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Pre-Petrine National History in Cultural Memory and Symbolic Politics in Modern Russia

The paper will analyze the role of pre-Petrine Russian history in cultural memory and symbolic politics in modern Russia. Throughout the last decades, the Russian elite has been trying to build (to restore?) a new coherent and stable system of values and identity milestones, which would be able to provide an ideological basis for national unity, and to consolidate the state and the people. Their key message seems to be to picture today's political regime as an integral part (logic and legal continuation) of multicentury glorious national history and political tradition that dates back to the very beginning of Russian statehood. With regard to historical perspective, I would emphasize some aspects which seem quite characteristic for modern symbolic politics in Russia: an emphasis on the continuity of 1000-year Russian history; an idea of a powerful omnipotent leader (a good tsar); an idea of necessary national unity in the fight against numerous external (and internal) enemies; highlighting of Russian military victories etc. A growing interest to national history as an effective tool for symbolic politics will be illustrated by most recent examples from different spheres of social interaction (from political practice to street art). Another objective of the paper is to compare the main trends of symbolic politics in the field of history in modern Russia and the Soviet Union in 1930s-40s.