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**THE AWAKENING OF “SLEEPING” POLITICAL RESOURCE:
RUSSIAN NATIONALISM BEFORE 2018 ELECTIONS**

**EL DESPERTAR DEL RECURSO POLÍTICO "DURMIENTE":
EL NACIONALISMO RUSO ANTES DE LAS ELECCIONES DE 2018**

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Abstract

The author analyses the problems of nationalisms in the Russian Federation, where nationalism is one of the most influential and ignored political ideologies simultaneously. The author presumes that Ukrainian revolution of 2014 inspired the rise of Russian nationalism and its radicalization. Russian nationalism coexists simultaneously with non-Russian nationalisms that gained more political experience in previous years. It is assumed that nationalisms in Russia develop more slowly than in Europe. The elections that will be in Russia in 2018 force and stimulate Russian political elites to imitate their agreement with Russian nationalists and use the practices of Russification, attacking the rights of the national languages in republics. The author believes that modern political elites perceive non-Russian nationalisms as an ideological collective enemy and try to suppress non-Russian nationalisms, formally simulating and imitating the support of Russian nationalists.

Keywords

Russian Federation – Nationalisms – Identities – Russian nationalisms – 2018 elections

Resumen

El autor analiza los problemas de los nacionalismos en la Federación Rusa, donde el nacionalismo es una de las ideologías políticas más influyentes e ignoradas simultáneamente. El autor presume que la revolución ucraniana de 2014 inspiró el surgimiento del nacionalismo ruso y su radicalización. El nacionalismo ruso coexiste simultáneamente con los nacionalismos no rusos que obtuvieron más experiencia política en años anteriores. Se supone que los nacionalismos en Rusia se desarrollan más lentamente que en Europa. Las elecciones que se realizarán en Rusia en 2018 obligarán y estimularán a las élites políticas rusas a imitar su acuerdo con los nacionalistas rusos y utilizarán las prácticas de rusificación, atacando los derechos de los idiomas nacionales en las repúblicas. El autor cree que las élites políticas modernas perciben los nacionalismos no rusos como un enemigo colectivo ideológico y tratan de suprimir los nacionalismos no rusos, simulando e imitando formalmente el apoyo de los nacionalistas rusos.

Palabras Claves

Federación Rusa – Nacionalismo – Identities – Nacionalismo ruso – Elecciones 2018

Introduction

Nationalism is one of the most significant and influential political ideologies and doctrines of the modern world. The political dynamics of recent decades testifies convincingly that nationalism is not going to become the property of history. Various national and nationalist movements are active in most countries of the world. It is simply pointless to doubt the existence of nationalism in multinational and heterogeneous states. Nationalism since its historical emergence in the 17th and 18th centuries was able to become an important factor. The modern political map of the world owes its existence to nationalism which decisively destroyed empires and defined the boundaries of new national or nationalizing states. All these assumptions are valid for the history of European, American and even African and Oriental nationalisms. The history of the West and the Orient, since the 17th century, developed as a blessing to nationalism. Political and economic factors, including the crisis of dynastic forms of statehoods, the progress of the capitalist economy and the class struggle, stimulated the genesis, emergence and progress of the national bourgeoisie, changed the social structures of the communities of the Western world, transformed them into political nations and nation-states.

Universality of nationalism

If nationalism could become a universal political force and one of the decisive factors in Western history, then the role of nationalism in Russian history was less significant and noticeable. Analysing nationalism in the history of Russia, it is extremely important to remember that several nationalisms and nationalist ideologies and movements co-existed simultaneously. Non-Russian nationalisms from the peripheral nationalisms of the Baltic region, including Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Finnish, changed and evolved in the same ways as other European nationalisms. The nationalities of the Volga region, including the Turkic and Finno-Ugric, transformed themselves in the same systems of political, social, economic and cultural coordinates as Western nationalisms imagined nations of Europe. The slow rates of social and political changes, the genesis of the transformations distinguished non-Russian nationalisms from other European nationalisms significantly. Even Islam as a factor in the national consolidation of the Tatars and Bashkirs did not distinguish the Turkic nationalisms of Russia from the general European political and social contexts. Russia before 1917 was a country of slow political, social and economic modernizations. Different regions developed unevenly and therefore non-Russian nationalisms were more successful, effective and visible than Russian nationalism. Non-Russian ethnic groups as victims of discrimination, assimilation and Russification modernized and changed faster than the Russians who formed a formal majority. If non-Russian groups by the beginning of the 20th century changed radically and became nations, then Russians as a nation were absent and invisible in the political space of the Russian Empire.

