse of the USSR, “parade of sovereignties” and destruction of the Soviet identity had intensified the issue of civilizational identity and Russia’s historical choice of a model for the further development. This period is characterized by an interweaving of public, intellectual and political discourses. Political discourse was becoming more and more disrupted. Singularist and particularist frames of civilizational identity co-existed and later competed in it. The range of opinions and views included those extremely pro-Western and approaching Russophobia (Novikov 1991), as well as the clearly anti-Western, those accusing in Russophobia (Shafarevich 1989 a,b).

The discourse criticizing the Westernization had been developing since late 1980s parallel to the official politics of Russia’s transformation according to the Western model. Russia’s civilizational status was reinterpreted in opposition to the concept of “joining the civilization”. This discourse noted the impossibility to reproduce the Western European experience, Russophobia, anti-Russian character of perestroika and USSR’s hostile environment. Such views are reflected in the “open letters” of the early 1990s (“Pismo pisateley...” (“The letter of writers...”)) 1990, “Slovo k narodu” (“A word to the people”) 1991, “Obraschenie k Sovetskomu narodu GKChP” (“An appeal to the Soviet people” of SCES) 1991). Perestroika began to be treated as an attempt of an aggressive westernization, a threat to Russia’s civilizational originality. The discourse invoked the idea of Russia’s civilizational originality with its own historical path while opposing the Western civilization’s universality and its monopolist claims for the export of civilization. “Russia cannot return to European civilization because it never belonged to it. Russia cannot join it because it is part of another type of civilization”. Perestroika is “completely based on the Western liberal democratic conceptions [...] Never before has “Westernism” taken such a barefaced aggressive form in this country, rejecting everything Russian” (Pozdnyakov 1991: 49- 50).

In this discourse, an image of hostile Others is formed — the external forces of the West and the internal conductors of the pro-Western, anti-Russian politics. The August

Putsch of 1991 became an attempt of the opposition to resist the collapse of the USSR and the new formula of identity that changes the former international position of the Soviet state.

After the dissolution of the USSR, the liberal Western ideas have been established in political discourse. Yeltsin and his team have integrated the two variants of relations with Europe. Firstly, the concept of the “return to the bosom of civilization”, the scenario of Russia’s integration into the European “civilized community” had retained its relevance. Secondly, the Eurasianism that considered establishing relations not only with Europe, but with Asian, had revived. One of the most active advocates of pro-Western politics was the foreign minister A.Kozyrev who considered the developed Western states to be Russia’s natural allies (Neumann 1996: 182). He was an adherent of the idea of a civilized society that possesses a set of criteria defined by the West that Russia had to satisfy in order to enter it. The closest Yeltsin’s teammate, the ideologue of most of the economic reforms, E.Gaidar noted that “the historical piece that we have lived is a struggle for the normal civilized market-Russia. However, “the society has to mature in order for Russia to make its way into Europe” (Gaidar 1998).

In Yeltsin’s Addresses to the Federal Assembly of 1994–1999, the appeal to the idea of civilization reflects Russia’s aspiration for civilization in its Western-European variant and the desire of overcoming one’s backwardness. The necessity of introducing institutes and practices that are characterized as “civilized” is mentioned (market economy; priority of Law; civil society, private property etc.). In his Address of 1996, Yeltsin (1996) noted that “Russia is following the common development path of civilization”, but its path is its own, “nobody is capable of helping Russia or bringing it up”, “we will have to struggle with our own barbarism”.

The opposition to Westernism required to search for an alternative concept of identity that would be reinterpreted in terms of Eurasianism. The liberals employed the idea of Eurasianism in an attempt to superstruct a complementary identity over the European identity of Russia, while nationalists employed it in order to demonstrate Russia’s non-European identity (Neumann 1996: 178).

