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**VALUES OF THE NATION AND THE PRINCIPLES OF LIBERALISM:
NATIONAL DEMOCRACY AS A FORM OF RUSSIAN NATIONALISM**

**VALORES DE LA NACIÓN Y LOS PRINCIPIOS DEL LIBERALISMO:
LA DEMOCRACIA NACIONAL COMO FORMA DEL NACIONALISMO RUSO**

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Abstract

The author analyzes national democracy as a form of Russian nationalism. It is assumed that the ideologists of the national democracy try to synthesize the values of the nation and the principles of democracy. National democrats seek to nationalize democracy and transplant the ideas of Russian nationalism into the political contexts of modern Russia. Formally, national democrats recognize the importance of democratic institutions and propose to reform parliamentary systems and federalism. National democrats ignore numerous social and political problems, including the status of republics and non-Russian ethnic groups in the federation. Therefore, the status of national democracy in modern Russia is marginal.

Keywords

Russia – Nationalism – National democracy – Regionalism – Invention of traditions – Identity

Resumen

El autor analiza la democracia nacional como una forma de nacionalismo ruso. Se supone que los ideólogos de la democracia nacional intentan sintetizar los valores de la nación y los principios de la democracia. Los demócratas nacionales buscan nacionalizar la democracia y trasplantar las ideas del nacionalismo ruso a los contextos políticos de la Rusia moderna. Formalmente, los demócratas nacionales reconocen la importancia de las instituciones democráticas y proponen reformar los sistemas parlamentarios y el federalismo. Los demócratas nacionales ignoran numerosos problemas sociales y políticos, incluido el estatus de las Repúblicas y los grupos étnicos no rusos en la Federación. Por lo tanto, el estado de la democracia nacional en la Rusia moderna es marginal.

Palabras Claves

Rusia – Nacionalismo – Democracia nacional – Regionalismo – Invención de tradiciones – Identidad

Formulation of the problem

The modern Russian Federation, better known as Russia, belongs to relatively new states, despite the fact that official Russian historiography claims that the history of the country is more than a thousand years old. Despite the mythologization of history Russian statehood and the modern Russian state appeared on political maps of the world in 1991 only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. If Soviet liberals and dissidents believed or presumed that the Baltic republics, occupied in 1940, the Transcaucasian republics or even the ignored Ukraine, whose identity and language they preferred to Russify, could become independent states, but virtually no one believed in Russian independence and did not foresee the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent Russia. Despite these sceptical ideas, in 1991 the USSR ceased to exist and Russia became independent states.

Russian nationalism as an ignored factor

The independence's euphoria in Russia passed quickly and, unlike other post-Soviet countries, it was political in the Russian Federation in its nature because national ideas and motivations did not play a significant role and their significance in Russia in general, in contrast to the national republics, was minimal. Russia, like other post-Soviet countries, was faced with numerous social and economic crises and problems that significantly impeded and slowed down national building in particular. Russia was radically different from other post-Soviet countries because the attempts to build a nation and nation-state were timid and extremely unsuccessful. Russia in general, unlike the national republics in particular, achieved very modest successes in the development of the nation and nation-state. Despite these complex and contradictory relations between Russian ruling political elites with Russian nationalism in its various forms, nationalism was an important and influential factor in the political, cultural and intellectual histories of post-Soviet Russia. Russian nationalism developed differently from regional nationalisms in the national republics. Sergei Volkov, one of the Russian nationalist intellectuals, in the middle of 2010s suggested that in the Russian nationalist doctrine actually coexisted six different nationalisms¹.

The contradictions between them root in relation to the Russian Empire, the USSR and democracy. Theorists of nationalism did not know what unity and ideological compromise were because they preferred internal debates. Russian nationalism almost from the very beginning developed as an ethnic and Russian national imagination existed in the ethnocentric system of political coordinates. Russian nationalism imagined the disintegration of the USSR as its own tragedy and national catastrophe, unlike nationalisms in the national republics where local intellectual and political elites tried to subordinate moderate nationalism and used it as a factor of political, social and cultural consolidations in their confrontations with the federal centre. It is logical to presume that the history of Russian post-Soviet nationalism can be divided into the several stages. The 1990s became the first period when Russian nationalism was a marginal political and ideological trend. The 2000s, when President Vladimir Putin began resolutely to abolish the modest results of democratic reforms, became a period of activation of Russian nationalism, which developed as a simultaneous coexistence of conservative and

¹ Sergei Volkov, Pochemu RF est' priamoe prodolzhenie Sovdepii? <http://sallery.livejournal.com/7468.html>

democratic trends. The 2010s became the third stage in the modern evolution of Russian nationalism when it finally fragmented and disintegrated into democratic and authoritarian conservative trends.

