

Almost 25 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the process of 're-composition' of a Moscow-dominated political space is still under way. Under the influence of different traditions, factors, events and interests, Russia seems to have developed a new version of the 'power state' that dominated European history until the 20<sup>th</sup> century's tragedies.

What was the weight of the Soviet legacy and of the crises of the 1990s in this development? What has been the influence of political leaders and intellectuals, siloviki, and economic elites on the current Russian political thought? To what extent have external factors contributed to shape this thought? What place for minorities and cultural differences does this political trend leave?

This volume is based on the proceedings of 'The Evolution of Russian Political Thought After 1991' workshop organized by Reset Dialogues on Civilizations (Berlin, 22-23 June 2015) and collects the essays written by Pavel K. Baev, Giancarlo Bosetti, Timothy J. Colton, Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, Alexander Golts, Lev Gudkov, Stephen E. Hanson, Mark Kramer, Marlene Laruelle, Alexey Miller, Olga Pavlenko and Victoria I. Zhuravleva.



The Power State Is Back?

ResetDOC

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*The Evolution of Russian Political Thought After 1991*

## I libri di Reset

Baev, Bosetti, Colton, Golts  
Gudkov, Hanson, Kramer, Laruelle  
Miller, Pavlenko, Zhuravleva

edited by Riccardo Mario Cucciolla

**ResetDOC**

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The Power State Is Back?  
The Evolution of Russian Political  
Thought After 1991

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Riccardo Mario Cucciolla

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Presenting ‘The Russia Workshop’  
A New Insight on Contemporary Russia  
*Giancarlo Bosetti, ResetDoc*

Since its foundation in 2005, Reset DoC has promoted dialogue across cultural divides through seminars, conferences, publications, and international events. In more than ten years of activities, we managed to develop a network among intellectuals with different cultural, religious, political backgrounds all around the Mediterranean, the American and Asian regions. In this era of conflicts and tensions, Reset DoC has been able to promote the exchange of ideas even concerning the former Soviet Union context and its main actor, Russia, above all.

In order to bridge the gap of knowledge, we gathered, under the coordination of the Italian historian Andrea Graziosi, some of the foremost international scholars and world experts on Russian studies. The first international workshop – entitled *The Evolution of Russian Political Thought After 1991* – was held in Berlin at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP) on June 22-23, 2015. It represented the start point of a long-term initiative that Reset DoC promoted in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and views between Russian and international experts in the field of the Russian studies: *The Russia Workshop* project.

This Berliner episode was the initial stage in a much longer journey and its core significance was in the fact that it unlocked a number of subsequent events, such as the concomitant roundtable entitled *‘The Political Culture of Today’s Russia. The Power*

*State Is Back?*’ that was held at DGAP on June 25, 2015. This meeting constituted a separate event from the first one, offering the direct testimony of some prominent European policy makers in approaching Russia’s power policy issues. After the Berlin events, the Russia Workshop initiative had further accreditations, attracting the attention of additional partners and sponsors and the participation of prestigious research institutes.

The second workshop entitled *Locating ‘Conservative Ideology’ in Today’s Russia* was organized in collaboration with the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at George Washington University) on March 31 – April 1, 2016. This event focused on ‘conservatism’ – as one of the main elements in the Kremlin’s political languages – and those conservative values and connotations that define contemporary Russia. In this event, the debate analyzed the diversity and plurality within the Russian ‘conservative’ spectrum, its representatives in literature, art, social life and in the Orthodox Church, its geopolitical-ideological dimension (as Eurasianism), its Statist approach and its vision of the world order.

The third event entitled *The State and Political Discourse in Today’s Russia* will be held in Venice at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini on June 17-18, 2016. It will focus on the multiplicity of the Russian state political discourses within its various organs, administration, media and party, so as to analyze those concepts and ‘sacred’ ideological references which are promoted by Moscow. The debate will also consider the demise of liberalism and its pluralistic approach, bearing in mind the impact of the Soviet legacy, the expectation and influence of perestroika and the future of democracy in Russia.

For 2017, Reset DoC is also scheduling a fourth event in Moscow that will concentrate on Russian liberalism. This occasion could further develop the *Russia Workshop* initiative, creating another opportunity to promote dialogue and to extend the horizon of the debate on Russian studies. The growing

participation in these events gives us great hope for the future of such events. However, only the ability to keep this dynamic format, to include more international scholars to the debate, to also involve Russian partners in the dialogue and to generate original insights on contemporary Russia, beyond common simplifications and prejudices, would define the success of such an ambitious project. This is our challenge.

#### *The first Berlin conference, June 22-23, 2015*

Beyond Andrea Graziosi (ANVUR, University of Naples Federico II) and Giancarlo Bosetti, as director or Reset-Dialogues on Civilizations, the scientific committee was composed of Timothy J. Colton (Davis Center), Stephen E. Hanson (Reves Center), Mark Kramer (Cold War Studies and Davis Center), Matthew Rojansky (Kennan Institute), Alexandra Vacroux (Davis Center), Vladislav M. Zubok (London School of Economics). The Reset-DoC organization team was composed of: Giancarlo Bosetti (Director), Letizia Durante (Project Administrator), Michele Salonia (Project Manager), Elisa Gianni (Project Assistant) and Nicola Missaglia (Reset-DoC Managing Editor) with the collaboration of Riccardo Mario Cucciolla (IMT Lucca) and Yulia Loeva (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik). In addition to the authors published in this book, also Vladislav Inozemtsev and Sergey Markedonov intervened as speakers and Andrea Graziosi and Vladislav Zubok as discussants. The event and this publication were made possible thanks to the support of the Nomis Foundation and of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. See the official page: <http://www.resetdoc.org/news/0000000153>.

#### *The Berlin roundtable, June 25, 2015*

The roundtable was welcomed by Arend Oetker (President of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik) and chaired by Giancarlo Bosetti (Reset DoC) with the participation of Giuliano Amato (former Italian Prime Minister and now Judge of the Italian Constitutional Court), Toomas Hendrik Ilves (President of the Republic of Estonia), Jörg Lau (Foreign Editor *Die Zeit*), Manuel Sarrazin (Member of the German Bundestag), Karel von Schwarzenberg (former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), Marlene Laruelle (George Washington University). See: <http://www.resetdoc.org/issue/04/01/2016>.

*The Washington conference, March 31 – April 1, 2016*

The event was directed by Marlene Laruelle and the scientific committee was composed of Alexey Barabashev (Higher School of Economics, Moscow); Giancarlo Bosetti, Timothy J. Colton, Andrea Graziosi, Stephen E. Hanson, Mark Kramer, Andrei Melville (Higher School of Economics, Moscow), Matthew Rojansky, Alexandra Vacroux, Vladislav M. Zubok. The partner institutions involved were: the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES), George Washington University; the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Berlin; the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University; the Cold War Studies Program, Harvard University; the Kennan Institute for Advanced Studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; 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. For the detailed program see: <http://www.resetdoc.org/news/0000000160>

Preface

The Importance of Understanding  
Contemporary Russia  
*Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, IMT Lucca*

The 2014 Ukrainian crisis was one of the gravest geopolitical earthquakes in Europe since 1991 and it is still manifesting its aftershocks in international relations presenting the harder side of the post-Cold war Russia. The proactive policy of Putin's last mandate is emblematic of the recomposition of a Moscow-dominated political space and of a return of the 'power state' in Europe, reproducing dynamics that had been typical of the last century in the old continent. Actually, a quarter century after the Soviet collapse, under the influence of different traditions, factors, events, and interests, Russia seems to have developed a new version of the 'power state' that dominated European history until the 20<sup>th</sup> century's tragedies.

The Kremlin's power politics – based on rearmament and force policies – has been frequently associated with the Wilhelmine *Machtpolitik*; the arrogance, arbitrariness and territorial claims of its programs have been condemned as a revival of the Molotov-Ribbentrop spirit and a denial of the of Helsinki 1975 achievements; the tacit acceptance of the dismemberment of a part of the Ukrainian state reminded the events of the 1938 Munich Conference, meanwhile the reference to nationalist values, often contradictory, seemed to recall some thankfully outdated ideologies. These elements are symptomatic of an internal transformation of Russia for which the West was unprepared. In fact, the situation that was exacerbated in spring

2014 – when the circumstances became so dire that many analysts overstated that Europe had to be prepared to fight a ‘new world war’ on its territory – clearly indicated a key fact: The West had underestimated Russia’s potential for years.

This unpreparedness demonstrated an overall lack of awareness about a country that – although present in the European spatial dimension – still seemed unknown and unfamiliar in many aspects. The cause of this situation is due to a general unwillingness of the Western chancelleries and media to deal with the Russian – and the former Soviet – world after the USSR collapse. Let us try to understand the crucial points that led to this situation.

1991 turned out to be a pivotal year that defined the conclusion of the Cold War, the collapse of communism and the beginning of a new season of uncertainty. The Soviet Union, which for nearly 70 years had been a decisive geopolitical actor and an ideological, political and military ‘alternative’ to the democratic and capitalist world, vanished. In his resignation speech, the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev claimed to have done everything possible to save the integrity of the state and recalled the importance of those reforms that were carried out during perestroika, wishing the Russian people a future leading “towards a prosperous and democratic society.” Despite the inevitable doubts about the perspectives of the independent RSFSR, the expiration of the USSR was met with enthusiasm in Russia and by the international community that was hoping for a historic turning point. However, the 90s represented a season of disillusioned promises of prosperity and drove Russia into a decade of darkness. In fact, this period was characterized by a dramatic chain of events – due to the radical reform of the former Soviet system – that inexorably marked the Russian destiny and brought about a decline in living standards.

At the political level, the 90s represented a period of harsh struggle – emphasized by strong opposition to reforms, the vi-

olent centrifugal pressures and the phenomena of separatism, the war in Chechnya, the assertion of the oligarchies and widespread crime – that had its culmination in the constitutional crisis of autumn 1993. As a result, the process of democratization in Russia was seriously distorted.

At an economic level, the ‘shock therapy’ recipe did not meet the desired results, degenerating into another emergency situation – exasperated by hyperinflation, pulverization of incomes, rising unemployment and poverty rates – with the fall of the demographic and social indicators. This general decline matured into further despair for an already exasperated population that had lost hope in the future. Substantially, the enthusiasm for the “wind of change” was over, meanwhile Western politics was unable to seize that historical conjuncture, thereafter ceasing to take interest in a country that was no longer a strategic issue. Russia, in turn, felt the humiliation and frustration of no longer being a determinant ‘Great power’ on the international stage, and the desire for revenge would be a decisive factor in the Russian political scenario. The ‘Russian redemption’ became a key issue legitimizing the rise of Putin and his program which promised to return Russia to a commanding and powerful position. This program was further implemented in the second half of the 2000’s when improving economic conditions – with high oil and gas prices – allowed the reaffirmation of the ‘Russian bear’ as an actor on the geopolitical stage, no longer condemned to helplessly observe events unfold. Once again, the West had underestimated the circumstances.

There are a number of reasons which explain the Western disengagement from Russia: due to the conclusion of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet system, the new giant state appeared – to Westerners – as a country that had been ‘defeated by history’ and that was inexorably destined to join the Western cause. At that time, Huntington’s “fourth wave” claimed to be imminent and the liberal democracy seemed to be destined



to triumph everywhere. On the other hand, the West lost the 'alternative' ideological referent which had tied a part of European intellectuals to the ideas of Moscow. In fact, the Soviet collapse broke those ties that were connecting most of the communist parties around the world to Russia, declassifying it to a lower rank on the intellectual, economic and political level, with the West merely regarding it as a new minor partner that was opening its market and supplying hydrocarbons to Europe.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the Cold War and the end of the nuclear threat implied that it was no longer convenient to concentrate so many political energies on a 'defeated' former antagonist that, in a sense, seemed to be 'relegated to history.' Conversely, at the academic level, the study for post-communist Russia never stopped and has produced a number of excellent works that have carefully analyzed the post-Soviet context. However, these studies have also been underestimated – or even ignored – by politics until 2014, when it became evident the analytical naïveté of many Western decision-makers who had previously underrated – or ingenuously interpreted – the political steps pursued by Russia over the last twenty-five years.

In fact, in the aftermath of the Crimean annexation, Russia – in all its idiosyncrasies and contradictions – appeared as a colossal and enigmatic neighbor that wanted to assert its power status and with which the West had failed to create a lasting and comprehensive dialogue and a long-term strategy to face the post-bipolar world order. This low awareness of the Russian context has involved relevant risks on the intellectual level as well as for the decision-making actors, which become increasingly clear in the course of the Ukrainian crisis. Therefore, in this situation of tensions and misunderstandings between Moscow and the West, it emerged as a necessity to bridge this gap and to restore a dialogue based on understanding and awareness of the interlocutor through a deeper study of it: a new comprehensive strategy that could start from the experts'

and the academic worlds in order to go over the simplifications and prejudices that too often are the cause – and at the same time the result – of ignorance. The need to understand what was happening in the largest – and resource-richest – country in the world became a political priority again in order to not be unprepared when faced with the Kremlin's 'irruptive measures' and for understanding, predicting, and – if possible – containing its aggressive attitudes.

The main step that would enable us to better understand contemporary Russia and its attitude ambition to reaffirm domestically a 'power state' and externally a reestablish 'Great Power' status is in the consideration of the Russian political thought and the dynamics that define it. The dynamics being the mythologization of the political discourse, the continuous search for legitimation of sovereignty, territorial and political space dimensions, the patriotic rhetoric, the geopolitics of resources and security culture, the 'state militarism' and war narratives as well as nation state discourse in a 'multinational empire' etc. are complementary – and often contradictory – aspects of contemporary Russia. Therefore, this varied dimension of Russian political thought is necessarily interrelated with its domestic and international situation and is functional to the regime's stability. In fact, bearing in mind the need for legitimation of Putin's regime helps us to understand the aggressive attitude and contradictions of contemporary Russia, surpassing debatable and simplistic discourses about Putin's irrationality and the Kremlin's unpredictability. In this scenario, it is possible to see that the 'red lines' are clearly visible delineating the risks of a restyled and uncontrollable 'New Cold War' between Moscow and the West. In accordance with these premises, it is necessary to embark on a new path to understand a reality that is crucial in order to create an exchange of ideas between the two worlds. For this aim, the international workshop entitled *The Evolution of Russian Political Thought After 1991* was conceived.

This first event was entirely dedicated to the political thought in post-communist Russia, involving a debate that would go beyond the simple study of ideologies and political doctrines. In fact, understanding the evolutions of the political thought means also to understand the identity of a country, the regime legitimizing issues and the direction that its politics assumes in domestic affairs and in international relations as the ‘re-composition’ of its political space after the Soviet collapse.

During this first workshop, some crucial dynamics and issues emerged, supporting a debate on different directions in order to understand what was the significance of the Soviet legacy and of the crises of the 1990s in the return of the ‘power state’; what has been the influence of political leaders and intellectuals, *siloviki*,<sup>1</sup> and economic elites on the current Russian political thought; to what extent have external factors – such as NATO enlargement, the enlargement of the European Union toward East and the ongoing crisis over Ukraine – contributed to shape this thought; what place for minorities and cultural differences does this political trend leave; and how does the idea of a ‘power state’ influence Russia’s foreign policy and international relations. This volume<sup>2</sup> is thus aimed to collect the workshop’s proceedings and to stimulate further discussion for ensuing debates.

In his introduction, Timothy J. Colton conceptualizes and contextualizes the new actors and variables of contemporary Russian political thought. He proceeds by analyzing the attitudinal changes at the individual level, the aggregate dynamics – that can be gradual or sudden – and the elements of censorship and self-censorship as fundamental factors. Along these lines, Colton provides a methodological framework in which it is possible to orientate the debate.

