Messages of the President of the Russian Federation to federal assembly as source for studying historical policy of Russia

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the historical representation of the highest state power in today's Russia (President's level) by considering the texts of presidential messages to the Federal Assembly. Content analysis, both semantic and quantitative, has been applied as a key research method. There were investigated the fragments of messages containing an appeal to events, phenomena, personalities of the past and the historical process as a whole. The results of the study make it possible to confirm the fact that there has been a paradigm shift in the perception of history at the highest state level of Russia, which consists in the transition from a liberal version of the modernization theory to a nationally conservative approach close to the theory of civilizations. Three Presidents of the Russian Federation - B.N. Yeltsin, D.A. Medvedev and V.V. Putin, despite the coinciding positions on a number of issues on coverage of the past, presented diverse visions to the historical process in the texts of their messages. The integration of the current policy into the general outline of history distinguished all the messages, making it possible to talk about preserving the tradition of historiosophical reflection on state activity in the Russian Federation, despite different versions of historiosophy. The transformation of historical policy in Russia is an indicator of the ideological inversion of the Russian state as a whole, the transition from a liberal to a nationally conservative pattern. The attitude of the state officials towards the history reveals the potential for the use of value-and-semantic guidelines of current policy as a means of reconstruction.

1 Introduction

History at all times of the existence of states has been used as an instrument of political representation. Historical content has always served and continues to serve not only as an object of cognition of historians, but also as an object of actual politics. In recent years, the concept of historical politics has become widespread in reflection of this direction of political activity. It originated initially in Germany, being used by opponents of supporters of the revision of history, then it was in Poland, correlating with the functioning of the Institute of National Remembrance, and finally it was perceived in Russia, being

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associated, on the one hand, with the course of President V.V. Putin, whose starting point was the task of creating a unified school history textbook, on the other, with a reaction to the revision of historical narrative in a number of post-Soviet states (primarily Ukraine and the Baltic republics). In other cultural and political contexts, instead of the concept of “historical politics”, the concept of “politics of national memory” was used, or as an equivalent to the policy of “public memory” [1-9].

In today’s Russia, both concepts are used simultaneously as equivalent, although there are methodological differences between them. Historical politics seems to be a broader category, since it is not limited solely to the functions of collective memory. In the USSR, in the first decades of Soviet history, the concept of “historical front” was used to reflect the political struggle that was waged in comprehending and interpreting the past. History, in accordance with the definition of a leading personality in Soviet historiography, academician M.N. Pokrovsky, was interpreted as “a policy overturned into the past” [10-11].

Appeals to history contain many documents of the highest state level, and accordingly it is possible and expedient to use them as sources of analysis of the historical policy of the corresponding state. One of the most important documents of this kind for studying the state historical policy of the Russian Federation is the annual Messages of the President to the Federal Assembly, the requirement to which is enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation [12]. The practice of Messages has been established since 1994, and thus it is possible to compare the relevant texts over a relatively long-time interval. The only time - in 2017, the presidential message was not presented. During this time, the Russian Federation was headed by three presidents - whose course of historical politics had, presumably, individual and conceptually political differences. In appeals to the past, statesmen often state, what, for reasons of political correctness, they cannot state directly as their political position. Through the disclosure of the interpretation of historical phenomena and events, it is possible to reconstruct value-and-semantic grounds of policy that are not directly revealed.

Presidential power in the Russian Federation is known to be personally successive. President B.N. Yeltsin supported V.V. Putin as his successor, and he, in turn, supported Dmitry Medvedev in the 2008 elections. The continuity of power determined the characterization of the entire historical interval under consideration as a single post-Soviet period. However, over time, many people discovered the obvious differences in the value and target orientations of the policies of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. This led to a widening view of Putin’s politics as a denial of Yeltsin’s policies. The political lexicon includes the concept of “Putinism,” viewed from different angles as a revision of Yeltsin’s attempt to implement a liberal democracy project in Russia [13]. Despite the continued influence of V.V. Putin on making government decisions in the presidency of D.A. Medvedev, Medvedev’s ideological and power discourse also had noticeable differences from Putin’s. Presumably. These differences in the value-targeted manifestations of the policies of three the Presidents of the Russian Federation should have been reflected in their interpretation of history. The corresponding fragments of the Messages to the Federal Assembly allow us to trace these possible differences in the vision of the past by Russian Presidents.

