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## **AXIOLOGICAL VECTORS IN THE AMERICAN AND RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL DISCOURSE: THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS AND THE ADDRESS TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL ASSEMBLY COMPARED**

### Abstract

Presidential discourse is an indicative of axiological and other developmental vectors of a linguocultural community. It informs one about the main social, cultural, economic, and political changes in a country. In this respect, the annual State of the Union Address in the USA and the Address to the Federal Assembly in Russia are seen as the highlights of the political calendar in both countries, as these statements summarise the most relevant issues and enable their respective leaders to elaborate on their vision of their nation's future. This paper aims to analyse and compare the axiological vectors developed in the given presidential addresses in both Russia and the USA in the period from 2009 to 2015. It traces not only the most relevant values promoted by the political leaders, but also any axiological changes that occurred in the eventful years under investigation. The results of the research inform one about the current axiological identities of the linguocultural communities in question and the changing vectors of their development.

Key words: values, presidential discourse, State of the Union Address, Address to Federal Assembly

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## INTRODUCTION

Values, the fundamental elements of social morality, are important constituents of a personality. They are “programmed early in our lives”<sup>2</sup> and are irrational, “although we may subjectively feel our own to be perfectly rational.”<sup>3</sup> Values tend to be the guiding principles in decision-making:

Values are ends, not means, and their desirability is either non-consciously taken for granted . . . or seen as a direct derivation from one’s experience or from some external authority.<sup>4</sup>

Values are important both individually and nationally as they make up an *a priori* matrix of human behaviour and serve as a tool of self-identification: “they inspire decisions and action or provoke feelings of guilt when behavior does not comply with their requirements.”<sup>5</sup>

Human values represent an abstract category which is unlikely to be easily defined or outlined with precision. They are a “deceptively difficult subject about which to write”.<sup>6</sup> As a mental construct, values may differ from nation to nation, or culture to culture. Even the universal values inscribed on the main international documents, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, can be understood with minor or major deviations. One of the simplest definitions of values frames them as cognitive representations of desirable, abstract, trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives.<sup>7</sup> This is in line with Rokeach’s definition, namely:

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<sup>2</sup> G. Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*, Thousand Oaks, CA 2001, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> D.J. Bem, *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs*, Belmont, CA 1970, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> J. Becquart-Leclercq, “Absolute Values and Practical Problems: Dilemmas of Local Politics in France”, *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, vol. 3, no. 2, Norms and Values (1982), p. 218.

<sup>6</sup> M.D. Barr, *Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The Tepid War*, London and New York 2002, p. 241.

<sup>7</sup> Sh.H. Schwartz, “Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries”, in: M. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, New York 1992, pp. 1–65.

To say that a person “has a value” is to say that he has an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence.<sup>8</sup>

Kluckhohn described the phenomenon as “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions”.<sup>9</sup> All the three definitions narrow the term down to a preferable mode of behaviour or principle, whether it is desired individually or as a part of the social agreement. For this reason, values can relate (or not relate) to cultures and mentalities.

The abstract nature of values does not prevent them from becoming increasingly important regarding politics. Values are “envisaged as basic axes that orientate human ideologies and practices”<sup>10</sup>; they are “necessary referents that cannot be eliminated from the political scene”.<sup>11</sup> The strengthening of the role of values is in line with the personalization of politics, which encompasses the two processes. On the one hand, candidates’ personalities become the centre of voters’ attention. On the other hand, the individual personalities of voters become decisive in one’s political choices.<sup>12</sup> Hence, basic personal values are seen “as the crucial grounding of ideology”.<sup>13</sup>

The importance of values in political discourses comprises the motivation behind this research, which investigates the values promoted by means of top-tier political addresses. Our objective is to compare the axiological vectors in the annual presidential addresses in Russia and the USA during the period from 2009 to 2015. We start from the premise that the two cultures may have a converging or diverging understanding of identical values or vary in the range of values coded within political statements.

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<sup>8</sup> M. Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change*, San Francisco, CA 1972, pp. 159–160.

<sup>9</sup> C. Kluckhohn, *Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification*, in: T. Parsons, E. Shils (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action*, Cambridge, 1951, p. 395.

<sup>10</sup> J. Becquart-Leclercq, “Absolute Values . . .”, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> G.V. Caprara, P. Zimbardo, “Personalizing politics: A congruency model of political preference”, *American Psychologist*, 59 (2004), pp. 581–594.

<sup>13</sup> G.V. Caprara et al., “Personality and Politics: Values, Traits, and Political Choice”, *Political Psychology*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2006), p. 2.

The nature of the research predetermined the selection of the material, which consists of the two sets of texts: the State of the Union Addresses by the American President and Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly by the Russian President. We have chosen them because both of these sets are annual addresses delivered by the presidents to the respective parliaments and nations. They summarise the previous year and give the presidents' vision of the next, outline the governmental policy, and reinforce the primary values of the nation, all of which make them suitable for the analysis of axiological vectors.