Nationalism in the USSR

The collapse of the Russian Empire and the transformation of its territorial debris and fragments into the Soviet Union changed and corrected the main vectors and trajectories of the development of nationalism. Soviet political elites became the first political classes in the history of Russia which tried to solve national problems and stimulated the processes of national and political construction simultaneously, imagining and inventing

new Soviet nations and locating them into separate rooms of a large communal apartment that was known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Soviet national experiment of imagination and invention of new political, cultural and ethnic nations was successful relatively because it inspired a radical modernization of those groups that until 1917 lived in the Russian Empire and were victims of various forms of discrimination, including political, religious, ethnic and linguistic ones.

The USSR, unlike its Russian imperial predecessor, did not practice the forms of discrimination openly, but Russification and integration continued despite formal declarations to resolve the national question and the slogans of proletarian internationalism and the friendship of peoples. The Russian worker remained a Russian and if the Soviet authorities sent him to build communism in Latvia or Tajikistan, he was equally indifferent or even aggressive towards local cultures, preferred to ignore them and not learn the local languages. The situation was even worse in the autonomies of the RSFSR: local nations became ethnic minorities and languages gradually mutated into formal and decorative institutions. If the Russians could be forced to learn Latvian in the Latvian SSR or Tajik in the Tajik SSR, nothing could stimulate them and make them learn Chuvash in the Chuvash Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Yakut in the Yakut ASSR or the Erzya in the Mordovian ASSR. The autonomous republics of the RSFSR were not the worst examples of deformations in Soviet national politics. The situation in the Ukrainian and Belarus Soviet Republics was even worse, despite the fact that these republics were co-founders of the USSR and had their own international representations. The significant part of the Russians who moved to the territory of these republics during the Soviet period refused to perceive them as nations resolutely, preferring to insist that the Ukrainian language is the wrong form of the Russian one.

Nationalism in the post-Soviet Russia

Therefore, the USSR at the outset of its historical existence and on the eve of its fall was a country with numerous national problems, stimulated by Russian – non-Russian (for example, Russian-Latvian confrontation) and non-Russian – non-Russian (for example, Armenian-Azerbaijani or Georgian-Ossetian ethnic conflicts) disputes and contradictions. The collapse of the USSR actualized the old national problems and stimulated the emergence of new ones. If before the collapse of the Soviet Union Russian nationalism opposed the nationalisms of the Soviet republics, Russian nationalism clashed with the regional nationalisms of the Russian Federation by the beginning of the 1990s. Nationalism in the 1990s was an important factor in the political and social history of the national regions, which were parts of the Russian Federation when the role of Russian nationalism was less visible and it was a marginal factor and an ideological misunderstanding.

Russian nationalism of the 1990s was the most marginalized among the nationalisms of the national republics. If the nationalists in the republics sought to revive nations, they belonged to, raise the status of republics, get economic and tax preferences and advantages, Russian nationalism was completely different because its theorists and ideologists gradually and consistently migrated into anti-Semitism, chauvinism and various obscurantist tendencies, including radical Orthodoxy or ethnic Slavic neopaganism. If the elites of the national republics were pragmatic in achieving their goals, Russian nationalists became victims of their own ambitions, which inspired their marginalization. If the regional nationalisms of the republics became an important and visible factor in the

political landscape of post-Soviet Russia, Russian nationalism was almost invisible and nothing foreshadowed radical changes until the end of the 1990s, the critical historical moment when the first Russian president, Boris Yeltsin provided Vladimir Putin with political power.

Vladimir Putin vs nationalism

Vladimir Putin tried to change the policy in the national regions of the Russian Federation, reducing the rights and powers of the republics consistently and decisively. If the republics in the period of Boris Yeltsin had a real attribute of statehoods, then Vladimir Putin sought to turn the republic into formal institutions and deprive them of real powers. The measures of the central authorities were different and ranged from the cancellation of elections to the renaming the formal posts of presidents of republics to the heads of republics. Despite this, Putin's politics in the national regions had conflicting consequences and results. Formally, Vladimir Putin was able to unify the political space of Russia, but this unification was had a formal nature only. If the central authorities sought to limit the powers of the republics in the Volga region, which are geographically located in the centre of Russia and their chances for independence were minimal and insignificant, the policy in Chechnya was completely different. Despite the fact that the federal authorities formally won the second Chechen war, the policy in the Chechen Republic correlates with the interests of local political national elites. Actually, the modern Chechen Republic became the embodiment of the dreams of Chechen radical nationalists of the early 1990s. Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation from a formal viewpoint only because the political elites of the republic receive significant investments. Chechnya is virtually independent and does not subordinate to Moscow in its internal policy, and Chechen elites try to be active actors in international relations, ignoring the fact that only the federal centre determines the main vectors and directions of foreign policy.