Aims and objectives of the article

The study of the main features of the political transformation of Russian civil and moderate nationalism and its ideology is the main task of this article. Analysing the ideological foundations and backgrounds of Russian political nationalism, the author plans to study several debatable problems, including the prospects for the development of Russian nationalism in the contexts of the civil nation and nation-state; contradictions between values and principles of class and nation; problems of the historical memory of Russian nationalism in the contexts of gaps, failures, continuities and discontinuities of political traditions.

What is this article about

This article is about the national democracy in Russia as an ideological and intellectual segment of the modern Russian nationalist discourse. The author presumes that several introductory remarks are needed. National democracy in Russia has its more than ten-year history, but it has not become the object of systematic academic analysis, either in the contexts of political science or the Nationalism Studies. A few attempts to write a history of national democracy was nothing more than attempts of participants and ideologists of movement to comprehend their contributions in particular or the history of nationalist ideas in general. There is no written history of national democracy in modern Russia, despite the fact that the theorists of the Russian national democracy in the 2000s and 2010e were able to write and publish the significant number of texts that formed the corpus of the sources of the history of national democracy.

The author, on the one hand, originally writes this article in English and therefore this text does not pretend to have a generalizing character. The author understands that it is impossible to analyse all sources that actualize various aspects of the national-democratic political discourse because this article is a modest attempt only to provide the academic reader with the basic ideological features of the modern intellectual history of Russian national democracy and Russian nationalism as a heterogeneous ideology. On the other hand, the author imagines this article as an introduction to modern intellectual history and the archaeology of the ideas of Russian national democracy, presuming that each analysed problem can become a topic of the article in particular, and the history of Russian national democracy needs to be systematized in the form of a book in general. Russian post-Soviet nationalism is still waiting for its historians, the ideological heritage of nationalist activists and intellectuals is diverse enough that its systematization will last several decades.

Methodological grounds

Methodologically, the author perceives nationalism as an invented tradition. Therefore, this article roots in theoretical approaches proposed in the first half of the 1980s

by Ernest Gellner², Benedict Anderson³, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger⁴. The author, on the one hand, believes that Russian nationalism was the primary product of modernization of high cultures of educated intellectual and political classes, and the Russian nation became a secondary consequence of political, social and cultural modernizations, these classes organized and believed in. The author presumes that primordial attempts to explain Russian nationalism led to its unnecessary historicization, sacrificed and mythologized the problems of political history in general and the Russian nation in particular. On the other hand, the constructivist and modernist approaches will allow actualizing common features in the development of Russian political nationalism with Western nationalisms because nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries was a universal political ideology, and its claims to political universalism were not refuted by competing for political doctrines in the 21st century. Russian political nationalism is no exception to this rule.

Russian political nationalism

This article is an attempt to analyse the ideology and evolution of modern and moderate Russian political nationalism. What is moderate Russian political nationalism? This is not so easy to answer this question because the actual Russian nationalism is extremely diverse and heterogeneous. There is no compromise among Russian nationalists because they perceive modern events in Russia and the world too differently and proposed various and mutually exclusive agendas. Traditional Russian nationalism prefer to develop several narratives, including the perception of Russian nation as the highest political and ideological value, imagination of the disintegration of the Russian Empire and the USSR as the most negative events, non-recognition of the post-Soviet nations as legitimate one, invention of the federation as political evil, and stable belief that Russia must return to a unitary state and start active Russification of non-Russian ethnic groups. These statements of traditional Russian nationalism are both archaic and unreal because they are rooted in idealistic faith in primordialism and *Sonderweg* of the Russian nation. Marginal ethnic nationalism represents a second trend in the actual Russian nationalism. Neopagans form an avant-garde of this trend in Russian nationalism. Supporters of this trend believe in the many thousands of years of Russian history and actively "find" Slavic footprints and influences in world history from Ancient Egypt to the present, declaring all languages as derivatives of the Russian one. The ideology of this trend ridiculous from the academic point of view, but despite it, this trend of Russian nationalism occupies its own place in the contemporary heterogeneous Russian nationalist ideology. National democracy is the third trend in modern Russian nationalism and the author of this article will analyse the national democratic tendencies in the intellectual and political transformations of Russian nationalism exactly.