<sup>1</sup> Russian word used for those politicians who were formed in the security or military apparatuses.

<sup>2</sup> We thank Thomas Moniz for the English revision of some parts of this volume.

The first part of the volume is dedicated to the imperial identity and Soviet heritage in contemporary Russia, focusing on the possible continuity patterns with the past. In the first chapter, Stephen E. Hanson searches for a continuity link in terms of patrimonialism. There, the author analyzes the different theories based on cultural continuity, the cynical rational choice approach and the idea of virtual politics. Then, he proceeds with a Weberian examination of patrimonialism in relation to Putin’s Russia, evidencing its novelties and specificities. Therefore, this essay is well correlated with the second chapter that studies those political dynamics that contribute to regime stability. Hither, Lev Gudkov investigates the “Great power” concept as one of the main conditions of Putin’s regime’s legitimacy, evidencing how the consent for the President has increased since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This very sensitive topic – that touches the Russian nationalist sentiment – and the abuse of the “Great power” rhetoric – that is invested in nostalgia over Soviet communism and for the splendor and greatness of the former Russian Empire – creates a sense of collective identity in which Russian society finds a ‘safe haven.’

It seems that the West probably underestimated the trauma of the Soviet collapse, the violence of socio-economic transformation of the early 1990s, and the feeling of ‘geopolitical humiliation’ in segments of Russian society that were longing for ‘great power’ long before the Russian regime itself. To understand this point, it is fundamental to remember that the concepts of ‘greatpowerness’ (*velikoderzhavnost*) and ‘paternalistic welfare state’ are interrelated in the mind of Russian public opinion because ‘great power’ status is perceived as the guarantee of socio-political order, and paternalism within. This nexus explains why, at least until now, legitimizing support for Putin is continuously rising despite an economic crisis.

In the third chapter, Alexei Miller investigates the semantic of ‘Nation’ and its relation to the Russian territory. Here, the au-

thor evidences the lack of a scientific debate in Russian literature and the problems related to the concept of the 'Nation State' – along its ethnic (*russkiy*) and civic (*rossiyskiy*) declinations – in a multiethnic state such as the Russian Federation. These premises are essential as they make it possible to consider the different identity developments that followed the re-establishment of a 'Russian' state, and the evolution of other European 'nation state' models whose concept is increasingly questioned.

In the fourth chapter, Marlene Laruelle examines the contradictions and paradoxes within the 'xenophobic empire' between the Kremlin's narrative and the Russian population. Analyzing the Eurasian concepts, she defines the connections with the Russian imperial identity dimension, evidencing then the difficulties to define the trends of Russia's relationship with Europe and with its population, and the space (or even the arena) of Russian political thought. In fact, although the Russian public opinion overwhelmingly supported the regime's position in the Ukrainian crisis and the Crimean '*anschluss*,' it presents a more plural dimension than is supposed to exist in an authoritarian context, revealing a diffused frustration towards the political authority, the state structures, and a pessimistic vision of the economic situation.

Russian society continues to be torn by deep contradictions: upper and middle classes look westward in their consumeristic way of life and shares with large sections of the European public opinion a growing xenophobia – and Islamophobia – against migrants and minorities. In parallel, the 'West' is perceived as a geopolitical competitor and, potentially, a military enemy. Furthermore, it is evident that Moscow attempts to find a way to recompose the political space it used to dominate and to take advantage of the ongoing processes of globalization, in which Russia mostly played the role of the 'looser' for the past decades. Following this corollary, it is palpable how these elements of frustration are potential threats to Putin's stability and they

risk to re-emerge in the near future, especially if the current the socio-economic situation will continue to deteriorate.

The second part of the volume focuses on the impact that war, ethnic conflict and international environment had and continue to have on the evolution of Russian political thought. In the fifth chapter, Mark Kramer analyzes – through a detailed historiographical reconstruction – the meaning of the war concept in post-Soviet Russia, evidencing how war becomes a key element in determining Russian politics and political debate. Russian wars – internal or external – and the 'others' wars' have become fundamental issues for Putin's regime, revealing a genuine link between conflict, political legitimation and the enforcement of authoritarianism in Russia. Alexander Golts, in the sixth chapter, also finds in militarism a key ideological element to interpret contemporary Russia. He evidences its features and trends describing the impact of 'mobilizing politics' on the Russian society and the role of the external elements in the political scenario, also placing further questions on future developments. Then, Pavel Baev focuses on the interplay between the 'hybrid war' narrative and the 'sovereignty-territory-resources' discourse in contemporary Russia, evidencing how the use of these concepts is indicating a revival of the way of the old mindset to control the widespread Russian borders and extensive resources. Therein, the author reveals a correlation between sovereignty, territory and natural resources, and a reinterpretation of this discourse due to the Arctic issues and the Ukrainian crisis where the dynamics of the 'hybrid war' and its risks constitute a dangerous hazard to Moscow.

The last two chapters are finally centered on the other external factors of Russian political thought that come directly from the system of international relations. Victoria Zhuravleva's essay focuses on the Russian-American relations characterized by the dichotomy between the community and the 'other' element. The narrative mutation, the consequent 'hostility-building pro-

cess,' the demonization of the American 'other' and the use of such concepts become key elements in Moscow's search to legitimize its domestic and international policies, interpreting the evolution of the Russian political thought in a dialectical perspective. Thus, Putin's moves depend on how he interprets – or perhaps misinterprets – what he perceives to be the agenda of the West, suggested as a determined and scheming player. In fact, Russia mimics the US in many aspects of its foreign policy – especially in its soft power agenda – and the United States, as the main 'other' in the Russian political discourse, becomes a model and an antagonist at the same time.

Therefore, 'power state' is a central element of Russia's position in the international scenario, and the Russian regime promotes *Realpolitik* denouncing what it perceives as 'hypocrisy' of the Western world order and its self-styled idealisms. From the Russian perspective, the Western domination (as the US one) is structural and founded on the dollar-based economy, international financial organizations, the information space etc. In response, Moscow tries to emerge as a (counter) power offering alternatives based on the supremacy of state sovereignty in a Westphalian sense – no interference in the name of universalist values, no overthrow of regimes, possibility for great powers to have their own sphere of influence – and promoting the supremacy of the UN General Assembly, the alternative regional platforms (as BRICS, SCO and EEU), and a new financial order no longer based on the US dollar. This so-called 'alternative world order' serves directly the Russian regime's own agenda, and it's meant to guarantee its stability and its power upon what Moscow defines as its 'near abroad.'

In the final essay, Olga Pavlenko examines the Russian 'security culture' through a four levels analysis, revealing how every dimension in Russian political discourse is tightly intertwined with each other. At a sociocultural level, the author marks the dichotomy between the prevailing conservative approach

(Neo-Eurasianism) and the weaker liberal one, discerning their similarities and differences. This ambivalence is also influencing the geopolitical space and the strategic thinking of post-Soviet Russia that correlates security, national interests and state sovereignty to the perception of external 'threats and challenges.' These processes are also related to the media level and to the military-technical aspect. Therefore, the Kremlin's foreign policy is definitively interrelated with its domestic political dimension, and the aggressiveness toward an imaginary 'West' becomes typical and even characteristic of Putin's third presidential mandate as a tool of legitimation for his hold on power.

The workshop has thus contributed to the field of Russian studies by producing a number of ideas and conclusions that will form the solid basis for subsequent discussions. In fact, this debate is not going to die with this volume but it must continually be fed, teased, confirmed and contradicted. Therefore, the main achievement of *The Evolution of Russian Political Thought After 1991* was to have created a new platform for dialogue, comprehension and debate between peoples. Thanks to Reset DoC, this format will be upheld for further workshops and events that will involve historians, political theorists and sociologists – as well as prominent figures in contemporary Russian culture – to freely discuss and debate in an open and uncensored environment. Berlin – a city that was a symbol of division and then of rapprochement between the Western and the Eastern blocks – is again an exemplary case of reconciliation.

## Introduction

What Do We Mean by 'Russian Political Thought'?

*Timothy J. Colton*, Harvard University

I have been asked to make some preliminary comments to help frame our forthcoming discussion, and am pleased to have this opportunity. The circulated materials already contain a few of my ramblings on the subject, as they came out in back-and-forth conversation with Professor Andrea Graziosi. Consider these remarks to be a bit of an elaboration and a provocation, and not a very well-focused one.

I have been trained in a scholarly environment where it is *de rigueur* to begin every analytical exercise with a specification of the effect the scientist seeks to understand and explain (the dependent variable) and the causes he hypothesizes may account for that outcome (the independent variables). Our dependent variable here in Berlin is "Russian political thought." 'Thought' is by definition produced by 'thinkers.' The thought that incites our interest most is of course, as our organizers remind us, prescriptive and not merely descriptive thought – although the line between the two realms is at times fuzzy.

A famous collection of papers in our field of study which many participants in our meeting will know is *Russian Thinkers*,<sup>1</sup> by the late Isaiah Berlin. Professor Berlin wrote about intellectuals, mostly as individuals but some of them as part of

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah Berlin, Henry Hardy & Aileen Kelly, *Russian Thinkers*, Viking Press, New York 1978.

groupings or movements, such as the Populists. The book contains vignettes of philosophers, publicists, novelists, magazine editors, political organizers, pamphleteers – Belinsky, Herzen, Bakunin, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, even Nicholas I. Berlin's subjects are also notably international, i.e., the Russian cast is engaged in constant dialogue, correspondence, mutual visitation, and so forth with European peers. Isaiah Berlin was writing about thinkers and thought in general. Our focus is contemporary Russian political thought. But it is worth clarifying who qualifies as a thinker and to what extent we see the exercise as national as opposed to transnational or international in scope.

If we wish to restrict ourselves to intellectuals, we will probably be disappointed, because Russian political thought today is not being shaped by the likes of Herzen or Dostoyevsky. If we limit ourselves to practicing politicians – starting, presumably, with President Vladimir Putin – we are impoverishing the exercise in a certain sense but probably being more realistic. Public officials and politicians have helpers and speechwriters, as well as the odd gray cardinal behind the scenes (e.g., the legendary Vladislav Surkov, the ideological 'vicar' in Putin's team from 2000 to 2011) who supplies ideas to the helpers and wordsmiths.

This wider cast of characters ought to be of high interest to us, but there are stumbling blocks: the 'Surkovs' of contemporary Russia operate in the shadows and do not commit all or even most of their thoughts to paper; and their role as 'political technologists' is as much to disguise and truth and spin half-truths as it is to speak the truth. I refer you to even the title of Peter Pomerantsev's provocative *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*.<sup>2</sup> Ideas shared by what we can simply call the Russian political

<sup>2</sup> Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: the Surreal heart of the new Russia*, Public Affairs, New York 2014. I make this recommendation without subscribing to, or for that matter being able to follow, all of Pomerantsev's claims.

elite – or political class – would make an inviting target, but one that does not lend itself to anecdotal analysis. There are sophisticated new tools of automated text analysis that could be employed here, but I am not aware of more than a few scattered attempts to do so in the Russian case (I have had several graduate students make good efforts). It would be a good project for someone to take on.

As for national vs. international contributions, a comprehensive investigation of contemporary Russian thought and its determinants cannot be carried out without extensive reference to factors that cut across state boundaries. This of course would apply to almost any country today. Russians travel far more than a generation ago, and they have the Internet on their PCs and smartphones. Putin travels only in a cocoon of officialdom and reportedly does not use a personal computer or smartphone (Medvedev does), but his handlers and ministers all do.

I do not mean to suggest that Russians are simply mimicking something they see out there. As often as not, they may be reacting against something they see or think they see. For example, Putin in his September 2013 Valdai speech on Russian identity commented at length at undesirable cultural tendencies (decline of religion and patriotism, same-sex marriages, etc.) and declared that Russia under his leadership would consciously lean against those trends. Nonetheless, to lean against something is to be linked to it, and Russian thought is without interlinked with the bodies of thought prevalent in other countries and regions.

I think we will readily agree that Russian political thought, whatever exactly we mean by that, has been in flux for quite some time. Let us assume Russian political thought today is reliably sampled in the rhetoric of the national leader, in transcripts of debates in parliament, and in opinion pieces published in a handful of leading newspapers. Were we to compare a 2015 sample with a 1995 sample, we surely would see

many changes. What would we find if we did a longitudinal comparison with 2005, 1985 (as perestroika slouched toward Bethlehem to be born), 1975...1875? Would these differences be greater or lesser than what we would observe for another European country? More importantly, what would the nature of the differences (and similarities) be? I would know enough only to hazard the barest beginning on answers. What I do know is that 'thought' at any point in time is a multi-layered, multi-jointed construct, and that comparisons across time points involve linkages that are highly complex and sometimes ironic. Let us assume also that, after appropriate investigation and coding, we are able to pin down what the content of Russian political thought has been over the years and in what ways its content (as represented by leadership rhetoric, legislative debates, and opinion pieces) has shifted. The next and more daunting challenge is to figure out why this pattern of change/continuity has come about.

In this regard, to pick up on the half-baked points I expressed to Andrea Graziosi some months ago, it is vitally important for us to appreciate the possible patterns that, in theory, the development of thought may possibly take. They are distinct and separable patterns, and constitute distinct and separable causal explanations, but the patterns are not mutually exclusive, in that they may be manifested simultaneously and in potentially elaborate combination with one another. The following, it seems to me, are some of the main logical possibilities that might account for changes in Russia's (or any place's) manifest output of political thought over a given time interval.

### 1. *Change at the individual level*

Here is the natural place to start thinking about the phenomenon. Call it 'Type 1.' The reference is to individual actors who move over time from one political position to another, either gradually or in momentary 'St. Paul on the road to Damascus' fashion. For example, a particular Russian official or journalist may have possessed liberal views in the 1990s but by the 2010s has come to subscribe to étatism and nationalism. We can all think of real-life Russians who fit this particular bill. What is sobering to realize is that many such persons, if they came of age early enough, would have had still another set of views in the 1970s, meaning that they had gone through multiple attitude shifts in one lifetime.

Attitudinal change at the individual level can occur through a variety of sequences. Which leads us into whole new realms of complexity. Let me mention just several of the possibilities worth considering by our discussion group as it proceeds:

a. *Preference emergence*: This is about the appearance of preferences from a tabula rasa or 'near-tabula rasa,' where there were no preferences (no thinking) before. For example: I didn't used to care about X, I had no opinion, it was a vacuum in my head, but now I want X to be resolved this way or that.

b. *Preference conversion*: Here the sequence is about one preference being inverted to another under the influence of some contextual factor. So: I used to desire X but now I have come to desire Y.

c. *Salience reordering*: The shift in this frame concerns the relative importance of particular preferences, not their absolute desirability. So: I have always thought we should have X, Y, and Z, but now I have come to realize that X is more important than Y and Z, and to hell with Y and Z.

d. *Disillusionment*: In this two-step pattern, things get really complicated. There are recognizable echoes here of Russian experience. The sequence is: I thought X was a good idea, but

somebody let down my hopes, I was duped, and now I have decided to do Y as a reaction to my naive dreams being let down. Note that disillusionment can be combined with preference conversion, producing a highly combustible mix. Thus: I used to be in favor of Y and I embraced X only because some pied piper talked me into it; then I reverted to opinion Y, and strongly resent whoever it was that sold me on X.