The State of the Union Address and the Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly hold a significant ritual capacity. In analyzing presidential inaugural addresses, Karlyn K. Campbell and Kathleen H. Jamieson call them epideictic speeches because they are

delivered on ceremonial occasions, fuse past and future in present contemplation, affirm or praise the shared principles that will guide the incoming administration, ask the audience to "gaze upon" traditional values, employ an elegant, literary language, and rely on "heightening of effect," that is, on amplification and reaffirmation of what is already known and believed.<sup>14</sup>

The same relates to the addresses considered here. Both the State of the Union Address and the Address to the Russian Federal Assembly are delivered on the specific dates annually; they constitute a ceremony of their own kind. In Russia, the address sometimes coincides with the anniversary of the Russian Constitution (as in 2013). The addresses in both countries are supposed to contemplate on the past (including the recent past) and show the perspective of the future through the current situation. They employ finely written texts, give an overview of values, and reaffirm the nation's beliefs and aspirations. In all respects, these speeches are epideictic and ritual as they constitute not only a linguistic, but a political act. Elena Šeigal labels such texts a political performance.<sup>15</sup> It is, therefore, important to keep in mind the performative nature of the analysed addresses, as it predetermines both the structure and content of the texts to a significant degree.

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<sup>14</sup> K.K. Campbell, K.H. Jamieson, "Inaugurating the Presidency", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2, (1985), p. 395.

<sup>15</sup> E. Šeigal, "Inauguracijoje obrasćenije kak žanr političeskogo diskursa", *Žanry reči*, 3 (2002), pp. 205–214.

In this paper, we analyse the texts produced in the period from 2009 to 2015. In Russia, this period encompasses the presidencies of Dmitri Medvedev and Vladimir Putin, while in the USA it incorporates almost the entire presidency of Barack Obama. It may seem that the selection criteria are not adequate, because the political course of President Putin in Russia is different from the one of Dmitri Medvedev, while American discourse is represented by a president affiliated with the Democratic Party, whose political course would be in line with the course of his party, omitting the position of the Republican Party. However, the aim of this research is to uncover the axiological vectors in the USA and Russia over seven years as this period was intense regarding political events and could influence the values the politicians adhered to. Other considerations, such as political homogeneity, were not taken into account.

Structurally, the paper consists of the three main parts: the values in the Russian addresses, the values in the US addresses, as well as the concluding section, where a comparison of the two axiological systems takes place.

## 1. AXIOLOGICAL VECTORS IN STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESSES OF 2009–2015

The United States of America is a democratic country with all the respective attributes such as civil society, freedoms and liberties, rule of law, etc.:

Democracy is often touted as diminishing the likelihood of war, protecting human freedom, and facilitating economic growth. . . . It is fair to say that there is a strong propensity to associate democracy with a wide array of activities and outcomes that people value.<sup>16</sup>

Both inside and outside the country, people expect the USA to adhere to certain characteristic features of a democratic state, including the democratic values, which are the foundation of the American political system, permeating all the strata of state management. Therefore, the State of the Union Addresses discussed below are also premised from these fundamental democratic values.

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<sup>16</sup> I. Shapiro, H.C. Casiano, "Promises and disappointments: reconsidering democracy's value", in: I. Shapiro, H.C. Casiano (eds.), *Democracy's Value*, Cambridge 1999, p. 1.

## 1.1. State of the Union Addresses

### The State of the Union Address is

a communication between the President and Congress in which the chief executive reports on the current conditions of the United States and provides policy proposals for the upcoming legislative year.<sup>17</sup>

It is an official address at the joint session of the US Congress, which is a part of the presidential constitutional duty according to Article II Section 3:

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.<sup>18</sup>

Though originally it was intended for the Congress only, the latest technological advances have enabled presidents to deliver their State of the Union Address to the whole nation.

One should keep in mind the ritual nature of the address. It is set in a specific period of time between January 3 and February 2, at 9 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, in the House Chamber of the Capitol. The content of the address is ritualised too. Most American presidents “incorporate common rhetorical arguments and ceremonial traditions”<sup>19</sup> with “bipartisanship, attention to both the past and the future, and optimism”<sup>20</sup> being in the centre of the discussion.

Karlyn K. Campbell and Kathleen H. Jamieson have revealed the three most recurrent rhetorical arguments in State of the Union Addresses are namely: public meditations on values; assessments of information and issues; and policy recommendations.<sup>21</sup> Obviously, the ceremonial character of the State of the Union Address predetermines the reinforcement of national values.

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<sup>17</sup> C.J. Shogan, T.H. Neale, *The President's State of the Union Address: Tradition, Function, and Policy Implications*, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> “The Constitution of the United States”, at <http://constitutionus.com>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>19</sup> C.J. Shogan, T.H. Neale, *The President's State . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> K.K. Campbell, K.H. Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*, Chicago and London 2008, pp. 137–139.

## 1.2. Liberal Values

It is clear that the State of the Union Address, as any other ceremonial address, incorporates numerous references to values. However, the values conveyed in the address depend on the party affiliation of the president delivering the speech, since the values promoted by the Democratic Party (liberals) are different from the values of the Republican Party (conservatives). As this research emphasises the State of the Union Addresses delivered by a liberal president, we need to discuss liberalism and liberal values.

Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote that the

liberal party . . . believes that, as new conditions and problems arise beyond the power of men and women to meet as individuals, it becomes the duty of the Government itself to find new remedies with which to meet them.<sup>22</sup>

George Lakoff distinguishes between theoretical and political liberalism, whereas the latter

characterizes the cluster of political positions supported by people called “liberals” in our everyday political discourse: support for social programs, environmentalism; public education; equal rights for women; gays, and ethnic minorities; affirmative action; the pro-choice position on abortion; and so on.<sup>23</sup>

Contemporary understanding of liberalism also includes such characteristics as “a premium on civil liberties”<sup>24</sup> and counsel “against government intrusion in private matters of personal and moral choice”<sup>25</sup>, “a genuine respect and concern for the thoughts and feelings of the common people”<sup>26</sup>, commitment to “freedom, justice and peace”<sup>27</sup>, and “governmental intervention in the economy”.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> F.D. Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt. 1938 Volume, The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism: with a Special Introduction and Explanatory Notes by President Roosevelt [Book 1]*, New York 1941, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> G. Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberal and Conservatives Think*, Chicago and London 1996, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> J. Losco, R. Baker, *AMGOV 2009*, New York 2009, p. 141.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> J. Taylor, *Where Did the Party Go?*, Columbia 2006, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> D.M. Shea, J.C. Green, C.E. Smith, *Living Democracy: Brief National Edition*, Upper Saddle River, NJ 2007, p. 360.

George Lakoff, in *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, employs a conceptual metaphor to distinguish the morality-based patterns of the Republicans' and Democrats' behaviour, which follow two different family models. The morality of liberals puts emphasis on the Nurturant Parent model, while "at the center of the conservative worldview is a Strict Father model."<sup>29</sup> The former model suggests that "love, empathy, and nurturance are primary, and children become responsible, self-disciplined and self-reliant through being cared for, respected, and caring for others, both in their family and in their community."<sup>30</sup> The latter "posits a traditional nuclear family, with the father having primary responsibility for supporting and protecting the family as well as the authority to set overall policy, to set strict rules for the behavior of children, and to enforce the rules."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, we may expect to see the Nurturant Parent model dominating the analysed texts as they were delivered by a liberal president.

### 1.3. Values in the State of the Union Addresses of 2009–2015

This part of the paper is devoted to the analysis of the values coded in the State of the Union Addresses of 2009–2015 given by President Barack Obama. These statements contain sentiments unique to the persona of the politician, those that can be attributed to the values of the Democrats, as well as values such as bipartisanship, which the president is supposed to attend to because of the ceremonial nature of the address. The axiological component in the State of the Union Address is highly prominent. Values are seen as a foundation of American democracy: "living our values doesn't make us weaker, it makes us safer and it makes us stronger."<sup>32</sup> Moreover, values perform the so-called parole function, whereby a person is categorised as a "friend" or "foe", and an equal attitude can be expected only if the common values of the society are observed: "if you adhere to our common values, you should be treated no different than anyone

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<sup>29</sup> G. Lakoff, *Moral Politics . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33–34.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2009, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>, 9 September 2016.



else.”<sup>33</sup> Below, we analyse the main values from the State of the Union Addresses of 2009–2015 grouped according to the principles of proximity or opposition.

### 1.3.1. Leadership

One of the innate characteristics of all the addresses is patriotism regarding the American nation and its values. This manifests not only in praising the country and its people, but also in delivering a competitive edge to the discourse. In the political addresses, America is portrayed as better than any other nation: “we need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world.”<sup>34</sup> In the universe of American politics, the US is always victorious: “if the playing field is level, I promise you – America will always win.”<sup>35</sup>

The superiority feature shows itself in the concept of American leadership. Svetlana Ivanova connects the notion to 15 dominants (nodes) in American political discourse, including help and support, management, exceptionalism, power, influence, etc.<sup>36</sup> These nodes contribute to the image of the American nation as a leader: “It is time for America to lead again.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, American leadership is presented as something natural and expected across the world: “the eyes of all people in all nations are once again upon us . . . waiting for us to lead.”<sup>38</sup>

### 1.3.2. People

As president of a democratic country, Barack Obama highlights the rule of the people and the importance of individual effort for the prosperity of

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<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2011, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>35</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2012, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>36</sup> S.V. Ivanova, “Chitroje slovo leadership, ili eščo ray o nacionalno-kulturnoj specifikje”, *Političeskaja lingvistika*, 3 (2014), pp. 62–65.

<sup>37</sup> B. Obama, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2009, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

the nation. The politician frequently incorporates himself and his cabinet into the scope of the whole nation by employing the personal pronoun “we” of the first person plural: “We will rebuild, we will recover.”<sup>39</sup> He also addresses the nation in a straightforward fashion: “You don’t need to hear another list of statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because you live it every day.”<sup>40</sup>

People constitute a value of their own, as an object of care and support. The projects suggested by Barack Obama are presented as the intention to make people’s lives easier. To reinforce his connection to common people, the President gives examples of regular Americans. His most frequent examples come from the lives of teachers, entrepreneurs, soldiers, workers, farmers. The politician manages to increase the value of each American by giving specific names and telling their stories:

When Bryan Ritterby was laid off from his job making furniture, he . . . found work at Energetx, a wind turbine manufacturer in Michigan . . .<sup>41</sup>

This example was also used to highlight how new innovative industries make the lives of American workers better by creating new jobs.