National democracy: Russian post-Soviet and the post-democracy version

What is Russian national democracy? It is also difficult to answer this particular question as well as to find the answer to the question what is Russian nationalism in

² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell University Press, 1983), 152.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (NY: Verso, 1983), 224.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 212.

general. Russian national democracy arose later than in other Western countries, which was the result of late democratization, its actual failure and the slow fragmentation of political space and nationalist discourse than in European countries. Russian national democracy emerged as a result of Russian democratization and topical political history, which, unlike some other post-Soviet countries, moved to authoritarianism later and did it only in the 2000s while some formal democratic institutions were able to survive. The political program of Russian national democracy was an attempt to synthesize the values of nationalism with democratic principles. The ideas and political preferences of several Russian intellectuals, including Aleksandr Sevast'ianov, Aleksei Shiropaev, Konstantin Krylov, Sergei Sergeev, Valerii Solovei, Pavel Sviatenkov, Il'ia Lazarenko can be defined as national-democratic. Aleksandr Sevast'ianov was probably the first Russian nationalist in the post-Soviet Russia who used the definition of "national democracy".

There are several common features in individual intellectual biographies of the ideologists of modern Russian national democracy. Most leaders of Russian national democracy were born in the period between the 1950s and 1970s. Some of them received higher education in humanities and defended dissertations: Aleksandr Sevast'ianov is a candidate of philological sciences, Sergei Sergeev is a candidate of historical sciences, Valerii Solovei is a doctor of historical sciences. Most of the ideologists of the national democracy received a humanitarian education and this fact inspired the formation of a new image of Russian nationalism and promote its intellectual reputation that contrasts with earlier images of nationalism as an aggressive ideology. Russian national democracy in Vladimir Putin's Russia develops and exists as a predominantly intellectual concept and part of the formally heterogeneous political and ideological mosaic of modern Russian nationalism because theorists and ideologists of national democracy do not have the opportunity to be active politicians. Formally, only one national-democratic organization, "Demokraticheskii vybor" received the status of the registered political party. Other national-democratic groups, including Natsional'no-demokraticheskaja partiia, "Novaia sila", Natsional'no-demokraticheskii Al'ians, and "Obshchee delo" are not registered and do not have an officially recognized status, but these bureaucratic barriers and obstacles did not prevent them from becoming virtual political parties which exist mainly on the Internet and social networks.

Ideological agenda of Russian national democracy

The ideological program and preferences of Russian national democracy are heterogeneous and diverse. Summing up the ideas of theorists of national democracy, it is possible to formulate several ideological principles and statements, theorists of Russian national democracy offer as the central points of the political program and the actual agenda. National democrats believe that the disengagement from radical Russian nationalists as extremists, the development of the Russian national statehood and the Russian national state, the transformation of Russia from a mixed federation into a symmetrical one are primary political tasks. National democrats popularize anti-communism and imagine communism as a criminal ideology. Theorists of Russian national democracy insists on lustration of Communists and Vladimir Putin's supporters. National democrats deny the concept of empire as a systemic value of the Russian nation, recognize the independence of all post-Soviet republics and promote peaceful coexistence with Europe. National democrats condemn also the idea of restoration of the Russian Empire and the USSR, abandon the idea of the need to preserve the North Caucasus as part of the Federation, and deny the special Russian way of development. Therefore, the

ideologues of Russian national democracy recognize European values, including political rights and freedoms, a free market, social responsibility, the independence of courts. They also propose to change the orientation of foreign policy radically. The restriction of migration policy, visas for citizens of Central Asian and the trans-Caucasian republics, allied relations with developed Western countries, counteraction to Islam are the basic ideas, national democrats offer as guidelines for a new concept of foreign policy.

National democracy as the invention of a nation

The ideologists of Russian national democracy believe that the formation and development of a political nation is one of the most important tasks of Russian nationalism: "we advocate the formation of a Russian political nation and the creation of a national state where the Russian nation will constitute the unconditional majority of population"⁵. Russian nationalism, as Sergei Sergeev insisted in 2007, was "the last chance of Russia"⁶, a Oleg Nemenskii, six years later, wrote about the need to determine the boundaries of the Russian nation⁷, but these appeals remained unheeded and ignored. National democrats insist that the nation is a universal political community and an inevitable political development guideline: "the modern world is the world of nations. The nation is the victorious form of state and international life in Europe ... there are only two alternatives: to build a national democratic state, or build a multinational empire and perish like Yugoslavia or the USSR"⁸. On the one hand, the Russian national democrats insist on the active use of Western political experience, but they also recognize that the political nation in modern Russia is absent. Ideologists of national democracy propose to reform the political structure of modern Russia, changing radically the Constitution, the structure of parliament, and federalism⁹, but they prefer to avoid controversial problems, including the fate of non-Russian nations in this imagined national Russia. Therefore, ideologists of the national democracy prefer to actualize the predominantly Russian question and insist that "the unfortunate historical truth for us is that the Russian nation has not yet formed... all European nations without exception have passed the path of national formation and the creation of national states, and only the Russian people are still deprived of their political identity"¹⁰.

