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## **CAPTURING HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIES (1993–2023)**

The article focuses on the analysis of Russia's official foreign policy Strategies and its correlation with the declared historical narratives. It is a well-known fact that historical narratives have an essential influence on the historical consciousness formation. It is noted that Russian historical politics and the politics of memory, with its ideological dimension, went far beyond the domestic political course and turned into an important foreign policy imperative. It is emphasized that Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has a historical, ideologically marked dimension and is a natural continuation of the memorial discourse that the Russian Federation has been forming for many years. It is emphasized that the cult of victory in the World War II and the subsequent ideas of a special mission of Russia in the international arena which were declared in the 2023 foreign policy Strategy resulted in major foreign policy priorities positioning Russia as the

global power providing multipolar international system building. It is noted that the policy of positioning the USA as an adversary, which was a common practice during the Cold War, was introduced nowadays to modern Russian society, and the Euro-Atlantic choice of Ukraine's foreign policy became a powerful trigger for the emergence of anti-Ukrainian sentiments not only within the Russian society, but also in normative foreign policy documents.

In the process of analyzing the stated topic, it was established that historical narratives became the ideological basis for strengthening neo-imperial ideas, which the Russian Federation promotes in all the post-Soviet countries, considering them as its own zone of influence. Ukraine's rejection of the policy of maneuvering between the two major centers of gravity – the European Union and Russia, – and the clear declaration of a course for European and Euro-Atlantic integration disrupted the Russian geopolitical strategy and determined the beginning of open expansion. The historical, ideologically marked dimension of the foreign policy strategy actually justified the attack on Ukraine.

**Key words:** war, Ukraine, Russia, politics of memory, historical politics, historical trauma, domestic and foreign national strategies, political discourse, use of history, historical narrative.

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## ІСТОРИЧНИЙ ВИМІР ЗОВНІШНЬОПОЛІТИЧНИХ СТРАТЕГІЙ РОСІЇ (1993–2023 рр.)

У статті зосереджено увагу на аналізі офіційних зовнішньополітичних стратегій росії та їх кореляції з історичними нарративами. Загальновідомим є факт, що історичні нарративи впливають на формування історичної свідомості. Зазначається, що історична політика й політика пам'яті з їх ідеологічним виміром вийшли за межі внутрішньополітичного курсу та перетворилась у важливий зовнішньополітичний імператив. Наголошено,

що повномасштабна війна росії проти України має історичний, ідеологічно маркований вимір і є закономірним продовженням того меморіального дискурсу, який багато років формує російська федерація. Акцентовано увагу на тому, що культ перемоги в Другій світовій війні та ідея про особливу місію росії на міжнародній арені, задекларовані в Стратегії зовнішньої політики 2023 р., зумовили в ролі зовнішньополітичних пріоритетів позиціонування росії як центру світового розвитку, що виконує унікальну місію з підтримки глобального балансу сил і вибудовування багатоплярної міжнародної системи. Зазначено, що традиційне ще для часів Холодної війни формування «образу ворога» в обличчі США було екстрапольоване в сучасне російське суспільство, а євроатлантичний вибір зовнішньої політики України став тригером для появи антиукраїнських настроїв не тільки в російському публічному просторі, а й у нормативних зовнішньополітичних документах.

У процесі аналізу досліджуваної проблеми встановлено, що історичні наративи стали ідеологічною базою підкріплення неоімперських ідей, які російська федерація просуває на всіх територіях пострадянського простору, вважаючи його зоною свого геополітичного впливу. Відмова України від політики лавірування між двома великими центрами тяжіння – Європейським Союзом і росією, – чітке оголошення курсу на європейську та євроатлантичну інтеграцію порушили російську геополітичну стратегію й визначили початок відкритої експансії. Історичний ідеологічно маркований вимір зовнішньополітичної стратегії фактично обґрунтовує напад на Україну.

**Ключові слова:** російсько-українська війна, політика пам'яті, історична політика, історична травма, внутрішньополітичні та зовнішньополітичні національні стратегії, політичний дискурс, історичний наратив.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The «historical/mnemonic» component of foreign policy in various countries is constructed around issues of historical memory and represents a specific form of historical discourse. The well-known tactic of selecting historical narratives and mnemonic practices is common for many states in the terms of development of national strategies and the implementation of domestic policies. However, the inclusion of historical discourse in justifying foreign policy strategies inevitably leads to catastrophic consequences, such as raising questions about the revision of borders and the legitimacy of state existence.

