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Politics of Memory in the Strategic Planning Documents of the Russian Federation

Abstract. The article analyzes key strategic planning documents of the Russian Federation, including the addresses by the President to the Federal Assembly, in order to assess the adequacy and comprehensiveness of regulations governing the implementation of politics of memory in the Russian Federation. The analysis reveals several critical issues. Firstly, there is a lack of legislative definitions regarding objects of legal protection within the framework of Russia's politics of memory. Secondly, an institutional foundation for implementing this concept into memory policy remains unformed. Thirdly, the delimitation of competences related to politics of memory implementation – both among federal bodies and between the federal authorities of the Russian Federation and its constituent entities – has not been resolved. Furthermore, there is no clearly defined mechanism outlining the content of memory policy, including specific measures and activities. As a result, tracking the effectiveness of the implementation process is challenging. The necessity for expert and analytical support for legal decisions related to the protection of historical truth is also pressing. The article concludes by recommending to develop and adopt a comprehensive concept of politics of memory, which should outline general principles for implementation of memory policy in the Russian Federation; the rights and obligations of federal and regional authorities; a detailed set of measures and activities aimed at protecting the historical truth and preventing its distortion; specific measures of accountability; and indicators to evaluate the concept's effectiveness.

Keywords: historical truth; strategic planning; national security; national interests; sovereignty; historical enlightenment; education; civil identity

In recent years, the rhetoric of strengthening state sovereignty, defending national interests, enhancing Russia's global position, and opposing unfriendly states and territorial entities has come to the forefront of the discourse among Russian politicians. The key themes underlying these trends were articulated in the constitutional reform of 2020, which formalized the constitutional identity of the Russian Federation. This reform fastened ed ideological foundations, sociocultural values, and political-legal ideals, as well as established a hierarchy of values that underpin both civil and cultural identity. This model of the constitution has been addressed as a "social value" in scholarly discourse (Khabrieva 2021: 8), emphasizing the institutionalization of value orientations within the Russian state and society.

It was during the 2020 reform when *historical truth* was introduced into the constitution as a category, thereby granting constitutional recognition to the function of protecting historical truth (Part 3, Article 67 of the Constitution¹). The constitutionalization of this category entails certain legal consequences: 1) *historical truth* as a value receives constitutional-legal protection; 2) the status of constitutional-legal value indicates that this category becomes a measure of law; 3) the Constitutional Court may rely on this category to argue for the preeminence of specific values.

To enhance the normative framework for strategic approaches to politics of memory, this article aims to accomplish the following tasks: 1) to analyze the role of strategic planning documents in shaping historical policy; 2) to assess the completeness and adequacy of the existing regulations; and 3) to propose potential pathways for improving regulatory practices in this area. These tasks are primarily addressed within the framework of political science research (Miller 2020; Rusakova 2023; Fishman 2024). However, in these cases, the legal constructs and terminology are interpreted through a specific lens: for instance, the norm regarding the state's opposition to the spread of destructive ideology is classified as the exclusion of citizens who do not adhere to traditional values from the legal sphere (Golovashina 2024: 43). Additionally,

¹ Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993, with amendments approved during the nationwide voting on July 1, 2020). Official Internet Portal of Legal Information, available at: http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102027595 (accessed October 30, 2024). (in Russ.).

such concepts as *memory politics regime* and *historical memory re- gime* are examined, but from a perspective distinct from the familiar legal term *legal regime* (Rusakova 2023) and others. Given the multifaceted nature of politics of memory issues, only a dialogue among researchers can ensure a consensus on the commemorative practices implemented by the state.

A systematic strategic planning document that would define politics of memory in Russia is definitely lacking; its foundations are laid by a collection of documents developed within the frameworks of forecasting, goal-setting, planning, and programming, including national projects and state programs. This article focuses on the documents developed within the goal-setting framework, particularly on Presidential addresses to the Federal Assembly, as they outline the priorities of tasks and propose algorithms for their resolution.

The Strategy for National Security puts significant emphasis on the protection of *historical truth*². The document under analysis includes paragraph 93, in which the tasks related to the protection of historical truth are listed alongside those concerning the safeguarding of traditional values. This indicates that the category of historical truth, while not explicitly mentioned among the values that form the foundation of civic identity, is nevertheless associated with them.