Sergei Sergeev¹¹, one of the ideologists of Russian national democracy, expresses the same point of view and stresses that the nation in the Western sense as the imagined community in Russia historically did not arise. Russian national democrats insist that the

⁵ Aleksei Shiropaev, Il'ia Lazarenko, Mihail Pozharskii. Manifest Organizatsionnogo Komiteta Natsional-Demokratov, Natsional-demokratiia v Rossii. Svoboda. Natsiia. Progress. 2007, 20 iulija, <https://ru-nazdem.livejournal.com/1672.html>

⁶ Sergei Sergeev, Natsionalizm eto traditsionalizm, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2007, 24 oktiabria, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=18177>

⁷ Oleg Nemenskii, Rossiiskaia natsiia vs Russkii narod, Voprosy natsionalizma, No 1, (2012) 82 – 95.

⁸ Manifest ob obrazovanii Natsional-demokraticeskogo dvizheniia Russkii Grazhdanskii Soiuz, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2010, 19 noiabria, <http://www.apn.ru/special/article23357.htm>

⁹ Pavel Sviatenkov. Chto nuzhno izmenit' v Konstitutsii Rossii? <http://vnatio.org/news2989/>

¹⁰ Aleksei Shiropaev, Il'ia Lazarenko, Mihail Pozharskii. Manifest Organizatsionnogo Komiteta Natsional-Demokratov, Natsional-demokratiia v Rossii. Svoboda. Natsiia. Progress. 2007, 20 iulija, <https://ru-nazdem.livejournal.com/1672.html>

¹¹ Sergei Sergeev, U nas eshchio net natsii, Natsional'no-demokraticeskaja partiia, 2016, 16 avgusta, <http://www.rosndp.org/bila-li-v-rossijskoj-imperii-russkaya-naciya.html>

concepts of "nationalism" and "democracy" are closely related and mutually dependent. Therefore, they declare that "We, the Russian national democrats, representatives of Russian political nationalism, are convinced of the inseparability of the concepts "nation" and "democracy". A democratic state presupposes the existence of a nation with a common destiny and common interests... and only democracy gives the nation the opportunity to express its will and the realization of its interests"¹². Ideologists of Russian national democracy offers a concept that is idealistic because it proposes an ideal non-existent democratic Russia where the nation and other political institutions exist in conditions of Western European political, social and economic realities. Russian national democrats try to localize the causes of the weakness of the Russian political nation in the deformations and development mutations inspired by the Tatar conquest, which institutionalized the "weakness or uniqueness of the Russian legal and moral culture, and rule and arbitrariness of supreme power in Russia"¹³. The ideological preferences of national democracy actualize the traditional ideas of Russian nationalism, including the supremacy and primacy of the Russian nation and the values of Western democracy simultaneously, as well as the ideas of the political nation. Belief in the universality of the nation is combined in the ideological program of national democracy with attempts to popularize the values of Western democracy.

National democracy and the imagination of the nation-state

The Manifesto of the National Democrats Organizing Committee proclaims that "only democracy and parliamentarism can lead the Russian nation to economic and political prosperity. Only democratic procedures can ensure the rotation of elites and lead the best representatives of the nation to government"¹⁴. National democracy theorists insist that the actual political regime in Russia is not actually democratic, but it stagnates as an authoritarian because it exists as a "dictatorship based on the remnants of the feudal Soviet bureaucratic system ... and the regime of commercial cosmopolitanism"¹⁵. Modern Russian national democracy promotes the negative image of political elites actively. Therefore, "Russian Federation" in the political imagination of democratic nationalists turned to invented political tradition, which they use to criticize the current political elites. National democrats provide the image of the Russian Empire with the most negative connotations, imagining it as an anti-national and neo-colonial state: "the Russian Federation is a fragment of the Soviet empire, it has not found its identity and plunged into an increasingly deep systemic crisis., the Russian Federation inherited from the imperial traditions of the Russian Empire and the USSR the worst of them – the colonial character of the state"¹⁶.