The image of Russia as a bridge between Europe and Asia was defended by E. Primakov and S.Stankevich. The latter noted that Russia has historically evolved as a synthesis of Slaves and Turks and after the dissolution of the USSR, it has shifted more towards the East. Stankevich emphasized Russian historical mission to initiate the dialogue of states, cultures and civilizations (Stankevich 1992: 4). Eurasianist discourse was not intrinsically homogenous; “slavophile” and “democratic” trends could be distinguished in it. According to the former, Russia occupying a unique central location on the world map was allotted a special mission of sustaining the equilibrium between the two civilizations of the West and the East, of uniting the conglomerate of cultures and peoples (Pozdniakov 1991: 47). The latter direction did not deny the integration with the West on equal terms (Lukin, Utkin 1995). Eurasianists of 1990s, just as N.Danilevsky and N.Trubetskoy, criticized the Europocentric understanding of “civilization” (Pozdniakov 1991: 51–52).

As Neumann notes (2004), 1992–1993 were the turning point in the Russian discourse on Europe and Russia’s civilizational identity in general. The competition of two representations and models of Russia’s civilizational identity — the universalist

and particularist — becomes apparent. United National Front, vice-president Rutskey and speaker Khasbulatov represented the opposition to the dominating Westernism.

Towards the mid-1990s, the radical Westernism and the idea of the “return to civilization” lose their ground in political discourse. The radical Westernism is displaced by the liberal Eurasianism and nationalistic trends in discourse (the constant representatives of this discourse in Russian State Duma — V. Zhirinovsky (LDPR) and G. Zyuganov (KPRF)). Political discourse is turning towards identifying Russia as an independent civilization.

Yeltsin’s presidency ended with summing up the results in the Address to the Federal Assembly “Russia at the Turn of the Century” (1999). He noted that the path of market economy chosen in 1991 “was and still is right”, “we do not have another path”. In his message Yeltsin contrasts: “the country was still further diverging from the development path of the world society”, but for the last years “the economy of our country has acquired many civilized features”. Russia has done “an ideological marathon”: in a very short time the difficult path of democracy was seized, which took other states centuries. Russia has made a civilizational leap, it is considered not as an apprentice, but as an equal participant in “developing the principles of world order”. Yeltsin, thereby, defines the role of Russia in the spirit of Eurasianism as a “center of attraction for traditions and cultures of the West and East” and claims its peculiarity — “being an integral part of the civilized world, it cleaves to the traditional values”. Yeltsin proposes an identity formula that seems to resolve the contradiction of Westernism/universalism and slavophily/particularism: Russia is inscribed into the global processes, it has incorporated the achievements of the Western civilization, “all the best of the achievements of humanity”, but has retained its civilizational originality and distinctiveness.

Putin’s 1999 article “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium” (Putin 1999) continues the narrative and the rhetoric of the last Yeltsin’s address. By the end of 1990s, Russia “has entered the highway by which the whole humanity is travelling” and which has no alternative. The Soviet period was characterized as a “dead-end route track”. Russia needs to search for its own way of renewal, and not to copy others’ experience and transfer “abstract models and schemes to the Russian soil”. “We will be able to expect worthy future only if we succeed at combining the universal principles of market economy and democracy with Russia’s reality” (Putin 1999).

According to Putin, Russia’s principal difference from the developed Western countries like the UK and the USA is the traditionally important role of the state and government institutions. Thus, the “inclination to collective forms of life” and the deep-rooted paternalistic sentiment can be regarded as a Russia’s special civilizational code. Putin repeats the formula of civilizational identity offered by Yeltsin and defines it as a “Russian idea” — accepting the universal (Western), but asserting the original (Russian). The appearance of concepts that in themselves synthesize the Western and the national — “sovereign democracy”, “national capitalism” — is symptomatic for the political discourse of Putin’s Russia. The very concept of “sovereign democracy” emphasizes specific character of the Russian variant of democracy and the independence of Russian democracy in contrast to the other “managed” democratic regimes governed by the West (McFaul, Spector 2010: 117).

Russia's civilizational independence and equality with the West are vindicated in the discourse. The critique of the Western expansion, western-universalist understanding of civilization, particularly the U.S. position as a guardian of "standard of civilization" that considers Russia as an apprentice, is growing. In his interview to the "Time" magazine, Putin (2007) noted that "there are civilizations much more ancient than the American one" and criticized the "civilizing mission" of the U.S., its attitude towards Russia as requiring to be civilized.