2 Methods

The study was based on the methodology of content analysis applied to the texts of presidential messages to federal assemblies. Along with comparing historical interpretations, the method of quantitative content analysis was also used [14–16]. The comparing was carried out in four positions: 1. volume of the text in the Messages

representing an appeal to history; 2. number of uses in the texts of the Messages of the lexemes “history” and its derivatives; 3. historical personalities cited in the texts of the message; 4. interpretation of events and phenomena of the past. The first two positions made it possible to trace the significance of the historical appeals themselves in the structure of the presidential narrative. Through consideration of cited historical personalities, indirect information was obtained about the president’s preferences in history, his choice of value-and-semantic platforms associated with the authors of the corresponding quotes. The identification of key ideas in the interpretation of history in presidential messages allowed us to reconstruct the historical views of the President as a whole and their evolution over time.

3 Results

For convenience of comparing the results, the materials of quantitative and semantic analysis of messages to the Federal Assembly are presented in a tabular format by the years of their announcement. (See table) [17-42].

Table 1. Content analysis of Messages of Russian Federation Presidents to Federal Assembly in focus of appeal to history.

Year of Message	President	Number of words "history" and its derivatives	Number of words in fragments of Message addressing events and phenomena of the past	Cited thinkers of the past	Ideas for comprehending and interpreting the past
1994	B.N. Yeltsin	16	76	No	Deep historical roots of local government. Forced resettlement of peoples in USSR, need to overcome consequences of repressive policies. Experience of dialogue of religions in history of Russia.
1995	B.N. Yeltsin	16	104	No	Totalitarian past. Inadmissibility of use of fascist symbols as abusing people's memory.
1996	B.N. Yeltsin	24	1564	P.A. Stolypin	Tsar's Russia has not been able to reach the path of building a democratic society. The absence of democratic traditions determined the breakdown in 1917 from the democratic February Revolution to the radical October Revolution, which

					destroyed the sprouts of many achievements. The development of the USSR was carried out through a mobilization model, concentration of resources in the hands of the state, which undermined the forces of the people. States that suppress freedom are doomed to the demise, respectively, of the crisis and the collapse of the USSR were objectively predetermined. An attempt by conservative forces to take revenge in August 1991 pushed directly to the breakup.
1997	B.N. Yeltsin	9	No	No	No
1998	B.N. Yeltsin	6	No	No	No
1999	B.N. Yeltsin	12	260	A.I. Solzhenitsyn	Democratic transformations freed ideology from dictatorship. The new threat is the dictate of money, the loss of national identity in the sphere of culture. The vices of Russia's modern state machine go into the tradition of feeding. - legalized fees of officials from the population. Russia has managed to escape the totalitarian past.
2000	V.V. Putin	2	No	P.A. Stolypin	No
2001	V.V. Putin	2	54	No	Not all changes are appropriate. Reforms and revolutions are followed by counter-reforms and counter-revolution, often accompanied by the search for those responsible.
2002	V.V. Putin	3	34	No	Russia has pre-revolutionary historical experience in the development of local

					self-government.
2003	V.V. Putin	11	134	No	Russian people have accomplished the feat of keeping the territory of the country within existing borders. Russia could live and develop within existing borders only with a strong state, which was weakened by the threat of disintegration. Pre-revolutionary Russia had one of the strongest currencies in the world.
2004	V.V. Putin	2	No	No	No
2005	V.V. Putin	8	779	I.A. Ilyin, S.Yu. Witte, L.I. Petrazhitsky	The collapse of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. The process of disintegration could destroy the sprouts of a young Russian democracy, but the aspiration for freedom was stronger. As a result of the reforms, a new vector of development has been chosen in the millennium history of development. Russia has been and remains a European country and is developing in accordance with European values.
2006	V.V. Putin	3	73	F.D. Roosevelt, A.I. Solzhenitsyn, D.S. Likhachev, I.A. Ilyin	The main lesson of the history of the Great Patriotic War is the maintenance of high combat readiness of the armed forces. Do not repeat the mistakes of the USSR "cold war" in the development of the military complex to the detriment of the economy and social sphere.
2007	V.V. Putin	10	165	D.S. Likhachev	Combining the country's openness to the world with cultural identity. The historical