For the vast majority of experts from different fields, it is evident that the full-scale war waged by Russia against Ukraine, perceived by the international community as beginning in 2022 but understood by the citizens of Ukraine –

accurately so – to have started with the events of 2014, carries a historically and ideologically marked dimension. It represents a natural continuation of the memorial discourse that the Russian Federation has cultivated over many years.

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war has underscored the relevance of this issue, demonstrating the need for an in-depth study of historical narratives, collective visions of the past, and their correlation with the state foreign policy. Notably, this issue is now pertinent to many European countries, as historical policies and memory politics, with their ideological dimensions, have transcended domestic agendas and evolved into significant imperatives of foreign policy.

The issue of the ideological dimension of historical narratives is not relatively new: Western European countries have already accumulated extensive experience in topic research. Today, the issues of the formation and content of historical narratives in society attract the attention of representatives from various disciplines and occupy an interdisciplinary intersection. Scholars in the humanities have noted their ideological context and the potential for explaining political processes and phenomena in social life.

It is a well-known fact that historical narratives influence the formation of historical consciousness. When analyzing contemporary definitions of these concepts, researchers point out their incorrect interpretations and connotations. Political scientist V. Bushansky emphasizes – and it is difficult to argue with – that historical memory, in the literal sense, has never existed as a specific memory. Memories are not historical memory; rather, they are narratives of human social experience, and only if this narrative transforms under the influence of normative discourse, it becomes an expression of historical consciousness [1, p. 93].

Researchers rightly note that contemporary individuals, on one hand, rarely reflect on how the past is constructed and represented, as they are more interested in the «final product» of history. On the other hand, nearly everyone considers themselves an indispensable connoisseur of history [2]. This final «historical product» is delivered to the average adult in a «ready-made» form, largely due to the powerful influence of the information flow, ranging from traditional media (television, radio, print publications) to various news and advertising products on social media platforms (Viber, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and computer games, among others [3, p. 88–92].

Among the **recent publications** concerning the study of the phenomenon of various dimensions of narratives, including historical ones and their influence on the state strategies formation, the works of Yu. Kurnyshova, J. Szostek, E. Hets, and J. Staun stand out. For instance, Yu. Kurnyshova (University of Bremen, Germany), in examining the narratives that emerged in Estonia regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war, takes into account the historical component [4,

p. 5–13]. J. Szostek (Royal Holloway University of London, UK) investigates the «Defence and Promotion of Desired State Identity in Russia’s Strategic Narrative» [5, p. 571]. The scholar notes that Russian leaders do relatively little to address the issue of international rejection of their strategic narrative, which reflects their prioritization. This state projection of identity is aimed at both domestic and foreign audiences.

The researcher emphasizes that within Russia itself, the state’s strategic narrative appears effective: it is widely accepted and reproduced, allowing Russian citizens to continue perceiving their country as «great», while the tension in relations with Europe is attributed to negative American influence [5, p. 571–593]. E. Goetz and J. Staun (Royal Danish Defense College, Denmark), in their scholarly article «Why Russia Attacked Ukraine: Strategic Culture and Radicalized Narratives», analyze Russian narratives within the cultural sphere through the lenses of history, geography, and tradition. The researchers conclude that the political elite in Moscow view Ukraine’s drift toward the West as a threat to national security [6, p. 255]. Ukrainian researcher M. Bessonova presented work on «Anti-American Rhetoric in Russian Narratives of the Russo-Ukrainian War» which is a significant contribution to the understanding of contemporary geopolitical discourse. The research is characterized by a rigorous methodological approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analysis that substantiate the claims and set a high standard for future studies in this area [7].

Thus, we can affirm that the issue of the influence of historical narrative on Russia’s foreign policy has entered the sphere of scholarly interest among researchers. However, it is also important to note that the analysis of these narratives within foreign policy strategies from the 1990s to the present, as well as the correlation of their content with the state’s foreign policy course, still requires further exploration.

**The purpose** of the research is to examine the ideological context of historical discourse in Russia’s foreign policy strategies and to identify its impact on foreign policy formation.

