State and Political Discourse in Russia

June 17th – 18th, 2016 | Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

The international association Reset-Dialogues on Civilizations is once again turning the spotlight on Russia, this time in order to understand the origins, reasons and mechanisms of the myths surrounding President Vladimir Putin on whom significant international attention and apprehension is now focused. After a first meeting in Berlin in 2015, and a second meeting in Washington on March 31st -April 1st 2016 in collaboration with GWU, Reset-DoC is organizing the conference “State and Political Discourse in Russia” to be held in Venice (June 17th – 18th, 2016).

In cooperation with top American, European and Russian universities and the participation of renowned international scholars, this conference will shed light on several pressing questions about Putin and ‘his’ Russia. What political culture do ‘Tsar’ Putin and his men feed upon and what are the features of their political discourse? Which are the new and old ideological constellations that provide the backdrop for Putin’s words and political choices? What are the cultural and ideological references in Russian conservatism that support Putin and shape his political language? What in today’s Russia are the origins and the fate of liberalism initially oppressed by the Soviet Union, then misinterpreted during the years of openness and that has now apparently vanished? If anything remains of it, who are its representatives?

With Putin and perhaps beyond him, post-Soviet Russia’s state organisation appears to be a complex, multi-layered apparatus that is able to shape new discourses and ideologies, interact with old ones, create a narrative and an image of Russia in the world and focus the world’s attention and concern on itself. With the world’s greatest experts on contemporary Russia debating these issues, this year’s event will provide an important opportunity to cast light on these questions.
Venice, June 17th-18th, 2016
State and Political Discourse in Russia
Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

Friday - June 17th, 2016

10.00 – 10.30 am – Welcoming address
Giancarlo Corò | Ca’ Foscari University, Venice
Pasquale Gagliardi | Secretary General, Fondazione Giorgio Cini

10.30 am – 1.00 pm - Session 1. The State’s Political Discourse
The first session will explore the possible existence of a multiplicity of political discourses associated with the contemporary Russian state and its various organs. It will discuss the plurality and fluidity allowed within the state political language, the relationship between the Party, the presidential administration, the bureaucracies, media structures, and the different places of ideological production and the role played by scholars and other intellectuals.

Chair: Giancarlo Corò | Ca’ Foscari University, Venice

Speakers
Alexey Barabashev | National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow
*The Discourse of Russian Bureaucracy and Its Influence on Political Discourse*

Anton Barbashin | Managing Editor of The Intersection Project
*Post-Crimean Political Discourse and Russian Foreign Policy Narratives*

Olga Malinova | “Experts” and the state political discourse(s): practices of political communication in Russia (2008-2016)

Discussant: Mark Kramer | Cold War Studies and Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University

1.00-2.00 pm - Lunch
2.00-4.30 pm - Session 2. Concepts and Ideological References

The second session will discuss the main ideological constructs promoted by the current Russian state, their relation to similar notions existing in the West in terms of mutual influences, adaptations, imitation or rejection and the possible existence of “sacred” topics closed for discussion, besides the purity of the victory in WWII and the Orthodox Legacy.

Chair: Daniela Rizzi | Ca’ Foscari University, Venice

Speakers
Marina Engström | Dalarna University, Sweden  
Russia as Katechon: Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy

Marlene Laruelle | Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University  
‘Nationalism’, ‘Conservatism’? Competition and Overlaps in the Kremlin’s Narrative

Andrei Melville | National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow  
New Conservatism as National Idea for Russia?

Nikolay Mitrokhin | Center for East-European Studies, University of Bremen  
Holy or Sacred? How Soviet Militarists, Russian Nationalists and Orthodox Believers Create a New Civil Religion for Russia

Discussant: Stephen Hanson | Reves Center for International Studies, College of William and Mary

4.30-4.45 pm – Coffee

Saturday - June 18th, 2016

9.00-11.15 am - Session 3. The Demise of Liberalism: Testing the Waters on the Subject

The session will focus on Russian notions of Liberalism and its demise and will explore the possible existence of a multiplicity of ‘liberalisms’ in contemporary Russia, the influence of the Soviet experience, perestroika and the early 1990s on Russian notions of liberalism, the impact of Western liberal domestic and foreign policies on Russia’s liberal ideas and expectations and vice versa as well as the role of the remaining institutions and actors promoting political, economic, and constitutional liberalism.

Chair: Andrea Graziosi | ANVUR, University of Naples Federico II
**Speakers**

Nadezda Azhgikhina | Executive Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and Vice President of the European Federation of Journalists  
*When Dreams Come True. Press Freedom and Media Development as Mirror of Russia Transformation in 1986-2016*

Nina Khrushcheva | Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy, The New School, New York  
*Cultural Contradictions of Post-Communism*

Andrey Kortunov | Director General, Russian International Affairs Council  
*A Phantom Quest: Looking for Alternatives to the Liberal World Order*

Kirill Rogov | Liberal Mission Foundation  
*“Liberalisms” in Post-Communist Russia (the Evidence from Polls Data)*

Vladislav Zubok | London School of Economics  
*«Unsuccess» of Russian Liberalism: Beyond Path Dependency?*

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**11.15-11.30 am – Coffee break**

**11.30 am-1.30 pm - Session 4. Roundtable: Politics and Culture. The Future of Democracy in Russia**

**Chair:** Giancarlo Bosetti | Director, Reset-Dialogues on Civilizations

**Speakers**

Giuliano Amato | Former Prime Minister and now Judge of the Constitutional Court  
Nina Khrushcheva | Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy, The New School, New York  
Marlene Laruelle | Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University  
Andrei Melville | National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow  
Adam Michnik | Director, Gazeta Wyborcza  
Sergio Romano | Former Italian Ambassador in Moscow  
Roberto Toscano | Former Italian Ambassador in Teheran and New Delhi

**1.30-2.30 pm – Lunch**
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**International Partners:**
Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES), George Washington University; the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University; the Cold War Studies Program, Harvard University; the London School of Economics; the Wendy and Emery Reves Center for International Studies, College of William and Mary; National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow; Ca’ Foscari University, Venice; Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

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