What is this article about?

The modern Russian Federation is not free from numerous national problems in this context because of nationalisms, including Russian and non-Russian ones, belong to a number of influential political, social and cultural factors. The political and intellectual elites of Russia prefer, on the one hand, to ignore the factor of nationalism and seek to minimize its influence. On the other hand, the periodic actualization of nationalism on the eve of elections became a political tradition in modern Russia where the electoral cycle tries to compete with the agricultural one. Therefore, the author will analyse the political and cultural role of nationalism as a universal and inevitable factor in Russia on the eve of the presidential elections of 2018.

Analysis of the various roles and forms of nationalism in pre-election Russia is the main objective of this article, which has several tasks, including the study of the sources of the actual activation of nationalism, the analysis of the factor of Russian nationalism in its official and oppositional versions, the study of regional nationalisms of the Russian Federation on the eve of elections, the forecast for the development of nationalism in Russia after the completion of the electoral cycle.

Russian nationalism before... nationalism

The starting conditions for the progress of Russian nationalism were very unpleasant and inconvenient. The disintegration of the USSR was an inspiring factor that stimulated the growth of Russian nationalism. American historians, including John Dunlop¹, believed in the middle 1980s that nationalism could weaken communism, supplant it and become a state ideology. Other historians, including Alexander Motyl², argued that Russian nationalism was a marginal phenomenon in Russian society, and therefore it was logical to localize and map it among the "myths". David Rowley³ agreed with him and argued that nationalism was absent in Russian history. All these forecasts, assumptions and conclusions were true only for Soviet political and ideological realities. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 deprived John Dunlop of the opportunity to verify the correctness of his assumptions. Events after 1991, the political and ideological dynamics of the 1990s and 2000s actualized that John Dunlop, Alexander Motyl and David Rowley were equally wrong: nationalism became an influential factor in the actual history of Russia, but nationalism did not oust communism from official discourse, nationalism only used ideological and political vacuum which emerged after Russia dismissed to accept communism as official doctrine. Despite these peculiarities of the ideological situation, nationalism was among the invisible political factors and only external influences could stimulate the growth of nationalism in Russia⁴ which, with a delay of more than 20 years, tried to become a national state, but attempts to nationalize the political space were unsuccessful because Russian elites preferred to imitate imperial forms of statehood instead of its transformation into a nation-state.

Ukrainophobia and Russian nationalism

The revolution in Ukraine in 2014 inspired the growth of Russian nationalism and Ukrainophobia⁵ became one of the dominant trends in the political and ideological cultures

¹ John Dunlop, *The New Russian Nationalism* (NY: Praeger, 1985).

² Alexander Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR*. (NY.: Columbia University Press, 1990).

³ David Rowley, *Imperial versus national discourse: the case of Russia, Nations and Nationalism* Vol 6. No 1 (2000) 23 – 42.

⁴ Putin tsepliyetsia za fal'shiviy natsionalizm dlia ukrepleniia svoei vlasti, *Ekspert*, 11 (2007) dekabria, URL: <http://www.expert.ua/mezhdunarodnaya-analitika/0/557-kak-putin-tseplyaetsya-za-falshivij-natsionalizm-dlya-ukrepleniya-svoej-vlasti>; Klinton nazvala Putina krestnym ottsom radikal'nogo natsionalizma, *BBC. Russkaia sluzhba*, 2016, 26 avgusta, URL: <http://www.bbc.com/russian/news-37193619>; Oleg Kashin. Kommentarii: Vladimir Putin - natsionalist bez natsii, *Deutsche Welle*, 2017, 8 marta, URL: <http://www.dw.com/ru/kommentariy-vladimir-putin-natsionalist-bez-natsii/a-37848959>; Sebag-Montefiore: Lozungi Putina — “samoderzhavie, pravoslavie, natsionalizm”, *Market signal*, 2017, 2 apreliia, URL: <http://marketsignal.ru/2017/04/02/sajmon-sebag-montefiore-stalinizm-zhiv/>; Putin i natsionalisty: kuda pridet «Russkii marsh»? *Eksperty o perspektive ul'trapatriotov v Rossii, Moskovskii komsomolets*, 2014, 3 noiabria, URL: <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/11/03/putin-i-natsionalisty-kuda-pridet-russkiy-marsh.html>

