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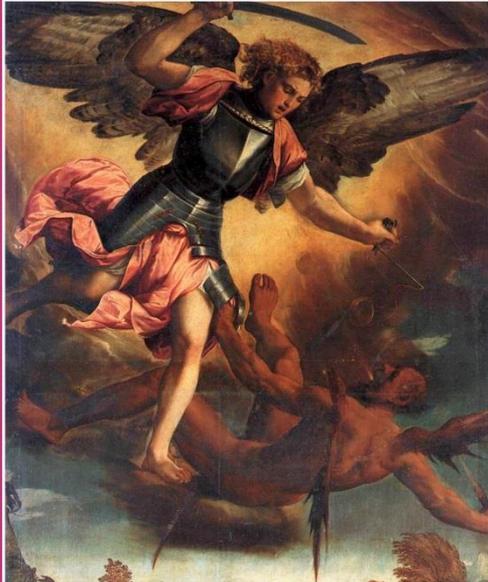
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## **The National Idea Of Modern Russia In The Official And Party Discourse**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research lies in the evaluation of the possible options for the conceptualization of the Russian national idea at the current stage of development. Methods. Traditional and formalized document analysis, systemic and comparative analysis, political diagnostics, expert surveys and focus groups have been used as basic research methods. Main results. The results of this research show the remaining multi-layered and controversial character of the existing versions and interpretations of the Russian national idea. A few key plots and paradigms have been established in this area. They focus on the idea of patriotism (the official discourse), the topics of “restoration” of the “great power status” (the party discourse), the ideas of “justice”, “the state of the whole people”, “the Eurasian mission” (experts) and the symbiosis of national patriotic and patriarchal paternalistic keynotes (the population). However, these ideas are shared by most Russian people to a varying degree and represent the basis of social discourse. Conclusions. Systematization of discourse practices, research data, assessments and expert recommendations draws attention to the correlation between the concepts “national idea” and “state idea” and the necessity to rethink the post-modernist interpretations of utilitarian and technocratic approaches.

Taking into account the local experience and modern challenges, the essence of the Russian national idea can be expressed by the triad “Justice. Patriotism. Faith.” In the course of its implementation, it is extremely important not to underestimate the complexity of the population composition and the form of government. The novelty of this research consists in consideration of the interrelation between the internal and external dimensions of the national idea and its semantic field in the context of overlapping multicomponent factors.

Keywords: great power, civil identity, “Eurasian mission”, nation-building, national idea, patriotism, spatial development, “Russian idea”, “sovereign democracy”.

## **La Idea Nacional De La Rusia Moderna En El Discurso Oficial Y Del Partido.**

### **Resumen**

El objetivo de esta investigación radica en la evaluación de las posibles opciones para la conceptualización de la idea nacional rusa en la etapa actual de desarrollo. Métodos Se han utilizado análisis de documentos tradicionales y formalizados, análisis sistémicos y comparativos, diagnósticos políticos, encuestas de expertos y grupos focales como métodos básicos de investigación. Resultados principales Los resultados de esta investigación muestran el carácter polémico y polémico restante de las versiones e interpretaciones existentes de la idea nacional rusa. Se han establecido algunas parcelas y paradigmas clave en esta área. Se centran en la idea de patriotismo (el discurso oficial), los temas de “restauración” del “estatus de gran poder” (el discurso del partido), las ideas de “justicia”, “el estado de todo el pueblo”, “La misión euroasiática” (expertos) y la simbiosis de las notas clave patrióticas y patriarcales nacionales (la población). Sin embargo, estas ideas son compartidas por la mayoría de los rusos en un grado variable y representan la base del discurso social. Conclusiones La sistematización de las prácticas del discurso, datos de investigación, evaluaciones y recomendaciones de expertos llama la atención sobre la correlación entre los conceptos “idea nacional” e “idea de estado” y la necesidad de repensar las interpretaciones posmodernas de los enfoques utilitarios y tecnocráticos. Teniendo en cuenta la experiencia local y los desafíos modernos, la esencia de la idea nacional rusa se puede expresar

con la tríada “Justicia. Patriotismo Fe.” En el curso de su implementación, es extremadamente importante no subestimar la complejidad de la composición de la población y la forma de gobierno. La novedad de esta investigación consiste en considerar la interrelación entre las dimensiones internas y externas de la idea nacional y su campo semántico en el contexto de factores multicomponentes superpuestos.

Palabras clave: gran poder, identidad civil, “misión euroasiática”, construcción nacional, idea nacional, patriotismo, desarrollo espacial, “idea rusa”, “democracia soberana”.

## 1. Introduction

Throughout the existence of the Russian statehood in various historical and geopolitical forms, which goes back over a thousand years, the spatial factor has been one of the most significant aspects in terms of self-determination of people, authorities, development of their relations and positioning of the country on the global stage. Moreover, its significance has been growing. From the ontological and axiological perspectives, balanced co-existence and development of the state and society are often substantiated, directed and supported by a certain core idea, which can be represented by a national idea. However, the enormous size of the country, its extended borders, the complexity of population composition and various interpretations of the country’s destiny (mission statement) at different stages of the historical trajectory due to the specific features of the political regime, the external environment and other reasons resulted in a variety of versions and patterns of the national idea.

In modern conditions, the determinants of the content of the national idea and its interpretation are even more multi-layered and often blurred in the ideological and other respects. The spatial structure of Russia is still characterized by heterogeneity, interregional and intraregional disproportions; increased economic activity in a limited area of the macro zone of the Center and North-West of Russia; low infrastructural development; presence of federal subjects with complex structure and general asymmetry of the Russian Federation; local ethnic areas overlapping with national and state areas. All of that combined with increased confrontation in the global media space, brought about by geopolitical ambitions of some countries, attempts to revise and falsify history, problems of national identity aggravated as a result of penetration of globalization into the national culture,

the highest participation of the country in international relations in the history of Russia in the context of geopolitical pluralization of the traditional areas of accountability and influence of the country, have a meaningful effect on resolution of many fundamental issues, including the ones concerning the interrelation between ethnic and civil identities, accomplishment of formation of the Russian nation, status and role characteristics of Russia as one of the major powers in Eurasia and the world.