¹² Manifest ob obrazovanii Natsional-demokraticeskogo dvizheniia Russkii Grazhdanskii Soiuz, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2010, 19 noiabria, <http://www.apn.ru/special/article23357.htm>

¹³ Sergei Sergeev, Natsionalizm i zapadnichestvo, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2017, 4 noiabria, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=36801>

¹⁴ Aleksei Shiropaev, Il'ia Lazarenko, Mihail Pozharskii. Manifest Organizatsionnogo Komiteta Natsional-Demokratov, Natsional-demokratiia v Rossii. Svoboda. Natsiia. Progress. 2007, 20 iuliia, <https://ru-nazdem.livejournal.com/1672.html>

¹⁵ Lev Trapeznikov, Burzhuaznaia revoliutsiia kak istoricheskaia zakonomernost', Natsional'no-demokraticheskaia partiia, 2016, 23 sentiabria, <http://www.rosndp.org/burzhuaznaya-revoluciya-kak-istoricheskaya-zakonomernostj.html>

¹⁶ Manifest ob obrazovanii Natsional-demokraticeskogo dvizheniia Russkii Grazhdanskii Soiuz, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2010, 19 noiabria, <http://www.apn.ru/special/article23357.htm>

The ideas of political and economic regionalization in the program of national democracy, on the one hand, are combined with the belief in the need for consistent democratization, including secularism and the real guarantee of civil rights and freedoms: "the formation of European nations occurred with the simultaneous emergence of secularism – the liberation of nations from the power of church corporations. The national state can only be secular. There is no place in a progressive and free national state for religious obscurantism, clericalism, retrograde and other indispensable attributes of backward peoples and countries of the third world ... We stand for the maximum of civil rights and freedoms ... only a civilized person can intelligently manage the achievements of civilization and freedoms ... we stand for a control of migration policy ... the maximum restriction of 'uncivilized elements' from the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia"¹⁷.

On the other hand, national democrats insist consistently that Russia is a European country: "Russia is obliged to follow only its own interests and firmly defend these interests, remaining an integral part of Europe"¹⁸. The political program of modern Russian national democracy is alternative and marginal because the ideas of Russian national democrats are in conflict with the ideological preferences of the ruling political classes. National democrats criticize the political regime actively and have many claims to the modern elites who received power in the early 2000s because they were able to consolidate regime and preserve the situation, stopping the reforms.

Historical narratives of national democracy

Historical imagination and the invention of history in the national system of coordinates plays one of the central roles in the ideological programs of modern Russian national democracy. The historical imagination of modern Russian national democracy is rooted genetically in the texts of Aleksandr Ianov¹⁹ and actively uses the achievements of academic post-modernist historiography²⁰. Theoreticians and ideologists of national democracy, on the one hand, abandon the ideas of historical messianism of their historical predecessors and do not believe in Russian historical *Sonderweg*. On the other hand, they believe that the history of Russia provides historians with numerous examples of relations with the West, the development of democratic institutions and traditions, the implementation of various regional scenarios of historical and political developments. Two points of view arose among the Russian national democrats. Oleg Nemenskii expresses a pessimistic concept, believing that "the Russian state has never been a Russian. It has

¹⁷ Aleksei Shiropaev, Il'ia Lazarenko, Mihail Pozharskii. Manifest Organizatsionnogo Komiteta Natsional-Demokratov, Natsional-demokratiia v Rossii. Svoboda. Natsiia. Progress. 2007, 20 iulia, <https://ru-nazdem.livejournal.com/1672.html>

¹⁸ Lev Trapeznikov, Tochka zreniia, Natsional'no-demokraticheskaia partiia, 2016, 18 iunია, <http://www.rosndp.org/tochka-zr.html>

¹⁹ Aleksandr Ianov, Rossiia i Evropa. 1462-1921. Evropeiskoe stoletie Rossii. 1480-1560 (Moskva: Novyi Hronograf, 2008), 694 s.; Aleksandr Ianov, Rossiia i Evropa. 1462-1921. Zagadka nikolaevskoi Rossii. 1825-1855 (Moskva: Novyi Hronograf, 2008), 502 s.; Aleksandr Ianov, Rossiia i Evropa. 1462-1921. Drama patriotizma v Rossii. 1855-1921 (Moskva: Novyi Hronograf, 2008), 676 s.

²⁰ Igor' Danilevskiy, Drevniaia Rus' glazami sovremennikov i potomkov (IX - XII vv.). Moskva: Aspekt-Press, 1998. 398 s.; Igor' Danilevskiy, Russkie zemli glazami sovremennikov i potomkov (XII - XIV vv.). Moskva: Aspekt-Press, 2001. 387 s.; Nikolai Klenov, Nesostoiavshiesia stolitsy Rusi. Novgorod. Tver'. Smolensk (Moskva: Veche, 2011), 320 s.

always been a definite form of political organization of the space of the East European Plain"²¹.

