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RUSSIAN REVISIONISM AS A CHALLENGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

РОСІЙСЬКИЙ РЕВІЗІОНІЗМ ЯК ВИКЛИК МІЖНАРОДНОМУ ПОРЯДКУ

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Abstract. The article is devoted to highlighting geopolitical ambitions of Russian revisionism to build a multipolar world, which should replace the modern liberal international order of the Western model. The focus is on revealing ideological foundations of the foreign policy doctrine of Russian revisionism. The historical and political conditions of formation and the main parameters of modern Russian revisionism – geopolitical, spiritual-moral, historical-mythological – have been clarified and are considered against the background of Russia's historical aspiration for hegemony in Eurasia.

The research is based on content analysis of public speeches and publications of Russian statesmen, ideologists and supporters of the Putin regime, which allows to determine the ideological basis of the revisionist course of the Kremlin, to establish declared and hidden motives of Russian aggression against Ukraine and the liberal international order. It is argued that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an integral part of the strategy of building a multipolar world order, which involves establishing Russia as a civilizational pole, where the Kremlin projects power within the Russian sphere of influence. It is concluded that Russian revisionism poses an existential threat not only to Ukrainian independence and the countries of the post-Soviet space, but also to democratic institutions and values that define the liberal international order.

Keywords: Russian revisionism. International order. Geopolitics. War in Ukraine. Post-Soviet space. European security.

Анотація. Стаття присвячена висвітленню геополітичних амбіцій російського ревізiонiзму щодо побудови багатополярного свiту, який має витiснити сучасний лiберальний мiжнародний порядок захiдного зразка. В центрі уваги розкриття iдеологiчних основ зовнiшньополiтичної доктрини російського ревізiонiзму. З'ясовано iсторико-полiтичнi умови формування та основнi параметри сучасного російського ревізiонiзму – геополiтичний, духовно-моральний, iсторико-мiфологiчний, якi розглядаються на тлi iсторичного прагнення Росiї до гегемонiї в Євразiї.

Дослiдження спирається на контент-аналiз публiчних виступiв та публiкацiй російських державних дiячiв, iдеологiв та прибiчникiв путiнського режиму, що дозволяє визначити концептуально-iдеологiчну основу ревізiонiстського курсу Кремля, встановити декларованi та прихованi мотиви російської агресiї проти України та лiберального мiжнародного порядку. Стверджується, що російське вторгнення в Україну є складовою частиною стратегiї побудови багатополярного свiтового порядку, що передбачає утвердження за Росiєю статусу цивiлізацiйного полюсу, де Кремль здiйснює проєкцiю сили у межах російської сфери впливу. Робиться висновок, що російський ревізiонiзм становить екзистенцiйну загрозу не тiльки українській незалежності та краiнам пострадянського простору, а й демократичним iнститутам та цiнностям, якi визначають лiберальний мiжнародний порядок.

Ключові слова: Російський ревізіонізм. Міжнародний порядок. Геополітика. Війна в Україні. Пострадянський простір. Європейська безпека.

Research problem setting. Revisionism is a driving factor in Russia's foreign policy course and remains currently a key challenge to European security. In order to substantiate territorial claims and revise Russian borders, the Kremlin resorts to revising socio-political doctrines and events of the past, which are the ideological basis of Russian foreign policy doctrine, which involves a return to the archaic practice of establishing spheres of influence in the world. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine was prepared by a long-term policy of spreading the revisionist narrative, which became a defining component of the disinformation system created in Russia. The Russian autocratic regime aims not only to seize the territory of an independent state, but also to demonstrate power as a decisive factor in international relations and the destruction of the liberal international order. Therefore, revealing the conceptual foundations of Russian revisionism and clarifying its claims to the current world order is an urgent scientific and practical task.

The purpose of research. The purpose of the proposed publication is to define the doctrinal foundations of the geopolitical ambitions of Russian revisionism. The focus is on the disclosure of the main parameters of Russian revisionism – geopolitical, spiritual-moral, historical-mythological, which are considered in the broad context of Russia's historical aspiration for hegemony in Eurasia and efforts to delegitimize the international order.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The study of revisionism in international relations has an established tradition, the origins of which go back to classical realism, and is represented in the international political thought of the first half of the 20th century (E. Carr, H. Morgenthau, R. Niebuhr, etc.). An integral concept of revisionism from the standpoint of non-classical realism is presented in the book by J. Davidson "The origins of revisionist and status-quo states" [Davidson, 2006]. He uses it to characterize states whose goal is to change or put an end to the existing international system of power distribution. Revisionism is considered by J. Davidson as a fundamental source of instability in international affairs. Governments pursuing revisionist policies respond to the demands of powerful domestic groups, such as nationalists and the military, who believe they can defeat "imaginary" rivals [Davidson, 2006]. According to G. Balachandran, revisionist projects and resistance to them are the subject of international relations, integral to the international order and its dynamics [Balachandran, 2022].

The concept of revisionism is widely used in modern studies, especially against the background of the escalation of disputes between the United States and China. However, currently revisionism is less and less associated with territorial expansion and more and more identified with the change of political and legal regimes that ensure international security [DiCicco & Sanchez, 2021]. According to S. Goddard, revisionists are states that seek to partially or completely challenge the institutional order, established rules and norms that determine interaction [Goddard, 2018: 3].

The study of Russian revisionism is attracting more and more attention from scholars after the Russian invasion of Georgia and the forcible seizure of Crimea. To understand the nature of Russian revisionism and its consequences for the world order, the works of R. Allison [Allison, 2017], R. Dzarasov [Dzarasov, 2017], A. Piontkovsky [Piontkovsky, 2015], B. Pisciotta [Pisciotta, 2020] are of great interest. The article by W. R. Mead published in Foreign Affairs in 2014 [Mead, 2014] is decisive in this sense. The author noted the return of geopolitics to international relations and the revenge of revisionist states, such as China, Iran, and Russia, which have not come to terms with the geopolitical order that was formed after the Cold War and are trying to destroy it. Speaking of Russia as a revanchist state", E. Götz and C. Merlen [Götz & Merlen, 2019] draw attention to the broad agreement of analysts and commentators regarding Russia's desire to undermine the rules-based liberal international order.