One of the effective solutions to global challenges and threats faced by Russia, as well as internal dangers and vulnerabilities, might be reaching social and political consensus regarding the national idea. However, its final choice is hampered by the past experience and present events, as well as the complexity of political initiation, management and control processes, which do not always smoothly fit with natural historical and socio-cultural parameters. Therefore, research into the indicated problem is very relevant in terms of neutralization of negative trends and destructive ideological practices based on the existing potential and its further growth. The objective of this research is the evaluation of the possible options for the conceptualization of the Russian national idea at the current stage of development. It suggests tackling the following tasks: measuring the degree of orientation of theoretical discourse towards the key aspects of the national idea with due consideration of the main trends in social and global development; identification of the range of expert judgments and views on this issue, as well as capturing and projection of the views held by ordinary people; identification of the specific features of the perception of the national idea in the Russian political community; establishment of the correlation between the spatial (territorial), ethnic and other factors affecting the formation, promotion and evolution of the Russian national idea in the context of local historical and political background.

Review of the state of exploration of the formulated topic in Russian and foreign research literature can be long and extensive. This debatable and multifaceted issue is reflected in various views and standpoints. However, in this article, we will confine ourselves to the representation of the opinions that seem essential to us and focus on the fundamental plots showing the entwinement of the internal and external dimensions of the problem.

Undoubtedly, this issue is one of the main topics in the Russian intellectual tradition, which is closely connected with discussions about the general sense of the existence of a people as a spiritual unity, its self-preservation and development in different legal political and spatial environments. It is no coincidence that special emphasis has been placed on the evolution of

the national idea and its mythologemes (Holy Rus – Moscow – the Third Rome – the official nation – communism – patriotism) and identification of the key characteristics of each version (Shilov, 2016a). When it comes to recent history, the development of Russian national ideology includes two periods: deideologization (the late 1980s – early 1990s) and reideologization (the mid-1990s – the present time). Researchers have pointed out that discussion about the necessity of a state/national idea has been taking place during the second period (Mukhametzyanova-Duggal, 2018).

Within the framework of the evolutionary process, an appeal to the emergence of “neoconservatism” can be recognized as another aspect of the Russian theoretical discourse. Its content unveils by contrast with “archaic” conservatism as a “relative” and “sworn brother” of the “Russian idea”. Its typical assumption consists in the insufficiency of the “value class of Growth” in Russia (Chernyshov, 2018).

In the course of reflections on the new national idea of Russia, its viability and the role of the country in the modern world, the term “great power” is used quite frequently. According to A.G. Chernyshev (2018), it should be based on “cherishing a person”. Other authors agree with this point of view. In their opinion, a national idea based on the development of human identity should be the subject and result of social agreement (Mitrokhina and Shaidullof, 2018).

In terms of a national idea, works that analyze the potential future of Russia are of great interest. Some researchers see it as a post-capitalist knowledge society, the intellectual and ethical values of which are determined by the idea of “kind reasonableness, which is becoming the Russian idea of the 21st century” (Alekseeva and Alekseev, 2014).

It appears that, in spite of the seemingly abstract wording of the national idea, it follows the Russian intellectual tradition, which reflects the main sense of the existence of the people – priority of spirituality and ethics over the material side of life and consumerism. Moreover, the national idea is becoming even more actual due to a radical transformation – blurring of traditional national and state borders, increasing migration flows, redistribution of wealth, technologies, knowledge, science, information, geopolitical power, etc. Reassessment of the nature and prospects of liberal democracy is taking place since some of its attributes, such as human rights and freedoms, have been emasculated. In this connection, K. S. Gadzhiev (2017) raises the issue of values, ideals and principles “that are above democracy, human rights and freedoms and unite people into integrated communities”.

The meaning of the national idea is interpreted in different ways in research papers by Russian scientists, both in terms of qualitative parameters – one dominant idea or image or rather an ideological symbiosis and in terms of the focus of interpretation and scaling: ethnic (the Russian people), national (“the political nation”, “the civic nation”), civilizational (the East, the West, Eurasianism) or supranational (Pan-Slavism). Some authors put their hope on the national idea as the main unifying force providing successful development and effective governance of a country, a “vivifying spring” instilling the energy of “creation, discoveries and breakthroughs, heroism and good deeds” (Sulakshin, 2012, p. 12). Other point out its mythologized nature and the inability to solve systemic problems of the society, seeing no opportunity to give it a clear definition (Miller, 2017).

Authors of English-language literature, including Russian scientists, highlight different key points and suggest different priorities. The same idea of patriotism is interpreted through the lens of Russian “performative non-liberalism”, the dichotomy between liberalism and “totalization” (Makarychev and Yatsyk, 2017; 2018). The present and future of the country are interpreted in terms of authoritarianism, in particular, the one that manifests itself in the relations between branches of government, according to G. Krol (2017), M.S. Fish (2018), G. Robertson (2017), and through the model of “aggressive immobility” (Greene, 2018). F. Prina (2016) claims that “promotion” of Russian patriotism “inevitably” leads to “reduction of diversity in Russia”, which has a negative effect on the rich cultural legacy and “undermines the peaceful coexistence of individuals and groups that comprise the Russian society” (Prina, 2016). Within this paradigm, some researchers (V. Laine and others) willingly resort to such expressions as “new Russian nationalism” (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2016), “nationalism as a political concept”, “competition for nationalist argumentation”, and “pro-government nationalist forces” (Laine, 2017).