					experience of Russia is a common peace for people of different nationalities and faiths. To solve modern problems, relying on the basic moral values developed over the millennial history of Russia.
2008	D. A. Medvedev	6	70	P.A. Stolypin, N.M. Korkunov, B.N. Chicherin	For centuries, the administrative principle dominated in Russia, and an individual was perceived as a means or a hindrance to strengthening state power. Rich historical experience of tolerance in Russia.
2009	D. A. Medvedev	3	149	L. Pasteur, V. V. Leontiev	In the 20th century, in the USSR, at the cost of tremendous efforts, an industrial breakthrough was made, the results of which could not be preserved under the existence of a totalitarian regime. The Soviet Union objectively lost in the competition to post-industrial countries. Modern new Russia is the successor to the victors in the Great Patriotic War, who defended the country's freedom.
2010	D. A. Medvedev	1	No	W. Churchill, L.N. Tolstoy	No
2011	D. A. Medvedev	5	85	Lao-Tzu, D. S. Likhachev	Experience of conciliatory practice in Russian pre-revolutionary courts. Thousands of years of experience of multinational coexistence as a unique advantage of Russia, inadmissibility of nationalism.
2012	V.V. Putin	18	319	A. I. Solzhenitsyn, M. V. Lomonosov	A single inextricable history of Russia, which was not interrupted either in

					1917 or in 1991. The Russian historical tradition is the presence of a strong state power. In Russia, a special type of statehood has historically developed - the state-civilization. The core of Russian civilizational statehood was the Russian people and Russian culture. The need to protect the military memory of the Fatherland, to give examples of the courage of heroes of the past.
2013	V.V. Putin	5	199	N. A. Berdyaev	Successful experience of the history of Zemstvo reform in the Russian Empire. It created the basis for Stolypin's agrarian reform and industrial transformation during the First world war. Russia is characterized not by fruitless tolerance, but by the organic coexistence of peoples. The need to preserve traditional values that have been the moral Foundation of civilization for thousands of years. The significance of not only material, but also spiritual, including religious, values. The position is conservative, understood as an obstacle to falling into "chaotic darkness".
2014	V.V. Putin	8	464	I.A. Ilyin	The significance of Crimea for Russia is sacred and similar to the significance of the Temple Mount for Jews and Muslims. Christianity was a spiritual unifying force that led to the formation of the Russian people.

					<p>Vladimir's baptism has a huge historical role for Russia. Support from outside of separatism, the desire to implement the "Yugoslav scenario." The more Russia retreats, the more aggressive and cynical opponents act. A single line linking the plans of Hitler and modern opponents of Russian statehood. Victory in World War II led to liberation in Europe. Remembering the victory, one should not forget the lessons of the failures of 1941 to 1942.</p>
2015	V.V. Putin	8	181	N. M. Karamzin, D. I. Mendeleev	<p>An urgent historical lesson for the world community is that it did not consolidate in a timely manner in the fight against Nazism. Russia is historically consolidated by common values and goals. Consolidation is the basis of Russia's sovereignty, since when fragmented, its constituent peoples will be immediately destroyed by opponents.</p>
2016	V.V. Putin	8	201	A.F. Losev	<p>Two revolutions in 1917, the February revolution and the October revolution, the study of the causes of which is an urgent task. The main lesson of revolutions is the value of civil consent, the inadmissibility of transferring the splits of the past to the present. The problem that existed both in the Russian Empire and in the USSR was the inability to</p>

					commercialize inventions.
2018	V.V. Putin	9	126	No	Russia has a thousand-year history of continuity. Having passed through transformations, it has established itself as an independent state, but going an independent way of development.
2019	V.V. Putin	4	101	No	The vices of bureaucracy go deep into history, back in the days of the Russian Empire. Russia, unlike a number of other countries, can exist only being sovereign.
2020	V.V. Putin	11	166	No	The memory of the victory in the Great Patriotic War strengthens the unity of Russia. The need to defend the truth about the war, against attempts to falsify and revise its history. Threats to the sovereignty of Russia that arose after the collapse of the USSR.