Many publications by Ukrainian scientists show that Russian aggression against Ukraine is not an isolated case, but a long historical tradition, which is embodied today in the country's official foreign policy doctrine. Among the main works of this direction, monographic publications by M. Doroshko [Doroshko, 2018], E. Magda [Magda, 2017], V. Tkachenko [Tkachenko, 2016] and

others should be mentioned. Collective monographs edited by M. Rozumnyi [*Rezhym Putina, 2018*] and V. Gorbulin [*Svitova hibrydna viina, 2017*] and others.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine caused a surge in publications devoted to Russian aggression. In the research by Y. Charalambides, Russian revisionism is considered from the standpoint of the geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the West in Eurasia [*Charalambides, 2022*]. I. Kotoulas and W. Pusztaï [*Kotoulas&Pusztaï, 2022*] focused on the interests and strategic goals of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The historical revisionism of the Kremlin, the reflection of Putin's version of history, which is used as an attempt to justify territorial claims, also appear in the field of view of many publicists and scientists.

Russian revisionism has a multidimensional nature and is in the ascendant stage, and the scientific reflections of the authors are mostly focused on the assessment of current processes, which often limits the research discourse of this problem to averaged conclusions about the Kremlin's desire to revive the Soviet Union or create its modern version. Undoubtedly, Russian aggression against Ukraine is, in some sense, an attempt to overcome the post-Soviet inferiority complex, to assert itself at the expense of absorbing another country. But Russian revisionist concepts cross the borders of Ukraine and the former USSR, actualizing a number of imperial nationalist doctrines and ideologies historically characteristic of the Kremlin, the evaluation of which requires additional study to understand its aspirations for hegemony in Eurasia in a macro-historical perspective.

Main research results. The modern liberal international order began to take shape after the Second World War. It is based on rules and regulations that combine the spread of democracy and the protection of human rights, international interaction through multilateral institutions, free trade and increased mobility of goods, capital, people and services. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar system, the liberal model spread to the post-communist world, which ensured the universalization of international cooperation. As J. Ikenberry aptly notes, the Cold War ended not with a military victory, but with the political and ideological triumph of Western democracy and the collapse of communism [*Ikenberry, 2020*]. The countries of the former "socialist camp" experienced a "democratic transit" from authoritarianism to democracy and market economy. The end of the period of bloc confrontation and the spread of liberal-democratic values became the basis for the conclusions about the "end of history" predicted by F. Fukuyama. Bearing in mind the end of the period of political-ideological confrontation and the creation of a global liberal-democratic civilization as "the end point of the ideological evolution of mankind" and "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" [*Fukuyama, 1989: 17*]. The post-bipolar world embodied the ideas of liberal internationalism under the undisputed global leadership of the United States, which acted as the guarantor of this world order.

Russia, like other post-socialist countries, has also taken advantage of the opportunities of economic liberalism, the economy and geopolitical influence of Moscow have grown rapidly since the 2000s. But it was no longer either a world superpower or an empire. The loss of such a status fostered not only nostalgia for great power, but also revisionist aspirations and hidden imperial ambitions, which made Russia an outspoken opponent of the liberal "end of history." Against this background, Russian and Chinese power circles actively promoted one of the key ideas of realist thinking about the multipolarity of the international order. In Russia, it was associated with the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs – Yevgeny Primakov [*Primakov, 1996*]. However, if in the realist discourse multipolarity appeared as a constellation of self-sufficient centers of power and, in general, a rather pessimistic concept that threatened to spark conflicts, the Russian political community promoted it as a "fair" distribution of power between different poles of attraction. In any case, from the mid-1990s, this very concept will become one of the defining components of the Kremlin's foreign policy doctrine and the embodiment of a poorly veiled claim to a large-scale redistribution of power and influence. A vivid example in this sense is the ambitious Russian-Chinese declaration signed in 1997 by Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin on "multipolar world and the establishment of a New International Order" [*United Nations*].

The study by M. Doroshko shows that the "new" Russia, having declared itself the successor of the USSR, almost immediately resorted to the revival of the traditions of the imperial past, which is embodied in the Kremlin's foreign policy course in the post-Soviet space. Thus, as early as 1991, Andrei Kozyrev, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, announced the former republics of the USSR as the main sphere of Russia's foreign policy interests [Doroshko, 2018: 80]. Very soon it will receive regulatory approval. In the "Strategic course" of Russia in relation to the CIS countries approved in 1995, the post-Soviet countries will be declared the sphere of "main vital interests" of Moscow, and the strengthening of Russia as the "leading power" of the post-Union space is recognized as one of the priority tasks [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 1995]. As for Ukraine, attempts to return Ukraine and, in particular, Crimea to the orbit of Russian influence also emerged since Ukraine gained independence. During the 1990s, Russian politicians openly campaigned for the "return" of Crimea, Moscow resorted to "gas wars", and encouraged participation in various integration entities. Later, this aspiration became the existential guideline of the Kremlin's foreign policy. It was not by chance that Z. Brzezinski noted in "The Grand Chessboard" that independence of Ukraine was "the greatest loss for Russia", which "challenged the very essence of Russia's claims that it is the divinely chosen flag-bearer of Pan-Slavic unity", because without Ukraine "Russia cannot be a truly great and self-confident imperialist state" [Brzezinski, 1997: 87]. Therefore, plans for the "reintegration" of Ukraine remained a "dogma of faith" for many representatives of the Russian political elite in the 1990s.