Some authors consider the prospects of establishment of “the Russian irredenta – an assembly of the Russian (ethnic) lands”, “empire-building”, “Eurasianism”, “the national Russian state” (Torbakov, 2015), etc. Thus, they touch upon the external dimension of the Russian national idea and its projections on the post-Soviet territory in the context of “searching for identity” (Richardson, 2017; Roberts, 2017). On a global scale, the current period is compared with the cold war era and the conclusion is drawn that “today’s Russia lacks a clear civilizational identity and does not follow an alternative project of modernity”. M. Maslovski (2018) views the recent “conservative turn” in Russian politics as a specific interpretation of Eu-

ropean modernity.

It appears that the abundance of opinions represents clear evidence of the unfading importance of this issue not only on the national (domestic) level but also on an international scale. The search for an internal structure of self-awareness and a foundation for the future development of the country and its people is intertwined with domestic and external attempts to identify the new status and role of Russia on the global stage, its relations with other countries and actors. At the same time, the vagueness, lack of clarity and other similar qualities that characterize the above-mentioned views and in the real political practices require a deeper insight into the internal and external dimensions of this issue. It is essential to provide analytical substantiation of the possible variants of the national idea taking into account the content of social and political discourse (primarily and predominantly the internal one) and the over a thousand-year-long experience of the Russian model of state and civilizational development and bearing in mind the national interests, opportunities and the potential of the Russian society and people in the complex environment full of global, regional and internal risks, challenges and threats.

## **2. Methods**

The research is based on the materials of an expert survey on the issue of nation-building and development of the Russian national idea, a focus group interview, studies of texts published by official authorities, program documents of political parties operating in the Russian Federation, other materials published on their official websites, secondary analysis of the data obtained in the course of mass sociological surveys conducted by Russian opinion research centers.

During the formalized distant expert survey we interviewed 20 representatives of the scientific and expert community of the Russian Federation (Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Perm State National Research University, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Saint Petersburg State University, N.G. Chernyshevsky Saratov State National Research University, etc. and the Republic of Belarus (the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies). All experts hold Advanced Doctorate (15) or PhD (5) academic degrees in political or social studies, history, philosophy or law. The survey was carried out using a specially developed form that included 30 questions divided into three thematic blocks. This article analyzes the answers to

questions from the second block that focuses on conceptualization of the Russian national idea.

An expert survey was used along with such methods as document analysis, political diagnostics, etc. Specifically, analysis of documents as important data carriers and tools of representation used by the leading political subjects of the Russian Federation has helped to identify the variants of the essence, factors, opportunities for development and implementation of a national idea suggested in these documents. The research is based on official documents, including the annual Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, other statements and addresses made by senior government officials and program documents of political parties registered in Russia. Non-formalized traditional document analysis was supplemented by elements of formalized research by means of discourse analysis. Within the context of the issue under consideration, discourse analysis focused on the reconstruction of the processes of sociopolitical objectivation, communication and legitimization of semantic structures of the national idea.

For the purpose of identification of images and conceptual structures in the collective consciousness taking part in the formation of civil identity, the nature of perception of the national idea and the leading consolidating plots, a focus group interview “Formation of territorial identities of Russian people: symbols and brands, images, concepts and myths” has been carried out. A presentation containing different symbols, from state symbols (the flag, coat of arms and anthem) to regional monuments, brands and logos of local factories, historical and modern person images, etc. was used as stimulus material. The age range of participants was broad: from 18 to 65 years old, which was determined by the goal of the survey, i.e. to embrace different age groups.

Usage of political diagnostics methods, systemic and comparative analysis allowed us to identify and classify the gaps, differences and similarities in the interpretations of the national idea presented in scientific literature and discourse political practices and determine the possible variants of the national idea taking into account the background of Russia and modern realia.

### 3. Results

The conducted research has allowed us to investigate expert assessments, constants and dominants of the political discourse related to the key aspects of the issue under consideration. These findings are represented below.

1. Possible variants (foundations) of the Russian national idea.

The majority of experts agreed on the choice of the preferred option – “the idea of justice”. Another common answer chosen by more than a third of experts was the idea of “the state of the whole people”. The ideas of a “Eurasian mission”, “sovereign democracy” and protective ideas (Orthodox Christianity, traditional values, etc.) were also quite popular. It is noteworthy that the option “the Russian idea” was outvoted by the above-mentioned variants, and the option “the idea of Slavic brotherhood” was chosen only by one expert. None of the experts chose the option “export of security”. The expert additionally suggested the option “the inherent value of the cultural component”. Thus, the experts focus on the internal component of the national idea to a greater degree, but they also find the geopolitical (“Eurasian”) aspect appealing.

In this case, the answers submitted by the experts extrapolate a certain cross-section of discourse practices taking place over the recent political cycles connected with particular casting moves but do not fully coincide with them. For instance, from 2008 to 2012 the “renewal” and “modernization of Russia” were often mentioned in the official discourse. It is noteworthy that in this period Russia was called “a country of a free nation” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 05 November 2008). The President mentioned the necessity and possibility of “obtaining the status of world power on a conceptually new foundation” – comprehensive modernization “based on democratic values and institutions” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 12 November 2009). The appeal to the future accompanied by the emphasis on the traditional values and usage of the epithet “great Russia” were typical during that period (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 30 November 2010). Here one can notice a correlation with experts’ preferences, which is expressed by the words “Russia... needs faith in the future and justice” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 22 December 2011).