### 2. *Changed composition of the opinion aggregate – gradual*

The driver for Types 2 and 3 is not changes in how a given individual or individuals think but changes in the composition of the relevant population. The population subtypes in this construct are fixed; over time, the mix shifts, as more individuals of (fixed) opinion X are represented in the mix and fewer individuals of opinion Y are represented. In Type 2, the process whereby the population changes composition is a gradual one.

For gradual changes in composition of the population, the most obvious motor would be biology, in combination with a changing context – the ‘generational succession.’ Age cohorts would by and large retain the attitudes internalized in childhood and adult socialization; as the years go by, these people are replaced by children and grandchildren whose life experiences were different. Jerry Hough years ago argued in a prescient study that such a process was underway in the late Soviet administrative and leadership cadre. Students of democratization in post–World War II Germany have made a similar claim about how successive cohorts of Germans after the loss of the war and occupation by the victors updated their preferences.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Jerry F. Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. 1980; and Kendall L. Baker, Russell J. Dalton & Kai Hildebrandt, *Germany Transformed: Political Culture and the New Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 1981.

### 3. *Changed composition of the opinion aggregate – sudden*

The elite cadre does not have to change gradually. The process can be in principle be lightning-quick. In modern times, there are many ways such a reshuffle can occur. Let me limit the possibilities for Type 3 to two particularly suggestive possibilities:

a. *Revolution*: Russian history gives us ample empirical material here. Russian political thought in 1925 was different from Russian political thought in 1895 because the elite had been repopulated as a result of the traumatic events of the Russian Revolution. Monarchists and organic conservatives were either dead or in mournful exile; Bolsheviks and their sympathizers manned the ramparts.

b. *Power struggle*: Again, Russia gives us classic examples. In the mid-1950s the Khrushchev group won out in the Kremlin over the likes of Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich. Ditto for the mid-1960s, when Brezhnev emerged to supreme. More to the point, Gorbachev and his supporters won the struggle of the mid-1980s and Yeltsin with a different crew on board took that of the 1990s, as well as Putin and his confederates after that. Putin won out in a power struggle involving wider circles of players than in Soviet times, in no small part by exploiting the support of his predecessor and patron, Yeltsin – who after the fact came to regret his role.

### 4. *Censorship and self-censorship*

In talking about a Type 4 I am on shakier ground. The issue is about what views are allowed to be expressed, publicly and privately, at acceptable cost to those who hold them. In today’s Russia, blogs and other social media may be a safety valve in this regard, but they do not mitigate the advantage Putin enjoys through his exclusive control of national television, which



is the dominant source of news for up to 90 percent of adults.

One can readily think of situations, and not just in Russia, where people (thinkers) are unable or unwilling to say what they really think, in which case the 'thought' one reads and hears expressed is a distorted or even completely falsified version of what people really think. The historian John Dower gives us an example from the attitudes of ordinary people in his wonderful book about U.S.-occupied, post-World War II Japan.

Put in Japanese terms, the emperor worship that so mesmerized Fellers<sup>4</sup> and other Western analysts appeared to have been in large part *tatamae*, a facade. Once defeat came home and the military state collapsed, the *honno* or true sentiment of ordinary Japanese revealed itself to be closer to mild attachment, resignation, even indifference where the imperial system and the vaunted national policy were concerned.<sup>5</sup>

Closer to home, consider this excerpt from George Kennan's famous Long Telegram to the State Department from the Moscow embassy in February 1946, summarizing the USSR's determination to press against Western interests at all cost:

[The] party line only represents [the] thesis which [the] official propaganda machine puts forward with great skill and persistence to a *public often remarkably resistant in the stronghold of its innermost thoughts*. [But, he continued, that was not so important for the U.S. government]. [The] party line is binding for the outlook and conduct of people who make up the apparatus of power— party, secret police and government — and it is exclusively with these that we have to deal.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Brigadier General Bonner F. Fellers was MacArthur's military secretary and head of psychological warfare.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, Norton, New York 1999, p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> *The "Long Telegram" entitled The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State*, Moscow 22 February 1946, is online: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.

In Type 4, if we are talking about change in thought, the engine of change is not so much the revision of private opinions *per se* (Kennan's "innermost thoughts") but shifts in the boundaries of what may be expressed in public. The main lesson to be taken from this typology is that it is important for us to be clear about what underlying process is driving changes in Russian political thought. Is it change at the individual level, changed composition of the opinion aggregate, or a process of censorship or self-censorship of true opinions? Or, most likely, it is some composite of these several types, and their subtypes? Answers to this question will strongly influence not only what we conclude about trends in Russian thought but the strategies we employ, foreigners and Russians alike, to investigate and debate them.

Part I

Imperial Identity and Soviet Heritage

## Chapter I

### On the Novelty of Patrimonialism in Putin's Russia

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The Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the subsequent outbreak of armed conflict in eastern Ukraine mark a major change in the history of Europe and Eurasia, bringing a close to the once seemingly open-ended period of 'postcommunism,' which spanned the quarter century from the fall of the Berlin Wall until the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis. In this essay, I will argue that understanding the evolution of political legitimacy in the postcommunist era from 1989-2014 is vital for making sense of contemporary Russian authoritarianism – and for formulating effective Western strategies for dealing with Russia in the dramatic and dangerous new situation we have now entered. In particular, such an examination makes it clear that President Vladimir Putin's turn toward a comparatively 'pure' form of patrimonial authoritarianism since returning to the presidency for a third term in 2012 is in no way a continuation of late Soviet or post-Soviet practices, but instead marks a radical departure in how political rule in Russia is legitimated.<sup>1</sup> Understanding the true novelty of patrimonialism in Putin's Russia also reveals it to be a comparatively fragile form of order, especially in the context of intensifying globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>1</sup> Stephen E. Hanson, *Plebiscitarian Patrimonialism in Putin's Russia*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 636 (1), July 2011, pp. 32-68.

### 1. *The continuity thesis*

The thesis that Putin's regime is now patrimonial, and that this patrimonialism marks a sharp break in Russia's contemporary history, contradicts several contemporary approaches to understanding Putinism in comparative perspective. After a quarter-century of intense political and social turbulence and uncertainty throughout Eurasia, it is remarkable how quickly scholars and analysts seem to have embraced what Stephen Cohen, in Soviet times, used to call the "continuity thesis"<sup>2</sup>: namely, that even apparently dramatic changes in Russian society only mask a "deeper" reality of cultural and political stasis. Indeed, Russia specialists from widely diverging scholarly camps have now converged in embracing this conclusion.

A first school of thought insists that 'patrimonialism,' in the classic Weberian sense, has actually been the dominant mode of governance in Russia from the tsarist period, through the Soviet period, and extending to the present day.<sup>3</sup> From this point of view, Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's efforts to democratize and decentralize Russian politics in the 1980s and 1990s were simply anomalous, bound to fail in the face of a longstanding Russian 'political culture' of deference to central authority. In a similar vein, a growing number of authors now embrace the idea that President Putin is a new Russian 'tsar'<sup>4</sup> – not just metaphorically, but in fact. Indeed, this interpretation of Putin's intensifying crackdown on all forms of political opposition is especially tempting given the fact that Putin's own supporters frequently make similar historical allusions.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Getty, J. Arch. *Practicing Stalinism: Bolsheviki, Boyars, and the Persistence of Tradition*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2013.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, Knopf, New York 2015.

The problem with the argument that Putin represents an unchanging Russian patrimonial culture, however, is precisely that it dismisses the significance of nearly three decades of remarkably dramatic efforts to dismantle 'Soviet totalitarianism' and rebuild Russia on a new foundation of democratic legitimacy. We should remember that not that long ago, scholars and policymakers were lambasting the field of Soviet Studies for its collective underestimation of the impetus to dismantle the Leninist regime – a phenomenon that was entirely unexpected for those such as Richard Pipes<sup>5</sup> who insisted that the USSR was simply a continuation of tsarist patrimonialism in Marxist-Leninist guise. Russian culture, like all other cultures, contains contradictory and complex impulses, some of which can be mobilized in support of the construction of personalized and centralized authority, and some of which can be mobilized to dismantle such forms of authority with remarkable speed. Buying into the Kremlin's own myth-making that Putin is the rightful heir to past Russian state-builders may well blind us to the informal cultural repertoires of opposition to authority that continue to play an important role in Russian politics.

### 2. *The rational choice approach*

To emphasize the relative novelty of Putin's embrace of pure patrimonialism since 2012 also contradicts a 'rational choice' approach to Russian politics that focuses on political incentive structures rather than political beliefs. If one looks only at the 'technologies' of governance, and not at legitimizing discourse, Putin's authoritarianism would seem to have been firmly established since at least 2004, when the last vestiges of serious partisan and elite opposition to his power were crushed. From

<sup>5</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, Penguin, London 1997.

this perspective, Russian politics in the mid-2010s looks quite similar to Russian politics a decade earlier. For that matter, rational choice institutionalists describe Yeltsin's regime, too, as 'super-presidential.' And Gorbachev never agreed to put his leadership to any sort of openly democratic electoral test, preferring to create a new 'Soviet presidency' while holding on to his position as General Secretary. A purely institutionalist approach to the analysis of Soviet and Russian 'regime types,' then, tends further to bolster the new consensus about Russian political continuity over time.

Even more sophisticated rational choice approaches to the analysis of Russian politics that take into account the periodic crises in Russian politics since 1991 tend nevertheless to bolster the 'continuity thesis.' Henry Hale, for example, argues that post-Soviet politics can be understood as essentially nothing more than a predictable set of regime cycles in which 'patronal' political machines rise and fall in response to the assessments of rational political actors concerning their future viability.<sup>6</sup> Pushing the analysis back further in time, he argues that Russian "patronalism" has remained essentially unchanged since the early tsarist era: whether under the Romanovs or under the Bolsheviks, the building of "pyramids of power" dependent on the power of a single patron has been a standard political practice. Again, we are led to the conclusion that contemporary Putinism is only the latest in a long series of efforts in Russia to build a single national political machine.

One should not dismiss Hale's argument too quickly. It cannot be denied that the more optimistic analysts of Russia's so-called 'transition to democracy' in the 1990s often failed to understand the continuing centrality of brute machine politics, as well as the informal political arbitrariness operating behind the

<sup>6</sup> Henry Hale, *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2014.

façade of democratic legality, in post-Soviet Russia. It is also clear that the 'rational-legal' notions of political legitimacy set out in formal documents, such as the Russian Constitution of 1993, have turned out to have little practical effect on longer term institutional outcomes. Nevertheless, it is a mistake also to downplay entirely the importance of genuine belief in the ideals of Western democracy and liberalism (not always the same thing, it should be noted) in accounting for the conduct of key political actors in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Principled pro-Western activism on the part of those who organized 'informal' movements for democratization was vital to the dynamic by which Gorbachev's perestroika led to ever more revolutionary demands for institutional change and, in the end, to the collapse of Leninism in Russia. Principled pro-Western actors mobilized in important ways in the early Yeltsin era to back quite radical changes in Russia's political economy that everyone now agrees were highly consequential – although the results of these changes were hardly what their authors initially envisaged. Even in the Putin era, significant public demonstrations of opposition to the regime have repeatedly emerged. As recently as 2011-2012, prominent analysts of Russian affairs wondered if the Putin regime might fall as a result of mass protests against fraud in the 2011 Duma elections. That such predictions turned out ultimately to be incorrect should not lead us entirely to discount the potential for new unexpected upheavals in Russian politics and society in the future.

### 3. *Virtual politics*

Finally, advocates of a third school of thought about contemporary Russian politics reject the idea that Putinism is 'patrimonial' or even 'patronal,' instead calling into question whether it is possible to grasp the underlying mechanisms of Russian

political authority through any usual social scientific analysis.<sup>7</sup> An extreme version of this approach to Putinism insists that Russian politics today has become entirely ‘virtual’ – that ‘truth’ can be manufactured by the authorities in any way they choose, and that only the most naïve of analysts could imagine that anyone in Russia actually believes in his or her professed ‘political principles.’<sup>8</sup> To be sure, there is an important grain of truth to this position: there can be no doubt that in comparative perspective, the collapse of Marxism-Leninism in 1991 left in its wake a Russian society profoundly allergic to political ideology in its 20<sup>th</sup> century form. In this social context, it has been comparatively easy for ‘political technologists’ in the Kremlin’s employ to ‘manufacture’ ersatz political parties, social movements, and even ‘facts’ in the service of the state, without encountering sustained social resistance. Adopting this cynical approach to the analysis of Russian affairs leads to a different version of the continuity thesis: since ideology and political principles are seen as irrelevant to the study of political manipulation in Russia, the country’s history can be interpreted as a whole series of elite conspiracies to fool a gullible public – whether via Potemkin villages, Marxist-Leninist dogma, or claptrap about ‘democracy.’

There are serious methodological problems with this cynical interpretation of Russian history, of course: if all empirical evidence of genuine ideological commitment among politicians in the tsarist, Soviet, Yeltsin, or Putin eras is taken to be suspect a priori, the argument that ‘legitimacy’ in Russia is nothing but a sham will inevitably – and tautologically-seem more compelling. Yet the very fact that Putin and his elite have chosen in

<sup>7</sup> The most influential recent analysis of Putin’s Russia in this vein is Peter Pomarantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: Adventures in Modern Russia*, Faber & Faber, London 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2005.

response to the political protests of 2011-12 fully to embrace a discourse of Orthodoxy, Eurasianism, homophobia, and anti-liberal nationalism demonstrates that in fact Russian politics today is far from ‘post-modern.’ Indeed, what is most striking about Russian political discourse in Putin’s second presidential term is how deadly earnest it is. The tongue-in-cheek, self-aware quality of pro-Putin propaganda in the 2000s – encapsulated in the silly popular song about how young women would prefer ‘a man like Putin’ – has given way to an unsettling drumbeat of dark conspiracy theories about the nefarious intentions of the West, with little if any sense of fun. Apparently, Kremlin ‘technologists’ have discovered, ironically, that it takes real ideas that resonate within Russian society, not fake ones, to mobilize real people to fight and die for the state. The ‘virtual politics’ school has in this way missed something crucial about important changes in Russian state-society relations since 2011.

#### 4. *The Weberian approach*

Thus, it appears that whether Putin’s contemporary regime is examined from a cultural, a rationalist, or a postmodern point of view, the end result is the same: the postcommunist ‘transition,’ which had once seemed to represent the most dramatic change in Russian political history since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has essentially accomplished nothing. In a strange way, too, these analyses leave us with the impression that no one is really to blame for the dashing of early post-Soviet dreams of a transformed Russia. It was simply foolish, it seems, to think that old patterns of authoritarian rule could ever be reformed in a country where ordinary people are powerless against authority and no one truly believes in anything beyond self-interest.

Yet there are good reasons to believe that the new ‘Russian continuity thesis’ is no less misleading than the old, Soviet-era

version. For one thing, such a viewpoint can unwittingly reinforce popular stereotypes, both in Russia and in the West, that there is a mysterious ‘civilizational’ divide between ‘Orthodox’ Eurasia and the lands of ‘Western Christendom.’ For another, it is just as likely to blind us to sources of institutional fragility in Putin’s Russia as the Soviet-era continuity thesis did with respect to the potential significance of Gorbachev’s reforms. How might we find a way, then, to take seriously the comparative similarities of Putinism in the mid-2010s to earlier forms of Russian authoritarianism, while still taking into account the possibilities for unexpected and potentially dramatic political change in the years and decades to come?