The word “history” and / or its derivatives are found in all texts of the Messages without exception. This indicates the existence in the Russian political discourse of the traditional inclusion of the current agenda in a large historical narrative. The lexeme “for the first time in history” was most often used, which was supposed to emphasize the modern achievements of the Russian state. The greatest number of times the word “history” and its derivatives were used in the Messages to the Federal Assembly of 1996 and 2012. In the first case, this was determined by the context of the presidential election, in which B.N. Yeltsin faced in the struggle for the presidency with the leader of the Communists G.A. Zyuganov. The context of the elections led to the structuring of the entire 1996 Message as a critique of Soviet historical experience, which also set the stage for the active use of the word “history”.

The increased frequency of using the word "history" in Vladimir Putin's 2012 Message was formally determined by analyzing the results of the "year of history" announced at the state level. The proclamation of the year of history was coupled with the widely celebrated date in Russia of the 1150th anniversary of Russian statehood. An appeal to the deep sources of the genesis of Russian statehood correlated with the development of V.V. Putin's theme of the continuity of Russian history. In addition, having been re-elected in 2012 to the post of President after a four-year hiatus, V.V. Putin was supposed to come out with an ideological Message that emphasized the new value-semantic accents of his political course.

In general, the word "history" was used more often in Boris Yeltsin's Messages than in those of the other two presidents. This historical emphasis in the Messages of the first

President of the Russian Federation is explained by the construction of the power discourse around the topic of transition from the Soviet to the new, positioned as a democratic, model of statehood.

Directly in terms of the volume of fragments of messages devoted to the events and phenomena of history, except for the special "historical" Message of B.N. Yeltsin of 1996, the most historically emphasized are the Messages of V.V. Putin. In today's Russia, there is a conditional division into governments of "technocratic" and "ideological". The appeal to history is a sign of ideology and is not characteristic of a technocratic approach. The smallest fragments of appealing to history are contained in the messages of the presidency of D.A. Medvedev. Such a feature is due to the "tandem" model, in which issues of ideology remained largely, though not fully, the prerogative of V.V. Putin, who served as Prime Minister. In the first presidential messages of Vladimir Putin himself, the appeal to history did not take much. But as time passed, the historical component of Putin's messages increased. A significant increase in the volume of historical appeals was the return of V.V. Putin to the post of President of the Russian Federation. The role of the President was increasingly, judging by the content of the messages, given *de facto* ideological functions.

All three presidents of Russia quoted in their messages the words of Russian Prime Minister P.A. Stolypin. Stolypin, unlike the Soviet time and the time of the Russian Empire, received in the official discourse of post-Soviet Russia a halo of the hero. The attractiveness of the Prime Minister's image was determined by the meaningfulness of his activity as a reformer in transit to a market capitalist society, combined with the policy of a «strong hand» with regard to the opposition. Both Yeltsin and Putin quoted Solzhenitsyn, a figure unacceptable to supporters of the Soviet idea in modern Russia, but containing two main connotations - the denunciation of the USSR and the presentation of an anti-liberal neo-Slavophile project. In this regard, the appeal to Solzhenitsyn by Yeltsin and Putin had a slightly different emphasis. Both Putin and Medvedev quoted the philologist and cultural scientist D.S. Likhachev, an iconic figure in the genesis of liberal thought in Russia. From figures of the liberal spectrum, Putin also addressed in a 2005 message to Russian Empire Minister S.Y. Witte and legal scholar L.I. Petragitsky. Medvedev appealed to the ideas of prominent pre-revolutionary theorists of the rule of law state, representatives of B.N. Chicherin and N.M. Korkunov. The characteristic feature of Putin's messages, amplified over time, is the use of quotes of thinkers representing the nationally conservative spectrum of Russian public thought - M.V. Lomonosov, N.M. Karamzin, D.I. Mendeleev, N.A. Berdyaev, A.F. Loseva, I.A. Ilyin. Putin addressed the ideas of Ilyin in three messages, which indicates that the views of this thinker, who was a supporter of a strong, based on the Orthodox values of the Russian state, are close to him.