From 2012 to 2018 the idea of patriotism becomes the keynote of many speeches delivered by senior government officials. Apart from that, this idea is coupled with the plot related to “civil responsibility” and “responsibility for the country”. The task “to build a rich and prosperous Russia” is set for the nation, but its material component is supplemented by conceptual value content: “We should not just develop with confidence, but also preserve our national and spiritual identity, not lose our sense of national unity. We must be and remain Russia”. The historical theme sounds much

more prominent; it is smoothly intertwined with the idea of looking ahead and focusing on the future declared earlier. The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly that marked the beginning of a new period is illustrative in this respect (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 12 December 2012). The thesis about the significance of traditional values (“that have made up the spiritual and moral foundation of civilization in every nation for thousands of years: the values of traditional families, real human life, including religious life, not just material existence but also spirituality, the values of humanism and global diversity”) is evolving. They are assigned a conservative meaning in keeping with N.A. Berdyaev’s views as preventing the movement backwards and downward, “into chaotic darkness” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 12 December 2013). At the same time, the confinement of the country in its own borders is denied: Russia is described as “a part of a global world that is changing rapidly” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 3 December 2015). The idea of justice is still presented in a pronounced way. The natural character of this idea for the Russian culture is emphasized. Another cross-cutting issue of this period is the topic of unity, solidarity and togetherness of the nation with an important specification: “when we speak of solidarity and unity, what we mean is conscious and natural consolidation of our people in the interests of Russia’s successful development” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 4 December 2014; The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 1 December 2016).

Throughout the current political cycle, many of the dominants of the official discourse that were introduced earlier have been reproduced. They include a focus on providing prosperous future for the country and people (the goals of breakthrough development, long-term growth and dynamic development) and an emphasis on historical plots. The lines from the Presidential Address of 2018 that express the uniqueness and abilities of Russia are noteworthy: the “unwavering forward-looking drive, coupled with traditions and values”. Finding solutions to large-scale problems will allow to “provide befitting answers to the challenges of a rapidly changing world and preserve Russia as a civilization with its own identity, rooted in centuries-long traditions and the culture of our people, our values and customs” (The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 1 March 2018; The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 20 February 2019).

Program statements of parliamentary political parties of the Russian Federation can be actually viewed as a part of governmental discourse since they are represented in the federal legislative body through their members. However, some key points should be taken into consideration. Firstly, these statements show a relatively higher variety of suggestions that correlates with differences in the ideology of parties. Second, parliamentary parties, including those that make up “loyal opposition”, predominantly demonstrate solidarity with the international policy suggested by the country’s top leadership; therefore, their general perception of the external dimension of the national idea (except individual points resulting from the specific features of their program platform) is similar in many respects. Finally, it is important to remember about the insufficient authority of political parties and the parliament of the countries, which gives reasons to notice frequent duplication of the essential plots featuring in discourse practices of the heads of the state and government and the impossibility of transformation of their suggestions into a generalized trend of political discourse. To make it clear, in this research we did not take into consideration the practices of most non-parliamentary parties, although they also explore the issues of a national idea, nation-building, the present and future of the country (Bakhlov and Bakhlova, 2018).

Tellingly, the parliamentary parties of the Russian Federation are trying not to distinguish the national idea as a separate definition. Instead, they integrate their standpoint into the general course of program statements. At the same time, commitment to the restoration of Russia as a great power often becomes the keynote of party documents. However, the suggested strategies for its implementation are far from identical. To sum up, analysis of election programs of 2011 and 2016 shows that all parties represented in the federal parliament are moderately interested in the examined issue, but do not focus on it in greater detail. What they concentrate on is the content and directions of Russia’s domestic and foreign policy in general. Therefore, it largely explains the usage of general terminology (“great state”, “great country”, “power”, “Motherland”, “patriotism”, etc.) in the context of possible and desirable socioeconomic, political and cultural development of the country.

2. The attitude to the idea of patriotism as the Russian national idea.

The vast majority of experts chose the option “The idea of patriotism should lie at the core of the national idea, but it should not be fully identified with it”. The second most popular answer was the following: “Love for one’s country is implied a priori, so the national idea should be more

original”. The options “The idea of patriotism is interpreted by political actors not clearly enough for it to be perceived by the people as a national idea” and “The idea of patriotism can be identified with the national idea” were far less popular than the previous ones. The option “In modern conditions influenced by the processes of integration and globalization, the values of patriotism are too blurred and vague to become the foundation of the national idea” was chosen only by one respondent. One of the experts left the following critical comment: “The more they speak of patriotism, the less real patriotism there is! In practice, the true meaning of this phenomenon is commonly replaced with its imitation”.

It should be noted that in the discourse of power the idea of patriotism is used as one of the essential sense-making constructs. It is typical of all the above-mentioned periods, although at different times this idea was interlaced with slightly different accentuations and references. The Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly of 2008, 2012 and 2016 seem the most noteworthy in this respect. For instance, in the Address of 2008 patriotism is associated with basic values (“things that cannot be given up”, “things for which we need to fight until victory”, “things without which it is impossible to imagine our country”); patriotism is “belief in Russia, deep-rooted love for our native land and our great culture”.

Throughout the following political cycle, the association of patriotism with the national idea becomes more evident, as well as the recognition of its consolidating potential. In the Address of 2012, the President said: “Being a patriot means not only to treat one’s national history with love and respect, although, of course, that is very important, but first and foremost to serve one’s country and society”. Interlinking with the topics of civil responsibility and unity is developed in further speeches and announcements made by the senior government officials of Russia. For example, according to the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin, “We don’t have and there can’t be any other unifying idea, apart from patriotism”; “And that is a national idea” (Putin: *natsionalnaya ideya v Rossii – eto patriotizm*, 2016).

In the Address of 2016, the President stated unification of people due to patriotic values. Solidarity and unity are interpreted as conscious natural consolidation of people for the sake of successful development of Russia (“It is this readiness to work for our country’s sake and this sincere and deep-seated concern for Russia that form the foundation of this unity we see”; “we are a single people, a united people, and we have only one Russia”). Correlation with the issue of civil rights and freedoms is what is

common for both later and earlier discourse practices.