As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> a return to the original works of the theorist who first introduced the concept of ‘legitimate domination’ to the social sciences, Max Weber, provides a needed alternative to the dominant contemporary paradigms in Russian studies. After all, ‘patrimonialism’ itself is a Weberian concept. Yet Weber’s work on political legitimation is typically poorly understood, both by analysts who reject his views – and by many who think they embrace them. Clearly the position that political ideas and principles are irrelevant to politics is foreign to Weberian thinking, but so too is the argument that Russian politics has simply been unchangingly ‘patrimonial’ in nature for the past five centuries. Indeed, Weber’s original research on the Russian Revolution of 1905, based on his analysis of Russian-language sources, clearly shows his own deep appreciation of the possibilities for democratic change in the context of patrimonial tsarism.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Stephen E. Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *The Russian Revolutions*, translated and edited by Gordon C. Wells and Peter Baehr, Polity Press, Cambridge 1995.

In particular, Weber’s theory of legitimate domination is distinguished by three key features that are often absent in contemporary misreadings of his work. To begin with, Weber’s primary concern is to understand the ‘legitimacy’ of orders given by elites to their ‘staff’ – not with the legitimacy of ‘states’ within broader ‘societies.’ His focus is thus both narrow and tractable: to what extent to the people entrusted by rules to carry out orders on behalf of the state subjectively believe that they have a ‘duty,’ and not only an interest, to obey? If state officials do believe in their duty to obey the leader, Weber argues, the resulting order is likely to be more stable than if state officials act purely out of self-interest. To answer this question, mass public opinion polls – however useful they might be for other forms of social science analysis – are simply irrelevant. Indeed, for Weber, a form of rule can be highly legitimate for the elites and staffs who enforce it, and simultaneously rejected as alien and oppressive by masses within society at large. Thus the common assumption that Putin’s high popularity ratings are evidence of the regime’s ‘legitimacy’ represents a misunderstanding of the Weberian approach.

Second, Weber’s theory is parsimonious. He famously insists that in the history of humanity to date, there have only been three effective sources for the belief that rulers have a right to give orders to staff. ‘Traditional’ legitimacy is rooted in the subjective belief by the ruler’s staff that obedience to the orders of the ruler is inherent in the ways of one’s community since ‘time immemorial.’ ‘Rational-legal’ legitimacy is based on the subjective belief that obedience to state commands is mandated by legal and/or constitutional principles that have been duly enacted according to impersonal procedures. And ‘charismatic’ legitimacy is based on the subjective belief that obedience to the leader is mandated by his (or, rarely, her) unique understanding of the will of God, destiny, or some other ‘transcendental’ force. These three ‘ideal types’ of legitimate domi-

nation, according to Weber, never exist anywhere in absolutely pure form; they intermingle in complex ways in every empirically-existing form of political order. Yet essentially, only these three forms of 'legitimate domination' together or separately have proven effective in the construction of enduring forms of political organization. Hence it is possible for social scientists to categorize 'regime types' in a way that can enable comparative analysis while not oversimplifying their empirical complexity.<sup>11</sup>

Third, Weber's approach to the study of legitimate domination welds together the study of 'ideas' in politics and the analysis of economic factors that clearly help to determine state stability. Contrary to some interpretations of Weber's sociology, he is well aware that no form of political order can survive indefinitely if it fails to provide material benefits to those who support it. Traditional forms of political domination 'work,' in the end, because the upholding of elite-sanctioned conceptions of 'tradition' tends to pay off for state elites in the form of privileged access to economic surplus. Rational-legal political orders typically marry the upholding of the 'rule of law' with systems of property rights and capital accumulation that provide material benefits to elites who work within them. Even charismatic domination depends on the validation of the leader's claims to extraordinary status through periodic 'miracles' of material success (whether these are gained through the spoils of war, through revolutionary expropriations of property, or through sheer good luck). Yet although all types of legitimate domination rest ultimately on a material foundation, Weber argues that they remain analytically distinct. Contrary to cynical, post-modern, and rational choice interpretations of politics, political actors can simultaneously benefit materially

<sup>11</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Voll. I-II, translated and edited by Guenther Roth and Klaus Wittich, University of California Press, Berkeley 1978.

from their position within a regime – and believe subjectively that these benefits are right, holy, and/or just according to their deeply-held principles. Indeed, 'legitimate domination' is effectively precise because it produces a social context in which elites typically do not distinguish between their 'ideal' and 'material' interests in upholding the established order.

For Weber, patrimonialism was a subtype of traditional legitimate domination. It is built not only on the claim of the ruler to represent 'sacred tradition' that must be upheld, but also, more specifically, on his claim to be the patriarchal male authority figure with rightful sole possession of all of the state and with the arbitrary discretion to utilize its assets as he pleases.<sup>12</sup> Patrimonialism's material basis rests on the ruler's ability to reward faithful members of the ruling 'household' with state assets, legitimating such conduct by depicting the ruler and his ruling elite as the heir to historical traditions of imperial and religious greatness. Such a description of Putin's regime after 2012 does seem reasonably apt. However, utilizing this framework to analyze Russian history in the longer term, it becomes clear that the patrimonial ideal type has rarely been appropriate to describe the key features of the Russian state. In fact, from a Weberian perspective that takes modes of legitimate domination seriously, we can discern at least five distinct 'regime types' since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As Pipes famously argued, tsarism under the Romanovs certainly did have prominent patrimonial features, with the tsar claiming his right to rule consistently on the basis of historical dynastic inheritance and 'divine right' bestowed by God, and distributing state assets to the court in ways rarely bound by rational-legal proceduralism. To be sure, there is a rich his-

<sup>12</sup> See also Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005.



toriography calling into question Pipes's argument that all of Russian imperial history from Ivan the Terrible to Nicholas II can be analyzed as 'patrimonial' in an undifferentiated way – especially after the constitutional reforms introduced after the Russian Revolution of 1905. Yet it is nevertheless true that the last Russian tsar until the very end did prove remarkably unwilling to break formally with the core claim that his right to rule rested on religion and tradition, and not on any form of legal-rational authority.

The Russian Revolution of 1917, however, brought tsarist patrimonialism to a decisive close, and – after a brief, troubled experiment with 'legal-rational authority' in the form of the Provisional Government – replaced it with a self-consciously 'revolutionary' regime. The new Bolshevik leadership built its legitimacy around a novel combination of charismatic promises to transcend all past forms of social oppression with rational-legal proceduralism in the building of new party and state institutions – a novel regime-type Jowitt has characterized as "charismatic impersonalism."<sup>13</sup> Despite disputes and policy debates among rival Bolshevik and Soviet leaders through Soviet history, this basic conception of legitimacy endured through the late Gorbachev era, until the failed August coup of 1991 brought a final end to Leninist rule in Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union. It is telling that even toward the end of the perestroika period, Gorbachev saw himself as acting in a way consistent with 'Leninist' principles, even if by the end he had very little clear sense of how such principles might be translated into any workable institutional system.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen E. Hanson, *Time and Revolution: Marxism and the Design of Soviet Institutions*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1997.

### 5. *Russia's post-imperial democracy: Putin's specificity*

What replaced Leninism in 1991 was not renewed patrimonialism, but instead a protracted, flawed, but nevertheless consequential effort to establish more fully rational-legal constitutional politics in the new 'Russian Federation.' Russian 'liberal capitalism' in the 1990s was clearly very weakly consolidated, subject to nearly constant political, economic, social, and international challenges; in this respect, it can be fruitfully compared to other weak 'post-imperial democracies' such as the early French Third Republic and Weimar Germany. But notwithstanding President Boris Yeltsin's frequent invocation of executive decree power, his increasing reliance on members of the former Soviet security services, the flaws in Russian elections at all levels of the federation, and the pervasive corruption of the post-Soviet Russian bureaucracy, it is a mistake to assimilate the entirety of the 1990s to the paradigm of 'Russian patrimonialism.' In fact, Yeltsin's explicit efforts to legitimate his rule with reference to Western ideals of 'democracy' and 'capitalism' in a geopolitical context where such terms looked increasingly to most Russians like a justification for the gradual destruction of the Russian state has played a fateful role in undermining rational-legal forms of legitimacy more generally in Russian society.

Indeed, even after Vladimir Putin's selection as Yeltsin's 'heir' in 1999 and his election as Russia's new president in 2000, significant 'plebiscitarian' elements of political legitimacy – in which periodic affirmative votes by 'the people' were cited as by Putin's elite as central to their right to rule – remained prominent alongside the emerging patrimonial themes in the construction of Putin's presidential regime in the 2000s. Without taking into account the regime's reliance on plebiscitarian democracy for its legitimation, it is impossible to account for Putin's decision to step down formally as President in favor of his protégé Dmitry Medvedev in 2008 to preserve the con-

stitutional limit on presidential terms set out in the Russian Constitution of 1993. And it is precisely the transformation of the ‘plebiscitarian patrimonialism’ of 2000-2011 into the more straightforward patrimonialism of Putin’s third term, in the wake of the significant opposition protests of 2011-2012, that defines the dramatically new situation we are witnessing in today’s Russian polity.

Contemporary Putinism, then, cannot simply be understood as a continuation of earlier trends in Russian politics. Instead, it emerged out of a specific domestic and international context, within which alternative possibilities for constructing legitimacy in the postcommunist era were successively tried and discarded. From this perspective, Putin’s relatively pure patrimonialism in the contemporary period represents not continuity in Russian political history, but instead a dramatic political rupture with the country’s modes of governance since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Putin’s decision to jettison the remnants of plebiscitarianism in favor of patrimonial legitimation – turning against the very same ‘modern’ elites that Yeltsin’s reforms tried to create – appears from this perspective not a return to time-tested Russian traditions, but instead a risky gamble. Patrimonial traditionalism, after all, is an awkward fit for a Russian political economy that is still enmeshed in global capitalist institutions, and a highly-educated Russian society that has been open to the West for more than a generation. Given the severe economic challenges facing Russia in the era of fracking and low energy prices, it appears doubtful at best that the short term nationalist fervor Putin has managed to generate through domestic paeans to the machismo of the leader and international adventures in Ukraine and Syria can be sustained for long.

## Chapter II

### The ‘Great Power’ Ideologeme as a Condition of Putin’s Regime Legitimacy *Lev Gudkov, Levada Center*

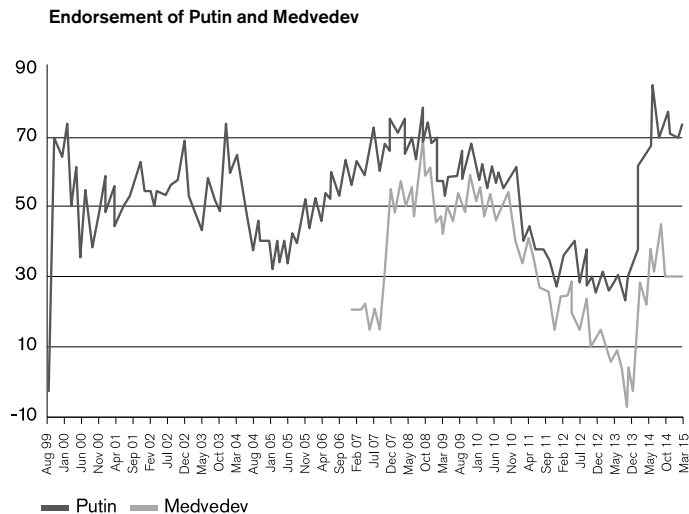
#### *1. Restoring consensus*

The year 2014 in Russia was marked with an unprecedented growth of internal aggression, intolerance and simultaneously – national pride, reflected in near unanimous support of the country’s policies. Such a result was insured through very effective, focused and absolutely cynical Kremlin propaganda and the war in Ukraine helping to revive patriotism. In December 2014, 87 per cent of Russian citizens surveyed by Levada Center were convinced that Western countries were pursuing a hostile agenda towards Russia (while only 8 per cent disagreed with them).

The annexation of Crimea and the instigation and provocation by Russia of civil war in the Ukraine has broken the trend in domestic political development that has manifested following the economic crisis of 2008-2009: decrease of Putin’s popularity, weakening of the authorities’ legitimacy and increase in social tensions. By the end of 2013, Putin’s personal rating had hit the lowest level of his entire ‘reign.’ Mass discontent was caused by the decrease in state social expenses, increase of bureaucratic pressure on business and social life, onset of corruption scandals among policy makers, uncertainty about the future under an authoritarian rule. Putin’s regime turned out to be incapable of fulfilling the paternalistic expectations of his ‘subjects.’

The authorities responded to the protest movement of 2011-2013 by acutely intensifying repressions against the opposition and civil society organizations, marginalizing independent media, returning state censure and transforming the mass media into total propaganda tools. Elimination of free elections and tightening of administrative control over public activities demanded that the judiciary system be further subdued by the president's administration, the authority of political police and other special services be expanded, marked changes be made to the legislation and law enforcement practice, as well as significant modifications to state cultural and educational policy.

Such an evolution of the authoritarian regime determined by the self-preservation of ruling groups seems rather logical. Taking their limited intellectual, cultural and symbolic resources into consideration, it means not simply an imitation or return of soviet institutional practices and mass beliefs but a kind of revision to late totalitarianism.



Militarist and anti-liberal, antidemocratic and anti-western rhetoric has caused an ideological mobilization of the populace restoring consensus between the state and society. Starting from March 2014, 83-87 per cent of respondents spoke of their approval and support of Putin's policies. The means used to bring Russian society into a state of fever pitch point to the latent structures that determine the stability of this socio-cultural system: totalitarian institutes (the organization of authority) have weakened in the last 25 years, having been partly distorted or changed but not disposed of. Thus, I want to underline this important methodological aspect: the newest events and phenomena (late phases) allow us to understand the importance of previous forms of organization and mechanisms of reproduction of the Soviet system, and therefore the evolution of Russia's political system and ideology. The system itself (entity) has fallen apart, but separate institutes of late soviet totalitarianism – such as authority organization, court, army, education – have turned out to be 'viable' and active.

The point of Putin's policy – the character of leaders' identity and purpose – is a regeneration of the domination structure under new conditions, namely the processes of the totalitarian system crash routinization. The domination technology is being based on privatization of the state by authority clans consisting of former special services and security agencies members on the one hand and keeping society in a state of apathy with a lack of political choice, creating an absence of alternatives to the existing order.

## *2. Recovering 'great power' memory and its collective identity*

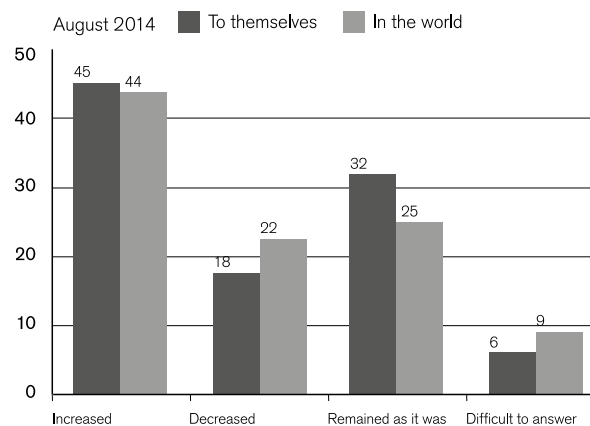
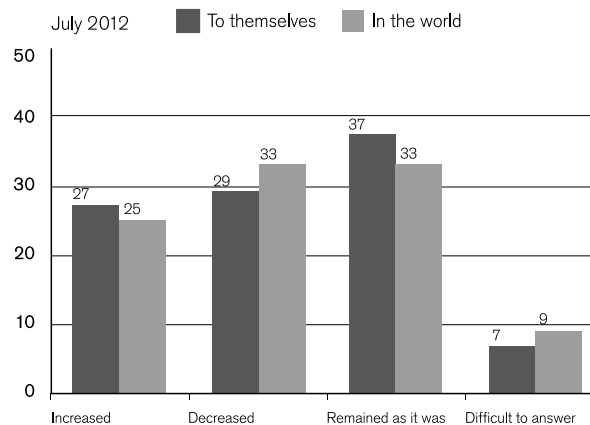
Insufficient legitimacy makes the current regime search for a means of generating mass support by turning to the ideology of groups that have already vacated the political scene: social-political conservatism, traditionalism, and Orthodoxy.