Oleg Nemenskii imagines the history of Russia as a history where some processes which determined the main directions and trajectories of the development of the West were absent in Russian historical contexts²², including the nationalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries as attempts to modernize agrarian cultures. Oleg Nemenskii believes that the history of Russian nationalism "missed" the stage of "radicalization"²³ of agrarian traditional cultures and their transformation into modern and national ones. Therefore, Oleg Nemenskii prefers to write the history of Russia as a history of the absence of Russian nationalism, which was able to imagine and invent the Russian nation. Sergei Sergeev, on the contrary, believes that Kievan Rus was "an organic part of the then European-Christian world", and Novgorod, Pskov and Viatka became continuers of political democratic traditions²⁴. Russian national democrats, in their attempts to develop new versions of the historical narrative, insist that the Mongol-Tatar conquest provoked political and social mutations that substantially weakened and completely destroyed earlier democratic institutions and made invisible the regional levels of the historical process. Some Russian nationalists seek to Europeanize and democratize the history of Russia.

Therefore, they carefully search for democratic institutions in the past of Russia but find examples how the central elites destroyed and suppressed these institutions and made impossible the formation of a political nation and nation-state. National democrats imagine Russian history after the overthrow of the Mongol-Tatar yoke before the imperial transformation of Russia as oppression and persecution of the rudiments of democratic institutions. The history of the Russian Empire is invented as an unpleasant political experiment with separate glimpses of freedom and attempts to revive democratic traditions. Russian national democrats, for example, imagine the Decembrists as the first Russian nationalists in particular, but Decembrism, in general, is invented as a failed attempt to institutionalize Russian nationalism. Nationalists prefer to integrate the history of Russia in the early 20th century into their own historical grand narrative as one more unsuccessful attempt to modernize and actualize the principles and values of the political nation and nation-state. The historical imagination of the national democracy uses the historiographical principle of gaps and failures actively. Therefore, the Soviet period of Russian history is imagined as a political and intellectual catastrophe when the Russians fell victims of Sovietization and could not, unlike other ethnic groups of the USSR, transform into a nation with their own quasi-state elites and institutions. The historical imagination of Russian national democracy depends on the myths of the cycle of history: therefore, on the one hand, they imagine the 1990s as an attempt to restore democratic institutions and, on the other hand, insist that the 2000s and 2010s became a period of anti-democratic and anti-regional regression.

²¹ Oleg Nemenskii, *Uhod s Ravniny*, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2006, 5 aprilia, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=1857>

²² Oleg Nemenskii, *Natsionalizm gorodskoi i sel'skii*, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2010, 11 iunia, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=22868>

²³ Oleg Nemenskii, *Rustikalizatsiia russkosti*, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2015, 13 maia, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=33519>

²⁴ Sergei Sergeev, *Russkaia natsiia, ili rasskaz ob istorii eio otsutstviia*, <https://www.litres.ru/sergey-mihaylovich-sergeev/russkaya-naciya-ili-rasskaz-ob-istorii-ee-otsutstviya>

An alternative political project of national democracy

Ideologists of national democracy in 2007 insisted that political, economic and social regime fell into a deep structural crisis because "the attempt to create a new modern democratic state on the territory of the former RSFSR failed. All the basic attributes of democracy, including the principle of separation of powers, the institution of free elections, the federal structure, local government, the independence of the courts are virtually eliminated only"²⁵. National Russian democracy in this intellectual situation actualizes the syncretic nature of its ideology because the political regime in Russia unified the political spaces so deeply that various political ideologies began to broadcast ideas that historically were alien to them. Russian nationalism marginalized by the authorities and demonized by them in the mass public consciousness was no exception to this logic of the development of modern Russian statehood because of the traditional democrats, on the one hand, and the nationalists, on the other hand, were the same victims of political and ideological unification.

Actually, Russian ruling elites, trying to protect themselves, inspired the convergence of nationalists and liberals, without assuming what political doctrine could arise as a result of this connection, which was unnatural only from a formal point of view. Marginalizing democrats, liberals and nationalists, the ruling political elites did not understand and did not realize that they created new incentives for the rise and progress of nationalism by the formation mechanism of the Russian political nation because the construction and development of the nation as a political community of citizens was never among the tasks of the political regime that emerged in Russia on the ideological ruins of the 1990s. The theoreticians of Russian national democracy understand that their ideas do not coincide with the official ideological discourse. Criticizing the contemporary foreign policy of the ruling elites, Russian national democrats believe that only Western orientation and the active use of Western political experience, the transplantation of the institution of nation into Russian contexts can save modern Russia from a deep crisis and further disintegration: "if we want to build a Russian democratic nation, but not a new version of the 'service people', then we can take its model only from the West ... the West as a system of national states ... The struggle for the Russian nation is a struggle for democracy"²⁶.