Analysis of party programs also shows the constant presence of the patriotic idea, but it is not central or independent – rather, it is used as a component of suggestions for the development of the society and state subject to certain conditions for the restoration of Russia as a great power. For instance, parties that took part in the electoral campaigns of 2011 and 2016 – United Russia, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), Just Russia, and in 2016 also Rodina (Motherland-National Patriotic Union) and Civic Platform, used statements emphasizing the significance of development of patriotic ideas in their election programs. It should be noted though that the term “patriotism” and synonymous expressions were mentioned only in the election programs of CPRF (2011 and 2016), Civic Platform and Rodina parties in 2016. Other parties used the following terms and expressions in this context: “Motherland”, “united nation”, “global power”, etc. The obtained results are presented in more detail in Table 1.

Table 1. Concepts and expressions connected with patriotism as a national idea used by Russian parties

Name of a political party	Election campaign of 2011	Election campaign of 2016
United Russia	“Great state”	“We love Russia”, “global power”
CPRF	“Pride of the nation”, “patriotism”, “Motherland”	“People’s patriotic forces”
LDPR	–	“Strong country”, “powerful, free, successful Russia!”
Just Russia	“Great culture”, “great country”	“National culture”
Rodina	–	“Social patriotic party”, “faithfulness to patriotic ideals”, “Motherland”, “homeland”, “united nation”, “unification of the Russian world”
Civic Platform	–	“Motherland”, “patriots”, “patriotic elite”

It is noteworthy that in permanent programs of political parties the development of the topic of patriotism is more visible. The corresponding terminology can be found in party documents of CPRF, LDPR, Just Russia and Rodina.

Therefore, the idea of developing patriotism is mainly introduced to long-term party programs. The reason is that the parties recognize its significance, but do not consider it to be the most attractive idea for voters in the current period, i.e. they are guided by pragmatic motives.

The conducted focus group interview shows the dominance of national patriotic and patriarchal paternalistic rhetoric among ordinary people. Reflections on the national idea of Russia have been recorded in the form of following theses and symbolic constructs: “great power”, “invincible country”, “restoration of might”, “protecting the land of our ancestors”, “historical roots and traditions”, “imperial force”, “patriotism”, “strength, greatness, power”, “civil dignity”, “civilization”, “justice and legitimacy”, “order and creation”, etc. Apparent commensalism of historical dominants, value foundations and social interests can be observed.

The attitudes to patriotism as a national idea shown by the participants of the focus group discussion were also controversial. On the one hand, patriotic feelings are viewed as the “foundation of a strong state”, “essential prerequisite for survival in the confrontation with the West”, “basis for education of citizens that live up to standards set by our ancestors”, “main link between the heroic past and the not-so-heroic present”, “one of the commonly shared values”, etc. The national symbols (the coat of arms, anthem and flag) instill pride and stand out among other symbols that reflect national and civil identity, which is confirmed by numerous polls carried out by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCI-OM). Experts explain this fact by the “prolonged echo” of such milestone events as the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the return of Crimea, the launch of the Crimean Bridge, the military operation in Syria and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, which were not decompensated by the fact that Russia was banned from participation in the 2018 Olympics, the retirement-age increase, introduction of new tax regulations, etc.

In spite of the strong emotional coloring, constructive drive and significant consolidating power, some discordant perception elements can also be observed. They are primarily connected with the imbalance between the historical topics (“victorious people”, “liberating people”, “hard-working people” and a series of negative events and trends in the development of the modern Russian society (“bureaucracy”, “gap between the rich and the

poor”, “discrepancy between the patriotic slogans and the non-patriotic deeds of the establishment”).

On the whole, the official idea of unification of citizens on the basis of patriotic values is being actively implemented and the level of patriotism in the consciousness of people is quite high. However, it is necessary to employ more effective mechanisms and technologies to reinforce this civil position.

3. The necessity of taking into account the spatial (territorial) and ethnic factors in the context of the Russian national idea.

More than half of the experts agreed with the option “The definition of the Russian national idea should contain a reference to a federal (complex) territorial form of government”. Other options were chosen by a fewer, but nearly equal, number of experts: “The definition of the Russian national idea should contain a reference to the global mission of the country”; “The definition of the Russian national idea should contain a reference to the specific Eurasian location of the country”; “The definition of the Russian national idea should not contain a reference to the ethnic component”. The option “The definition of the Russian national idea should contain a reference to the ethnic component” was slightly less popular. One of the experts left a comment that the option he had selected (“the idea of justice”) implied equal distance from all of the suggested options.

Since the spatial boundaries of Russia did not remain unchanged, the territorial aspect is objectively and subjectively intertwined with the historical one in terms of discourse practices. The complexity of the form of the Russian state structure and the population composition in the present and in the historical past leads to a permanent connection with the ethnic component. Therefore, the constants of the official and party discourse should be considered taking into account this correlation and will be further discussed in clause 4.

4. Reflection of the specific features of the historical trajectory and civilizational uniqueness of the Russian Federation in the content of its national idea.

Experts also showed a high degree of solidarity in this sphere: approximately two-thirds of the experts said that it is necessary to take this factor into consideration; others believe that the most appropriate answer to this question is “to a certain degree”.

In the position declared by the state authorities the following aspects are the most noteworthy: emphasis on the original structure of Russia (“Russia is the most multi-regional, multi-national and multi-confessional nation in

the world”) and the historically developed unique and extraordinarily rich experience of tolerance and mutual respect; recognition of the support of ethnic traditions and cultures of the peoples of Russia as a prerequisite for strengthening the federal framework and for ensuring the harmonious functioning of the society; attributing an integral axiological meaning to interethnic peace (the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of 2008); linking historical eras for the purpose of national restoration, importance of preservation of unique experience passed on by the ancestors, perception of Russia as a “civilization-state” (the Presidential Address of 2012); indication that the Constitution of the Russian Federation contains crucial unifying national ideas, substitution of the term “tolerance” (“neutered and barren”) for the expression “natural life of different peoples within the framework of a single state” with an emphasis on traditional values and an increasing number of people in the world who share them (the Presidential Address of 2013); a focus on profound understanding of the essence and importance of national interests, as well as the duration of Russia’s historical trajectory (“the indivisibility and integrity of the thousand-year long history of our country”) (the Presidential Address of 2014); the necessity to firmly resist any manifestation of extremism and xenophobia while defending ethnic and religious accord, which is the historical foundation of the society and the Russian statehood (the Presidential Address of 2015). It is highlighted that the unwavering forward-looking drive, coupled with traditions and values, ensured the continuity in the thousand-year-long history of the Russian nation (the Presidential Address of 2018).