"Frozen" conflicts and imposition of integration projects have become important tools for achieving the Kremlin's geopolitical goals in the post-Soviet space.

Having no significant success in the implementation of economic initiatives, Russia deliberately ignited and "froze" separatist conflicts in post-Soviet countries, waged "hybrid" wars, created puppet regimes and zones of influence. Examples of such policies include: Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Crimea, the so-called "people's republics" in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In 2014, Russian troops occupied Crimea and started a war in eastern Ukraine under the guise of separatists. At the beginning of 2022, under the guise of the CSTO, Russia sent its troops to suppress mass protests in Kazakhstan. In addition, the Russian army fully controls the territory of Belarus, which has been used to carry out attacks on Ukraine since February 2022. Today, most analysts agree that after suffering a catastrophic defeat and failing the plan to seize the Ukrainian capital in March 2022, the Kremlin again seeks to "freeze" the conflict, engaging Ukraine in long negotiations, which will allow to buy time for a further offensive.

Integration projects led by the Kremlin have become another important direction for restoring geopolitical influence in the post-Soviet space. They were aimed at making the European integration aspirations of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, etc. impossible and thus impose a strategy of "limited sovereignty". Moscow-initiated multilateral associations and integration structures (CIS, Eurasian Economic Community, Customs Union, Eurasian Economic Union, etc.) caused particular opposition in Ukraine. Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014) became the clearest embodiment of such sentiments. Millions of people in Ukraine strongly opposed the attempt of the then pro-Russian leadership of Ukraine to deviate from the European integration course and refuse to sign the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU. Realizing that the government's proposed alternative of joining the Customs Union with Russia would ultimately lead to a loss of sovereignty.

The end of the "Yeltsin era" in Russia marked the end of democratic experiments and the transition to state propaganda to discredit liberal values. With the appearance of a new leader in the Kremlin, V. Putin, a representative of the special services, Russian political elite was formed mostly from representatives of the power bloc, and the revisionist character of Russia's foreign policy acquired established features [Balachandran, 2022]. The vision of the future state presented by Putin was based on four "pillars" imbued with the apotheosis of the "great power": patriotism, statehood, statesmanship, and social solidarity. It is significant that statehood was explained as "great power", which is an "integral" characteristic of Russia's existence, and determines the mentality of Russians and government policy throughout history [Putin, 1999].

In Russia, an autocratic system of power is rapidly being formed, which is strengthened due to the rapid increase in energy prices, the formation of a clan-oligarchic system, and the establishment of state control over the media. Russian capital controlled by Moscow actively infiltrated the post-Soviet space, European countries and other regions of the world, forming various forms of energy and economic dependence and supporting right- and left-wing populist movements [*Svitova hibrydna viina, 2017: 126*].

With the formation of an autocratic regime in Russia, scientists increasingly began to notice the features of fascist societies in Russian society. In the book "Putinism: The slow rise of a radical right regime in Russia" (2013), which was published even before the occupation of Crimea, the famous Dutch political scientist Van Herpen draws attention to the "ultranationalist" nature of the Russian state ideology. The entire work is permeated with a large number of parallels between "Putinism" and fascism, between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia, because both at one time experienced the post-imperial syndrome of loss of territories, hyperinflation and institutional chaos, which multiplied the disappointment from the loss of empires [*Van Herpen, 2013*].

As carbon exports and financial inflows to the "petrodollar" budget grew, the Kremlin began to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy, spreading openly revisionist discourse and resorting to hybrid warfare practices. As is known, since 2005, Putin has publicly and repeatedly stated that the collapse of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century." In 2007, the head of the Kremlin in the well-known "Munich speech" harshly criticized unipolarity as "the world of one master" and "one sovereign" [*President of Russia, 2007*], thereby declaring to the West about his geopolitical claims on spheres of influence in Europe. In the Munich speech, there was also a decisive criticism of the expansion of NATO to the East and its approach to Russia's borders. Although by that time, almost all the countries of post-communist Eastern Europe, as well as the Baltic countries, which were part of the USSR, had joined NATO. Despite the fact that the expansion of NATO was accompanied by its demilitarization and was dictated by the defense initiatives of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which sought to protect themselves from a possible renewal of Russia's imperial aggression, as happened to Georgia in 2008.

After the "Munich speech", blaming the West for the expansion of NATO became the leitmotif of Russian foreign policy. The culmination of this policy was the presentation of almost ultimatum proposals to the USA and NATO on written security guarantees by Moscow in December 2021. They included demands to remove NATO infrastructure from Eastern Europe to the borders of 1997, exclude the possibility of Ukraine joining the Alliance, not to conduct military exercises in the post-socialist countries of Europe without the prior consent of Russia. It should be reminded that the "proposals", unprecedented in form and content, were made public against the background of the gathering of 100,000 troops at the border with Ukraine, which directly threatened European security. They were initiated against the background of Russia's prolonged hybrid war with Ukraine and the West, which made them impossible.

Russian demands, especially regarding the non-aligned status of Ukraine, are often used for propaganda purposes, claiming that the expansion of NATO allegedly provoked Russian aggression. However, the very idea of a Western-oriented but militarily neutral Ukraine has not withstood the test of history. It should be reminded that the military invasion of Ukraine in 2014 was not provoked by joining NATO (at that time Ukraine had a non-aligned status), but by Kyiv's rejection of the economic union with Moscow and an attempt to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. This decision was dictated by a stubborn reluctance to recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine and the geopolitical realities that developed after 1991. It was determined by distorted historical ideas that equate medieval Kyivan Rus with the modern Russian state. Putin explained the annexation of Crimea by "restoring historical justice." The first thing he drew attention to, speaking on this matter before the State Duma, was his pride in the shared history with Crimea, where the ancient Chersonesus was located and Prince Volodymyr of Kyiv was baptized [*President of Russia, 2014*].