When analyzing the content of historical fragments in the messages of the three presidents, certain general provisions and themes are found. Each of the presidents addressed the theme of victory in the great Patriotic war in their messages, which could not but be in view of the sacral attitude of the majority of Russian society to it. In Yeltsin, however, this topic was given less emphasis in the context of the provision on the inadmissibility of the use of fascist symbols. The corresponding fragment of the 1995 message correlated the prospect of upcoming elections in Russia with the threat of an emerging Alliance of Communists and nationalists. The appeal to the theme of the Great Patriotic war by Medvedev was built around the idea of defending freedom. Having won the war, the people defended the freedom of future generations. In addressing the topic of the great Patriotic war, Putin sees a line of succession between the fight against the enemy in 1941 to 1945 and the up-to-date struggle for Russian sovereignty. In Putin's Messages, there are provisions about attempts by Russia's opponents to falsify history and rewrite it in a light that is unfavorable for the Russian side. One of the main lessons of the war is the

need to strengthen the country's defense capability and maintain the military spirit of the army.

Another common theme in the Messages to the Federal Assembly of all three Russian presidents is the historical formation of Russia as a multi-ethnic state. At the same time, in his Message to the Federal Assembly, Medvedev used the concept of tolerance to characterize multinational coexistence. In his Message to the Federal Assembly, Putin described tolerance as a "sterile and gender-neutral" principle, and it is opposed to the organic unity of the Russian peoples. Speaking about Russia's multi-ethnic nature, Putin, unlike Yeltsin and Medvedev, also pointed to the special role of the Russian people and Orthodoxy in the historical consolidation of the Russian community. In this regard, the model of describing multinational existence in the versions of presidents had its own specifics. Putin's version was expressed in the idea of the existence of a state-forming religious and national force, the core of the Russian community, manifested in history.

In messages to the Federal Assembly of different years, there is an appeal to the experience of Zemstvos in pre-revolutionary Russia. Such appeals were used by both Yeltsin and Putin in the context of topical issues of local self-government development in Russia. Even the success of Stolypin's agrarian reforms and industrial reorganizations during the First world war, which is not a consensus position for Russian historiography, were attributed by Putin to the consequences of the Zemstvo reform.

At the same time, in the General vision of the philosophy of history, the presidential messages to the Federal Assembly allow us to state the difference of positions. Yeltsin's messages were structured on the basis of a view of the historical process through the prism of theories of modernization and the totalitarian state. These positions were most fully reflected in the Message of 1996. Modernization in history was associated with the construction of a democratic, legal state and civil society. Tsarist Russia did not manage to enter the path of modernizing development, despite some reforms, which predetermined its collapse. The February revolution, rated as a plus, offered a chance for modernization that was not used as a result of the radical disruption of the anti-democratic October revolution. Yeltsin's Message harshly criticized the Soviet mobilization model, which, in his estimation, was not viable and uncompetitive in the long term. It was blamed for destroying democratic elements and undermining the forces of society. The achievements that occurred during the existence of the USSR were the achievements of the people who showed their historical subjectivity in spite of the system. The system was irreformable from within and predestined to destruction. The attempt of the GKCHP to reverse the course of history hastened the destruction of the USSR. The main achievement of the reform period was the liberation from the dictates of ideology and the totalitarian past, which went back to the pre-revolutionary Russian state [43-46].

As part of the modernizing concept of history, historical fragments of Medvedev's Messages were also presented. The 2008 message focused on the tradition of administrative domination, suppression of an individual by the state used as a means of state policy, and often hindrance that goes deep into the history of Russia. The idea of contrasting the state with man in Russian history allows us to evaluate the philosophical and historical positions presented in Medvedev's messages as liberal. According to the author, the industrial breakthrough made in the Soviet period was achieved due to the incredible efforts of the population, and in the long term such a system could not be effective. The totalitarian Soviet regime objectively lost the competition to post-industrial States, which predetermined the regularity of its dismantling. It is characteristic that unlike the messages of Yeltsin and Medvedev, Putin's messages have not once used the key concept for them of a totalitarian state [47-49].