**The methods** employed in this research combine qualitative content analysis instruments with a historical interpretative approach. The primary focus is made on examining the texts of key Russian foreign policy documents from 1993 to 2023, such as the official Foreign Policy Concepts and national security Strategies. The analysis aims to identify and interpret historical references and markers – specific mentions of historical events, figures, and ideologemes used as justifications for Russia’s foreign policy decisions. Content analysis is a valuable methodology for uncovering the strategic and ideological underpinnings of foreign policy. By rigorously applying this method, we can gain insights into

how Russian authorities articulated and implemented their foreign policy strategies over time. By systematically categorizing these references, the study reveals patterns and the strategic use of history to shape and legitimize Russian policy goals.

## 2. RESULTS

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states embarked on the path of forming a new historical narrative. As historian Ivan Kurilla points out, Russia, in this context, became an exception, which indicated a crisis of Russian identity. The researcher emphasizes that V. Putin came to power with a clear understanding of the importance of national history and began to construct Russian identity by affirming the «imperial» flag and coat of arms on one hand, and by reinstating the «Soviet» national anthem on the other. He also actively employed «patriotic» rhetoric about a return to the «glorious past» [6, p. 255]. Ivan Kurilla is rather an exception to the rule; he belongs to a small group of Russian historians who find themselves in a certain opposition to the historical rhetoric of the authorities.

It should be noted that the majority of contemporary Russian historians have embarked on the path of forming an alternative-free «patriotic historical canon», continuing the Soviet tradition of state-controlled historiography. As a result, thousands of articles, monographs, and other works have been produced. As researcher L. Chekalenko rightly points out, for modern Russian historical science, studies on the problems of historical memory represent a political and ideological mandate and task, serving as one of the tools for justifying and supporting the vertical of power, regardless of the forms and manifestations it takes [8, p. 16].

An interesting aspect in this context is the six-volume collective monograph titled «The National Idea of Russia», published in Moscow in 2012. The introduction to this project states that the question of the national idea of Russia has a long history and is as important as the meaning of life for an individual. Contemporary Russia faces this question in two dimensions. First, in the external world: what is Russia's place in world history, and what states its contribution to the world development? The researchers argue that this issue is akin to the search for the «Russian idea», which has bothered many Russian thinkers since Dostoevsky, Solovyov, and Berdyaev.

Second, to discuss the meaning of life, life must exist! «To speak about Russia, its mission and destiny, Russia must exist!» The authors declare that in the 20th century, Russia's statehood was destroyed twice and note that many contemporary indicators suggest a new threat at that level [9].

Particularly noteworthy is Volume Three of this publication, in which Chapter 5 is titled «Non-violent Methods of Destroying Russian Statehood». This chapter analyzes the new type of war, framing the issue as «Russia in the Focus of the Western (American) Project», and raises the question: «Whether Russia is a «rogue state» or is it a problem of global isolation»? The aforementioned publication asserts that the West is creating a «global empire», with Russian statehood standing as an obstacle on this path [9, p. 1534].

Thus, Russian historiography actively articulates the ideologemes of «Great Russia» and its «special path», which is positioned in opposition to the West. A particularly prominent theme is the presentation of the state as a «besieged fortress». All these ideologemes serve as the foundation for strategic planning, primarily in the realm of foreign policy.

Over the years of the modern history of the Russian Federation, six foreign policy strategies, which represent concepts of foreign policy, have been adopted: in 1993, 2000, 2008, 2013, 2016, and 2023. Each of these reflects shifts in domestic priorities and the overall international context.

The first Foreign Policy Concept of 1993 reflected the realities of the USSR's collapse and envisioned integration into the Western world, emphasizing cooperation with Europe and the United States. It declared a new approach to the implementation of foreign policy, distinct from the «elements of imperial arrogance and egocentrism of the Soviet Union». The document states that the concept lays the foundation for equitable partnerships with neighboring states and leading democratic and economically developed countries through genuine cooperation. It emphasizes that, in principle, Russia excludes the use of military force from the arsenal of global politics and does not consider any state as inherently hostile or friendly. Instead, Russia aspires to build the best possible, mutually beneficial relations with all nations, seeking to resolve disputes and conflicts through political means [10, p. 16].

One of the key priorities of Russian foreign policy is proclaimed to be the protection of the rights, freedoms, and well-being of Russian citizens. Nevertheless, the concept also reflects ideas of unity among East Slavic peoples and emphasizes maintaining ties with former Soviet republics, particularly in terms of protecting Russian-speaking populations abroad. The document highlights Russia's role as the successor to the historical legacy of the Soviet Union and the need to counter Western influence. Russia is presented as a great power, intent on maintaining its «role in the global balance of power, in accordance with its status as a major power» [10, p. 35].