According to this document, the protection of historical memory is carried out through the establishment of various tasks related to both historical and moral identity: strengthening civil unity, fostering civic consciousness, achieving interethnic and interfaith harmony, preserving the uniqueness of the Russian Federation; ensuring continuity in the development of the state and its historically established unity, countering the falsification of history; maintaining continuity among generations of Russians; enhancing the role of traditional values in public consciousness while rejecting externally imposed destructive ideas; developing the education system as the foundation for shaping socially responsible individu-

² Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation, approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated July 2, 2021, No. 400, *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 2021, no. 27, art. 5351. (in Russ.).

als; patriotic upbringing of citizens; strengthening cultural sovereignty; popularizing the achievements of Russian figures in various fields; and protecting society from external ideological and valuebased expansion (paragraph 93). An analysis of these tasks suggests that the function of protecting historical memory is implemented through diverse measures within the frameworks of identity, language, migration policies, as well as policies in education, sports, culture, and the preservation of traditional values, among other policy areas.

The Strategy for State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 20253 introduces the definition of civic consciousness and proposes a model of a solidarized community with shared value foundations – namely, the Russian nation. While the Strategy does not provide a precise list of these foundations, it is possible to infer from the text that they include patriotism, a unified cultural code, the historical and cultural heritage of different ethnic groups of Russia, service to the home country, family, constructive labor, humanism, social justice, mutual assistance, collectivism, and others. The Strategy also pays attention to values of a historical nature. Among these are pride in Russia's history and respect for Russian history and culture. The historical heritage of different ethnic groups of Russia forms the basis of civic unity and is part of the singular cultural (civilizational) code of society. The Russian people are viewed as the foundational element for the unity these groups. The preeminent role of the Russian people should be emphasized within the context of implementing memory policy in education, sports, science, and other spheres.

The term *historical truth* is not used in the Strategy, yet the measures for implementing national policy aimed at strengthening the civic unity of the Russian nation and supporting the ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity of Russia are closely linked to politics of memory. Notably, the analyzed Strategy was adopted in 2012, a year that marked the foundations of contemporary politics of memory in Russia, including the establishment of *the Russian Historical Society* and *the Russian Military Historical Society*, as

³ Strategy of State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2025, approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated December 19, 2012, No. 1666, *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 2012, no. 52, art. 7477. (in Russ.).

well as the initiation of projects that led to the creation of thematic parks such as *Russia – My History* and the launch of *the Immortal Regiment* initiative (Miller 2020: 215). It is significant that the law on foreign agents⁴ was enacted in the same year. This act is important for minimizing the risks of foreign influence on the perceptions formed among citizens regarding the history of Russia and its role in global development.

According to the interpretation of the Strategy, the strengthening of civic consciousness is accomplished, among other avenues, through the preservation of traditional values (paragraphs 17 and 21.1). The success of this tactic is attributed to the universal nature of the majority of values presented in the analyzed documents, including the Foundations of State Policy on the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Values (hereinafter referred to as the Foundations for Preserving Traditional Values⁵). Among these values are "life, dignity, high moral ideals, a strong family, constructive labor, the precedence of the spiritual over the material, humanism, compassion, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance, and mutual respect" (paragraph 5 of the Foundations), which are values that are not tied to any specific state. It is precisely the moral identity that researchers identify as the core of personal identity (Atkins 2008: 65). A significant advantage of this moral identity is that it shapes the expectations of citizens regarding other members of the nation, allowing them to perceive others through the lens of moral identity. The strategy chosen by the legislator, taking into account the high degree of universality of the carefully selected values, appears to be auite iustified.

In addition to moral values, values of a historical nature are integrated into civic identity. The choice of such values appears to be a strategically disadvantageous option due to the lack of compre-

⁴Federal Law No. 121-FZ of July 20, 2012, «On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Regulation of Activities of Non-Profit Organizations Performing Functions of a Foreign Agent», *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, July 23, 2012. (in Russ.).

⁵ Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values, approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated November 9, 2022, No. 809, *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 2022, no. 46, art. 7977. (in Russ.).

hensive, targeted action from the state in this area over a prolonged period. Furthermore, historical identity cannot claim universal status when detached from other components of civic identity (Syrov 2023: 10). At the same time, when shaping civic identity, it is crucial to consider the historical context: the current set of values is grounded in past frameworks and is aimed at building the future upon them. In other words, the inclusion of these values into the legal framework possesses a rational basis.