They [Russian] are still not quite civilized, they are still a bit wild, only came down from the trees not long ago, so we have to groom them a bit because they can't do it for themselves. We have to shave them, clean the grime from them. That's our civilizing mission (Putin 2007).

In the statements of the dominating party "Edinaya Rossiya" ("United Russia"), Russia is recognized as a "unique civilization" (Predvybornaya... 2007), "one of the world civilizations", whose historical mission is to defend the principle of "equality of the world cultures, their effective co-existence as a basic value of modernity", "to unite the inherently differing poles of the world civilization" (Programmnoe... 2006). Russia's role consists in the "contribution to the cultural and civilizational diversity of the contemporary world and to the development of an intercivilizational partnership" (Konceptsiya vneshney... 2008), participation in the "intercivilizational dialogue". In 2002 Russia became a co-initiator for creation of the international forum "Dialogue of Civilization". Messianism remains an integral constituent of Russia's identity in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Along with messianism, the idea of greatness, whose basis has been changing since 1990s, is an important component of Russian civilizational identity (Thorun 2009: 51–52).

During 2000s, the modality of relation between Russia and Europe changes. Political discourse highlights Russia's tight cultural connection with Europe. Putin noted that "Russia is a part of the Western European culture, we are Europeans" (Gevorkian, Timakov et al. 2000). This position justifies the borrowing of the "universal economic mechanisms and democracy" from Europe. Russia is recognized to be on the orbit of the European civilization, but in the capacity of an equal participant of the civilizational process. "Russia has to be in the role of a co-author and a co-actor of the European civilization", "Russia mastering democracy is in Europe" with which it "has created unsurpassed civilization" (Surkov 2006).

The ambivalence of the identity that is European on one side and originally peculiar on the other is functional. In the Western European coordinate system of "barbarianism — civilization" Russia is evaluated as a "civilization", but possessing a distinctive status that justifies its "special path" to/ into modernity. The political discourse of the last years is focused mainly on modernization as a key ideologem of the government's political program. "Modernization will allow the country to proceed to the next stage of civilization" (Medvedev 2009). Putin-Medvedev's modernization discourse maintains Russia's status as "civilized" in universalist perspective.

Russia's civilizational status is revealed in the antiterrorist discourse through the rhetoric of the battle between civilization and barbarism (O'Hagan 2004), the struggle

against the barbarism of fascism or terrorism as a threat to the civilized humanity. “In Chechnya, whose populace is mainly Muslim, it is Russian troops who are, so to speak, manning the walls against those attacking civilization as such. Time and again Putin has used the terms “civilization” and “civilized” to describe his country” (Mazlish 2004: 145).

A special place in the modern political discourse still belongs to Eurasionism, which now enjoys real political initiatives. Putin (2011) supported the formation of the “Eurasian Union” as a prospect for the common economical space project between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan to be launched in 2012. The Union as an “integrational project” with Russia as the key member is presented as a ‘supra-national union’, ‘one of the world’s poles’ intended to become a ‘link’ between Europe and Asia. The “Eurasian Union” is to be built on the universal integrational grounds as a part of the Greater Europe based on common values of freedom, democracy and market. In Putin’s words, ‘effective integration’ is the only way for participant states to become leaders of the “civilizational progress”. Thus, the Union is seen as a project of deep integration within Eurasia that has started with an intensive economic cooperation. The idea of Union is the continuation of the Eurasionist debates of 1990s on Russia’s mission due to its ‘in-between’ position.

Neoeurasianism and its ideologue A. Dugin, who was an advisor for the Speaker of Parliament G. Seleznyov and who founded the political movement “Eurasia” in 2001 should also be noted. Neoeurasianism is characterized by its anti-Western, particularly anti-american rhetoric, opposition to westernization and globalization. Neoeurasianism is a particular case of a radical discourse of Russia’s civilizational originality and messianism. Russia is recognized as a unique civilization, which has to lead the movement against the globalization of the West, which, in turn, is represented as a cultural geopolitical antithesis (Dugin 2000). One of the key slogans of neoeurasianism is “modernization without westernization”, which in some way corresponds to the position of the government.