The concept underscores that cooperation and partnership-building with the United States and Western Europe are among Russia's main priorities. How-

ever, it also contains anti-Western narratives, reinforced by an emphasis on Russia's cultural and historical mission. The rhetoric opposing Western influence and promoting unity among post-Soviet states is particularly evident. In Section 1, titled «CIS», under the article on the main directions of foreign policy, the document specifies that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is one of Russia's priority areas for foreign policy activities. It states that Russia's relations with this group of countries should be elevated to the level of «comprehensive intergovernmental relations, ensuring robust cooperation with them» [10, p. 28].

The importance of such close cooperation is explained by the shared responsibility, particularly of Russia and other former Soviet Union countries, for ensuring stability, human rights, and freedoms, as well as the fulfillment of international obligations across the former USSR. In Section 5, «Europe» under the article on the main directions of foreign policy, it is emphasized that a strategic task at that time was to prevent Eastern Europe from becoming «a sort of buffer zone isolating Russia from the West» and to ensure that Russia was not marginalized by Western states in the Eastern European region. According to the Russian political leadership, the states of Eastern Europe are being artificially distanced from Russia by Western forces but should remain oriented toward Russia and other CIS countries [10, p. 16].

Russia's vision for further dialogue with the Baltic states includes a provision for ensuring the civil and social rights of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltics, with these rights enshrined in relevant intergovernmental agreements. From the perspective of the Russian leadership, the group of Central and Eastern European states (including the Baltic countries), which had moved away from totalitarianism, were facing the most complex political, economic, and social challenges, which served as a «fertile ground for the resurgence of nationalism». It is in Russia's interest to prevent the spread of nationalist ideas that could potentially be encouraged by the West to distance post-Soviet countries from Russia. This perspective also reveals a narrative centered on the so-called fight against neo-Nazism [10, p. 16].

After Putin came to power, the 2000 Strategy shifted focus towards a multipolar world and the restoration of Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space. The 2000 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation represents a rethinking of Russia's foreign policy course in light of the changes that occurred during the 1990s and marks the declaration of a new foreign policy direction for the country in the 21st century. A critically important aspect of the new concept is the assertion that the «expectations associated with the formation of new equitable, mutually beneficial, and partnership-based relations between Russia



and the surrounding world» had not been realized. It was stated that the international situation at the beginning of the 21st century necessitated a reassessment of Russia's foreign policy priorities [11, p. 18].

Among the primary objectives outlined in the concept for Russia's foreign policy agenda are: the establishment of a multipolar system of international relations; maintaining Russia's authoritative role in the global community, «in line with the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power and as one of the influential centers of the modern world»; protecting the interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad; promoting a positive perception of Russia globally, including the promotion of the Russian language and culture; creating a «belt of good-neighborliness along the Russian borders»; and supporting the elimination and prevention of potential sources of tension and conflict in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation. The concept identifies the «trend toward the creation of a unipolar world structure dominated economically and militarily by the United States» and the increasing influence of Western institutions and forums in resolving key issues of international security as threats to Russia's national interests [11, p. 18–30].

Thus, this concept more clearly reflects an anti-Western rhetoric and a narrative emphasizing Russia's unique role and mission in the world and in the post-Soviet space. The document underscores the necessity of resisting the «dominance of a unipolar world», indirectly referencing the United States and NATO as threats to international stability. Russia stresses the importance of multipolarity and sets the goal of defending national interests from external interference, particularly regarding the security and sovereignty of CIS countries.

The 2008 Strategy, directly linked to the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, highlighted the importance of countering Western influence in post-Soviet countries. Approved by then-President Dmitry Medvedev, the document develops and expands upon the provisions of the 2000 Concept. According to the concept, the main goals of Russia's foreign policy remain the same: maintaining Russia's «strong and authoritative positions in the global community, which best correspond to the interests of the Russian Federation as one of the influential centers of the modern world»; promoting and supporting the Russian language and culture abroad (introducing for the first time the term «Russian World» («Russkiy Mir»)), which describes the Russian diaspora; fostering good neighborly relations with neighboring states; and facilitating the resolution and prevention of tensions and conflicts in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation. The «Russian World» concept is an ideological construct that emphasizes the cultural, linguistic, and historical unity of Russian-speaking peoples worldwide. It seeks to unite individuals and communities who share a common heritage rooted in the

Russian language, culture, and Orthodox Christianity. The introduction of this concept in 2008 was not merely a cultural initiative but a strategic articulation of Russia's vision of its global role [12, p. 9–14].