### 1.3.3. Hard Work, Courage, Conviction, Strength, and Resilience

It has already been mentioned that the addresses delivered by Barack Obama are very patriotic. The politician’s pride is connected primarily with American people, who constitute a value of their own kind. The reasons for praising Americans are listed in the form of the values inherent to the nation, such as strength, courage, and resilience: “We are strong. We are resilient. We are American”<sup>42</sup>; “. . . stubborn resilience in the face of adversity”<sup>43</sup>; “These were the times that tested the courage of our convictions.”<sup>44</sup> Besides, Americans are continuously referred to as “the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> B. Obama, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2012, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

hardest-working people on Earth"<sup>45</sup>. On the one hand, Obama praises Americans for their qualities. On the other hand, the politician encourages them to cling to the same values by repeatedly introducing a slogan, which sums up the makeup of the nation: "We are not quitters"<sup>46</sup>; "We do not quit."<sup>47</sup>

#### 1.3.4. Freedom, Equality, Justice, Honesty, and Human Rights

Freedom and equality are among the categories traditionally associated with democracy, whereas equality is even more closely associated with the Democratic Party: "Democrats stand for core equality; an ideal that helps anchor the ideological nucleus of the American political system."<sup>48</sup> Both of them are highlighted in Barack Obama's addresses: "For America must always stand on the side of freedom and human dignity."<sup>49</sup>

Democrats also connect equality to justice: "Justice and equality, two principle concerns . . . in the concept of government redistribution of wealth."<sup>50</sup> As a representative of the Democratic Party, Obama promotes "justice, and fairness, and equality under the law"<sup>51</sup> and claims that Americans "have a profound commitment to justice".<sup>52</sup> These basic values, along with human rights, are promoted as universal not only for the US, but for the entire world: "That's why . . . we support the human rights of the women marching through the streets of Iran."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2009, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>48</sup> K.G. Trautman, *The Underdog in American Politics: The Democratic Party and Liberal Values*, New York 2010, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>50</sup> K.G. Trautman, *The Underdog* . . . , p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2014, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>52</sup> *Idem*, "Joint Session of Congress", 2015, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>53</sup> *Idem*, "Joint Session of Congress", 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

### 1.3.5. Collectivism, Unity, a Bipartisan Approach vs. Individuality

The name of the country, namely the United States of America, as well as its motto engraved on the national emblem *E pluribus unum* (Latin for “out of many, one”) emphasises the collective effort and the unity of the nation. In line with tradition, Barack Obama reinforces the necessity to hold to this value:

This nation is great because we built it together. This nation is great because we worked as a team. This nation is great because we get each other’s backs. And if we hold fast to that truth, in this moment of trial, there is no challenge too great; no mission too hard. As long as we are joined in common purpose, as long as we maintain our common resolve, our journey moves forward, and our future is hopeful, and the state of our Union will always be strong.<sup>54</sup>

In this example, Obama contends that the citizens of the USA are “the authors of the next great chapter of our American story”<sup>55</sup>, who prevail because they “chose to move forward as one nation, as one people”<sup>56</sup> and “live the idea that we are our brother’s keeper and our sister’s keeper.”<sup>57</sup>

Though presidential rhetoric is unsurprisingly connected to the party interests,<sup>58</sup> the State of the Union tradition allows the nation’s leader to set aside his political affiliation and encourage bipartisanship:

By claiming a willingness to reach across the aisle, Presidents can remind listeners that their constitutional authority includes a mandate to protect the welfare of all citizens.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2012, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>55</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2013, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>57</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2015, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>58</sup> M. Eshbaugh-Soha, B. Rottinghaus, “Presidential Position Taking and the Puzzle of Representation”, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2013), pp. 1–15.

<sup>59</sup> C.J. Shogan, T.H. Neale, *The President’s State . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

Besides, bipartisanship has been one of the major campaigning tools of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, which echoed in his State of the Union Addresses:

These aren't Republican values or Democratic values that they're living by; business values or labor values. They're American values.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, "our values are mutually related and form value systems or hierarchies, but these systems need not be in a state of harmony: most people simultaneously hold several conflicting values"<sup>61</sup>, such as collectivity and individualism, both of which are innate to the American nation: "It's the spirit of citizenship – the recognition that . . . we can pursue our individual dreams, but still come together as one American family."<sup>62</sup> In Obama's vision, one is a prerequisite of the other: "we have . . . placed our collective shoulder to the wheel of progress – to create and build and expand the possibilities of individual achievement."<sup>63</sup>

### 1.3.6. Promise and Opportunity vs. Responsibility

A similar opposition of values is opportunity/promise versus responsibility for these two values. Both opportunity and responsibility stem from the individuality of the American dream and the nature of the US democracy: "We are a nation that has seen promise amid peril, and claimed opportunity from ordeal."<sup>64</sup> However, the nation is supposed to take up responsibility:

What is required now is for this country to pull together, confront boldly the challenges we face, and take responsibility for our future once more.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>61</sup> G. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* . . . , *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>62</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2013, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>63</sup> *Idem*, "Joint Session of Congress", 2014, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>64</sup> *Idem*, "Joint Session of Congress", 2009, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