After the seizure of Crimea and the intervention in Eastern Ukraine, Russia began to be perceived as a non-institutional and non-systemic actor in the system of international relations. The

White House made this quite clear when the 2015 National Military Strategy included Russia, along with Iran, China, and North Korea, on the list of "revisionist states." In the national security strategy of the United States in 2017, China and Russia were also defined as "revisionist states" that seek to form a world opposed to the values and interests of the United States, to project their influence in the world and, in particular, in all parts of Europe and Central Asia [*White House, 2017*].

Seeking to "soften" sanctions and find allies in the confrontation with the West, the Kremlin made a foreign policy adjustment, known as the "Pivot to Asia", ideological foundation of which became the concept of neo-Eurasianism, and the real basis was the "connection" or coordination of the ways of cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road "Economic Belt" with the prospect of building the "Greater Eurasian Partnership" around the interaction between China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Iran and other countries, on which agreements were reached in 2015. Thus evolved a convergence of the two autocratic regimes of the largest countries of Eurasia, united by a common revisionist goal – the establishment of a multipolar (post-Western) world order, which guarantees the consolidation of spheres of influence and the preservation of their own authoritarian regimes. For Russia, this meant establishing a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space and in the countries of Eastern Europe, for China – the satisfaction of territorial claims in the South China Sea, established by the "nine-dash line" (since 1947 it has defined China's "historic rights" to marine areas). In 2019, Beijing and Moscow upgraded relations to the highest level of partnership in China's diplomatic relations hierarchy, underscoring the growing identity of the worldviews and interests of the two regimes. During his visit to Moscow in June 2019, Xi Jinping called the Russian leader his "best friend" [*China's Xi praises 'best friend' Putin during Russia visit, 2019*] against the background of a fierce trade confrontation with the United States.

Russian-Chinese strategic rapprochement has become a kind of "anti-democratic alliance" and a real challenge for international security. During 2021, Russia and China simultaneously intensified their separate military activities and threats to the sovereignty of Ukraine and Taiwan. The Winter Olympic Games in Beijing in February 2022, boycotted by the West, became a symbol of the unity of authoritarian revisionist regimes, where Xi Jinping and V. Putin declared "friendship without borders", which became a harbinger of the war in Ukraine. Beijing and Moscow issued a statement where they set out their agreed position on the rejection of the foreign policy of the US and Western countries, which seem to use the protection of democracy and human rights as a means of pressure on other countries. They noted the "transformation of the architecture of global governance and world order" and called on NATO to respect the sovereignty and security of other countries, to stop "expansion" in Eastern Europe, and condemned the formation of security blocs in the Asia-Pacific region [*Roth&Ni, 2022*].

The Russian invasion of Ukraine strengthened transatlantic ties and united the world's democracies in opposing the aggressor. It is no coincidence that the confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism became the key theme of the US National Security Strategy, released in October 2022. The strategy notes that the United States and the world are entering a "decisive decade" (mentioned several times) that will determine the terms of geopolitical confrontation. Since China, Russia and other authoritarian regimes are trying to change the international order itself. The biggest strategic problem, the Strategy notes, comes from states that "combine authoritarian rule with revisionist foreign policy" [*White House, 2022: 8*]. The strategy singles out China and Russia as distinct but different challenges facing different tasks. If Russia is defined as an "imminent threat to the free and open international system" that defies all norms of the international order today, China is a challenge to the global order. The PRC, according to the White House, is the "only competitor" that aims to "change the existing international order" [*White House, 2022: 8*].

At first glance, defining China as a major national security problem seems incompatible with the reality that Russia is waging a "hot" war and threatening the entire world with nuclear weapons. But it is about a "deeper danger" coming from Russia, which, violating the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, ceases to be a constructive and normative element of the system of international relations. It acts as an "immediate and constant threat" to international peace and stability, regional

security order in Europe, which lacks the full range of capabilities of the PRC. The strategy states that over the past decade, the Russian government has decided to pursue an "imperialist" foreign policy with the aim of "overthrowing key elements of the international order" [White House, 2022: 25].

Among the key parameters of Russia's neo-imperial revisionism, one can single out geopolitical, spiritual and value, and even historical-mythological foundations, which are closely intertwined. Let's reveal them in more detail.

Geopolitical revisionism. In a geopolitical sense, Russian revisionism is aimed at revenge for the defeat of the West in the Cold War and related attempts to destabilize the liberal project of the EU and the USA. It envisages the establishment of a "multipolar world" with great power spheres of Moscow's influence in Eurasia. The "core" of this influence, the "zone of privileged interests" of Russia is informally declared to be the post-Soviet space, where Moscow considers the unilateral use of military force possible. To substantiate these geopolitical ambitions, the Kremlin needed new doctrines of socio-political development, since the communist ideology proved ineffective, and liberalism did not correspond to the traditions of Russian authoritarianism. From the mid-1990s, the idea resulted in a little-known theory of Eurasianism (N. Trubetzkoy, P. Savitsky, P. Suvchinsky, etc.), which was developed in the white emigrant environment traumatized by the collapse of the Russian Empire in the 1920s and was based on earlier Slavophile ideas.

The basis of Eurasianism is criticism of Western colonialism, the Eurocentric world, soulless European culture, Europeanization, which is "an absolute evil" for any non-Romano-Germanic people. The key concept of the theory is the concept of "Eurasia" – a large space covering the East European, West Siberian and Turkestan plains on the border of Europe and Asia. The main territory within this space belongs to Russia [Trubetzkoy, 2007:15].