The anti-Western rhetoric persists, with accusations against the West of monopolizing global processes, which in turn leads to a policy of «containing» Russia through «selective approaches to history, particularly the history of World War II and the postwar period». Additionally, the concept criticizes NATO's expansion, particularly plans to admit Ukraine and Georgia, warning that such moves would bring NATO's military infrastructure closer to Russian borders, «violating the principle of equal security and creating new dividing lines in Europe» [12, p. 16].

Thus, the narrative of Russia's achievements in World War II – the so-called victory cult – emerges not only as a unifying element of domestic politics but also as a foreign policy argument, reinforcing Russia's claim to authoritative status and genuine influence on the international stage. Russia perceives the West as an adversary seeking to diminish its wartime accomplishments and tarnish the historical memory, a memory that is a sacred element of Russian self-awareness and unity, as well as a unifying factor for the shared fate of post-Soviet countries.

The 2013 Strategy reflects the increasing confrontation with the West, emphasizing the strengthening of partnerships with BRICS countries and Asia. The Foreign Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation of 2013 largely reiterates the objectives set forth in the 2008 document. For the first time, it introduces the idea of using soft power in international relations, defined as «a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy goals by relying on the potential of civil society, information and communication, humanitarian, and other methods and technologies that serve as alternatives to classical diplomacy». Accordingly, Section 39 on international humanitarian cooperation emphasizes Russia's commitment to countering extremism, neo-Nazism, nationalism, and attempts «to rewrite history and use it to fuel confrontation and revanchism in world politics, or to revise the outcomes of World War II». This emphasis reflects a broader historical narrative that frames Russia as the defender of the legacy of World War II and as a stabilizing force in a world threatened by revisionism and extremism. The concern over «attempts to revise the outcomes of World War II» highlights a central theme in Russian foreign policy: the sacrosanct nature of the historical narrative surrounding the Soviet Union's victory and sacrifice during the war [13, p. 18].

The assertion of Russia's central and coordinating role in international affairs is rooted in a historical narrative that positions the country as a leader

among Slavic nations and a key player on the global stage. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has sought to redefine its influence in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. The historical dimension of this aspiration is reflected in various initiatives aimed at asserting Russia's leadership and fostering unity among Slavic countries. In addition to its religious engagement, Russia has actively pursued the development of intergovernmental cultural and humanitarian ties among Slavic peoples. This initiative reflects a historical commitment to cultural diplomacy that has deep roots in the region's past. Cultural ties are leveraged as a means of strengthening Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space. By promoting shared cultural heritage, language, and history, Russia seeks to reinforce connections with countries like Ukraine, Belarus, and the Balkans. This approach not only emphasizes the historical continuity of Slavic identity but also aims to cultivate goodwill and foster cooperative relationships [13, p. 24].

Historically, Russia has viewed itself as the protector of Slavic heritage and values, a sentiment that dates back to the era of the Russian Empire. The notion of a «Slavic brotherhood» is not merely cultural; it serves as a geopolitical strategy to cultivate alliances and increase Russia's influence in Eastern Europe and beyond. By positioning itself as a leader among Slavic peoples, Russia seeks to counterbalance the influence of Western powers and assert its historical significance [13, p. 16].

This historical positioning is not merely a commemorative act but a strategic policy tool. By invoking the Soviet Union's role in defeating Nazi Germany, Russia seeks to establish a moral high ground in global discourse. This moral legitimacy is then used to counter criticisms of its actions, particularly in the post-Soviet space, and to justify interventions under the guise of protecting the historical truth and fighting extremism.

It highlights Russia's continued negative stance on NATO expansion and on «the overall proximity of NATO's military infrastructure to Russian borders, which violates the principle of equal security and creates new dividing lines in Europe». The concept underscores Russia's unique role in maintaining stability within the post-Soviet space. Thus, the 2013 Concept continues to circulate anti-Western rhetoric and the narrative of Russia's accomplishments in World War II as key elements [13].