⁵ Antyukrajins'ka isteriia v Rosiji ne pry pynylasia, jiji prosto pryhlushyly, *Obozrevatel'*, 03 lystopada 2015, URL: <https://www.obozrevatel.com/ukr/politics/57418-antiukrainska-isteriya-v-rossii-ne-privinilasya-ii-prosto-priglushili-kasparov.htm>; Antiukrainskaia isteriia v Rossii ne prekratylas', *Newsland*, 2015, 3 noiabria, URL: <https://newsland.com/user/4297728044/content/antiukrainskaia-isteriia-v-rossii-ne-prekratilas/4782753>; U RF rozpochalas' nova antyukrajins'ka isteriia, *Presa Ukrajiny*, 29 zhovtnia 2015, URL: <http://uapress.info/uk/news/show/102599/>; Antiukrainskaia isteriia

of Russia. Political events in Ukraine and the overthrow of Viktor Yanukovich frightened the political Kremlin elites and they launched the mechanism of Ukrainophobia. The revolution of 2014 and the overthrow of Viktor Yanukovich who had much in common with Vladimir Putin stimulated the Russian mass media to launch anti-Ukrainian hysteria. What did scare the Russian elite in Ukrainian events that they decided to use political practices and ideological strategies of Ukrainophobia as extreme form of Russian nationalism? On the one hand, events in Ukraine actualized that a corrupt political regime is vulnerable in the contexts of internal political threats. On the other hand, the revolution of 2014 stimulated and inspired the progress of Ukrainian political and national identities. Ukraine received a unique historical chance to become an independent political nation. This factor extremely frightened Russian nationalists who cannot imagine and invent Russian national identity without imperial mythology. Russian nationalists prefer to imagine Ukraine and Ukrainians as an inferior and incorrect Russia.

Therefore, Russian apologists and adherents of Ukrainophobia deny the independent Ukrainian nation and the Ukrainian language, preferring to imagine them as elements of the Russian nation and dialect of the Russian language. The growth and progress of Ukrainophobia attest to traumas of Russian political and ethnic identity because Russian nationalists cannot imagine the political body of the Russian nation without Ukraine and Ukrainians as its inventing parts. The mass media initiated a company of discreditation of Ukraine and began to replicate and popularize anti-Ukrainian myths⁶, including followings: Ukrainians have never been an independent nation, but have always been only a Russian ethnographic group; Ukrainian language never existed because it was one of the Russian dialects; the Ukrainian statehood became a political misunderstanding which was inspired by the powerful enemies of Russia and the Russian world; the events of 2014 facilitated the institutionalization in Ukraine of a fascist political regime that lost its political independence and became a Western puppet; the new

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⁶ Den' nezavisimosti na Ukraine otmetiat paradom v odnom stroiu s NATO, Pervyi kanal, 2014, 27 avgusta, URL: https://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-08-24/331338-den_nezavisimosti_na_ukraine_otmetyat_paradom_v_odnom_stroyu_s_nato; Nikolai Azarov: Kievskaya vlast' polnost'iu kontroliruetsya Vashingtonom, Pervyi kanal, 2017, 8 noiabria, URL: https://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-11-08/335851-nikolay_azarov_kievskaya_vlast_polnostyu_kontroliruetsya_vashingtonom; Ukraina pytaetsia vybrosit' rossiiskuiu storonu iz protsessa monitoringa vypolneniia Minskih soglashenii, Pervyi kanal, 2017, 13 dekabria, URL: https://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-12-13/337832-ukraina_pytaetsia_vybrosit_rossiyskuyu_storonu_iz_protsessa_monitoringa_vypolneniya_minskih_soglasheniy; Ukraina protiv inakomyслиia. Vremia pokazhet. Vypusk ot 14.08.2017, Pervyi kanal, 2017, 14 avgusta, URL: <https://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/ukraina-protiv-inakomyслиya-vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-14-08-2017>; Chego boiatsia kievskie vlasti? Vremia pokazhet. Vypusk ot 21.08.2017, Pervyi kanal, 2017, 21 avgusta, URL: <https://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/chego-boyatsya-kievskie-vlasti-vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-21-08-2017>; Prazdnik po-ukrainski. Vremia pokazhet. Vypusk ot 10.05.2017, Pervyi kanal, 2017, 10 maya, URL: <https://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/prazdnik-po-ukrainski-vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-10-05-2017>; Virtual'naia real'nost' Ukrainy. Vremia pokazhet. Vypusk ot 16.08.2017, Pervyi kanal, 2017, 16 avgusta, URL: <https://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/virtualnaya-realnost-ukrainy-vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-16-08-2017>

Ukrainian authorities persecute everything Russian and banned the Russian language and culture; the Ukrainian army and nationalists initiated the genocide of the Russian population in Eastern Ukraine.