### **Conclusion**

During perestroika, the broad group of politicians and general public, particularly intelligentsia with acknowledged symbolic capital (A. Likhachev, A. Sakharov, A. Solzhenitsyn etc.), participated in the debate on Russia’s civilizational identity as main agents of identification. Previously politically apathetic and abstained public became significantly involved in political life, although its activity diminished in the first years after the collapse of the USSR. The political discourse of the following years was mainly formed by professional politicians. Studies of political discourse uncover the existence of political heterodoxies, different political elites and groups as proponents of competitive representations of civilizational identity and interpretations of sociocultural order struggling for domination. This is exemplified by the opposition to perestroika inside the CPSU in late 1980-s, and also in the August’s Putsch in 1991 and the constitutional crisis of 1993 etc. Established nominations and categorization are a resource for power and a result of a symbolic struggle (Bourdieu 2005).

Russia’s civilizational self-representations are historically reluctant and relational and reflect the currently chosen ‘path’ within civilizational continuum West-East,

Europe-Asia, that is, between the alternative frames of Westernism, Slavophilia and Eurasianism. Political discourse of the indicated period reveals the historicity and contingency of Russia's identity: great turn from the aggressive Soviet anti-Westernism frame to the radical Westernism in perestroika; the opposition to Westernism and rise of Slavophilia and nationalistic ideas in late 1980s — early 1990s; coexistence of moderate Westernism, nationalistic representations and the turn towards Eurasianism in the mid-1990s; proclaimed civilizational specificity in late 1990s and the attempts to synthesize the universal/ unitary/ Western with the original/ local/ Russian in 2000s. Analysis of political discourse uncovers the competitive relationship between singularist-universalist and pluralist-particularist perspectives and attempts to construct an integrative though ambivalent civilizational identity which represents duality of Russia as a distinct and unique entity involved in the universal civilizational process, conforming to the criteria for membership in the 'community of civilized nations'. At the core of this identity ambivalence one finds the permanent antithesis of "global and local" and contradiction of "Westernization and modernization", which produce ambiguous intentions — to be modernized but not westernized. Political officials identify Russia as modern and thus civilized but oppose the Westernism of modernity. That was the case of Stalin's grandiose modernization with its simultaneous aggressive anti-Westernism, of perestroika as a deep restructurization antagonized by a nationalistic opposition for its hostile westernization and such is the current discursive mode of Putin-Medvedev's modernization project. Historically, the European discourse has always "othered" Russia (Neumann 2004) and since 19th century the Russian discourse has begun to "other" Europe. But despite the negative or positive attribution of the West/Europe, it inevitably remained the principal referent of Russia's civilizational identity construction. This relational character is incorporated into the very logic of civilizational identity discourse. Contemporary political discourse does not oppose Europe or the West as a genuine Other. Deep interweaving with Europe is proclaimed since Russia has declared a construction of market economy, democracy, supporting human rights etc., which constitute the basic cultural and institutional programme of the Western modernity. However, this programme despite being accepted is constantly problematized and reinterpreted in the discourse through intentional correlation with local "Russian reality", traditions and by appeals to Russia's "special path", "Russian idea" and civilizational distinctiveness. These reinterpretation, critical discourse and confrontations are intrinsic to "multiple modernities" creation (Eisenstadt 2000; 2003). Since perestroika, global cultural and civilizational diversity has been a salient topic in Russian political discourse. In contrast to Bolshevik Russia that claimed for civilizational hegemony by establishing superior communism through the world revolution, contemporary Russian political elite cannot position Russia as the inventor of the universal "standard of civilization", thus, the most decent alternative position found is to support the civilizational heterogeneity, to be the '*primus inter pares*'. Contemporary Russian political discourse retains the idea of messianism. Russia's mission is not to civilize the world but to sustain the civilizational diversity, to bridge the different poles of the world civilization, to promote and mediate the dialogue of civilizations.

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