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 led to the formation of new foreign policy objectives, resulting in the adoption of the 2016 Foreign Policy Strategy, which underscores a commitment to multipolarity and opposition to the United States. The 2016 Foreign Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation presents a vivid example of how history is used as a tool to shape and justify modern fo-

reign policy. The statement that «Russia's role in international affairs has been shaped over centuries» invokes a narrative of historical continuity and legitimacy. By emphasizing its long-standing influence, Russia seeks to reaffirm its status as a global power with inherent rights and responsibilities on the international stage. This historical self-perception shapes foreign policy orientations, including Russia's engagement with emerging global multipolarity and resistance to perceived Western hegemony. The strategy also prioritizes «protecting the rights of compatriots living abroad» and acknowledges their contribution to the development of the Russian language and culture. This aspect of the policy highlights a significant historical narrative: the protection of ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking communities beyond Russia's borders. This concern has historical roots in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union's efforts to project influence through cultural and linguistic ties. By framing this protection as a moral and historical duty, Russia legitimizes its involvement in the affairs of neighboring states, particularly in regions with significant Russian-speaking populations. Another key element of the 2016 strategy is the emphasis on «developing humanitarian ties between peoples» and «strengthening integration structures in the post-Soviet space with Russian participation». This reflects a historical ambition to maintain and strengthen Russia's influence in the former Soviet republics. By promoting integration through humanitarian and cultural initiatives, Russia seeks to counteract Western influence and ensure its strategic presence in the region [16; 17]. The historical dimension of this approach can be traced back to the Soviet Union's legacy of fostering solidarity and cooperation among its republics. In the post-Soviet context, this legacy is repurposed to sustain a sense of shared history and interconnectedness, which supports Moscow's vision of a multipolar world order [14].

In 2023, Russia approved a new foreign policy concept, marking the sixth iteration [15]. This strategy was adopted in response to shifting geopolitical conditions, particularly following the start of the full-scale war against Ukraine and the intensifying confrontation with the West.

We will attempt to outline the main historical narratives embedded within Russia's 2023 foreign policy strategy. The general provisions of the 2023 «Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation» emphasize Russia's millennium-long history of independent statehood and its deep historical ties with traditional European culture and other cultures across Eurasia. Russia is portrayed as a unique civilizational state, uniting the Russian people and other ethnic groups within the cultural and civilizational community of the «Russian World» [15].

The cult of Victory and Russia's special mission on the international stage are highlighted within the foreign policy strategy. The document underscores

Russia's decisive contribution to the victory in World War II and its role in dismantling the global colonial system. Consequently, Russia is depicted as a center of global development, carrying out a unique mission to maintain the global balance of power and to construct a multipolar international system [15].

Anti-Americanism as a Marker. Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic foreign policy choice has triggered the emergence of anti-Ukrainian sentiments within the Russian public sphere, establishing a correlation between «anti-Ukrainian» and «anti-American» attitudes. Anti-Americanism, as a vector of solidarity with Western/European values, is noted in the foreign policy strategy. The strategy states: «Considering the strengthening of Russia as one of the leading centers of development in the modern world and perceiving its independent foreign policy as a threat to Western hegemony, the United States of America (USA) and its satellites have utilized the measures taken by the Russian Federation to protect its vital interests concerning Ukraine as a pretext to escalate a long-standing anti-Russian policy and have unleashed a new type of hybrid war» [15]. The document asserts that Russia does not view itself as an enemy of the West, does not isolate itself from it, and hopes that Western states will recognize the futility of a confrontational policy.

In Section 44, «International Humanitarian Cooperation», of the «Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation», the necessity of countering the falsification of history, incitement of hatred against Russia, and the spread of ideologies such as neo-Nazism, racial and national exceptionalism, and aggressive nationalism is emphasized [15].

Thus, we will identify the ideologemes/mythologemes of the Soviet/imperial interpretation of history that are present in Russia's foreign policy strategies and shape its foreign policy orientations.

Historical Imperial Legacy Concept. The foreign policy concept of «gathering the lands of Rus» traces back to the times of the Tsardom of Moscow and the Russian Empire, when territorial expansion was one of the state's key objectives. The utilization of this historical continuity in political rhetoric serves as a foundation for justifying territorial claims. In contemporary Russian foreign policy, particularly following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the rhetoric of restoring historical territories is frequently invoked.

Unity of the East Slavic Peoples Concept. To strengthen its influence in the Balkans and other Slavic regions, Russia has been cultivating the image of a leader/protector of the Slavic peoples since the 19th century. A distinct aspect of this rhetoric pertains to the shared past of the three «brotherly» nations and the indivisibility of their historical fate.