National democrats propose a program of reforms, including the modernization of political institutions and relations in the form of consistent Westernization and the rejection of the myths of the Russian nationalism proposed by its other trends that, unlike the national democracy, idealize the empire and deny democratic Western political experience. On the other hand, the concept of national democracy is marginal for modern Russia where it is little known and rejected also by the political classes and the electorate. National democracy in its program suggests reforms that include the democratization and nationalization of the political regime simultaneously and require a decisive and radical deconstruction of the political system that emerged in the 2000s.

²⁵ Manifest Natsional'nogo russkogo osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia "NAROD", Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2007, 27 iyunia, <http://www.apn.ru/publications/article17321.htm>

²⁶ Sergei Sergeev, Natsionalizm i zapadnichestvo, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2017, 4 noiabria, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=36801>

The invention of regionalism and national democracy

The ideologists of modern Russian national democracy invent and imagine Russia as a regional country, insisting and emphasizing actively that the Russian regions became the victims of political and economic disparities that arose in the 19th and 20th centuries and did not allow potential Russian regions to become political, cultural and economic alternative centres. Russian national democrats understand the importance of the regional problems and factors. The invention of democracy as a universal political tradition in the ideology of modern Russian liberal nationalism coexist with attempts to actualize the regionalist levels and dimensions of modern Russian statehood: "we stand for maximum freedoms and preferences for the Russian regions. We consider that actual system is unfair and harmful to the nation and state when all economic resources are concentrated in Moscow, bleeding regions, which are pinned firmly to the ubiquitous centre of the bureaucratic 'power vertical'. We stand for free regional self-government and for the development of regional centres. We stand for genuine federalism, for a "multipolar" Russia with many developed and independent regional centres with the widest powers"²⁷.

Russian national democrats insist that the regional policy of Vladimir Putin is erroneous because the central elites ignore the interests of the regions and prefer to ignore those regional difficulties and contradictions, different parts of Russia are faced. National democrats believe that the un-development of Russian regions became one of the reasons for the failure of the project of political nation building. National democrats in modern Russia became probably the first generation of Russian nationalist-minded intellectuals who try to imagine and invent a modern nation, despite the fact that their European counterparts did it in the 19th or 20th centuries successfully. Russian national democrats in this intellectual situation face a lack of understanding and therefore try to popularize the Western concepts of nationalism and the nation as the political community²⁸. Russian nationalists did it too late with several decades delay, although this form of assimilation of the European and Western humanities in particular and knowledge about nationalism, in general, became traditional in Russia.

Attempts of national democrats to popularize Western theories of the nation among political classes are less successful than the expansion of Western methods and theoretical approaches into academic studies of nationalism, where modernism and constructivism determine the basic trajectories and vectors of the analysis of nationalism. Sergei Sergeev, one of the ideologists of Russian national democracy, believes that the political nation in general and the idea of a political nation in particular were not developed in Russian history²⁹ because "if a political entity was understood as a nation, the nation did not exist until October 17, 1905, because the Russians never formed autonomous from the state social and political elite as the nucleus of any nation with political rights"³⁰. Sergei Sergeev became one of the inspirers of the myth of the absence of a political nation in the

²⁷ Aleksei Shiropaev, Il'ia Lazarenko, Mihail Pozharskii. Manifest Organizatsionnogo Komiteta Natsional-Demokratov, Natsional-demokratiia v Rossii. Svoboda. Natsiia. Progress. 2007, 20 iuliia, <https://ru-nazdem.livejournal.com/1672.html>

²⁸ Sergei Sergeev, Natsiia v russkoi istorii, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2009, 18 maia, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=21603>

²⁹ Sergei Sergeev, Ia hotel razobrat'sia, pochemu v RF net russkoi natsii, Agentstvo politicheskikh novostei, 2017, 17 fevralia, <http://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=36009>

³⁰ Sergei Sergeev, Byla li v Rossiiskoi imperii russkaia natsiia? Natsional'no-demokraticheskaia in Russia partiia, 2016, 18 marta, <http://www.rosndp.org/bila-li-v-rossijskoj-imperii-russkaya-naciya.html>

Western sense in Russia. Therefore, he named one of his books published in 2017, “The Russian Nation, or the Story of the History of Its Absence”³¹.

Russian national democrats believe that the Russians were a formal ethnic majority that did not have real rights and preferences³², and therefore political elites tried to minimize effects of historical regionalism in Russia and a new regionalism could not arise until the beginning of the 20th century because the nation as a political actor in Russia appeared only as one of the results of the first Russian revolution. Ideologists of national democracy³³ presume that the historical and political failure of Russian regionalism and regions with political and social ambitions in the invisible periphery and background of Moscow became a result of domination of elitist political which ignored the principles and values of a nation and regions were not able to reach the level comparable to the experience of European political nations. The crisis and the fall of the project of the Russian political nation, as theorists of Russian national democracy presume, was the result of disproportions in Russian political and social developments, where until the 20th century the political nation was virtually absent and was a fiction and a chimaera³⁴. Modern Russian national democrats are democrats, regionalists and nationalists simultaneously because they insist that Moscow authoritarian and anti-democratic policies destroyed and suppressed regional development potentials. National democrats try to modernize regional levels and dimensions of modern Russia and Russian history, nationalize them and imagine their new Russian identities, which can be a real alternative to the official localized forms of state-controlled patriotism which only imitate regionalism.