### 1.3.7. Progress and Renewal

Despite the promise of keeping traditional values of American democracy, Obama also promotes continuous development and movement, yielding a Hegelian dialectic conflict between the opposing ideas of preservation and transformation. Consequently, Obama states that looking back in history, American “progress was inevitable”<sup>66</sup> and that America is “poised for progress”.<sup>67</sup> Renewal and change are even more important to his political career: “I campaigned on the promise of change – change we can believe in, the slogan went.”<sup>68</sup> At the same time, it is acknowledged that transformation is difficult: “But this is America. We don’t do what’s easy. We do what is necessary to move this country forward.”<sup>69</sup>

### 1.3.8. Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Independence and Environmentalism

The promise of renewal and progress in the economy is linked to technological innovation and entrepreneurship. The former is also seen as a prerequisite for American leadership: “The first step in winning the future is encouraging American innovation.”<sup>70</sup> At the same time, innovation is portrayed as an innate feature of the American design: “In America, innovation doesn’t just change our lives. It is how we make our living.”<sup>71</sup> Obama praises the nation for giving birth to the outstanding innovators in technology:

We’re the nation that put cars in driveways and computers in offices; the nation of Edison and the Wright brothers; of Google and Facebook.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> B. Obama, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>67</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2011, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>69</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2009, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>70</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2011, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

In a similar fashion, Obama sees entrepreneurship as a primary development driver, which needs protection and encouragement: “Let’s do more to help the entrepreneurs and small business owners who create most new jobs in America.”<sup>73</sup> Just like innovation, entrepreneurship is named among the primary values of American society “We’re a nation that says, ‘I might not have a lot of money, but I have this great idea for a new company.’”<sup>74</sup>

According to Obama, both innovation and entrepreneurship are a matter of economic survival and a tool to ensure American independence and leadership: “I do not accept a future where the jobs and industries of tomorrow take root beyond our borders.”<sup>75</sup> At the same time, it will help the country to become environmentally friendlier: “We have gone from a bystander to a leader in the fight against climate change.”<sup>76</sup>

### 1.3.9. Diversity and Tolerance

Some of the values promoted by the President result from the so-called partisan presidency.<sup>77</sup> Barack Obama, a partisan political figure, represents party ideology as in the case with immigration policy and minorities. Obama finds “unity in our [American] incredible diversity”<sup>78</sup>, depicting the immigration as a core principle of American design:

In the end, it’s our ideals, our values that built America – values that allowed us to forge a nation made up of immigrants from every corner of the globe.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> B. Obama, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2013, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>74</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2011, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>75</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2009, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>76</sup> *Idem*, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>77</sup> R.M. Skinner, “George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 123 (2008), pp. 605–622.

<sup>78</sup> B. Obama, “Joint Session of Congress”, 2010, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

Obama reinforces the rights of ethnic and sexual minorities when he repeatedly condemns the law that denies them serving in the army:

When you put on that uniform, it doesn't matter if you're black or white; Asian, Latino, Native American; conservative, liberal; rich, poor; gay, straight.<sup>80</sup>

Any persecution based on gender, religion or sexual orientation is considered inappropriate: "We . . . condemn the persecution of women, or religious minorities, or people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender."<sup>81</sup>

## 2. AXIOLOGICAL VECTORS IN THE ADDRESSES TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL ASSEMBLY OF 2009–2015

### 2.1. Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly

The Address to the Russian Federal Assembly is delivered by the President of the Russian Federation to both chambers of the Russian Parliament – the Duma and Federation Council. Just like the State of the Union, the address is a constitutional responsibility of the head of the country, according to Chapter 4, Article 84:

The President of the Russian Federation shall: address the Federal Assembly with annual messages on the situation in the country, on the guidelines of the internal and foreign policy of the State.<sup>82</sup>

Though the date of the address is not fixed, it is usually held in December.

The address defines the main vectors of domestic and foreign policy of the country. However, despite the constitutional background, the legal status of the address is not clear. Since it has not been granted legal force by

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<sup>80</sup> B. Obama, "Joint Session of Congress", 2012, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>81</sup> *Idem*, "Joint Session of Congress", 2015, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>82</sup> "The Constitution of the Russian Federation", at <http://constitution.ru/en/10003000-01.htm>, 9 September 2016.



the public authorities, the influence of the address depends on how much the president can influence the political environment. Hence, it is the social, political, and ideological stance of the head of the state.<sup>83</sup>

Despite its unclear legal status, the Address to the Russian Federal Assembly is a ceremonial speech just as the State of Union Address is in the USA. At the same time, the democratic traditions in the Russian Federation number only several decades, which is not long enough to shape a well-established custom. The Russian President's Address to the Federal Assembly is, therefore, less ritualised compared to the State of Union Address in the USA. Moreover, the fluctuating date and less rigid content structure make it a more independent document.

## 2.2. Deliverers of the 2009–2015 Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly

This research focuses on the addresses delivered in the period from 2009 to 2015 by President Dmitri Medvedev (2009–2011) and the current Russian President, Vladimir Putin (2012–2015). The politicians are known to be close collaborators with a similar vision. The widely-discussed term “tandem” was introduced to denote the degree of their cooperation capacity, when Dmitri Medvedev was elected Russian President, while Vladimir Putin gave his consent to take charge of the parliamentary majority, as well as the government. This binary model provided for the peculiarity of political leadership in Russia, whereby the power was split between the two national leaders, as well as the continuity of policies.<sup>84</sup>

Both politicians are connected with United Russia, a conservative party founded in 2011. It is often characterised as a “dominant party” or “party of power”<sup>85</sup>, because it is led by the highest authorities in the country: Vladimir Putin since 2008 and Dmitri Medvedev since 2012. In 2007 parliamentary elections, the party declared a motto “Putin's Plan – Russia's

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<sup>83</sup> M.Ju. Pogorelko, “Normativno-političeskije i normativno-pravovije istočniki i osnovanija”, *Naučny expert*, 5 (2008), p. 34.