Eurasianists believe that Russia-Eurasia is not just a geopolitical construct, but a certain historical and cultural community, formed by Turkic, Slavic, Mongolian and other Asian peoples forming a special type of "Russian civilization" for which European ideas are alien and unnatural. It was claimed that in "Russian civilization" not only Byzantine, but also "steppe" cultures are organically combined. It was believed that the "heritage of the Horde", which played a huge role in the formation of Russian identity, acquires a unique geopolitical significance. According to N. Trubetzkoy, the real historical and not fictional Slavic Russia is "Russian-Turanian Russia-Eurasia", "heir to the great legacy of Genghis Khan" [Trubetzkoy, 2007:236]. Eurasians believe that the influence of the Mongol Empire was also reflected in the authoritarian traditions of the organization of power in Russia. In particular, I. Ilyin, the Eurasian-oriented philosopher most quoted by Putin, repeatedly warned about the fatality of democratic temptations after the fall of communism and the need for a "national-patriotic dictatorship," a "national leader," or even a "national dictator" [Ilyin, 2008: 129].

Thoughts of a special type of elites can also be found in L. Gumilev, another "guru" of modern Russian Eurasianism. Since the 1980s, his passionary theory of ethnogenesis has gained considerable popularity. He believed that different ethnic groups under the influence of "energetic impulses" and special "passionary" leaders can develop to the level of "super-ethnos". These super-ethnicities, among which L. Gumilev singled out the Russian one, constitute a community covering the scale of many states, united by ideology, a sense of complementarity and opposition to other super-ethnicities. At the same time, Gumilev imagined the Western super-ethnic group as an "existential threat" to Russia.

The Russian president also echoed the pseudo-scientific passionary theory, which explains the processes of ethnogenesis by the influence of energy impulses from space. Putin, like Gumilev, repeatedly claimed the "identity" of "Russian civilization", which should follow the "special path" and have a "special democracy" [Putin o demokratii, 2019]. In 2017, he noted that there is a certain "internal nuclear reactor" inside the Russian people, a Russian person. This, they say, is passionarity that "pushes our country forward" [Putin rasskazal, 2017]. Talking to the editors of Russian newspapers in 2021, Putin frankly admitted that he believes in passionarity, in the passionary theory, according to which Russia is "on the march of development", "on the rise", and the Russian

people have an "infinite genetic code" [*Putin zayavil o beskonechnom geneticheskom kode Rossii, 2021*].

In this context, it is important that Eurasianism is an idealized image of the future empire, which should be formed through the gradual transformation of the Soviet Union into a Eurasian one, but with the rejection of communism and the establishment of an Orthodox Eurasian ideocracy as a defined system of views. Eurasianism is understood by I. Ilyin as a "supranational organic attitude" that combines "positive orthodoxy, extreme social radicalism, rootedness in the rational past and supranational perspectives for the future" [*Ilyin, 2008: 89*]. This Orthodox-fundamentalist attitude serves as the ideological basis of Eurasianism and brings it into civilizational conflict with Western Christianity and Western civilization as a world that has "fallen into heresy." Against this background, it goes without saying that the leading Eurasians do not see the future of Russia without Ukraine. N. Trubetzkoy in his article "To the Ukrainian Problem" in 1927 argued that Ukrainian culture is an "individualization of all-Russian culture" and that Ukrainians and Belarusians should unite with Russians around the organizational principle of their common Orthodox faith [*Trubetzkoy, 2007*]. It is significant that even in contemporary history of independent Ukraine, Kyiv's refusal to join Moscow's Eurasian integration projects in favor of European integration was perceived not just as betrayal, but also as an element of civilizational confrontation, in which Ukraine is an outpost of Western liberalism. And the military defeats of the Russian army in Ukraine forced the Kremlin to once again change the image of the enemy, declaring that in Ukraine Moscow is not at war with Kyiv, but with NATO. In February 2023, the Russian president directly threatened to "fight back against the "aggression of the collective West" [*Putin uses Stalingrad, 2023*].

Undoubtedly, the ideas of Eurasianism had a direct impact not only on the Kremlin elites and Putin personally, obsessed with the idea of reviving imperial grandeur, but also on the intellectual environment and creation of a corresponding narrative in Russia. Eurasian geopolitics, Russian Orthodoxy, traditional values, anti-Westernism have become the main ideological constructs that determined the revisionist nature of the foreign policy doctrine of Putin's Russia. The works of Eurasians and neo-Eurasians (A. Dugin, B. Yerasov, A. Prokhanov) are replicated and distributed among pro-ruling parties and state officials.

Eurasian ideological paradigm is embodied in the Kremlin's integration projects in the post-Soviet space. V. Putin's pre-election article about a new integration project for Eurasia, published in 2011, is particularly interesting in this sense. The article proclaimed an ambitious goal of building the Eurasian economic space as a "powerful supranational association capable of becoming one of the poles of the modern world" [*Putin, 2011*]. In the Valdai speech of 2013, Putin takes Eurasian ideas to the absolute, proposing the creation of the Eurasian Union. The latter, according to him, is a project of "preserving the identity of nations in the historical space in the new century and in the new world", and the Eurasian integration itself is: "a chance for the post-Soviet space to become an independent center of global development", and not remain "at the margins" of Europe and Asia. Following the Eurasian doctrine, he declares that Eurasia is the main geopolitical zone where the "genetic code" of Russia and its numerous peoples will be protected from "extreme Western-style liberalism" [*Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai International Discussion Club, 2013*]. The article ends with another chauvinistic quote by the religious-conservative thinker K. Leontiev about the development of Russia as a "state-civilization", united by the Russian people, the Russian language, Russian culture, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Understanding of Russia as a separate civilization within the neo-Eurasian ideology is gaining more and more supporters and is important for understanding the Russian concept of multipolarity. Messages about the formation of a "multipolar world" are heard in almost every speech of the Kremlin dictator. In this context, it is worth paying attention to the works of A. Dugin, the anti-liberal "philosopher" of neo-fascist direction, who is often called "the main ideologist of the Kremlin". A. Dugin is widely known for his anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western rhetoric, and his main political activity is aimed at creating a Eurasian superpower led by Russia. He is the author of many

books translated into different languages and is associated with European right-wing populist movements.