In the context of examining the role of historical truth and memory within the structure of civic identity at the level of strategic planning documents, the issue of the conceptual and categorical apparatus used in these documents draws attention. First, many of the terms are not characteristic of legal science and are borrowed from other social sciences (such as civic identity, cultural identity, historical memory, traditional values, patriotism, etc.). Second, not all concepts have clear definitions (such as cultural identity, historical memory, historical truth, etc.), which raises questions about the relationships between these concepts. Third, the existing definitions are ambiguous. Civic identity is used synonymously with civic consciousness and interpreted as "the awareness of the Russian Federation citizens of their belonging to their state, people, society, accountability for the fate of the country, the necessity of observing civil rights and obligations, as well as a commitment to the basic values of Russian society"6. This concept conflates several types of identity, including national and ethnic identity. This raises the question of how effective it is to incorporate a concept related to individual citizens into state national policy and to seek legal means of influencing citizens' identities. The identified issue concerning the conceptual and categorical apparatus necessitates independent scholarly investigation.

Historical truth is not explicitly named among the traditional values. However, historical memory and intergenerational continuity are indicated as such. Historical truth is closely linked to other values – specifically, patriotism, civic responsibility, service to the home country, and accountability for its fate. The teaching of national history, from a certain perspective, serves as a tool for

⁶ Paragraph "g" of Section 4.2 from the Strategy of State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2025.

instilling patriotism, civic consciousness, and solidarity among citizens. However, a number of ambiguous questions arise: *Can historical truth* and *historical memory* be universal values inherent to identity? How do historical truth and historical memory relate to constitutional-legal values and moral values? What legal means are most optimal for their universalization? What is the relationship between freedom of speech and historical truth?

It seems that historical truth can be viewed as an ideological construct inherent to civic identity; however, for its universalization as a value at the state level, official assessments of key events significant to Russian statehood must be developed. It is generally the school and university education systems that serve as the main conduits for these positions. This is why it is extremely important to create a scientifically substantiated historiographical model of political and legal knowledge and to implement it into cognitive technologies for value formation among targeted groups, such as schoolchildren and students. *Historical memory* is part of historical consciousness and societal awareness as a whole. In the context of civic identity, historical truth is linked to the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of ethnic groups in Russia and the continuity of their historical traditions. Memory, to some extent, acquires practical significance, becoming a resource for statebuilding and enhancing public well-being (Golovashina 2024: 42). The formation of identity is based on traditional values; however, identity may also encompass other value foundations that do not contradict Russian law. Researchers identify values such as solidarity, communal unity, national identity, reunion with compatriots, trust, and others as part of this framework (Semenova et al. 2023).

A significant event in light of the pressing issues of politics of memory was the adoption of *the Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Historical Enlightenment* in 2024⁷. Historical enlightenment is distinguished from education and is defined as the dissemination of historical knowledge aimed at forming an understanding of the past that would constitute a common civic identity and collective historical memory. This definition aligns with

⁷ Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Historical Education, approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated May 8, 2024, No. 314, *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 2024, no. 20, art. 2587. (in Russ.).

the socio-value model of the current Constitution. The document reflects traces of the Eurasian idea of socio-political corporatism and the potential for realizing geopolitical opportunities within the spatial system of Russia-Eurasia. Russia positions itself as a civilization-state that unites peoples across Eurasia into a singular cultural-historical community. Centripetal vectors are established within the framework of the Union State and the CIS, based on spiritual, moral, and cultural-historical values, with the aim of countering ideological and informational aggression against Russia. The institutional foundation for this implementation consists of the entities involved in historical enlightenment policy and the *Interdepartmental Commission for Historical Enlightenment*, established in 2021.

In the addresses of the President of the Russian Federation since 2020, the theme of traditional values has been raised, along with indications of necessary measures: advocating for and defending spiritual and moral values, revising history textbooks, improving the quality of history courses and methodological resources, allocating funds for the renovation of cultural centers, libraries, and museums in rural areas, countering historical falsification in the context of information warfare, and supporting the development of culture in newly formed regions⁸. Thus, these addresses, presented in a strategic planning format, define the forthcoming vectors of development for the Russian state⁹.

Almost all the documents examined in this article mention historical and cultural values, among which historical truth occupies a significant place. The protection of this value is essential for ensuring Russia's national security. By safeguarding historical truth, as well as historical, cultural, and moral values, the state ensures national unity. However, the existing regulatory framework is insufficient for establishing a memory policy. At the legislative

⁸ Message of the President of the Russian Federation dated April 21, 2021, available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/46794 (accessed October 30, 2024) (in Russ.); Message of the President of the Russian Federation dated February 21, 2023, available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49010 (accessed October 30, 2024) (in Russ.); Message of the President of the Russian Federation dated February 19, 2024, available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/50431 (accessed October 30, 2024). (in Russ.).