<sup>84</sup> O.F. Leychenko, “Tandem kak osobennost' političeskogo liderstva v sovremennoj rossii”, *Gumanitaryje issledovanija Vostočnoj Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke*, 4 (2010), pp. 90–94.

<sup>85</sup> Th. Remington, “Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin”, in: R. Sakwa (ed.), *Power and policy in Putin's Russia*, London and New York 2009, pp. 81–110.

victory” to promote the so-called Putin Plan to strengthen the country.<sup>86</sup> It clearly indicates that the party is more dependent on the presidential leadership, unlike American parties which often predetermine the presidential policy and values. Hence, it is safe to assume that the Russian presidential address and the values reinforced through it are not bound by the ties of party affiliation.

### 2.3. Values in the Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly of 2009–2015

This section reveals the values coded in the Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly delivered by Dmitri Medvedev and Vladimir Putin. Our analysis revealed that the axiological vector within the period of 2009–2015 changed its direction together with the change of the political leader in 2012 and under the burden of external factors. Taking this peculiarity into account, we will repeatedly address the axiological shift within this section.

#### 2.3.1. Democracy, Modernization and Changes

According to the Russian Constitution, the Russian Federation is a democratic state. Therefore, the Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly reinforce the value of democracy. However, with the change of president, the vector of understanding democracy alters as well. In 2009, Dmitri Medvedev guaranteed democracy: “As the guarantor of the Constitution I will continue to do everything possible to strengthen democratic institutions in our country.”<sup>87</sup> Already in 2012, Vladimir Putin specified that Russian democracy differs from the Western model:

Russian democracy is the power of the Russian people, with their own traditions of self-rule, and not the fulfilment of standards imposed on us from the outside.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> B. Gryzlov, “Plan Putina my objazany realizovat’ v polnom objeme”, at <http://web.archive.org/web/20070806115246/http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=120703>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>87</sup> D. Medvedev, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2009, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>88</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

A similar shift is observed with the value of change promised in 2009 by President Medvedev:

We . . . know that change is essential and that what kind of country we will hand down to our children . . . depend on us alone.<sup>89</sup>

In 2012, President Putin confirmed the necessity of the changes, but pointed out that they must be controlled and limited:

The change and modernisation of the political system are natural and even necessary, but . . . it would be inadmissible to allow for the destruction of the state to satisfy this thirst for change.<sup>90</sup>

### 2.3.2. Innovation, Modernization, and Entrepreneurship

Innovation is perceived as a renewal and a driver of the Russian economy by both politicians. In 2009, Dmitri Medvedev claimed that the older economy must give way to a smarter model:

Instead of a primitive raw materials economy we will create a smart economy producing unique knowledge, new goods and technology of use to people.<sup>91</sup>

Innovation in his understanding is also linked to the encouragement of young talent:

I hope the time is not far off when Russia's prosperity will depend on . . . the ability of our state and society to find and encourage talented individuals . . .<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> D. Medvedev, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2009, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>90</sup> V. Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>91</sup> D. Medvedev, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2009, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

Young people are perceived as the ultimate beneficiaries of the innovation because “modernisation is carried out for their sake.”<sup>93</sup>

Entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the means of innovation and modernization:

Russia must create . . . opportunities for . . . small and medium-sized businesses. This would allow us to benefit from innovation . . .<sup>94</sup>

Hence, both politicians are promoting a more favourable attitude to entrepreneurs: “all regions could offer two-year tax holidays to new small businesses.”<sup>95</sup>

### 2.3.3. Civil Society and Social Commitments

Civil society is repeatedly named among the prerequisites for sustainable development by both politicians. President Medvedev highlighted the necessity of creating the proper conditions for this democratic institution: “It is the government’s job to create the necessary environment for the development of civil society.”<sup>96</sup> President Putin expresses the hope that medical workers, educators, scientists and cultural workers will “become the core of a competent and active civil society”.<sup>97</sup>

Social commitments are a recurrent issue in the presidential addresses. The government undertakes to support underprivileged categories of people:

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<sup>93</sup> D. Medvedev, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2010, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/9637>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>94</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2011, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/14088>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>95</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2013, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/19825>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>96</sup> D. Medvedev, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2009, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>97</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

Our priority was and is to support people in difficult circumstances . . . the authorities will continue to carry out social commitments in full.<sup>98</sup>

This support “applies to pensions, measures to support families with children, healthcare, creating a barrier-free environment for disabled people, as well as the development of education and culture.”<sup>99</sup>

#### 2.3.4. Patriotism, Sovereignty, Strong Government, and Independence

Patriotism has become a more prominent feature in the addresses by Vladimir Putin who has repeatedly referred to the necessity to absorb “the nation’s values, history and traditions”.<sup>100</sup> Patriotism is listed among the traditional values, including those which are democratic:

Conscientious work, private property, the freedom of enterprise – these are the same kind of fundamental conservative values as patriotism, and respect for the history, traditions, and culture of one’s country.<sup>101</sup>