In his books, A. Dugin puts forward the idea of the "fourth political theory" (2009) as an alternative political ideology, since the previous three (fascism, communism and liberalism) were a product of the Western world and proved ineffective. The "fourth" theory rejects unipolar world and the Western liberal values associated with it such as democracy, human rights, individualism. The "multi-polar world" proposed by Dugin exists in opposition to neoliberalism and the basic principles of the classical Westphalian system, as it does not recognize the full-fledged "pole" status of formally sovereign national states. Dugin's "multipolarity" asserts fundamental inequality and denies the equality of national states, instead taking into account the real balance of forces and potentials. Dugin considers the main "poles" of such a multipolar world system to be "civilizations", understood as "poles of power and centers of local hegemony". Russia as "the future Eurasian empire" is recognized as one of these poles. Pushing the world into the Huntington paradigm of the "clash of civilizations", Dugin notes that it is Russia that can engage in "the last and decisive battle with the American empire of lies, oppression, moral decay and inequality" [Dugin, 2013].

Eurasian foundations of modern Russian foreign policy doctrine consistently promote the idea of Russia to create of a new geopolitical pole, imposing the image of a unique "civilization state", an "empire" built on civilizational features, which restrained the expansion of the West for centuries. In this sense, the so-called "special military operation" announced by the Kremlin means, as the Russian president stated, "the beginning of the transition from liberal-globalist American egocentrism to a truly multipolar world" [Cole, 2022]. The geopolitical utopia thus formed by the Eurasians became the regulation for Russia's practical policy of establishing control over a much larger part of the world.

Spiritual and moral foundations of Russian revisionism. If Eurasianism captures mostly geopolitical dimensions of Russian revisionism, its moral foundations, which determine the choice of goals and means, the legitimate sphere of the Kremlin's foreign policy actions, are formed by the concept of the so-called "Russian world." It arose as another response to the search for Russian identity after the collapse of the Soviet Union and was presented as the concept of "soft power" of Russia. The "Russian world" promotes the "unification" of a transnational community of people [Shedrovickij, 1999], who are connected to Russia in a cultural and spiritual sense by Orthodoxy, the Russian language and culture, common social views and traditional values, which seem to form "Russian civilization". From the moment of its emergence, the concept of the "Russian world" was based on outdated imperial conservative doctrines, spreading great power and anti-Western ideas, so it quickly slipped into the ideology of Orthodox fundamentalism.

In fact, the concept of "Russian peace" became a cover version of the medieval mythologeme "Moscow, the Third Rome" (15th century) and the conservative doctrine of nationality, which was formed in the 1930s of the 19th century. The emergence of the idea of Moscow as the "third Rome" is connected with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and geopolitical changes in the position of Moscow, which assumed the messianic idea of the guardian and defender of world Orthodoxy, which was shaken in Tsargorod. The doctrine of "official nationality" promoted the triad of "Orthodoxy", "autocracy" and "nationality" as indispensable conditions for the existence of Russia.

The concept of the "Russian world" actively reproduces nationalist-conservative ideas of "official nationality", proclaiming the protection of Orthodoxy, the Russian language and Slavic unity as the value basis of Russian expansionism. The support of the imperial nationalist concept of the Russian "triune nation" (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians), which denies the separateness of Ukrainians and Belarusians and was not used even in Soviet times, is indicative in this sense. The discourse on the "triune nation" and "triune Rus" is one of the defining ones for the "Russian world". Corresponding statements can be found in the speeches of Putin and Patriarch Kirill [Putyn schytaet Rossyiu, Ukraynu y Belorussian tryedynym narodom, 2022]. The patriarch repeatedly spread ideological stamps about the "unified historical space of Holy Rus", repeating one of his favorite slogans everywhere: "Ukraine, Russia, Belarus - together we are Holy Rus", even, no matter how cynical it sounds, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine [Patriarshee slovo, 2022]. This

fundamentalist ideology promoting "land reunification" was used to justify the occupation of Crimea and justify Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Long before the invasion, Putin called Ukrainians and Russians "one nation." Speaking about the causes of the war in December 2022, he openly stated that the goal of the war in Ukraine is to "unite the Russian people" [*Putin says West wants to 'tear apart' Russia*].

The concept of "Russian peace" contributed to society's immersion in great-power messianism. The stubborn refusal to recognize the national identity of the Ukrainian people is based precisely on the sickly great-power attitude about the "state-building mission of the Russian people", which should "consolidate" Russian civilization with language, culture, and worldwide sensitivity [*Putin, 2012*]. The Russian president imagines himself as the defender of the boundless "Russian world", which crosses the borders of the nation state, which, in his opinion, "do not end anywhere" [*Sharkov, 2023*]. The messianic idea of "protecting" Russians is used to justify military interventions. War criminal Putin's speech from September 30, 2022, in which the annexation of four partially occupied Ukrainian regions was called "the accomplishment of a great liberation mission" [*Full text of Putin's speech at annexation ceremony, 2022*], is indicative in this sense. According to Putin, the West cannot be reassured that there is a new "Great Country" Russia in the world. Instead, according to him, Russia is fighting for its culture and language.