The efforts of the Kremlin's political engineers come down to suppressing all opportunities of rationalizing and moral processing of the totalitarian past thereby discrediting and paralyzing the very thought of possible change to the political order (necessity of reform, modernization and democracy). Ideologically this restoration process is justified through the rhetoric of 'Great Power' and the mythology of the traditional or imperial past, satisfying the mass demand for recovering a prior collective identity. The return to superpower status along with crisis rescue were determined as priorities by the masses' expectations of the ascension to power by an authoritarian leader in the late 1990s. Compared to this even the escalating social problems – corruption, crime, degradation of medical services etc. – were seen as less important by the populace. The first attempts at conservative consolidation of Russia's society – the search for a 'national idea' after the questionable presidential election of 1996 – were undertaken back in Yeltsin's time, but it was only under Putin's imitation of Soviet style leadership that it became the basis of the political course.

#### What was done by Vladimir Putin during his stay in power?<sup>1</sup>

	Aug 2010 VIII	Feb 2013 II	Mar 2014 III	Mar 2015 III
Restore Russia's superpower status	36	36	51	49
Overcome separatist sentiments, keep Russia from the break-up	–	24	27	32
Keep Russia on the reform track	22	22	16	24
Continue the reforms but with a greater focus on the social security of the population	22	9	12	14
Overcome the crisis in the economy, stop the decline in output	18	14	12	10
Cope with the consequences of the crisis 2008	–	19	19	29
Raise salaries, pensions, scholarships and allowances	43	28	25	29
Ensure the rule of law and order	17	11	9	18
Pursue the agenda of reunification of the republics of the former Soviet Union	20	16	13	16
End the war in Chechnya / tensions in North Caucasus	12	17	25	34
Ensure the fair distribution of wealth in the interest of common people	5	3	2	4
Reimburse the population for the savings lost in course of reforms	11	5	3	5
None of the above	6	9	6	5
Difficult to answer	5	8	10	6

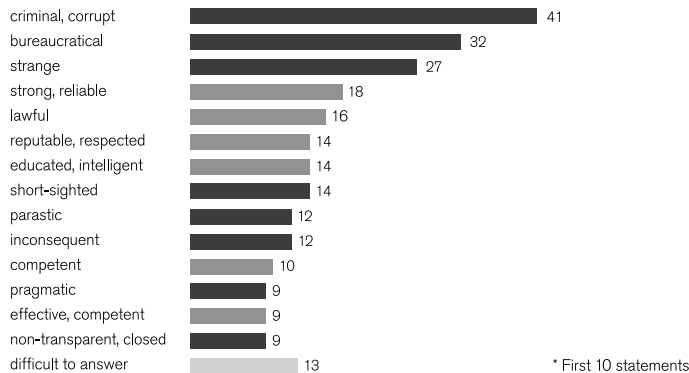
#### Over the last 10 years, the respect for Russia in the world has increased, decreased or remained the same as it was?



<sup>1</sup> Levada-Tsentr, Survey ranged by 2015, N=800, in percentage, May 2015.

Key ideological points of modern Russian nationalism are closely related to the traumatic experience of the Soviet collapse and the defeat in the Cold War. Superpower status holds the central place in the structure of collective identity of Russians. The sense of belonging to a huge country that ‘everybody used to respect and fear,’ identification with one of the two most powerful military states compensated the ‘small men’ and the persistently present feeling of daily humiliation, the sense of chronic poverty, powerlessness and dependence on the arrogant and despotic authorities.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, Russian nationalism – no matter how different its versions and currents – is fed by the negative energy of mass resentment on the one hand and collective frustration on the other. Russian nationalism – which the legitimacy of Putin’s regime is built upon – is devoid of visions of the future; it faces the mythologized past, is concerned mostly with searching for internal and external enemies – those guilty of the empire’s crash, the country’s degradation, the failed transition to democracy, the unfulfilled modernization etc.

**How would you describe the current government?<sup>3</sup>**



*3. An eclectic conservative approach*

The subject of Russian nationalism is an extirpation of obsessive national inferiority complexes and the sore feelings regarding the historical state of backwardness and archaism. Its ideology has a defensive, compensatory, consolatory character being the dark side of the weakening great power consciousness. Therefore, it doesn’t propose and isn’t capable of proposing any development goals. Such ideologemes are activated every time a crisis within a political system unfolds; a power shift issue arises and therefore creates the demand and necessity to justify and legitimize it. The semantical basis for glorification (or vilification) of the authorities may vary radically: from nostalgia over soviet communism to the splendor and greatness of the former Russian Empire, from myths about racial supremacy of Russians to Orthodox fundamentalism. Nevertheless, their function remains purely conservative – an apology of the dominant existing structure instead of formulation of political objectives for national development.

Is Russia now a great power? <sup>4</sup>	Mar 99	Apr 00	Oct 01	Mar 04	Nov 05	Nov 06	Nov 07	Jun 09	Nov 10	Nov 11	Mar 14	Mar 15
Definitely yes + Most likely, yes	31	53	40	39	30	43	53	61	55	47	63	68
Most likely, no + Definitely no	65	43	57	57	67	52	42	33	41	46	32	27
Difficult to answer	4	4	3	3	4	5	5	6	4	6	5	6

<sup>2</sup> The level and depth of mass frustration caused by the collapse of the USSR and the disintegration of the soviet institutional system is clearly underestimated by political scientists and social analysts.

<sup>3</sup> Levada-Tsentr, Survey referred to March 2015, in percentage, May 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Levada-Tsentr, Survey ranged by 2009 (N=1600), since 2010 (N=800), in percentage, May 2015.

“Russia’s renaissance,” “getting up from our knees,” announced by Putin in the mid-2000-s is set to overcome the national state of humiliation. In this context “the eternal opposition of Russia and the West” as separate ‘civilizations’ closed off from each other is acquiring traits of collective metaphysics as we speak and doesn’t require special justification and therefore the policy pursued by the regime doesn’t need additional arguments and proof. The meaning of this reactionary utopia is in conserving what is by now a no alternatives domination system and – as the drift – in discrediting the ideas and principles of ‘open society,’ constitutional state, and modernization. Acceptance of democratic and liberal values inevitably leads to the acceptance of the need for further institutional reform and change of the current political system as a prerequisite of economic growth, social prosperity and technological progress.

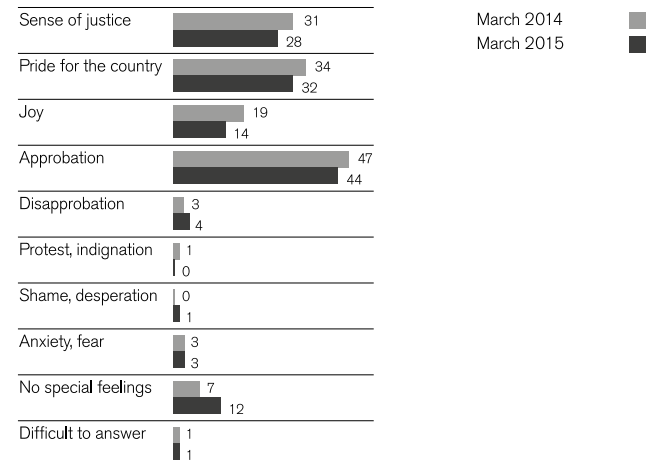
Putin’s ideology – restoration of the moral and political unity of the authorities and the people – boils down to the following ideas: ‘stability’ – unchangeability of the authorities – overcoming the ‘chaos’ caused by Yeltsin’s reforms; ‘traditionalism,’ a special role of Orthodoxy and its importance in the matter of society’s ‘moral upbringing’; fighting against Western influence – civil society organizations as well as constitutional state and human rights movements were appointed ‘agents’ thereof by the Kremlin’s political engineers.

This national ideology presents an eclectic mix of all previous justifications of Russian nationalism: the rehabilitation of Stalin and the soviet state system are combined here with the glorification of the tsar’s ministers and generals; increase of militarist rhetoric with orthodoxy; pious censure of culture, media and education with a ban on critical analysis of the soviet past.

Restoration of patriotic pride – in the absence of tangible achievements – could only happen at the expense of imposing the notion of the surrounding world’s hostility towards the nation upon the populace. The idea of the country’s hostile envi-

ronment, the perception that the West strives to weaken Russia by dislodging it from its traditional area of national interest – the former USSR territory – to get control of its primary resources has been insistently impressed upon Russia’s populace, especially following Putin’s Munich speech in 2007.<sup>5</sup> Propaganda constantly propagates the idea that western countries – especially the US – strive to abate Russia, dismember it, take control of its opulent resources, that the West is a historical enemy that plants the morals and ideology of liberalism and human rights foreign to Russian culture and destroying the basis of state solidarity.

#### What are your feelings regarding the Russian Government’s decision to annex Crimea into the Russian Federation?<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Putin’s speech on 10 February 2007 at 43rd Munich Security Conference is online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkyjYKVYlWo>.

<sup>6</sup> Levada-Tsentr, Survey ranged by N = 1600 (several answers are possible), in percentage, May 2015.

Thus the idea of Russia's 'unique way' differs from western modernization, based on the need for self-reliance and autonomous economic development without which the country's safety cannot be guaranteed. The pursuit of self-isolation has already reached its peak after Putin's Crimean conquest and the introduction of western sanctions against Russia.

<b>In your opinion, is Putin guilty of abuse of power as he is under an accusation by his opponents?</b> <sup>7</sup>	2012 IV	2012 XII	2013 VIII	2014 V
Doubtless guilty, that confirms the array of facts in the Internet and free media	16	11	10	10
Probably yes as all high-ranking officials, but I don't know a lot about that, I don't follow that	32	37	42	30
Even if that is true, it is most important of all that the country is better off	25	14	18	28
Whatever they say, I don't believe that Putin had ever abused of power	11	15	13	19
Difficult to answer	16	23	17	13

This policy turned out to be rather successful, at least short term. If at the end of Yeltsin's era 72 per cent of those surveyed thought that Russia had lost the Great Power status and the authority and influence in the world that went with it and that the USSR used to have (most of them thought back then that it would be forever): However, after the annexation of the Crimea the situation changed dramatically: in March 2014 68 per cent thought that the country had always been and still remained a Great Power. The wave of anti-western sentiment created by propaganda was accompanied by experiencing pride for Russia and for being a part of it. The survey of October 2014 demon-

<sup>7</sup> Levada-Tsentr, Survey ranged by N = 1600, in percentage, May 2015.

strated the highest level of this sort of 'pride' during the whole period of study (86 per cent). 64 per cent agreed that "Russia is better than the majority of other countries."

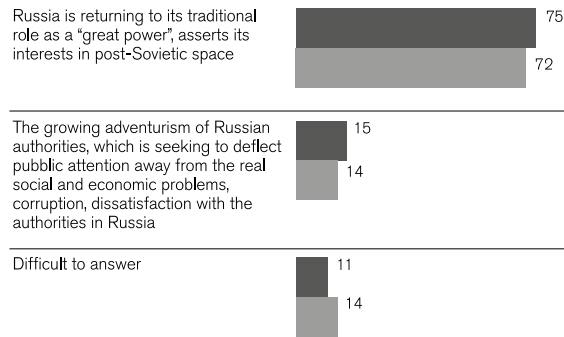
The main motif of the pro-Kremlin media is in the allegation that the Euromaidan of 2013-2014 was a link in a chain of mass disturbances inspired by the US throughout the world and social-political coups prepared with the help of the Internet and social networks, the activity of foreign foundations and non-governmental organizations. The 2003 'Rose revolution' in Tbilisi, and the 'orange revolution' in Kiev, and the events in the Arab world are presented by the propaganda as attempts to establish regimes dependent on the West.

As a result of the CPSU crash, the mass disappointment in the consequences of the reforms undertaken by the democrats in the 1990s and finally the elimination of free political competition by Putin's regime and systematic sterilization of the political and informational landscape the ideological views and positions of the populace are markedly undefined and unexpressed. Only half of Russia's populace demonstrates partiality to this or that political party program. Out of those about 20 per cent of the surveyed share communist views. The majority (48-50 per cent) consider themselves proponents of 'social-democracy' (necessity of social state, insuring the "fair distribution of national income," security of the poor and socially weak populace groups in a market economy). In essence it's a somewhat humanized soviet version of state paternalism, an inertial multitude of degraded notions of "human faced socialism" born back in mid 1960s. Hardcore Russian nationalists make up 16 per cent, and pro-western liberals – a bit less than that.

The cause of mass conservatism is not in mythologized Russian traditionalism per se, but in the lack of understanding as to what the country's mid- and long-term future might be. This causes the majority of the populace to hold on to the present, evaluating it solely from the point of view of the past (that is to

In your opinion, what is primarily evidenced by the annexation of Crimea by Russia?<sup>8</sup>

April 2014  
March 2015



say, basing their orientations and life strategies on 'the worst'). The rigidity of Russia's mass consciousness stems from the experience of survival under conditions of artificially created absence of alternative. Lack of choice is the result of the dominant technologies used by the authoritarian regime, purposeful social policy of a state not controlled by the populace and therefore feeling no sense of responsibility for its actions.

In fact, it's an adaptation to political, legislative and economic arbitrariness of the authorities. Under Putin Russian society has been forced to 'forgo' participation in politics in exchange for paternalistic 'guarantees' of existence. In such a society everyday structures play the determining role of routinization and life stability mechanisms. Under conditions of suppression of group interest representation, impossibility of political party competition, the very mechanisms of determination

<sup>8</sup> Levada-Tsentr, Survey ranged by N = 1600 (several answers are possible), in percentage of respondents, May 2015.

of the future (political goal-setting structures) degrade which means that quotidian life determines the framework of mass requirements (the horizon of possibilities as practically desired, "no worse than") and life strategies of 'reductive adaptation' and lowering of demands ('Russian patience'). This is the meaning and essence of philistine conformism.

Thus, the suppression of liberal and democratic ideology – westernizing modernization of the country – in the 2000s has led to a rise of archaic or preceding culture layers and respective political views, which served as a base for the relegitimation of Putin's regime.



## Chapter III

Nation, Nation-State, State-Nation  
and Empire-State in Post-Soviet Russia

Alexey Miller, European University  
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and state is the history of erroneous translations, misinterpretations, blind spots and superficial borrowings from the repertoire of western scholarship and journalism. When dealing with these issues, Russian thought demonstrated an inclination towards creating ideologically driven projects, which are poorly connected to observations of reality on the ground and are only vaguely formulated in practical terms. In other words, we are dealing with a specific feature of political culture that is attendant to Russia's entire political spectrum, a feature that does not presuppose productive discussion but that regards the makers of intellectual products as mutually 'hostile' groups battling for the minds of the masses that consume their products. The concept of *res publica* is almost entirely absent.

On the one hand, this situation tells us that the affirmation of the nation as an overall political framework is encountering serious difficulties in Russia and, on the other hand, it delineates the need to create such a framework.