⁹ Article 15 of the Federal Law dated June 28, 2014, No. 172-FZ, "On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation." *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, July 3, 2014, p. 15. (in Russ.).

level, definitions of objects deserving legal protection within the framework of Russia's politics of memory have not been formulated (definition for concepts like *historical truth* or *minimizing heroism in the defense of the home country* is lacking; although, individual offenses are established, among others). Furthermore, the institutional foundation for politics of memory is not clearly defined: while almost all executive bodies are involved in its implementation, a coordinating structure has not been created, and there is no consistent delineation of the competences of these bodies (Elizarov 2014: 36). Additionally, there is no clearly articulated mechanism for implementing politics of memory. It is challenging to track the effectiveness of such policy since the performance indicators in strategic planning documents are provided only for certain policy directions. There is an urgent need for expert-analytical support for decision-making regarding issues of historical truth (Rattur 2024: 277).

It would be advisable to adopt a *memory policy* concept to address the aforementioned issues, which would outline: the principles for implementing this policy within the country and beyond its borders; the rights and responsibilities of public authority bodies in its realization; measures to protect historical truth, prevent the distortion of historical facts, and safeguard historical memory; accountability measures; and monitoring and performance indicators for the implementation of the concept. It is sensible to normatively define historical policy as "a set of actions carried out by the subjects of state historical policy aimed at forming and disseminating official representations of Russia's history within society, supporting and promoting scientific research in the field of Russian history, and shaping individuals based on the value system inherent to Russian society and love for the home country". The concept may be adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation based on its general powers to organize the implementation of domestic policy, its authority in the protection of family and childhood, and its powers in the fields of education, science, and culture¹⁰.

The practice of legally formalizing historical policy through general documents is not widespread globally. In countries with a

¹⁰ Federal Constitutional Law dated November 6, 2020, No. 4-FKZ, "On the Government of the Russian Federation", *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, September 9, 2020, pp. 13, 15, 21. (in Russ.).

Romano-Germanic legal system that implement an official state historical policy, such policies are typically articulated through several legislative acts addressing specific aspects. This method of formulation has gained traction in European Union countries (e.g., France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, etc.), in Latin American countries (Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, etc.), in Africa (e.g., Tanzania), and in the member states of the CIS (Kazakhstan, the Republic of Belarus, etc.). The experience of creating general documents will be analyzed further below.

Historical policy as implemented by European states varies significantly in content. These differences can be schematically outlined as follows: the core of the historical policy in Western European countries is the acknowledgment of the Holocaust and the responsibility for it, whereas in Eastern European countries, it is the necessity of overcoming the consequences of two totalitarian regimes – the Nazi and the Communist (Lifanov 2021: 80-85). In the Kingdom of Spain, the core of historical memory is encapsulated in the so-called *Historical Memory Law*, which recognizes the rights of individuals who became victims of persecution or violence during the Civil War or dictatorship, and establishes compensatory measures for such individuals ¹¹. The institutional foundation consists of *the Documentary Center for Historical Memory*, which operates under the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

In the Republic of Poland, state historical policy is normatively established by the 2016 Law on the Prohibition of the Propagation of Communism or Other Totalitarian Systems through the Names of Organizations, Units, Public Buildings, Structures, Devices, and Monuments¹²; the 2009 Law on Amendments to the Law on the Pension Provision for Professional Soldiers and Their Families;

¹¹Law 52/2007, of December 26, which recognizes and expands rights and establishes measures in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship, available at: https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/12/27/pdfs/A53410-53416.pdf (accessed November 04, 2024). (in Spanich).

¹² Act of 1 April 2016 on the Prohibition of the promotion of communism or other totalitarian regime by the names of organizational units, auxiliary units of the municipality, buildings, objects and public facilities and monuments, see: *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 2016, poz., 744, available at: https://ipn.gov.pl/download/1/110400/Ustawazdnia1kwietnia2016.pdf (accessed November 04, 2024). (in Polish).

and the Law on the Pension Provision for Employees of the Police, the Internal Security Agency, the Intelligence Agency, the Military Counterintelligence Service, the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, the Border Guard, the State Protection Bureau, the State Fire Service, and the Penitentiary Service and Their Families, which altered the payment system for individuals who supported the Communist regime¹³. Additionally, the Criminal Code includes provisions on socalled "Communist crimes" that were incorporated in 1998, among others. Since 1999, the Institute of National Remembrance and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage have been operational, and since 2020, the Institute of Heritage of National Thought has been established. Since 2015, the development of a Polish historical policy strategy has been part of the political agenda. According to the transcript of the official meeting regarding this strategy's development (Belvedere, Warsaw, 17.11.2015), the idea aligns with the necessity to uphold the values of the Polish people¹⁴. However, the Strategy was never officially adopted.