Within the framework of the "Russian world" ideology, Russia declares itself the legal successor of Kyivan Rus, the Russian Empire, the USSR, calls for Slavic unity, claiming the relevant spheres of influence. Moscow Patriarch Kirill, being one of the developers of this concept, claimed that Ukraine and Belarus, as countries linked to Russia by a common past, are the "core of the Russian world", the "backbone of historical Rus", which forms the spiritual ideal of "Holy Rus" [*Vystuplenie Svyatejshego Patriarha Kirilla, 2009*]. At the same time, spiritual ideals of the Patriarch did not prevent him from blessing the Russian army to kill the Ukrainian people, urging "to be ready to repel the enemy on the borders of our Motherland" [*V Den zashitnika Otechestva, 2022*].

The "Russian world" actively promotes the archaic Slavophile ideologeme about the hostility of the Catholic West to the "unique" Russian "civilization state" with a special "cultural code" and "historical experience" based on Russian cultural dominance [*Putin, 2012*]. In one of the speeches dedicated to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Putin expresses fierce criticism of Western colonialism, despotism and apartheid, accusing of trying to create a neo-colonial unipolar world order, overthrowing faith and traditional values, suppressing freedom. The West, Putin emphasizes, keeps looking for a new chance to "hit", "weaken", "destroy", "split" Russia, dooming it to poverty and extinction [*Full text of Putin's speech at annexation ceremony, 2022*]. Another mystical quote from the works of I. Ilyin, the admirer of fascism and monarchy, about faith in spiritual forces and the historical destiny of the Russian people was the symptomatic end of the speech.

Criticism of Western liberal ideology contained in the national-conservative concept of the "Russian world" extends to social values and norms. It involves the fight against Western immorality and decay. Instead, the Russian people are seen as carriers of traditional spiritual and moral values. They do not accept Western individualism, egoism, liberal values. But the unspiritual Western civilization seem to be traditionally trying to break their "cultural code". Back in 2009, conservatism was announced as the official ideology of the Russian pro-government United Russia party. Thus, Russia and its President Putin are not just defenders of the Russian-speaking and Orthodox, but a global defender of traditional and family values against liberal ideas and LGBT communities, inclusive. The spread of conservative discourse about the spiritual unity of the Russian people and the moral values that unite them is becoming an important factor in Russian politics, which is enshrined in official government documents.

Historical revisionism. Geopolitical, spiritual and moral parameters of Russian revisionism are already based on reanimated imperial and Soviet "historical" concepts and schemes. In this case, it is proposed to pay attention to the fact that historical myth-making, as well as the spread of certain historical metanarratives, has acquired a centralized character in Russia and is used for the needs of the disinformation system and the justification of revisionist claims. As is known, S.

Naryshkin, the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, personally heads the Russian Historical Society. This institution, founded in 1866, continues imperial traditions and deals with the formation of historical policy and the promotion of commemorative practices, instrumentalizing the past for the needs of the political regime. The society, for example, has a commission on higher historical education, it develops standards for school textbooks on history, and there is a program on historical education for teachers and students from the separatist entities of "DPR" and "LPR". The Russian president himself holds meetings with historians and has repeatedly made pseudo-historical publications, including the infamous article "On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians" [Putin, 2021].

Already during the war, Russia approved a single "official" expanded concept of teaching history in higher education institutions. It should "put an end to diversity" in approaches and concepts of understanding the past. According to the Concept, large-scale protests in Belarus (2020-2021) and Kazakhstan (2020) are called "color revolutions", the revolution in Ukraine in 2014 is called an "anti-constitutional coup", the annexation of Crimea is marked as "the reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia", and the conduct of the so-called "special operation" was called "inevitable" due to the transformation of Ukraine into "anti-Russia" [*U kurs istoriyi rosijskih vishiv vklyuchili vtorgnennya RF v Ukrayinu*, 2023]. Let's consider this statement in more detail, since recently it has been actively used by Russian propaganda to justify the invasion of the territory of Ukraine. So, what is "anti-Russia"?

Analysis of President Putin's discursive practices shows that Ukraine as "anti-Russia" acts as a simulacrum of the hated collective West. This is a "territory from which dangers come" for Russia [Putin, 2021], an "anti-Russian enclave" created by the West [Putin calls Ukraine an "anti-Russian enclave", 2022], the idea of forming which is based on the outdated doctrines of Polish-Austrian ideologues regarding the construction of "anti-Moscow Russia". And Ukraine's "true sovereignty" is possible "only in partnership" with Russia [Putin, 2021].

Historical revisionism of the head of the Kremlin is also based on repeated arbitrary interpretations of Ukrainian history, which deny the existence of Ukrainians as a separate nation in a long historical period. In particular, he stated that Ukraine is a "product of the Soviet era", completely and entirely created by "Bolshevik, communist Russia" and V. Lenin personally. It was created to a large extent on the lands of "historical Russia", due to the annexation of "historical" Russian territories [Putin, 2021]. At the same time, Putin deliberately omitted that it was Lenin who destroyed the independent Ukrainian state that existed in 1917-1921, launched the "Red Terror" in the territories occupied by the Bolsheviks, and deprived the Ukrainian SSR of formal independence by integrating it into the USSR.

President Putin's articles and speeches regarding the occupation of part of the Ukrainian lands state manifestations of political will aimed at restoring "historical justice", "protection of Russian-speaking communities", which are called "a divided nation". The very ideological construction of a "divided nation" is strongly reminiscent of the rhetoric of interwar Germany, where the idea of "reuniting all Germans" scattered on the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire fostered Hitler's expansionism. As is known, Putin's propagandists have repeatedly called Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Ukraine "artificial" or "failed" states, emphasizing their right to "protect" Russian speakers.