As far as party discourse is concerned, the degree to which the issues related to the national idea are reflected in program documents of parties corresponds with the level of coverage of both spatial and ethnic factors in such documents. Interrelation between the recognition of the right of each people for preservation and development of its culture and the necessity to reinforce the unity of the Russian nation can be traced, which is proven by the quotes in Table 2.

Table 2. Quotes representing party discourse concerning interrelation between the spatial and ethnic factors in the context of the Russian national idea

Name of a political party	Indicative terms and expressions
United Russia	"Strength of the peoples of Russia lies in high spirituality, moral purity, dignity and the ability to respect each other", "national interests"
CPRF	"National self-preservation", "a great nation", "national state interests", "national patriotic forces", "the Russian issue"
LDPR	"Patriotic national policy", "national heritage", "national spirit", "the Russian nation"
Just Russia	"National identity", "Russian national traditions"
Rodina	"National unity", "the issue of inter-ethnic relations is of fundamental nature", "harmonious interaction between different cultures", "national state identity", "the moral will of the people", "the unity of people", "a single people", "a civic nation", "the current deed of many peoples", "the multinational nature of the Russian state", "a multinational society"
Civic Platform	"Favorable development of all peoples and ethnicities", "national wealth"

The specific features of the historical trajectory of Russia are quite well-articulated in the party discourse. For instance, one of the strategic statements in the programs of such parties as CPRF and Just Russia is recognition of the continued significance of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War for development of the state and peoples that live in its territory. Awareness of the importance of the historical factor is manifested in many other program statements (Table 3).

**Table 3. Usage of concepts and expressions emphasizing the historical factor of development of Russia in the 2016 parliamentary election campaign**

Name of a political party	Terms and expressions that emphasize the historical factor affecting the Russian national idea
United Russia	"The destiny of Russia", "historical destiny of peoples"
CPRF	"Peoples' feat of arms", "national history"
LDPR	"historical values"
Just Russia	"Historical victory", "the sacred duty"
Rodina	"The history of Russia", "a historical state"
Civic Platform	"Like 100 years ago, in the middle of World War I and on the threshold of revolutionary upheavals, the leadership of the country is facing a difficult choice"

The Rodina party discusses the topic of the historical past, mainly relying on the statements declared within the official discourse. One of the essential issues in the rhetoric of the party is historical continuity. In spite of ideological disagreements with Rodina, the Civic Platform party similarly believes that "modern Russia is the successor of Kievan Rus, the Muscovite state, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union". This party adheres to the view that the Russian statehood has been based on equal partnership of various peoples living in Russia and its development continues on this foundation. LDPR considers the collapse of the USSR and further actions aimed at the restoration of Russia to be the main reference points in the evaluation of the historical aspect as a component of the national idea. By contrast, United Russia does not focus on the historical past and suggests mechanisms for the dynamic development of the country in the future.

##### 5. Ideological neutrality of the national idea

It is notable that the opinions of experts divided into two virtually equal halves: ten positive and nine negative answers. To clarify his view, one of the experts specified that such neutrality is hardly possible since a national idea is a consolidating foundation and ideology represents its value content. However, in his opinion, ideology should be related to the system of values and norms rather than with the ideology declared by a political

party in its classic sense.

The first viewpoint (agreement with the statement) was supported by references to “The democratic principle of political diversity”; “Negative historical experience”; “Existence of constitutional restrictions”. A less popular argument was “Domination of one party that is not interested in presenting its ideological views on the national idea”. The option “Lack of clear ideological views among the most influential political parties of Russia” was not chosen by any experts.

The second viewpoint (disagreement with the statement) was substantiated by the following most popular answers: “A big idea is impossible without value content, it cannot be totally pragmatic” (the most common answer); “Absence of the ideological foundation of the national idea prevents it from being accepted and supported by the population”; “The contents of the Constitution of the Russian Federation do not impede ideological substantiation of the national idea”; “The refusal to fill the national idea with ideological meaning contradicts the general political trends in the development of the country and discourse practices of the political establishment”. The option “The refusal to create an ideological foundation for the national idea has a negative effect on the interest of political parties in taking part in real competition” was selected by one respondent.

The position of government authorities regarding argumentation of the choice of patriotism as the national idea is quite clear: they lean towards its deideologization and unconnectedness with activities of any party (Putin: *natsionalnaya ideya v Rossii – eto patriotizm*, 2016).

Analysis of program documents of leading political parties of the Russian Federation has not revealed their rigid adherence to any ideological platform – liberal, conservative, social-democratic, etc. It is more traceable among parties with a right liberal orientation. Rather, it can be said that the civilizational factor serves as a determinant of the fundamental position (Bakhlov and Bakhlova, 2018).

The further examined problem indicative series is oriented towards a comparison of the degree of activity shown by different subjects in the sphere of suggesting initiatives for the development of the Russian national idea. Estimations (1 point – the lowest degree of activity, 5 – the highest degree of activity) presented in Table 4 illustrate the degree of activity shown by different subjects, according to the experts.

Table 4. The degree of activity shown by political subjects of the Russian Federation in the sphere of suggesting initiatives for the development of the national idea\*

Sequential number	Subject	Average estimation of activity (1 – the lowest, 5 – the highest)
1.	The President of the Russian Federation	4.3
2.	The Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation	2.4
3.	The Chairman of the Federation Council	2.25
4.	The Chairman of the State Duma	2.25
5.	Leaders of parliamentary parties	2.84
6.	Leaders of non-parliamentary parties	2.21
7.	Representatives of religious organizations	2.63

\*The table shows average estimations of the degree of activity based on the summary of expert assessments of each category.