At the level of the European Union, an attempt has been made to utilize the agenda of historical memory as a tool for shaping a pan-European identity. Initially, the focus was on the Holocaust, which was termed "a unique historical reference point that will forever remain in the memory of the peoples of Europe" 15. Subsequently, in 2009, there was a shift towards commemorating the vic-

 $^{^{13}}$ Act of 23 January 2009 amending the act on pension provision for professional soldiers and their families and the act on pension provision for police officers, the Internal Security Agency, the Intelligence Agency, the Military Counter-Intelligence Service, the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, the Border Guard, the Government Protection Bureau, the State Fire Service and the Prison Service and their families, see: *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 2009, N° 24, poz. 145, available at: https://www.gov.pl/web/zermswia/ustawa-z-dnia-23-stycznia-2009-r (accessed November 04, 2024). (in Polish).

¹⁴ Recording of the meeting inaugurating the work on the establishment of the strategy of Polish historical policy in Belvedere, available at: URL: https://www.prezydent.pl/storage/file/core_files/2021/8/5/e283c8 9495b5691530c7545261aab539/zapis_spotkania_dot._strategii_polskiej_polityki_historycznej.pdf (accessed November 04, 2024). (in Polish).

¹⁵ European Parliament resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-semitism and racism (2005, January 27), available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2005-0018_EN.html (accessed November 04, 2024).

tims of totalitarian regimes¹⁶. Finally, in the resolution adopted on January 17, 2024, by the European Parliament titled *On European Historical Consciousness*, an effort was made to use memory issues as a means of reinforcing the value foundations of the European Union. This resolution marks a transition from a European *culture of memory*, which is essentially top-down and aims to dictate what Europeans should remember, to a grassroots and citizen-driven culture of memory grounded in common European principles and values¹⁷.

In the post-Soviet space, trends similar to those in Russia regarding the development of legislation on politics of memory are observed in the Republic of Belarus, where the concept of historical memory was incorporated into the constitutional text in 2022. According to Article 15 of the Constitution, "the state ensures the preservation of historical truth and memory of the heroic feats of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War", while Article 54 states that "the preservation of historical memory of the heroic past of the Belarusian people and patriotism is the duty of every citizen of the Republic of Belarus"18. In 2022, the Republican Council on Historical Policy was established under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus¹⁹. Attempts have been made to officially solidify historical policy. In Chapter 12, Preservation of National Foundations and Values, this policy is identified as an element of national security, emphasizing that it is aimed at "cementing the Belarusian national conception of the country's

¹⁶ European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism (2009, April 2), available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2009-0213_EN.html (accessed November 04, 2024).

¹⁷ European Parliament resolution on European historical consciousness (2024, January 17), available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0030_EN.html (accessed November 04, 2024).

¹⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, 1994, available at: https://pravo.by/pravovaya-informatsiya/normativnye-dokumenty/konstitutsiya-respubliki-belarus/ (accessed November 04, 2024). (in Russ.).

¹⁹ Directive of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 22rp dated February 4, 2022, "On the Republican Council for Historical Policy under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus", available at: https://president.gov.by/fp/v1/825/document-thumb_37825_original/37825.1643988447.61b64231b0.pdf (accessed November 4, 2024). (in Russ.).

historical past and the Belarusian model of memory, both within Belarus and beyond its borders." ²⁰ The Concept of the History of Belarusian Statehood has been developed at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (Danilovich 2018: 9-15), which essentially aims to establish the uniqueness of the Belarusian state and distance it from Russia.

Despite the fact that, to date, the experience of adopting general legislative acts mediating historical policy has not gained widespread acceptance worldwide, it appears that in Russia, the Concept of Historical Policy as a strategic planning document could become an effective tool for shaping civic identity and embodying historical memory and truth as constitutional and legal values within the legal framework.

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²⁰ Resolution of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus dated March 18, 2019, No. 1, "On the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus", available at: https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=P219 s0001 (accessed November 4, 2024). (in Russ).

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