Russian media replicate these myths for three years actively and it is extremely difficult to find a Russian television channel that does not tell about the atrocities of "Ukrainian fascists and punishers". Ukrainophobia of modern Russian mass media did not become an accident because it was only a rehearsal and the first act in the attempts of elites to provide Russian nationalism with the status of an official, semi-official or respected political ideology. The mass media and nationalist-minded experts used Ukrainophobia only as an opportunity to rehearse the active political introduction of nationalist myths into the mass consciousness. Ukrainophobia in Russia legitimized the use of nationalism. Therefore, the actual attempts by Russian nationalists to launch an offensive against the political and cultural rights of the republics, including national languages, were impossible without the anti-Ukrainian hysteria that began in 2014

Russian nationalism vs national language of republics

The middle of the 2010s became the beginning of several nationalistic attacks on the national languages of the republics of the Russian Federation⁷. Russian social organizations and various parental committees initiated this political and ideological company. Parental committees assert that Russian children in the republics are forced to study national languages, refusing to study the Russian one. The annexation of Krymian peninsula by the Russian Federation was the beginning of an attack on national languages. Formally, the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea declares that the three languages, Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar, are state languages, but actually only Russian language possesses the attributes of the state language. The integration of Krym into the Russian space inspired the marginalization of the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages, a drastic reduction in the areas of their social use and almost complete cessation of teaching in secondary and higher educational institutions in these languages.

The success of Russification in the annexed Krym inspired Russian nationalists to attack the rights of languages in the national republics, ignoring the constitutions of the

⁷ Rodnaia rech': zaiavlenie Putina vyzvalo spory vokrug izucheniiia natsional'nyh iazykov, Radio «Sol'», 2017, 24 iiulia, URL: <https://salt.zone/radio/8582>; Oleg Panfilov. «Vsem govorit' porusski...», Krym. Realii, 2017, 23 oktiabria, URL: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28809107.html>; Fattahov pro vyskazyvanie Putina o natsional'nyh iazykah v shkolah: «U nas narushenii net!», Biznes Online, 2017, 25 iiulia, URL: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/news/352525>; «Slova Putina o iazykah – eto, bezuslovno, poslanie Tatarstanu». Opros nedeli: A vy za ili protiv sohraneniia tatarskogo iazyka v obiazatel'noi shkol'noi programme, Biznes Online, 2017, 22 iiulia, URL: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/352276>; Irina Ivoilova. Rodnoi urok. Minobrnauki raz'iasnilo, kak izuchat' iazyki v shkole. Minobrnauki raz'iasnilo, kak v shkolah dolzhny izuchat'sia rodnye gosudarstvennye i russkii iazyki, Rossiiskaia gazeta, 2017, 30 noiabria, URL: <https://www.rg.ru/2017/11/30/minobrnauki-raziasnilo-kak-izuchat-iazyki-v-shkole.html>; Galina Mislivskaia. Prezident otvetil na vopros o natsional'nyh iazykah, Rossiiskaia gazeta, 2017, 14 dekabria, URL: <https://www.rg.ru/2017/12/14/putin-otvetil-na-vopros-o-natsionalnyh-iazykah.html>; Boris Bronshteyn. Protivniki obiazatel'nogo izucheniiia tatarskogo iazyka v shkolah obratilis' k Putinu i Chaikhe, Novaia gazeta, 2017, 10 noiabria, URL: <https://www.novaia gazeta.ru/news/2017/11/10/136899-protivniki-obiazatelnogo-izucheniiia-tatarskogo-iazyka-v-shkolah-obratilis-k-putinu-i-chayke>

republics that declare and proclaim these languages as state ones. The attacks of Russian nationalists on national languages were not accidental and the elections of 2018 became the main factor that stimulates Russian nationalist officials who concentrate around the party “Edinaia Rossiia” to be more active in Russification of national minorities. It is logical to assume that the problems of national languages are unimportant, uninteresting and indifferent to Russian officials, but their attempts to abolish the study of the national languages of the republics were in fact part of “cleaning” of the political landscape in the regions before the elections.