It should be noted that the experts produced a wide range of estimations regarding many subjects. For example, according to different experts, the rating of activity of the President of the Russian Federation varied from one to five points. Still, the lowest level of variation was also registered in the assessment of the President's activity since most respondents said that it could be estimated as four or five points.

The estimations are specified through the example of parliamentary parties of the Russian Federation. Table 5 shows the average estimations of their activities in this field (1 point – the lowest degree of activity, 5 – the highest degree of activity).

Table 5. The degree of activity shown by parliamentary parties of the Russian Federation in the sphere of suggesting initiatives for the development of the national idea\*

Sequential number	Subject	Average estimation of activity (1 – the lowest, 5 – the highest)
1.	United Russia	3.05
2.	The Communist Party of the Russian Federation	3.21
3.	The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	3.26
4.	Just Russia	2.26

\*The table shows average estimations of the degree of activity based on the summary of expert assessments of each category.

The disparity of expert evaluations can also be observed here. Nearly all parties (except Just Russia) received both the highest (5) and the lowest (1) ratings. LDPR received the largest number of the highest estimations, which allowed it to end up slightly ahead of the CPRF.

Table 6 shows average expert estimations of the activity of political parties in the course of the two latest parliamentary election campaigns, where 1-2 points stand for low effectiveness, 3 – medium effectiveness and 4-5 – high effectiveness.

Table 6. The degree of activity shown by political parties in the sphere of suggesting initiatives for the development of the Russian national idea\*

Parliamentary election campaign	Activity		
	Low	Medium	High
2011	-	3.06	-
2016	-	3.5	-

\*The table shows average estimations of the degree of activity of political parties based on the summary of expert assessments of two parliamentary campaigns.

It should be mentioned that the results of the expert survey based on the parliamentary campaign of 2016 show insignificant growth of the ratings of activity carried out by political parties in the sphere under examination, although the summarized estimation remains on the average level. Interestingly, the number of the highest ratings (four and five points) has increased.

Table 7 shows average expert estimations of the activity of political actors in different periods, the starting and finishing points of which were presidential elections, where 1-2 points stand for low effectiveness, 3 – medium effectiveness and 4-5 – high effectiveness.

Table 7. The degree of activity shown by political actors in the sphere of suggesting initiatives for the development of the Russian national idea\*

Period	Activity		
	Low	Medium	High
2008-2012	-	3.2	-
2012-2018	-	3.58	-
From 2018	-	3.42	-

\*The table shows average estimations of the degree of activity of political actors based on the summary of expert assessments of different periods.

Table 7 shows that ratings showing the average activity of actors have been worked out for each of the indicated periods. Thus, experts have reported no significant fluctuations over the given periods. However, a certain growth of the number of higher ratings (four and five points) can be seen over the period from 2012 to 2018 compared with the previous period (2008-2012). These data correlate with results of sociological surveys that have identified a peak of patriotic feelings among Russian citizens in this particular period.

The content of discourse practices of different political actors generally shows their stable interest in the issues under consideration throughout specific periods of time. However, it would be an exaggeration to say that it has a dominant meaning in the federal political process. It is worth noting that the prevailing answer given by respondents is the partial significance of these issues for its participants, as well as insufficient attention to them. It is likely that a similar trend will preserve its relevance in the immediate future – at least until the parliamentary campaign of 2021.

Meanwhile, all indications are that the authorities have determined their position regarding this issue. We believe that they are currently promoting certain deaxiologization of the national, or rather, “big” idea expressed in terms of “breakthrough” pragmatization and materialization of its components and driving forces. At the same time, the appeal to traditional values remains unchanged, although there are some vulnerabilities connected primarily with the insufficient incorporation of the local experience, culture and spiritual potential. We assume that in spite of the demonstration of activity, as of today none of the parties of the Russian Federation represented in the federal parliament by factions or single-mandate deputies have developed a clear and original framework in this respect. It should also be mentioned that the parties and the country’s senior political leadership agree on some essential questions – development of patriotism, preservation of the nation, common historical past shared by many peoples, etc.

#### 4. Discussion

The answers submitted by experts and conclusions based on the research into theoretical, official and party discourse show the controversial nature of perception of the problem not only from the essential but also from conceptual, methodological and even strategic perspective on political development. For example, V. Shilov (2016b) defines a national idea as a hypothetical affirmation formulated and cultivated among the population by the ruling establishment “in order to preserve the status quo of the political

regime". This view is partially proven true by actual political practices. It is no coincidence that experts often claim that calls for patriotism are fictitious or formal. However, it appears that this interpretation is too utilitarian, which, in our opinion, is methodologically inadequate for substantiation of the Russian national idea from the value-based and socio-cultural perspective and in terms of development and promotion of civil identity. At the same time, it should be admitted that such approach to the national idea reflects the general civilizational changes taking place all over the world that are connected with a wide spread of corporate relations and the idea ingrained in the public consciousness about the "progressiveness" of the market with excessive utilitarian needs and the egoistic "homo economicus", the highest value for whom is represented by material assets. On the other hand, sociological studies show that the values of corporate ideology are not crucial for the majority of Russian people. Social justice remains the main political value for the Russian population over the last years, which is also confirmed by experts. For example, in 2018 59% of respondents said that the future of Russia should be based on "social justice" (according to the Federal Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences). Another significant value for Russians is patriotism, defined in most responses as love for one's own country, striving to change the state of things in the country and working for the country's good. According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), in 2018, the share of Russians who consider themselves to be patriots, amounted to 92% (the highest figure in 18 years, having risen from 80% in 2016). An opinion poll held by the Public Opinion Foundation in 2018 produced a different result (78%) and specified the criteria for patriotism chosen by respondents, including being convinced that one's own country is the best one; the importance of serving in the army; being not indifferent to Russian nature; knowledge of the Russian history, etc. (Institut sotsiologii RAN zafiksirovaniya peremenu nastroyeniya u rossiyan, 2018; Kochetkov, 2018; Patriotism, 2018). The given data call for "restitution of "homo politicus" who acts in a frame of extra-economic goals, factors and motivations, presenting increasingly important factors of human progress" (Martyanov, 2017). We suppose that more active development of the issue of formation of a national idea by Russian parties could become an important mechanism encouraging reinforcement of patriotic feelings, strengthening the political consensus and nationwide unity of the peoples living in Russia. Nowadays these issues are not sufficiently addressed in party programs. In addition, it should be noted that in spite of the variety of program statements, this