Preliminary conclusions

National democracy became an important segment and element in the ideological mosaic of modern Russian nationalism, but the ideas of national democrats continue to be marginal, and the theorists and ideologists of the movement are practically invisible in the modern information landscape of Russia because the media prefer to broadcast and reproduce exclusively official political and ideological discourses. Several reasons led Russian national democracy to its present state. Russia belongs to a number of countries where the processes of political and economic modernization began later than in the rest of Europe. The slow speed of social changes hampered the transformation of traditional agrarian and urban communities into modern nations. Russian nationalism in Russia, unlike the countries of Western Europe, did not arise earlier than the Russian nation. Russian nationalism and the Russian nation became the secondary consequences of social and political modernizations. Russia has never been a national state, nationalizing state and a nation-state in the Western sense.

Elements of political and civic nationalisms, a nation as the imagined community, invented traditions have never dominated because they always existed in the shadow of a hypertrophically developed a centralized state that perceived Russian and regional

³¹ Sergei Sergeev, *Russkaia natsiia, ili istoriia eio otsutstviia* (Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf, 2017), 740 s.

³² Sergei Sergeev, *Pobediteli ne poluchaiut nichego*, *Natsional'no-demokraticheskaiia partiia*, 2016, 2 marta, <http://www.rosndp.org/pobediteli-ne-poluchayut-nichego.html>

³³ Lev Trapeznikov, *Evoliutsiia russkogo soznaniia i rol' obshchestvennykh organizatsii v politicheskoi bor'be*, *Natsional'no-demokraticheskaiia partiia*, 2015, 14 dekabria, <http://www.rosndp.org/evoliuciya-russkogo-soznaniya-i-rolj-obschestvennih-organizacij-v-politicheskoi-borjbe.html>

³⁴ Sergei Sergeev, *Printsip Moskvy*, <http://www.rosndp.org/princip-moskvi.html>

nationalisms, liberal and leftist political ideologies with a sense of identical rejection and politically motivated dislike. Russians could become a political nation only in the Soviet period because the USSR was an attempt of radical social and economic modernization, but they did not become a nation-state during the existence of the USSR or after its collapse. Russians in the USSR were an invisible majority and did not have their formal political and cultural institutions as invented traditions. The Russians could not become a political nation and a nation-state after the collapse of the USSR because they did not receive their own political institutions. Russian nationalism in these unfavourable conditions was marginal in the USSR and the post-Soviet Russian Federation.

The radicalization of Russian nationalism in the form of anti-Semitism, Orthodox obscurantism, chauvinism inspired and promoted its marginalization, but radical nationalists was visible, their voices were audible and these factors slowed the emergence of national democracy as a political version of Russian nationalism significantly. National democracy is an alternative trend in the development of Russian nationalism because its ideologists tried to synthesize and combine the values of nationalism and the principles of liberal democracy. Theorists of liberal Russian nationalism are too ambitious in their attempts to nationalize the values of democracy and integrate their intellectual contexts of Russian nationalism and intellectual history of Russia. National democracy in Russia arose under the European political and intellectual influences, on the one hand, in the context of attempts to democratize nationalism and transplant Western institutions in it. This attempt was not very successful, but institutions that imitate the democratic principles of the organization of society and the state in Russia continue to exist. On the other hand, the progress of national democracy in the actual intellectual history was a consequence of the transplantation of Western theoretical Nationalism Studies that radically differed from the earlier Russian theories of nations that absolutize and idealize the principles and values of ethnicity, blood and religion.

National democracy in modern Russia is marginal and it is logical to assume that 2018 will not become a time of radical improvement and progress of Russian liberal nationalists because ruling political elites will mobilize all available political resources and mechanisms for marginalization and demonization of the possible competitors. National democracy in this situation will inevitably become the best candidate for the role of the enemy because its ideas and principles synthesize the values of nationalism, the nation, democracy, rights and freedoms that are equally alien to the modern political class of Russia. Despite marginality, Russian national democracy could become a part of the history of Russian nationalism, and the author presumes that the history of national democracy awaits its scholars who will be able to localize it in intellectual history and the archaeology of the ideas of post-Soviet Russia.

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