The Kremlin deliberately instrumentalizes historical past, presenting Russia as a "great power" and a center of civilization that claims spheres of influence. A special role in this sense is given to the historical metanarrative about "Victory Day", which promotes the view of Russia as the successor state of the USSR, which defeated Nazi Germany in the Second World War and "liberated" Eastern Europe from fascist invaders. The Russian policy of commemorating the victory is determined, in particular, by the fact that the USSR, as part of the "Big Three", became one of the "architects" of the postwar world order in 1945, and Yalta is a symbol of recognition of Moscow's international influence. As a result, communist regimes were established in half of the European countries. Therefore, the desire of the political leadership of Russia to monopolize the status of the winner is completely consistent with the current foreign policy course to revive the "spirit of Yalta"

and "negotiate" a new configuration of forces in a multipolar world. Thus, in his next historical survey on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, President Putin put forward the ideas of a new Yalta conference. The "Forces of Victory", he noted, should approach "the creation of a new world order" with "maximum seriousness" in order not to "repeat the mistakes of the past". According to Putin, these forces were to be the "Big Five": the United States, France, Great Britain, Russia, and China [Putin, 2020].

It should be noted that Russian memory of the Second World War does not agree with the corresponding memory in European countries, especially in Poland and the Baltic states, which were occupied by the USSR before the beginning of the Second World War. It also contradicts historical memory of most European countries, whose "liberation" culminated in the establishment of authoritarian pro-Soviet regimes. Moscow's non-acceptance is also caused by the recognition of historical responsibility of the USSR for the beginning of the Second World War, since in 1939 the Soviet Union acted as a de facto ally of Nazi Germany, which together attacked Poland. Instead, a clear conclusion on this matter is offered by the resolution of the European Parliament adopted in 2019, which unequivocally condemns the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and assigns equal responsibility to Germany and the USSR for the start of the Second World War [European Parliament, 2109]. According to I. Boginska, this not only devalues the USSR's contribution to the victory over Germany, but also discredits modern Russia, including its myth about the "Great Victory" [Boginska, 2021].

Glorification of victory has become the main "fastener" of the Putin regime, the basis of the state myth that justifies past and present crimes, war and repression. It manifests itself in annual militaristic parades, exaltation of patriotism, glorification of Stalin, preservation and cultivation of the "image of the enemy". It is not surprising that the ribbon of Saint George became a symbol of the occupation of Crimea in 2014, the so-called "militia" in Donbas and the new stage of the war against Ukraine from February 24, 2022. Archaic ideological concepts of the Second World War have been used to justify full-scale Russian aggression and included the "denazification" of Ukraine, its "liberation" from the "Nazis", "Banderites", "neo-Nazis".

Conclusions. Russian revisionism is based on the geopolitical ambitions of V. Putin's political regime to build a multipolar international order. It envisages the establishment of Russia as a "Great Power" and a civilizational pole that projects power within the Russian sphere of influence. First of all, this applies to the post-Soviet space, where Moscow seeks to assume the role of a security regulator and imposes the concept of "limited sovereignty" for satellite countries. Turning to a forceful, anti-system strategy, Russian revisionism currently poses the greatest threat to the open international system compared to the revisionist projects of China and Iran. The Kremlin's revisionist policy aims to impose a new security architecture in Europe, limit the influence of NATO, and undermine trust in democratic institutions of the EU. Moscow sees the fulfillment of the ultimate requirement of recognition of security guarantees on the basis of an international agreement, which would fix the principle of spheres of influence, as an indicator of achieving such a state. Within this geopolitical logic, a full-scale unprovoked war against Ukraine aims to destroy the existing international status quo in Europe and actually demonstrate Russia's assertion of the principle of spheres of influence.

To ideologically justify the foreign policy doctrine of Russian revisionism, the Kremlin uses a bizarre combination of geopolitical concepts and ideologemes of different eras of Russian statehood – the Muscovite Empire, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union. The most important of them were: the medieval concept of "Moscow, Third Rome", the doctrine of official nationality, Slavophile ideology, right-wing radical monarchical ideas, geopolitical concept of Eurasianism, Orthodox fundamentalism. To justify territorial claims, Russian leadership actively uses various ideologemes such as "Russian civilization", "special way", "triune nationality", "Greater Eurasia", "Holy Rus", "historical Russia", "anti-Russia", "Victory Day", "Nazis", "Banderites", "one nation", etc. The ideology of the "Russian world" became the most expressive embodiment of these views. It professes to defend "Holy Rus" and traditional values, spreading anti-liberalism and criticism of the Western world instead. This explains the need to introduce "educated authoritarianism" in Russia,

militarization of society, restriction of human rights and freedoms as elements of an ideal political system that allows protecting "true" Christian values and "true" Russian sovereignty. The war of aggression launched by Russia is directly based on the national-conservative ideology of "Russian peace".

Russian revisionism poses an existential threat not only to the sovereignty of Ukraine, European institutions and values, and is not limited to Moscow's desire for regional hegemony in the post-Soviet space. Given the challenges to global food and energy security, the threat of using nuclear weapons, and most importantly, the ideological conflict, the Russian-Ukrainian war is taking on a global character. It is primarily about the global confrontation between liberal and autocratic views on the future of the world system, where revisionist power politics claims its own understanding of democracy, sovereignty and international law. This policy rejects universal human rights and asserts a utopian Orwellian picture of the spatial fragmentation of the world represented by the borders of several superpowers.

The utopian vision of the future world order is conditioned not only by the sickly attitudes of Russian political elites, but also by the global erosion of democracy and the liberal world order, which has been comprehensively attacked by authoritarian regimes and Russian propaganda as unsuitable for solving modern challenges. Against this background, the consolidation of Western democracies in support of Ukraine's sovereignty has become an unexpected turn for the Kremlin. The Russian invasion gave new strength and meaning to the promotion of democracy and liberalism and sharply undermined Russia's claims to the status of a great power. In the future, the Ukrainian victory should be the beginning of the end of the "authoritarian international". This requires a mandatory international criminal tribunal against the aggressor and reform of the UN Security Council, where veto abuse threatens the rules-based international order.

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