The view of history in Putin's messages is undergoing conceptual changes. The message of 2005 clearly expressed the European tendency to comprehend the prospects of Russia's

development, the acceptance of European values and European identity. It was argued that as a result of the reforms, the millennial vector of Russia's development was changed, and the new vector was associated with the ideals of freedom and democracy. At the same time, Putin's first messages contained messages in the interpretation of history that were not typical of Yeltsin's discursive line: 1. the existence of Russia and its retention of territories on the existing scale was possible only in the presence of a strong state; 2. not all reforms in the history of Russia were justified, turning in many cases into counter-reforms; 3. the collapse of the USSR, although it was natural, was a geopolitical catastrophe. Time passes, and in Putin's 2012 message, the concept of understanding Russia as a state-civilization is already stated. The very use of the category civilization indicated a revision of the modernizing theory of history in favor of a civilizational approach. It was pointed out that there is an independent path of development, which is at odds with the previous view of the common European values and identity of Russia. In the Message of 2013, Putin for the first time self-identified their position as a conservative. The disclosure of the role of the state through the words quoted by the President of the predictor of the "new middle ages", the philosopher N. A. Berdyaev about preventing the world from falling into chaotic darkness echoed the medieval Byzantine-Russian concept of catechon (the state that keeps the world from the triumph of evil). In the interpretation of the revolutionary events of 1917, Putin, unlike Yeltsin, no longer took sides with either the Feburalists or the Bolsheviks, which can also be considered a turn in comparison with the accentuated criticism of the Soviet historical experience. Since the 2014 Message, which justified the historical justification of the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a sacred symbol of Russian civilization, the theme of historical enemies was raised. The fundamental differences in understanding and interpretation of history in Messages to the Federal Assembly from different periods of Russian history allow us to record the change in the ideology of the post-Soviet Russian state that took place approximately since 2012 [50-56].

4 Discussion

The analysis makes it possible to speak about the possibility of using the texts of the Presidential Message to the Federal Assembly as an authentic source of reconstruction of state ideology and state historical policy. In turn, through the power historical discourse there is a possibility to adequately reflect the value-target guidelines of the state in the current policy. The analysis led to a change in the vision of the nature of historical process and assessments of past events at the level of presidential power compared to the dominant approaches of the 1990s. There has been a shift from modernization theory to a nationally conservative approach in choosing methodological paradigm philosophy of history. This transition at the level of power discourse was gradual, having been completed in the third term of the presidency of V.V. Putin. The results confirm the overall concept of Putin's ideological transformation generally put forward in the political science literature.

5 Conclusions

The analysis made it possible to formulate a number of conclusions relating to both historical and political discourse.

1. Historical appeals of top-level statesmen serve as an adequate reflection of the ideology of power and the ongoing ideological transformations.
2. Higher state-level documents, such as Presidential Messages to the Federal Assembly in Russia, can serve as a source of reconstruction of the historical representation of power and the historical policy of the state.

3. State historical policy plays an ideological role for the state policy as a whole and serves as an indicator of the value and semantic orientations of the corresponding state.

4. All Presidents of the Russian Federation viewed political activities in the context of the historical process and related them to different understandings of the past.

5. The historical component in the Messages to the Federal Assembly has been increasing since the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin, which testifies to the trend of re-ideologization of the Russian state.

6. Common approaches of three Russian Federation Presidents in the perception of the history were demonstrated in the understanding of the multinational nature of the Russian state and the recognition of the high significance of the feat of the Great Patriotic War, with different accents of these positions.

7. Understanding of the historical process in the texts of the Messages to the Federal Assembly of B.N. Yeltsin was built around theories of liberal modernization and overcoming the totalitarian past. Within the framework of the liberal interpretation of history, with criticism of the hypertrophied state principle in the history of Russia, historical fragments of messages from the period of Medvedev's presidency were also constructed.

8. The historical narrative of President Putin 's messages evolved from the idea of European development to the idea of Russia 's independent path as a state of civilization, which expressed a tendency to switch to a platform of civilizational approach. The distinctive features of the historical fragments of Putin's messages were also the idea of strong state power and an ongoing struggle for sovereignty against external enemies.

9. The change in power historical discourse, traced to the texts of the Presidential Messages to the Federal Assembly, confirms the position about the ideologically power transformation in Russia, which came for the third term of the presidency of V.V. Putin.

The results obtained during the study make it possible to recommend further study of power historical discourse in the projection of analysis of current state policy.

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