In Putin’s addresses, patriotism is often manifested through sovereignty, which has become one of the most prominent values since 2012: “In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Russia must be a sovereign and influential nation amid a new balance of economic, civilisational and military forces.”<sup>102</sup> Presented as a feature of patriotism, sovereignty in Putin’s discourse does not follow the dictionary definition, but acquires a new meaning as a notion rooted

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<sup>98</sup> D. Medvedev, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2009, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>99</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2011, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/14088>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>100</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2013, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/19825>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>101</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2014, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/47173>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>102</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

in Russian history and culture. Thus, the politician claims that although not all nations can afford sovereignty, he declares that it is a prerequisite for national sustainability:

If for some European countries national pride is a long-forgotten concept and sovereignty is too much of a luxury, true sovereignty for Russia is absolutely necessary for survival.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, Putin promotes the sovereignty of other nations just as his own, claiming that Russia will strive “for respect and national sovereignty and peoples’ independence and identity”.<sup>104</sup>

Sovereignty logically leads to the necessity of the country’s independence, which means lessening “critical dependence on foreign technology and industrial goods”<sup>105</sup> and the intention to introduce the “policy of import substitution”<sup>106</sup>, which can also be explained by the negative factors of international politics.

The list of traditional values is also complemented with the value of a strong government, which explains why the main public demands are addressed to the state: “Russia is characterised by a tradition of a strong state.”<sup>107</sup> Russia becomes the ultimate value and purpose: “. . . we will work for the common good and for the sake of Russia.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2014, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/47173>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>104</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2013, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/19825>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>105</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2014, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/47173>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>108</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2015, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/50864>, 9 September 2016.

### 2.3.5. Spirituality and Morality

Since 2012, the values of morality and spirituality has become some of the most prominent on display and are seen as a prerequisite for Russia's sovereignty: "For Russia to be a sovereign and strong . . . we must be better in our morality . . ." <sup>109</sup> Spiritual values, according to Putin, "throughout our entire history, made us [Russia] stronger and more powerful". <sup>110</sup> The notion of spiritual values (*duchovnyje skrepy*), encompassing "charity, empathy, compassion, support and mutual assistance" <sup>111</sup>, have become the foundation of Vladimir Putin's understanding of Russianness and its independence. National identity is closely knit with spiritual identity, which in turn is connected with "order and freedom, morality and civic solidarity, justice and truth, and nationally oriented consciousness". <sup>112</sup>

Unlike Dmitri Medvedev, who rejects any "action dictated by nostalgia" <sup>113</sup> about the Russian Soviet past, Vladimir Putin believes that together with the "ideological slogans of the previous [Soviet] era" <sup>114</sup>, the country has lost "many moral guides" <sup>115</sup>, saying that Russians have metaphorically thrown out "the baby with the bath water". <sup>116</sup>

Putin reinforces his idea of traditional values as a foundation of national policy, claiming:

there are more and more people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values that have made up the spiritual and moral foundation of civilisation in every nation for thousands of years. <sup>117</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Idem*, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> D. Medvedev, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2009, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>114</sup> V. Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> V. Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation", 2013, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/19825>, 9 September 2016.

In this respect, the development of civilization is directly connected with the morals of society.

### 2.3.6. Unity and Continuity

The 2012–2015 addresses delivered by Vladimir Putin are also remarkable for establishing the unity of the nation: “. . . we must safeguard interethnic peace and thus the unity of our society, the unity and integrity of the Russian state.”<sup>118</sup> National unity is a precondition for the preservation of Russia: “. . . we must remain united and remember what is most important for us: Russia.”<sup>119</sup>

The understanding and acceptance of the common history underlies the unity and prosperity of the nation:

. . . we need to link historical eras and get back to understanding . . . that we have a common, continuous history spanning over one thousand years, and we must rely on it to find inner strength and purpose in our national development.<sup>120</sup>

Based on continuous historical development, Vladimir Putin proclaims Russia an independent civilization united by Russian culture and language:

For centuries, Russia developed as a multi-ethnic nation, a civilisation-state bonded by the Russian people, Russian language and Russian culture native for all of us, uniting us and preventing us from dissolving in this diverse world.<sup>121</sup>

Putin highlights the national trend of shifting from individuality to collectivity, whereby “people begin to relate their own lives . . . with the aspirations of the entire nation and the interests of the state”<sup>122</sup>, because

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2015, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/50864>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>120</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.



“working for one’s own interests has its limits.”<sup>123</sup> He believes that the nation “will move forward in unity”<sup>124</sup> and “will achieve success.”<sup>125</sup>

### 2.3.7. Multiethnicity and Tolerance

The Russian Federation is a multiethnic country, with each ethnic group enjoying its own distinctive culture and language. Medvedev sees the multiethnic composition of the country as an advantage:

This multicultural world is also Russia’s unique advantage, a world in which representatives of different nationalities and faiths have lived together for more than a thousand years.<sup>126</sup>

Vladimir Putin, in turn, guarantees respectful attitude to every ethnicity:

We treat . . . with great care and respect every ethnic group. . . . Our diversity has always been and remains the source of our beauty and our strength.<sup>127</sup>

To prevent any interethnic conflict it is important to promote tolerance among the representatives of various nationalities. However, the understanding of the notion of tolerance differs from that of western countries:

This is . . . understandable for a state like Russia, with its great history and culture . . . not so-called tolerance, neutered and barren, but the actual common, natural life of different peoples within the framework of a single state.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2015, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/50864>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> D. Medvedev, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2011, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/14088>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>127</sup> V. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/17118>, 9 September 2016.