The struggle for the legacy of Kievan Rus', specifically asserting that medieval Russia is the successor to Kievan Rus'.

Historical Legacy of the Soviet Union Concept. The Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War and the «cult of the Great Victory» is actively employed by Russia in its foreign policy to bolster its moral authority, presenting its contemporary foreign policy as a counter to «neo-fascism», particularly in the context of the conflict with Ukraine. Consequently, the Russian-Ukrainian war is framed as a struggle for liberation from neo-Nazism. The «image of the enemy» cultivated within Russian society fueled anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in 2014, intensified during the full-scale invasion, and continues to shape prevailing sentiments in the Russian public discourse.

Anti-Western rhetoric and the «Great Historical Mission» concept. In Russian political rhetoric, there is often an assertion that the confrontation with the West has historical roots, referencing figures such as Peter the Great, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Crimean War, as well as Soviet times (the Cold War), which shaped the «image of the enemy». These traditions have solidified ideas of anti-Americanism that have been extrapolated into contemporary Russian society. Russia is positioned as the bearer of traditional (religious, moral) values. Historically, it has been framed as a state defending these traditions against a «degrading» West. This argument is also employed on the international stage.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

The historical dimension of Russia's foreign policy strategies from 1993 to 2023 reveals a consistent reliance on ideologemes and mythologemes rooted in the Soviet and imperial past. These narratives are instrumentalized to shape contemporary foreign policy orientations and justify actions on the international stage.

The Historical Imperial Legacy Concept continues to play a pivotal role. The concept of «gathering the lands of Rus» connects modern territorial ambitions to the era of the Tsardom of Moscow and the Russian Empire, legitimizing claims through the rhetoric of historical restoration, as observed after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The narrative of the «unity of the East Slavic peoples» reinforces Russia's leadership image among Slavic nations, drawing on the idea of a shared historical destiny among Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Additionally, the struggle over the legacy of Kievan Rus' emphasizes Russia's self-proclaimed historical continuity with this medieval state, forming another foundational myth that influences regional policies.

The Historical Legacy of the Soviet Union Concept is equally prominent, with the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War and the «cult of the Great Vic-

tory» framing Russia's foreign policy as a moral crusade against neo-fascism. This myth has become particularly salient in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, where contemporary warfare is portrayed as a fight for liberation from neo-Nazism. The construction of the «image of the enemy» has fueled anti-Ukrainian rhetoric since 2014 and continues to shape public opinion, legitimizing aggression in the eyes of Russian society.

Finally, Anti-Western rhetoric and the «Great Historical Mission» Concept remain central to Russia's strategic narrative. The portrayal of a historic confrontation with the West, drawing on figures like Peter the Great and referencing conflicts from the Napoleonic Wars to the Cold War, reinforces anti-American and anti-Western sentiments. This rhetoric positions Russia as a defender of traditional values in opposition to a morally decaying West, a narrative that extends to international platforms, emphasizing Russia's self-appointed role as a guardian of religious and moral traditions.

Overall, these enduring historical narratives provide a framework that influences and legitimizes Russia's foreign policy decisions. By invoking a selectively interpreted past, Russia seeks to shape both domestic and international perceptions, reinforcing its ideological and geopolitical objectives. Understanding these deep-seated historical influences is essential for comprehending the motivations behind Russia's strategic actions and its long-term vision in global affairs. Extending the analysis, Russia's strategic deployment of historical narratives highlights a sophisticated use of the past to achieve modern political goals, both within its borders and internationally. The consistent references to imperial and Soviet ideologies not only bolster domestic legitimacy but also serve as tools of influence and soft power in regions with historical and cultural ties to Russia. These narratives help to construct a national identity that is deeply interwoven with the glory and trauma of the past, fostering a sense of mission that justifies expansionist or protective policies.

In sum, the historical dimension of Russia's foreign policy is not merely a relic of the past but an active component that shapes present and future strategies. It offers a lens through which to understand Russia's geopolitical behavior, revealing that these narratives are likely to remain significant as long as they continue to resonate with the Russian public and support the state's strategic objectives. Understanding these historical continuities is crucial for anticipating Russia's actions and developing informed and effective diplomatic responses.

The role of modern media, including social media and state-controlled platforms, in disseminating and reinforcing historical narratives warrants further exploration. Future research could examine how digital communication strategies amplify these narratives and assess the effectiveness of disinformation and propaganda campaigns in shaping perceptions globally.

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