A distinguishing feature of the debate about the nation in modern Russia is that the subject of this debate encompasses too many crucial issues at once. One would be hard pressed to find another country in which, at one and the same time, there is no consensus on such a broad range of basic topics. There is no agreement on whether Russia should be considered a nation-state or on whether we should strive to make it such a state. Those who called themselves liberals claimed that Russia should become a 'normal nation-state,' based on civic '*rossiyskaya natsiya*.' Some have flatly declared that Russia not only was an empire but is doomed to remain an empire, so no nation-state need be built in Russia. Others say that Russia needs to look for some sort of fundamentally new construct, because both the traditional form of empire and the traditional form of the nation-state have become obsolete. Still others in our society take the view that there is a nation, but that we simply fail to understand this point or are unwilling to acknowledge it.<sup>3</sup>

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian elites had developed sophisticated vocabulary and conceptual repertoire sufficient to discuss the issues of state structure and its relationship to territorial autonomy, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.<sup>1</sup> It was closely linked to the European debates of the time. Of course, the field was also densely populated by various radical and/or primitive publicists, but this is the case everywhere.

### 1. The 'national debate' in contemporary Russia

By the end of the communist period, Russians were practically deprived of this heritage. Issues of nationalism and state structure were among the most strictly controlled and censored in the Soviet Union. When I first started checking the existing historical literature on the national question in 1996, I discovered that there was only one (sic!) article,<sup>2</sup> published on nationalism in the Romanov Empire during the latter two decades of Soviet rule. History of post-communist Russian thought about nation(s)

<sup>1</sup> See Alexey Miller, *Istoriya ponyatiya natsiya v Rossii*, in Alexey Miller et.al. (eds.), «*Ponyatiya o Rossii*». *K istoricheskoy semantike imperskogo perioda*, vol.2, *Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye*, Moskva 2012, pp. 7-49.

<sup>2</sup> Valentin Semenovich Dyakin, *Natsional'nyy vopros vo vnutrenney politike tsarizma (nachalo XX v.)*, *Voprosy Istorii*, 11-12, 1996.

There is no consensus on whether Russia's present-day borders should be accepted as given. Many say that we should strive to expand them, under the banner of either 'restoring the USSR' or creating a new planned empire of some sort or through Russian irredentism – that is, an effort to annex territories with large Russian populations in order to save Russians from various misfortunes. In fact, two of these motifs (fighting for great power status and irredentism) were used in one and the same speech by President Putin, when he explained the motives for the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrently, there is a view that Russia needs to rid itself of certain 'undesirable' territories that are currently a part of it. With regard to this, some have spoken – and continue to still – of Chechnya in particular, whereas others have talked about the autonomous Caucasus republics of Russia as a whole.

Finally, there is a whole knot of contradictions over the questions of "what kind" of nation exists in Russia, what kind of nation is needed – a nation of Russian citizens (*rossiyskaya natsiya*) or of ethnic Russians (*russkaya natsiya*) – and what exactly these concepts mean. Those taking part in these disputes constantly invoke public sentiments, and they often perceive such sentiments in mutually exclusive ways. In other words, those engaged in this polemic cannot even agree on how most of the country's citizens feel about these issues.

<sup>3</sup> Valeriy Aleksandrovich Tishkov, *Chto yest' Rossiya I rossiyskiy narod*, Pro et Contra, 11 (3), May-June 2007, pp. 21-41; Alexey Ilyich Miller, *Debaty o natsii v sovremennoy Rossii*, Politicheskaya Nauka, 1, 2008, pp. 7-30; Galina Ivanovna Zvereva, *Kak "nas" teper nazyvayut? Formuly kollektivnoi identichnosti v sovremennoi Rossii*, Vestnik Obschestvennogo Mneniya, 1, January-March 2009, pp. 72-85.

<sup>4</sup> Speech of the of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, addressed to the deputies of the State Duma, the members of the Federation Council, the heads of Russian regions and the representatives of civil society; Moscow, Kremlin (March 18, 2014). The speech is fully online: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

## 2. The 'rossiyskaya natsiya'

Another significant problem is the absence of public consensus with regards to the concept of the 'Russian nation.' In official, 'politically correct' language, *rossiyane* and *rossiyskaya natsiya* are considered the norm. But this is not the case in everyday speech. Often *rossiyskiy* serves not as a unifying term but as a marker of non-Russian ethnicity. For example, we now speak confidently of Ivan Pavlov as a "great *russkiy* scientist" and Georgy Zhukov as a "great *russkiy* military leader." But in speaking of another Noblist, Vitaly Ginzburg, many people will catch themselves and describe him as a "great *rossiyskiy* scholar."

I will not cite any examples of critical or ironic comments about 'Russian citizenship' (*rossiyskost'*), but there are a myriad. Those who make them are not necessarily inclined toward racism or tribal nationalism. One often hears the suggestion simply to replace *rossiyskiy* with *russkiy*, provided that *russkiy* is used to signify a community open to people of any ethnic or racial background.

The negative attitude that many Russians have toward the concept *rossiyskost'* grows out of a suspicion that it is a substitute for 'Soviet citizenship' (*sovetskost'*) which in certain periods relied heavily on the suppression of Russian ethnicity. Those who are not ethnic Russians also perceive a connection between *rossiyskost'* and *sovetskost'*, which they interpret in the context of the pressure to Russify imposed during certain stages in the development of Soviet nationalities policy.

There are other problems as well. For example, if the sole criterion for belonging to the nation is citizenship, how do Russians abroad fit into this concept? The word 'compatriot' is, after all, defined in cultural terms, through 'Russianness' (*russkost'*), and we are talking about many millions of people here. It is clearly impossible to conceive of *rossiyskost'* without *russkost'*, just as 'British' cannot be imagined without 'English' or 'French' republicanism without 'French' culture. The weaker and less de-

veloped the civic component, the more important the cultural component is in building a nation. The cultural component also becomes more significant whenever a society sees an increase in the number of immigrants who do not meet certain cultural expectations held by the indigenous population.

### 3. *Interpreting rossiyskost' and russkost'*

The answer to the question of whether *russkost'* is an alternative to *rossiyskost'* or a necessary supplement to it depends on how we interpret *russkost'*. Attempts to construe the problem in purely philological terms and to propose that *russkost'* replace *rossiyskost'* simply on account of established linguistic practice are naïve. If *russkost'* is understood as replacing *rossiyskost'*, that greatly exacerbates the problem confronting the numerous citizens of Russia who do not identify themselves as Russians. In trying to adjust the meaning of *russkiy* so that it denotes a civic identity common to all Russian citizens, the proponents of this viewpoint will encounter no fewer difficulties than those who advocate the affirmation of *rossiyskost'* to signify a common identity.

At the other pole of thinking about the meaning of *russkost'*, we see an aspiration, clearly stated in modern discourse, to interpret *russkost'* as an ethnic category. Some openly insist on a biological, genetic interpretation of *russkost'*. The danger of this position is obvious, because if it were to be accepted by society, it would automatically lead to the question of who is to determine whether someone is Russian, of whether DNA analysis will now replace a pair of compasses for measuring people's skulls, and of how the Nuremberg laws can be rewritten for Russia. In practice, echoes of this position can be readily discerned in our contemporary debate in attempts to denigrate opponents as 'non-Russian.'

The author of this article believes that it is precisely in superimposing *rossiyskost'* and *russkost'* as a form of cultural identification that we obtain a working ideological construct that allows us to take a pragmatic approach to the problems confronting us respecting nation building. *Russkost'* as an open category offers a strategy of assimilation to all who seek it. At the same time, *russkost'* cannot be all-embracing, because millions of Russian citizens do not want to assimilate or to identify themselves as Russians. The concept of the Russian (*rossiyskaya*) nation supports the equality of their civil rights with Russians and comfortable coexistence in the same state as Russians.

Russia inherited from the Soviet nationality policy politically mobilized ethnic groups, who consider themselves to be nations unto themselves and perceive certain autonomous republics as their national property. This very fact makes it impossible to build a 'normal' Russian nation state based on these Soviet ruins. We should instead experiment with the concept of 'state-nation,' which has to be designed so that it would incorporate several politically mobilized and territorialized ethnic groups, which would never accept the status of 'normal' minorities.

## Chapter IV

Russia as a Xenophobic Empire: Multiethnicity,  
the Nation and the Empire in Russia's 'Political Thought'  
Marlene Laruelle, IERES, George Washington University

Contemporary Russia displays two relatively contradictory positions in the staging of its state identity. On one side, the Kremlin states that Russia should be recognized as having a legitimate role in its Eurasian neighborhood: it considers that its own national security is potentially threatened by geopolitical changes happening in its so-called 'Near Abroad' and that its great power status and prestige should be based on a recognized condition of being a regional hegemon and manifest in its overseeing a natural 'sphere of influence' in Eurasia. On the other side, the Russian population displays high levels of xenophobia toward some parts of this very 'Near Abroad': if Ukraine and Belarus are not considered as 'foreign,' and are seen as part of the 'broader Russian' or 'Eastern Slavic world,' the relationship to the five Central Asian republics and the three South Caucasian states is much more ambivalent.<sup>1</sup> According to the main sociological surveys organized by agencies such as the Levada Center, VSTIOM, FOM or Romir, about two-thirds of Russians can be defined as xenophobic:<sup>2</sup> they consider immigration as a danger for their country and for Russian culture, and they would like to see the number of migrants from the southern re-

publics of the former Soviet Union drastically reduced, as well as the ones already on Russian territory to be expelled en masse.

This ambivalence is visible in the use of the term Eurasia.<sup>3</sup> The notion attained greater visibility largely for want of something better: it expresses conveniently, and in a rather intuitive way, the historical space of Russia in regards to its 'peripheries,' as well as a certain geopolitical reality. In 2011, when Vladimir Putin launched his Eurasian Union project, his speech articulated several dimensions of this intended relationship.<sup>4</sup> He proclaimed that reintegrating the post-Soviet space under its leadership is Russia's 'natural' geopolitical destiny and that the country cannot be denied this vocation. He stated that the European Union (EU) has been a successful model to follow and that Russia should offer an 'EU-like' construction to Eurasia, but also increasingly engage in a discourse criticizing liberal principles and call on Europe to remember its 'true' (read: conservative) values. And, last but not least, he accelerated the previous trend of rehabilitating Russia's Soviet and, to a lesser extent, imperial past, in the hope that citizens' pride in their country and its legacy would be replicated as support for the regime.

The use of 'Eurasia' as a concept to define Russia's great power-ness and its legitimacy in its neighborhood is largely shared by both the Putin regime and Russian public opinion. However, the Eurasian Union project itself, which declares free movement of people among member states, is less consensual. Even if the Kremlin holds firmly to its position of favoring a visa-free regime inside the Union, most Russians – as well as most Russian politicians, including many members of the presidential

<sup>3</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology of Empire*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington D.C.- Baltimore 2008.

<sup>4</sup> This passage emerged in an article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin entitled *Novyy integratsionnyy proyekt dlya Yevrazii – budushcheye, kotoroye rozhdetsya segodnya* ("A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making"), *Izvestia*, 3 October 2011. See Ninu Popescu, *Eurasian Union: the real, the imagined, and the likely*, EUISS Chaillot Papers, 132, 9 September 2014.

<sup>1</sup> Starting from this premise, a country like Moldova can be considered somewhere 'in the middle.'

<sup>2</sup> Theodore P. Gerber, *Beyond Putin? Nationalism and Xenophobia in Russian Public Opinion*, *The Washington Quarterly*, 37 (3), 2014, pp. 113-134.

party, United Russia, and officials at the local and regional levels – oppose such policies, instead calling for the introduction of a visa regime for citizens of Central Asian and South Caucasian states.

How can we comprehend this apparent contradiction? Can Russia be a regional hegemon in Eurasia and, in particular, in Central Asia while its population is massively in favor of closing its borders with its southern neighbors? Can Russia revive an imperial tradition while being at the same time xenophobic? Even if Russia is second only to the United States (maybe third if we count the Gulf countries) in the number of migrants that cross its borders and work in the country, it still doesn't promote a narrative welcoming immigration, and shares with Europe a discourse more reluctant toward it, with similar arguments on the need to protect national identities and local citizenry, as well as on the limits of national economies to 'absorb' migrants. In this short paper I do not aim to explain the ambivalent position of a 'xenophobic empire,' or the legitimacy of this metaphor. Rather I address our scholarly toolkits – historical, ideational or philosophical, social scientific – in shedding light on the general parameters of a supposed 'Russian political thought.'

### 1. *Is there a Russian specificity in regards to 'political thought'?*

This first question is a kind of elephant in the room. Not only is the term 'political thought' fuzzy on its own, but associating it to a single country makes its readability even more complex. Western scholarship on Russia has always devoted a large amount of attention to *political thought* at once in order to explain Russia's 'difference' from the West, but also as part of a mirroring game with the Russian tradition of debating the existence of a 'Russian idea,' very much shaped by Silver Age philosophy. Historically, the Western study of political ideas in Russia has been mostly promoted alongside an ideological

agenda of identifying what 'went wrong' with the country, from late Tsarist chauvinism to Soviet Marxist-Leninism, and today with 'Putinism.' The study of 'Russian nationalism,' intrinsically linked to the study of Russian political philosophy, has become a kind of genre in itself since the Cold War period.<sup>5</sup> The reasons for this focus are grounded in the ways in which Soviet Studies were constituted in the West, and especially in the United States, but also because even today studying 'Russian political thought' often implies a judgment value as well as underlying policy strategies.

Russia's ideational evolutions also tend to be systematically interpreted in accordance with what they mean for Russia's place on the international scene and its relationship with the West. Western scholarship is thus still marked by a prism of 'Russian exceptionalism,' one that was formulated by Russian thinkers in the 18th century but that Western scholars have since tended to either directly or indirectly reproduce. We are still waiting for scholarly works comparing, for instance, Russian and American messianic traditions – similar in many aspects<sup>6</sup> – or contemporary xenophobia in Russia and Europe,<sup>7</sup> or Russian and Western conservatism. Comparative studies

<sup>5</sup> John Barrett Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983; Idem. *The New Russian Nationalism*, Praeger, New York 1985; Idem. *The New Russian Revolutionaries*, Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont MA 1976; Idem. *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1993. See also Alexander Yanov, *The Russian Challenge and the Year 2000*, Basil Blackwell, New York 1987; Idem. *The Russian New Right: Right-Wing Ideologies in the Contemporary USSR*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1978; Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred. The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*, HarperCollins, New York 1993.

<sup>6</sup> This comparison is only in its infancy. See for instance, among the first, Luke March, *My Country, Right or Wrong? Comparing Russian and American Nationalism's Foreign Policy Manifestations*, Centenary Conference of Slavic Studies, Leiden University, 11 October 2013.

<sup>7</sup> See Marlene Laruelle, *Eurasianism and European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship*, Lexington, Lanham MD 2015.

would help us address this metaphor of a ‘xenophobic empire’ as well as reduce the risk of analyzing how political ideas develop in Russia in isolation from its international context, as if Russia was a kind of close world, distinct from the rest of *us*. What is ‘national’ and what is ‘globalized’ in Russia’s current political trajectory?

### 2. *Are historical parallels helpful?*

In a second move, I am interested in addressing here the issue of using historical parallels to explain what is going on in Russia today, based on the indemonstrable assumption that some historical patterns have shaped the Russian society so deeply that they tend to repeat.

Historically, Russia’s national identity has been built around two main issues: its relationship with Europe (i.e. is Russia part of Europe? Part of Asia? Straddling both worlds? Separate from both?) and the relationship between the state and its population (i.e. is Russia a nation-state, an empire, or a multinational federation?). The Tsarist Empire was not founded on a unified pattern of integration: conquered ethnic groups were given different status depending on the way their elite negotiated with the Russian authorities, and on the perception of their status on a ‘civilizational’ scale, i.e. as civilized versus archaic peoples. The Russian authorities requested political loyalty and submission to their hierarchy of values and elites (“Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality”). Some populations were largely granted cultural autonomy while others were more repressed.