topic is one of the few ones that do not provoke fundamental controversies. The views on this issue expressed by political parties are largely in agreement, which can probably be explained by basic determinants (historical past, geographical location, ethnic and cultural diversity, etc.) that shape the mentality of population and the voters' moods.

Recently patriotism has become the subject of a large number of works. Besides, it is discussed widely in political circles. Researchers emphasize the necessity of rethinking this very concept and the mechanisms for its development in the current situation (Izergina, 2015). Many authors and experts reasonably note that the patriotic component of the national idea is extremely important, but the whole of its content cannot be reduced to patriotism only.

The unsatisfied demand for social justice, shortage of solidarity, westernization, technologization, deformation of channels and mechanisms for the transmission of spiritual legacy, etc. in modern Russia are all socio-cultural threats to the state and society (Shestopal and Selezneva, 2018). Experts acknowledge the existence of a great number of factors that urge the rapid development of the Russian national idea and they are absolutely right. Among these factors, there are those of internal and external origin: escalation of confrontation on the global stage, aggravation of threats and challenges to national security; external pressure, including that of sanctions; disproportional development of subjects of the Russian Federation, increasing social inequality in Russia; the crisis of traditional values. However, as we have demonstrated earlier, their cumulative negative effect has not yet been fully recognized by the political establishment, which, according to experts, adheres to neoliberal values. We also agree with experts that responses to relevant challenges are still of situational character and that acceptance of a certain idea by the population as the national idea is mainly hampered by internal vulnerabilities and deficiencies rather than external destructive influence.

In the light of the above-mentioned circumstances, it is reasonable to stand for the significance of the declaration of the Russian national idea as the foundation for strategic management. The focus on "the close interconnection between the material, spiritual and social aspects that is reflected by the national idea and its components – national well-being and security" appears methodologically correct (Ivanov et al., 2016). National well-being and security, as well as sustainable development of the country, cannot be provided by a community of people who have been turned into consumers and have lost their creativity. This why it is necessary to devel-

op a national idea that embodies “the meaning of the country’s existence, answers the questions as to what it is, where and why it is going, what is valuable and impossible to be sold for it and why it should be respected in the world” (Sulakshin, 2012, p. 33).

Taking into account the role of religious traditions in the life of the Russian society, this process requires the participation of religious organizations that have “an integral worldview and humanistic principles of human co-existence that have been tested over centuries” (Mukhametzyanova-Duggal, 2018). Meanwhile, a reasonable attitude of government institutions to traditional religions implies a combination of support and respect, on the one hand, and drawing a clear distinction between religious structures and secular statehood, religious doctrines and national ideology, on the other hand. Ideologization of the worldview advocated by a particular religion is fraught with aggravation of interconfessional and interethnic relations. It is important to put emphasis on the integrative potential of traditional confessions and their everlasting spiritual value. It is no coincidence that the thought is expressed in foreign discourse that in Russia the Orthodox identity is an attribute of cultural rather than religious identity and self-identification as “Eastern Orthodox” does not necessarily have a theological meaning (Warhola and Lehning, 2007).

The facts set forth above allow us to make a conclusion about the complex nature of a national idea necessary for Russia. In other words, it has to embrace the solution of economic, social, moral and psychological problems “in their interconnection and integrity” (Zhuravlev and Yurevich, 2016). The complex nature of the national idea is manifested in its functions oriented towards the completion of management tasks.

## 5. Conclusion

The conducted analysis has revealed the unfinished character of a number of aspects related to the issue under consideration. Basically, two key aspects can be identified. First, it is the correlation between the concepts “national idea” and “state idea”, which are treated as synonymous in many publications. Second, it refers to continuing the search for methodological foundations of reflection on the Russian national idea and its formulation, which is clearly observed in the creation of the image of the country’s future against the backdrop of modern challenges. In this context, we believe that the search for a national idea in the Russian setting from the perspective of postmodernism is non-productive. The reductionism of utilitarian and technocratic approaches lead to one-sidedness and unjustified domi-

nation of the material aspect over the spiritual and social ones. Relying on the most frequently used concepts that make up the main meanings of the national idea according to scientists, politicians and members of the public, at present time its essence can be expressed by the following triad: “Justice. Patriotism. Faith”.

What can encourage the accomplishment of this task? Naturally, in the first place, elimination of the identified problems or at least defusing them can improve the situation. In terms of management initiatives and actions, what is important is not only presence of a clear, strategically adjusted and reasonable pattern and tools adequate to the situation and internal capabilities, but also really patriotic behavior shown by the political establishment, its blending not into the globalized transnational elite, but into the genuine life of the country and its people. It is necessary to find the right balance in the relationship between the central government and subjects of the Russian Federation, activate the dialog between the authorities and civil society institutions, as well as the expert community. As for the external dimension, it is important to continue and enhance the efforts aimed at providing support to compatriots and implementation of the priority integrative formats in the Eurasian space while preserving and strengthening of the role of Russia as a guarantor of security and stability on regional and global levels, reinforcement of its status as not only a Eurasian, but also a world power. It is also crucial to promote one of the essential socio-cultural components of domestic and foreign policy – support the Russian language and culture and provide them with indisputable priority status in Russia.

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