Russian nationalist officials presume that these preventive actions will guarantee the dominance of the ruling party in the following decades because it is easier to manipulate people who know only one language. Russian nationalists in this situation prefer to realize party goals when national feelings have secondary meaning for them or even belong to the number of the third-rate factors. Attacks on the national languages of republics actualize the crisis of Russian political elites who began to perceive nationalism and Russification as universal and permissible forms of politics. The crisis trends and the lack of prospects for improving the situation force Russian political elites to virtually abandon federalism, imitate, simulate and feign it, try to build a unitary state where only the Russian political nation will exist when other nations, languages and identities will be assimilated. The current Russian national policy became an attempt to transplant the French model of a unitary political nation into Russian social, cultural and political realities, but Russia historically missed the era when the imagination of a nation of this type was possible. The historical and political experience of Soviet and Russian federalisms complicates attempts of assimilation and Russification significantly.

Conclusions

The Ukrainian Revolution of 2014, the civil war in Ukraine, Western sanctions against Russia actualized the factor of nationalism before the elections of 2018. The author presumes that it is very doubtful to assert that a single political or ethnic nationalism exists in modern Russia. Nationalism in Russia belong to a number of extremely diverse and heterogeneous political phenomena. Analysing the nationalist situation in modern Russia, it is logical to assume several assumptions. Firstly, the Russian political elites of the 1990s and 2000s ignored the factor of nationalism and when they noticed that its role is obvious and the potential is huge, they chose the wrong tactics and strategies. Secondly, political elites preferred to marginalize the nationalisms of non-Russian ethnic groups naively believing that Russification could solve political and economic problems, but attempts of the political classes to launch mechanisms and flywheels of russification created new problems. Thirdly, the policy of the elites was erroneous and it facilitated the simultaneous activation and radicalization of Russian and non-Russian nationalisms, although these nationalisms have not yet reached a consensus and the authorities understand that this is the only positive factor for them. Fourthly, the political language and ideological message of nationalism as a form of political thought is so universal that elites and the opposition seek to use nationalism before elections, but they prefer to do it differently.

The elite, on the one hand, continue anti-Ukrainian hysteria and seek to demarcate the rights of the republics, reducing and prohibiting the teaching of national languages. Nationalists seek to protect the rights of their nations and languages in the national republics. On the other hand, formally non-nationalist parties began to use the political

language of nationalism actively. The political rhetoric of “Edinaia Rossiia” is becoming more and more nationalistic on the eve of the elections. Actually, the use of nationalism proves that the ruling party became a party of officials who do not have a political ideology, but prefer to use political resources to achieve economic goals. The transformation of the “Edinaia Rossiia” into a nationalist party was the result of its inner-party crisis because the party historically disintegrated as an artificial and unviable project of officials in their quest to guarantee exclusive access to resources and eliminate competitors. The political opposition also began to use the political and ideological language of nationalism because it understood its universality, attractiveness and inevitability. It is obvious that in 2018 political ruling elites will blame the opposition for national betrayals and it will not be surprising that the opposition will do the same and accuse the Kremlin of betraying national interests.

The political elites will continue their shameful attack on the rights of the national republics and will try to restrict the rights to use national languages again and again. The reaction of local nationalists will be inevitable, and the political Russian opposition will try to use this conflict, but it will not effect on results of elections results because the status quo situation will be restored. Nationalists and other intellectuals, including Russian and non-Russian ones, understand that it is not possible to transform Russia into a national state of the Russian nation only and it is also impossible to separate the national republics from the Russian regions. A possible development of events allows us to offer several scenarios. Russian political elites will reach a compromise with national regional political classes again, Russian nationalists will be ignored and forgotten temporarily until the next elections, regional nationalists will agree with the proposed rules of the political game and participation in political processes.

This compromise does not mean that nationalism will lose its significance because since 2014 Russian mass media pushed nationalist hysteria consistently, but elections of 2018 and one more Vladimir Putin’s political success will not mean that political energy of nationalism will lose its dangerous mobilization potential. It is logical to assume that the ruling elites will again begin to ignore nationalism, but this policy is dangerous because it can inspire the rise of nationalism, its progress, including radicalization and ethnisation. In general, the political metamorphosis and ideological misadventures of nationalism in modern Russia testify that the ruling political elites will not be able to reach a compromise with the national republics and institutionalize the principles and values of the political nation. Therefore, the rumours about the death of nationalism in Russia are exaggerated and it is logical to presume that nationalism in its elitist or mass forms will determine the main vectors of transformation and development in the 2020s.

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