The Soviet Union, while functioning under different political assumptions, still maintained a diversity of approaches: depending of the historical period and of the concerned ethnic groups, some were ‘lucky’ to benefit from indigenization processes (mostly peoples considered by the Russian elites as

backward and remote), while others saw repeated destruction of their elite alongside mass deportations (mostly people of the Western regions of the Soviet Union, and the Jews). The Soviet regime balanced celebrating the ‘friendship of peoples,’ with popular conceptions that, on the one hand, Russians were paying a heavy price for bringing civilization and development to backward republics, and, on the other, that asserting the *primus inter pares* role of ethnic Russians and promoting some policies that can be defined as ‘colonial.’<sup>8</sup>

How do these historical patterns help us address the contemporary paradox of reclaiming an imperial tradition while still maintaining complaints about cultural and ethnic ‘mixture’ among some of the former Soviet citizens? If historical patterns are useful, how then do we assess not only the continuities but the ruptures, the gaps, the temporal fragmentations, and the transformations?

### 3. *Do we need a sociology of actors and places of production?*

As a third point to be addressed, I argue that we do not yet have enough scholarly tools to discuss ‘Russian political thought’ because we lack a sociology of its creators and places of production. Historically, the study of ‘Russian political thought’ came from the field of political philosophy and focused on ideas, concepts, their intellectual legacies and logical orders. We are thus still lacking a sociology of Russian intellectual life and an ‘ecology’ of the places of its production – universities, academy of sciences, journals and newspapers, internet world(s), think tanks, etc.

<sup>8</sup> See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001. Ronald Grigor Suny & Terry Martin (eds.), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

Ideologies are often fuzzy and shifting, and say nothing about personal strategies, institutional statuses, and networks of their producers or funders. Ideological typologies remain sterile if they are not combined with a more sociological approach to the strategies employed by each group to speak to their constituency and to impact the political or cultural arena.

We see this in studies of contemporary Russian nationalism that often hope for an easy mapping of where ‘nationalism’ is and where it is not. Studies tend to look for one ‘nationalist voice’ and thus lose themselves in debating whether it comes from the Kremlin and shapes society or whether, on the contrary, it comes from society and influences the Kremlin, or whether far-right movements set the tone and the Kremlin adopts it. This analysis presents these problems as analogous to the tropic dilemma of the chicken and the egg. Nationalism is polyphonic, and voices are multiple: the Kremlin-backed official production; para-official voices such as the Moscow Patriarchate and official think tanks; political opposition from the ‘Communists’ to the ‘Liberals’; the regions and the republics; the media world, such as the famous publishers of the *publitsistika*; academia, and the world of arts and literature.<sup>9</sup>

If Russia presents the paradox of an ‘xenophobic empire’ it is probably because those promoting the xenophobic arguments and those defending the imperial ones came from diverging groups, with their distinct ideological traditions, gurus, funders, and places of production. Hence the need for a collective work that could map ‘who thinks what’ in Russia to help us avoid projecting a unified and monolithic ideological landscape.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For a longer discussion, see Marlene Laruelle, *Russkiy natsionalizm kak oblast' nauchnykh issledovaniy*, (“Russian nationalism as an object of research”), *Pro et Contra*, 18 (1-2), January-April 2014, pp. 54-72.

<sup>10</sup> See Pål Kolstø & Helge Blakkisrud (eds.), *The New Russian Nationalism: Between Imperial and Ethnic*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2016.

#### 4. Does cultural anthropology give us some keys?

I follow the previous point by adding that cultural anthropology, which has offered us the most innovative approaches to post-Soviet Russia, may offer some new tools to comprehend this ‘xenophobic empire.’ We know for instance that universalist discourses that imply an in-principle rejection of discrimination are poorly diffused in Russia. The ‘friendship of peoples’ concept was, and is still today, not based on universal principles but rather on an idea of a common historical destiny that brought together the peoples of the Eurasian space to coexist while still respecting their national individuality. This vaunted tolerance is therefore not seen as an abstraction, but is assumed to be a historical fact unique to Russia. As Mischa Gabowitsch persuasively explained.

The anti-racist or anti-nationalist message [...] is never understood as a universalist message of total neutrality toward nationality and skin color: it is always meant to highlight the hospitality of the Russian (or Soviet) people, who welcome the outsiders *despite* their otherness.<sup>11</sup>

Multinationalism as vaunted by the Russian authorities and supported by the public opinion is an ontologized, essentialized one: it believes in national entities as natural. Hence, the exclusion of North-Caucasians and of migrants from the narrative of Russian citizenry, while Tatars and Siberian populations are celebrated as examples of the Eurasian ‘melting-pot.’ To this can be added the memory of WWII in Russia, which is read as a patriotic war against an historical enemy invading the country, and not as a war against an extremist ideology calling for mass extermination.<sup>12</sup> This perception, widespread in Russia thought

<sup>11</sup> Mischa Gabowitsch, *Le Spectre du fascisme. Le nationalisme russe et ses adversaires, 1987-2007*, PhD dissertation, EHESS, Paris 2007, p. 119.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Wood, *Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of World War II in Russia*, *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 38, 2011, pp. 172-200.

as well as school textbooks, official commemorations and family narratives, drastically shaped the cultural acceptance of some racist or ethnicized patterns, which partly explains the 'xenophobic empire' posture.

To conclude, I would like to thank the organizers of this workshop for re-opening a long-awaited discussion about Russia's 'political thought' and allowing us to move away from a short-sighted analysis focused on Putin's own personality and on a supposed monolithic political and intellectual life. Many of these misinterpretations are based on the lack of scholarly tools and analyses able to give us a more complex picture of Russia's current evolution.

## Part II

### The Impact of War, Ethnic Conflict and the International Environment



## Chapter V

### War and its Impact on Politics and Political Thought

*Mark Kramer, Harvard University*

A statement about war often attributed to Leon Trotsky – “you may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you” – is apocryphal, but whoever first said it understood the link between politics and war very well. The literature on war and state-building, including the work of Charles Tilly, Joel Migdal, William McNeill, Samuel E. Finer, Ronald Cohen, Barry Buzan, Miguel Centeno, Christopher Clapham, Mohammed Ayob, Linda Colley, Rolf Schwarz, Kalevi Holsti, and Jeffrey Herbst among many others, underscores the variegated impact of war on politics both domestically and internationally.<sup>1</sup> Wars alter power balances among key political and social elites, bring to the fore certain sectors of the economy, arouse nationalist and militaristic sentiments, facilitate infringements of civil liberties and political repression, and – in the case of disastrously unsuccessful war efforts – spawn recriminations against those responsible for the wars, potentially culminating in large-scale social upheaval and the downfall of governments.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, Blackwell, Oxford 1990; Charles Tilly, *War Making and State Making as Organized Crime*, in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, & Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1985, pp. 169-191; Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1988; William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1982; Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role*

### 1. *Russia's wars and the others' conflicts after 1991*

War is a crucial topic in understanding politics and political thought in post-Soviet Russia, a country that has taken part – to one degree or another – in nine wars and several smaller conflicts since 1991. Russian forces were involved in four civil wars in other former Soviet republics in the 1992-1994 period – Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), Moldova (Transnistria), and Tajikistan – and then fought two highly destructive wars (1994-1996, 1999-2009) to keep Chechnya within the Russian Federation.<sup>2</sup> In August 2008, Russian military forces crushed the much smaller Georgian army and completed the *de facto* removal of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia.

*of the Military in Politics*, Praeger, New York 1962; Brian D. Taylor & Roxana Botea, *Tilly Tally: War-Making and State-Making in the Contemporary Third World*, *International Studies Review*, 10 (1), March 2008, pp. 27-56; Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics*, The Free Press, New York 1994; Ronald Cohen, *Warfare and State Formation: Wars Make States and States Make Wars*, in Brian R. Ferguson (ed.), *Warfare, Culture, and Environment*, Academic Press, Orlando 1984, pp. 329-358; Barry Buzan & George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity, and the Making of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2015; Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park 2003; Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, The Free Press, New York 1991; Christopher S. Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1996; Mohammed Ayoub, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder 1995; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 3rd ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2009; Rolf Schwarz, *War and State Building in the Middle East*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville 2012; Youssef Cohen, Brian R. Brown, and Abramo Fimo Kenneth Organski, *The Paradoxical Nature of State Making: The Violent Creation of Order*, *American Political Science Review*, 75 (4), December 1981, pp. 901-910; Karen Barkley, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1997; Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1996; and Jeffrey Herbst, *War and the State in Africa*, *International Security*, 14 (4), Spring 1990, pp. 117-139.

<sup>2</sup> Varvara Igorevna Blishchenko & Mayya Mikhaylovna Solntseva (eds.), *Krizy i konflikty na postsobetskoy prostranstve*, Aspekt Press, Moscow 2014.

In late February and March 2014, Russian military forces occupied Crimea without bloodshed and facilitated the annexation of the peninsula by the Russian government. Soon thereafter Russian forces began supporting pro-Russian insurgent groups in eastern Ukraine, giving rise to a destructive civil war there – a war that continues to this day.<sup>3</sup> Most recently, in September 2015, the Russian authorities dispatched Russian combat aircraft and troops to Syria to prop up the faltering regime of Bashar al-Assad against a variety of rebel groups.<sup>4</sup> The ensuing Russian bombing campaign in Syria, aimed at supporting a Syrian Army ground offensive, marked the first time that Russian forces engaged in military operations outside the territory of the former USSR. In addition to the wars in which Russia has taken part over the past 25 years, wars fought by other countries, especially the United States, have also had a far-reaching impact on political thought in Russia, mostly to the detriment of those who support democracy, human rights, and international law. In particular, the war undertaken by the United States and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Serbia in the spring of 1999, including a bombing campaign over Serbia that killed more than 500 civilians, sparked deep anti-NATO and anti-U.S. sentiment in Russia, marginalizing those who had previously advocated close ties with the West.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the U.S.-led war in Iraq in the spring of 2003 put a decisive end to the partial rapprochement between Russia and the West that followed the September

<sup>3</sup> For a solid overview of the military conflict from the spring of 2014 through the summer of 2015, see Lawrence Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Exhaustion*, *Survival*, 57 (5), September-October 2015, pp. 77-106.

<sup>4</sup> On the risks posed by Russia's intervention in Syria, see Irek Murtazin, *Sirijskaya lovushka: Rossiya ne dolzhna zastryat' na Blizhnem Vostoke*, *Novaya Gazeta*, 8 October 2015, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Vladimir Brovkin, *Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War*, *Demokratizatsiya*, 7 (4), Fall 1999, pp. 544-560. See also Oksana Antonenko, *Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo*, Working Paper n° 21, Russia/NIS Center, Paris, July 2007.

2001 terrorist attacks against the United States.<sup>6</sup> The prolonged U.S. counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq that followed the invasion, and the escalating war in Afghanistan after U.S. forces failed to prevent the Taliban from regrouping, further strained East-West ties. NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 differed from the Kosovo and Iraq wars insofar as it was authorized by the United Nations (UN) Security Council (a move that Putin openly opposed but that President Dmitry Medvedev decided to approve), but Russian leaders quickly surmised that NATO had misled the Security Council about its true intentions and was using the campaign to overthrow the regime of Muammar Gaddafi and bring to power a government that favored the West.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. government's willingness to act outside international law in 1999 and 2003 (among other occasions) has been cited by the Russian authorities as a rationalization for Russia's own repeated violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighboring states. Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to believe that the West's bad behavior – but not its good behavior – is worth emulating and that Russia should be praised for doing so. Oddly enough, Putin himself had actually warned against this phenomenon in early 2008 when he denounced Kosovo's imminent declaration of independence as “illegal, ill-conceived, and immoral” and accused NATO and the European Union (EU) of “double standards.” He emphasized that he and other Russian officials did not intend to “act like fools. If someone makes an illegal and ill-conceived decision [about Kosovo], it does not mean that we should act the same way” in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>8</sup> Just six months later, however, Putin decided to do exactly what he had warned against. To be sure, even if NATO had not forcibly intervened in Serbia

<sup>6</sup> See Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, Knopf, New York 2015, pp. 203-262.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 379-400.

in 1999 and spearheaded independence for Kosovo nine years later – a step that Western governments depicted as a “unique case” that would not set a precedent for other separatist conflicts around the world – Putin might well have proceeded with independence for South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the wake of the August 2008 war. But, at a minimum, Western policy concerning Kosovo gave Putin a convenient pretext and rationalization for his actions.

## 2. *The political dimension of the Second Chechen War*

Both the internal and the external wars in which Russia has been involved since 1991 have affected politics and political thought in Moscow. There is not sufficient space here to cover this phenomenon fully, so I will simply highlight a few crucial points about the Putin era. The prosecution of the second war in Chechnya by Putin (initially as prime minister and then as president) not only enabled him to consolidate immense power in Russia but also transformed the nature of Russian politics, as reflected in the curtailment of political debate and political competition, the reassertion of state control over key media outlets, the recentralization of political administrative arrangements, and the increasing personalization of executive authority.<sup>9</sup> War-making over the centuries has both necessitated and resulted in a huge increase in the power of the state. The impact in Russia of the second Chechen war illustrated this dynamic very well,

<sup>8</sup> The full transcript of Putin's *Annual Great Press Conference*, (“Ezhegodnaya bol'shaya press-konferentsiya”), Moscow, 14 February 2008 is online: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24835>. See also Vladimir Putin, *Nam vsegda govoryat: Kosovo – osobyi sluchai. Vran'e eto vse*, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 14 February 2008, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Mark Kramer, *Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Terrorism in the North Caucasus: The Military Dimension of the Russian-Chechen Conflict*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57 (2), March 2005, pp. 209-292.

though I should note that the impact also was driven by the specific political circumstances in Russia under Putin.

From 2001 to 2005, Chechen fighters resorted to many large-scale terrorist attacks against Russian civilians outside the North Caucasus. One would have assumed that these incidents, particularly the numerous suicide bombings in Moscow that killed hundreds of civilians, as well as the massacre in Beslan in September 2004 that killed nearly 340 (more than half of whom were schoolchildren), would have generated a sustained public debate about the goals and nature of the war. After all, opinion polls conducted by the Levada Center revealed that by 2003 more than 80 percent of Russians feared that they or their relatives “might fall victim to terrorist attacks,” and by 2004 that figure had risen to 90 percent.<sup>10</sup> The financial costs of the conflict, and the high death toll among Russian troops (comparable until 2005 to the number of Soviet soldiers killed each year in the 1980s in Afghanistan, a country that is forty times larger than Chechnya in land area and thirty times larger in population), would presumably have given further grounds for a vigorous public debate. Yet no meaningful public discussion about the war occurred at any point, nor was any senior official held accountable for misjudgments and blunders in prosecuting the war. Chechnya played no role in either the Russian parliamentary elections of December 2003 or the Russian presidential election of March 2004, and it was not on the political agenda afterward, apart from a brief flurry of concern and re-primations following the Beslan massacre. The war was never discussed in any depth on Russian television or in the Russian

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Levada-Tsentr, *Chechnya posle A. Maskhadova*, ATsYuL, Moscow, March 2005; Idem., *Rossiiane o smerti Aslana Maskhadova*, ATsYuL, Moscow, 24 March 2005; and VTsIOM (Vserossiiskii Tsentr Izucheniya Obschestvennogo Mneniya), *Bor'ba s terrorizmom: God posle Beslana*, Press-Vypusk, n° 281, Moscow, 30 August 2005; as well as many surveys conducted in 2004 by the Levada-tsentr, VTsIOM, and Fond obschestvennogo mneniya (FOM).

parliament (which held no hearings about the war even when terrorist attacks were at their peak), and the coverage of it on the television news was sporadic and highly tendentious.

