

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

After the fall of USSR and during the first years of Putin's presidency the Kremlin has officially sought to avoid ideological profiling of its policy and the president himself assured that Russia wanted to be a „normal power“. At the time, most experts on Russia saw messianism as a relic of the past with no bearing on the political thinking of the Russian elites. This assessment has changed drastically in face of the so called „conservative turn“ and the on-going conflict in the Ukraine. Leading newspapers (e.g. Financial Times, The Economist) started to write about the renaissance of Russian messianism, analysis and comments on the topic began to appear. However, this growing interest still hasn't ushered in an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. In the predominant majority of publications messianism is used as a catch phrase for providing a simplified explanation of the new developments in Russian foreign policy. Although the idea for this project had occurred to me long before the “conservative turn”, the re-traditionalization of the public discourse, initiated in the recent years by the Kremlin, has been an important motivating factor for addressing this issue. This issue, in my opinion, is of significant importance for understating the current dynamics in Russian politics. I define mission as a conviction of a certain community (state/nation) about its exceptionality which manifests itself in a special destiny (Russian: *особенное предназначение*) of this particular community. In my conceptualization of mission, the latter is determined by three inter-connected features: (a) the conviction of having a special destiny, (b) the feeling of moral superiority (politics understood in moral categories), (c) conviction of not acting solely in one's own particular interest. The goal of research is to describe and understand the phenomenon of contemporary exceptionalism in Russian foreign policy by establishing the content, context and function of the idea of mission in the Russian thinking on international relations. The object of my analysis will be Russian official discourse on foreign policy in the years 2000-2014. My research will thus entail the examination of different forms of appearances (speeches, interviews, comments, press conference appearances etc.) by state officials with influence on Russia's foreign policy. The project will allow not only understanding the complexities of Russia's mission, but will give important insights about the dynamics of the self-identification process of the Russian state. The research I propose in frames of this project will also yield observations on the universal mechanisms of political messianism. My hope is that it will serve as a platform for further comparative research on states with different statues, i.e. for comparing Russia (as a recovering power) with the USA (dominating power) or China (rising power). The project is multidisciplinary and combines elements of political science, sociology, philosophy and cultural studies.