<sup>128</sup> *Idem*, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, 2015, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/50864>, 9 September 2016.

It is obvious that in this case Vladimir Putin defies the liberal attitude to sexual minorities. He continues by saying that the promotion of same-sex relationships leads to the revision of “moral values and ethical norms, eroding ethnic traditions and differences between peoples and cultures”.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, according to the Russian President, this leads to the “destruction of traditional values”<sup>130</sup> and “negative consequences for society”.<sup>131</sup> Vladimir Putin sees this kind of tolerance as “essentially anti-democratic, since it is carried out on the basis of abstract, speculative ideas, contrary to the will of the majority, which does not accept the changes occurring or the proposed revision of values.”<sup>132</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This section compares the axiological vectors embedded in the 2009–2015 addresses delivered by the US and the Russian Presidents. It uncovers the similarities and differences between the two value systems. Special attention is paid to the statements made by the Russian Presidents, because the axiological vector within the period in question underwent certain changes.

American and Russian leaders rely on values as the foundation of national development. However, the fundamental difference lies in the set of values the politicians select. Most of the values which Barack Obama uses in his addresses are predetermined by the long-standing tradition of the State of the Union as well as his party affiliation, whereas Russian politicians are less bound by tradition.

The foundation of Obama’s axiological system is the leadership of American nation and the rule of democracy with the well-being of the people as the primary goal. The US President relies on hard work, courage, conviction, strength, and resilience as the values predetermining American leadership. Democracy is based on freedom, equality, justice, honesty, and human rights, which are promised and guaranteed.

The understanding of Russian democracy changes from a more universal one to the more specific, encompassing the Russian tradition of

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

self-rule and rejecting alien models. The leadership of the nation is significantly less stressed, and the value of people is substituted with the strong emphasis on social commitments of the state. However, since 2012 the axiological vector has started pointing towards the sovereignty of Russia, which is heavily based on morality, traditions, and millennium-long history of the Russian nation. The spiritual values of Russia, such as charity, empathy, compassion, support and mutual assistance, constitute its exceptionalism. In addition, Putin contends that strong government has always been a cultural component of the Russian nation, which is absent from Obama's statements even despite his affiliation with the Democratic Party, known for its reliance on "Big Government".

The unity of the nation is promoted by both Obama and Putin who reinforced it in his address in 2012. The foundations of unity, however, differ. The unity of the American nation is portrayed through the image of a country which is made up of immigrants from all over the world. Moreover, special attention is given to the unity of the political system, whereby Obama promotes the bipartisan approach to problem-solving. The unity in Putin's understanding is based on the common history of all the ethnic groups which have been living together in harmony for many centuries, and glued together by the Russian culture and language.

The promotion of innovation, progress, and entrepreneurship is the one set of values that goes in unison in both the American and Russian addresses. All the three leaders concerned see innovation as the driver of national development and entrepreneurship as the primary means of innovation.

Tolerance is one of the most debatable points in the understanding of American and Russian leaders. Barack Obama supports equal attitude towards genders, ethnicities, as well as sexual minorities. Vladimir Putin, while promoting an attitude of equality towards all human beings, believes that Western tolerance to sexual minorities is destructive, dangerous, and anti-democratic, because it does not take into account the opinion of the majority of the people.

We may conclude that the Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly are less predictable and more likely to change the axiological vector of their content. Specifically, in the investigated period, we have witnessed a noticeable change in the axiological system despite the fact that the Russian leaders are known for the proximity of their vision and party affiliation, whereas the State of the Union Addresses remained relatively

homogeneous in their values partly because of the established tradition and the ceremonial character of the statement, and partly because all the addresses were delivered by the same President affiliated with the Democratic Party.

It is worth noting that the above-mentioned axiological change in 2012 made the values embedded in the Russian addresses more vividly seen. However, the distinctive character of the new set of values increased the divergence of the axiological vectors of the State of the Union Address and the Address to the Russian Federal Assembly. The most striking difference coming to the fore with Vladimir Putin's presidency is the tilt towards Russia's sovereign democracy with its roots in national history and spiritual culture, which at least partially opposes the notion of liberal democracy promoted by Barack Obama's administration. In addition to numerous nuances of political stances, the view on the tolerance issue shows one of the widest gaps between the two notions and, therefore, increases the axiological distance.

The results of this research have demonstrated that even a relatively short period of time can incorporate visible changes in the axiological content. We believe that the comparative analysis of the larger spans may show how the changes have occurred within one and the same nation. Specifically, it is interesting to look at the major political addresses in Russia, as in recent decades the country has undergone political rebirths and crises which have influenced the values of the Russian nation. Regarding the USA, it would be worth comparing the divergence between the axiological vectors of Democratic and Republican presidents. Finally, a comparative analysis between the State of the Union Addresses and the Addresses to the Russian Federal Assembly over a larger period of time will help one to find the periods when the values of the two nations were closest or diverged most.

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