The lack of public debate about the second Chechen war was a notable departure from the experience in Russia during the first war, which began in December 1994 and continued until August 1996. That earlier conflict was unpopular from the start and was sharply criticized on Russian television, particularly the independent NTV station. The issue came up repeatedly during the 1996 Russian presidential election campaign (albeit mainly as part of a general indictment of the government's incompetence), and pressure mounted on President Boris Yeltsin for a political settlement.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, during the second war, the Russian public was much more ambivalent and fatalistic in its reactions. Even though opinion polls in 2003, 2004, and 2005 revealed that the vast majority of Russians believed that the war would drag on incessantly and would inspire further terrorist attacks, they did not take to the streets in protest or seek to form an organized movement that would press for an end to the fighting. Nor did they support calls for much more drastic repressive measures (e.g., mass deportations) that would “end the Chechen problem once and for all.”<sup>12</sup> Throughout the war, the Russian electorate seemed content to have the government continue with its protracted counterinsurgency/counterterrorist campaign regardless of the costs.

<sup>11</sup> Carlotta Gall & Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, New York University Press, New York 1998; Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C. 2002, pp. 11-45; and Tracey C. German, *Russia's Chechen War*, Routledge Curzon, New York 2003, pp. 49, 61, 70-73.

<sup>12</sup> Prominent members of the *Rodina* party, notably Dmitry Rogozin, raised the prospect of mass deportations, but did not gain any public backing for such measures. See the interview *Beseda s Dmitriem Rogozinym s Apel'sinskii sok*, NTV television station, 8 February 2004, 12:15 p.m. (Moscow time). See also MN, *Zayavlenie partii 'Rodina'*, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 10 September 2004, p. 7.

In the absence of public debate and high-level accountability, the war served as the pretext for a major recentralization of political authority in Russia, notably in September 2004 when President Putin cited the Beslan massacre as justification for his decision to eliminate direct elections for regional governors and to do away with single-member district elections for the Russian parliament.<sup>13</sup> These actions were conducive to Putin's political agenda, but they had no bearing on the underlying regional dynamic in the North Caucasus, with the spread of the conflict beyond Chechnya's borders. Even as the war was winding down in Chechnya in 2006-2007, it was taking an ever deadlier toll in neighboring regions and wreaking havoc in both Ingushetia and Dagestan, with some repercussions elsewhere as well. The growing regionalization of the war from 2002 on meant that an end to warfare in Chechnya itself – Putin's primary goal – did not ultimately bring greater stability to the North Caucasus as a whole. When Chechen fighters were forced to abandon their guerrilla war at home, they moved into Ingushetia and Dagestan and linked up with radical Islamic groups in those regions. The result was wider instability and convulsions in the North Caucasus even as Chechnya proper was pacified under the iron-fisted rule of Ramzan Kadyrov. The situation has been further complicated by the impact of external conflicts. In recent years, Chechen and Dagestani jihadists have traveled to Syria (and subsequently to Iraq) to fight on behalf of radical Islamic groups affiliated with al Qaeda and Islamic State. The prospective return of these battle-hardened jihadists to the North Caucasus poses a host of potential dangers for Russian society and Putin's regime.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Vladimir Gelman, *Vozvrashchenie Levafana? Politika retsentralizatsii v sovremennoi Rossii*, Polis, 2, 2006, pp. 15-32; and Paul Goode, *Russia's Gubernatorial Elections: A Postmortem*, in Julie Newton & William Tompson (eds.), *Institutions, Ideas, and Leadership in Russian Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2010, pp. 43-66.

### 3. *The political impact of the 'external wars'*

The three external wars in which Russia has been involved – officially or unofficially – in the aftermath of the second war in Chechnya have also been notable for a lack of any meaningful public debate. In the case of the August 2008 war with Georgia, the near-universal consensus in support of the war was undoubtedly attributable to the rapid and decisive outcome of the fighting – a situation that in many countries is apt to generate overwhelming public approval. Much the same is true about Putin's decisive use of force in early 2014 to sever Crimea from Ukraine and incorporate it into Russia – all without any loss of life. The few individuals in Russia who condemned the move as an act of conquest and aggression, such as Boris Nemtsov, gained no traction among the Russian public on this matter apart from a few liberal intellectuals.

Nevertheless, events in Ukraine that have followed Russia's annexation of Crimea are not quite as easily explicable. Despite overwhelming evidence that the Russian government has been fueling the internal conflict in eastern Ukraine and that Russian soldiers who are operating without identifying insignia have taken part in certain large-scale operations on behalf of the pro-Russian insurgents (particularly at key moments in August 2014 and February 2015), the Levada Center's polls have consistently shown that some 80 to 90 percent of Russians do not believe that Russia has been involved in any way.<sup>15</sup> To be sure, even if a majority of Russians *did* believe that Russia was directly or indirectly taking part in the conflict, they might well be supportive of that role. The “rally around the flag” effect is

<sup>14</sup> See Mark Kramer, *The Return of Islamic State Fighters: The Impact on the Caucasus and Central Asia*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo n° 381, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington D.C., August 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Levada-Tsentr, *Vospriyatie sobytii na vostoke Ukrainy i sanktsii*, ATsYuL, Moscow, 31 August 2015.

a powerful catalyst of support not only in Russia but in almost all large countries. Even so, the very fact that the vast majority of Russians do not believe that Russia has been either directly or indirectly involved in eastern Ukraine is a sign of how thoroughly Putin has circumscribed the leeway for political debate about fundamental matters of war and peace. Even such issues as the deaths and capture of Russian soldiers in Ukraine have not generated anything close to meaningful public discussion. Activists and relatives of soldiers who have tried to raise the issue are at risk of being accused of disclosing state secrets or of engaging in ‘extremism,’ and scholars at Russian universities and research centers who have publicly criticized the war have been ostracized and fired.

A similar dynamic has been evident with Russia’s military operations in Syria. In September 2015, just days before Putin ordered the use of Russian troops in Syria, the Levada Center’s polling indicated that only a small minority of Russians were paying any attention to Syria and that an even smaller minority believed that Russian troops should intervene in Syria.<sup>16</sup> But Putin, having sensed that Assad’s regime was on the verge of being overthrown, decided to act regardless. Without any public debate or hearings in the Russian parliament, he authorized the deployment of combat forces and the start of the bombing campaign. Immediately, public opinion shifted overwhelmingly in his favor, not least because every news broadcast on state-controlled television offered heroic depictions of Russian bombing raids. The broadcasters made no attempt to confirm the briefing materials they received and instead simply echoed the official line that “the precision with which strikes are being inflicted [by Russian combat aircraft] shows that we now have achieved a situation better than that attained by the American-

<sup>16</sup> Idem., *Voina v Sirii: Vnimanie, otsenki, IGLI*, ATsYuL, Moscow, 28 September 2015.

led coalition.”<sup>17</sup> Some Russian bloggers challenged and debunked this line on the Internet, but the only thing that mattered was the depiction on state-controlled television, which under Putin has become the exclusive news source for some 90 percent of Russians. All the national television broadcasts conveyed a uniformly rosy picture of the Russian bombing campaign.

#### 4. *Enforcing authoritarianism through war*

The manipulation of public opinion about Russia’s involvement in Syria was also seen in the public’s misperceptions of the goals of the military campaign. Putin had made clear from the outset that his overriding goal in Syria was to “stabilize the legitimate authority” (i.e., Assad’s regime), but this was not the impression given to the public by Russia’s state-controlled television.<sup>18</sup> Instead, the news broadcasts led people to believe that Russian was intervening primarily to combat Islamic State terrorists. The fact that the Russian Defense Ministry’s own charts showed that none of the Russian combat aircraft in the initial weeks had actually flown sorties over the vast swathes of territory held by Islamic State apparently made no difference to a public that had become accustomed to embracing every word from on high about fundamental questions of war and peace. The public was not so submissive in the 1990s, but one of the defining features of the Putin era has been the elimination of structures that ensured public scrutiny of military operations,

<sup>17</sup> These statements, almost word for word, were featured in numerous news broadcasts on the *Rossiya* station and *Pervyi kanal* station on 11 and 12 October 2015, as I witnessed firsthand.

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Putin’s interview *Putin v eksklyuzivnom interv’yu: Rossiya mirolyubiva, samodostatochna i ne boitsya terroristov*, on the *Voskresnyi vecher* program, *Rossiya* television, 11 October 2015, is online: <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2673998#>.

resulting in a lack of public accountability and a free hand for the authorities to act at will.

Thus, over the past 16 years, wars in which Russia has taken part and wars fought by Western countries have contributed a great deal to the increasing authoritarianism in Russia and the drastically circumscribed leeway for political thought. War in many countries has tended to impede wide-ranging public debate and to deter people from openly questioning the official line – conditions that are certainly evident in Russia. If Russia continues to fight wars in the future as often as it has up to now, authoritarian retrenchment under Putin will be further solidified and will be much more difficult for future generations to overcome.

## Chapter VI

### State Militarism as a Basis for Russian Identity *Alexander Golts, Yezhednevnyy Zhurnal*

#### *1. Russian Militarism: features and trends*

The ideology of Russian militarism – which is precisely what hides behind the euphemistic term ‘defense consciousness’ – turned out to be far more tenacious than the Communist ideology, and it continues to permeate Russian society as a whole. To this day, Russian citizens, including those who see themselves as the intellectual elite, become misty-eyed at the sight of the parade ‘boxes’ marching in Prussian ‘goose step.’ What is even worse, the majority of citizens are convinced that the state has every right to demand of them huge sacrifices in the name of the said defense capability.

Over a period of three hundred years, with a few breaks between (1860-1880, 1905-1914, 1925-1935, 1987-present), the primary, if not the sole, objective for the Russian state has been to maintain a mastodontic military machine.<sup>1</sup> This kind of

<sup>1</sup> See William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, The Free Press, New York 1992; William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1998; Alexander A. Svechin, *Strategiya, Voyenny Vestnik*, Moskva 1927; Brian Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations 1689-2000*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2003; John P. Moran, *From Garrison State to Nation State: The Russian Military and Political Power under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*, Praeger, Westport 2001; Dietrich Geyer, *Russian imperialism: the interaction of domestic and foreign policy, 1860-1914*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1987.

state strives to control everything and everyone; it diminishes, if not does away with, the role of civil society and private life. The word ‘militarism’ characterizes this kind of state best. German Historian Gerhard Ritter, speaking on German militarism, for instance, observes that some of its fundamental characteristics are, first, that all important political decisions are based on military-technological calculations, rather than on a comprehensive analysis from the perspective of national interests, and second, that the military approach absolutely dominates the nation’s way of dealing with various problems.<sup>2</sup> In his book, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military*, Alfred Vagts describes the civilian aspects of militarism as

the unquestioning embrace of military values, ethos, principles, [and] attitudes; as ranking military institutions and considerations above all others in the state; as finding the heroic predominantly in military service and action including war – to the preparation of which the nation’s main interest and recourse must be dedicated, with the inevitability and goodness of war always presumed. Such high regard leads to the advocacy of applying military values, organization – notably hierarchical features – to the totality of a nation’s life.<sup>3</sup>

Attending these values, Vagts argues, is “contempt for civilian politics”<sup>4</sup> shared by members of the military, as well as by government officials and the public.

No one could deny that Russia has exhibited the aforementioned qualities. Just as was the case for Peter the Great, Russia’s military needs prompted the construction of roads and canals, Joseph Stalin explained that the industrialization was necessary if the Socialist motherland were to be able to defend itself from its enemies. “We are fifty to a hundred years behind

<sup>2</sup> Constantin P. Danopoulos & Cynthia A. Watson (eds.), *The Political Role of the Military: An International Handbook*, Greenwood Press, Westport 1996, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military*, Meridian, New York 1959, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

the developed countries. We need to cover this distance within a matter of ten years. Either we do it, or they will destroy us.”<sup>5</sup> The Brezhnev administration, too, claimed that the construction of the Baikal-Amur Highway was necessary for the country’s security in the East.

For three centuries, each respective Russian government was interested in its subjects as potential soldiers and as suppliers of financial and material resources necessary to maintain huge armed forces. For three centuries, the foundation of the Russian Army was not the officer corps, but a badly trained mass of rank-and-file men, whose power relied on the fact that they could be continuously replaced. The same unique feature of Russian military culture, which has penetrated every pore of society, helps explain why Russians have such an ambivalent attitude towards the military. The draft service coexists in Russia with the regular army. For the majority of the population, military service has never been a freely chosen occupation instead it has been the most burdensome of all state obligations. The three-century old custom of coercion has produced some rather particular folk mentalities. On the one hand, no one disputes the government’s right to draft people into the army and to be in control of their lives, despite bearing no responsibility for their deaths. On the other hand, society does not condemn those who use any means at their disposal to evade the military service.

## *2. The Mobilizing politics*

A protracted and painful process of disintegration of the military system of ‘mobilization’ took place in Russia between the years 1991-2008. The system has considerably deeper historical

<sup>5</sup> Stalin, *Voprosy Leninizma*, XI edition, Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel’stvo Nauk, Moskva 1947, p. 329.



roots than any other relic of the Soviet and Russian past. This accounts for the resistance of the Russian military system to any attempts to reform it. In the public conscience of our nation, there is simply no other, non-compulsory form of military organization, so society perceives this Moloch that robs hundreds of young men of their lives and futures as an unavoidable evil.

The second Russian president Vladimir Putin fully exhibits the features of civilian militarists, as they were described by Alfred Vagts: unconditional preference for “war values, manners, principles and relations” and “a deep contempt for civil politics, the institution of elections, parliamentarism, and political parties.”<sup>6</sup> The war was the powerful catalyst that propelled Putin to power. In fact, Russian voters – frightened by the invasion by gangs of Chechen militants into Dagestan and the subsequent terrorist attacks, explosions of houses in Moscow and Volgograd – hastened the support for the one who promised to provide security and vowed to make it simple and justifiable with the support of military force. The Russian president demonstrated a sincere love for the parade and the heroic life of the Armed Forces. From the outset of his occupation of the Kremlin, Putin began to build so called ‘vertical power.’ Therefore, Putin is sure that the best management model for Russia could be a hierarchical system like the military one. On the top of the pyramid stands the president – who is also the commander in chief – and below – level by level – executive and dedicated officials, capable of carrying the will of the ‘supreme leader’ to each and every corner of the vast country.

In fact, the introduction of this system means that power in Russia is still built on the military-feudal principle and the power reigns held by the present ruler. The entire practice of Putin’s regime, which brought down the parliament and the

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military*, Meridian, New York 1959, p. 453.

judicial authorities to the role of ‘puppets,’ shows that the principle of division of powers is seen as a sort of ‘heresy,’ and the principle of unity of command and near supreme authority is also extended to the political system of the state.

### 3. *The external elements*

In this logical system, any crisis is seen as the result of hostile forces who want to disarm Russia. This has been most clearly demonstrated in Putin’s response to Beslan. On that occasion, he blamed external forces that were allegedly helping terrorists: in his words, “they help, believing that Russia – as one of the largest nuclear powers in the world – is a threat. Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate this threat. And terrorism – is, of course, just a tool to achieve these goals.”<sup>7</sup> He continued to declare almost the same thing for the next ten years, explaining the conflict with the West as a consequence of its desire to disarm Russia:

You know, at the Valdai [International Discussion] Club, I gave an example of our most recognizable symbol. It is a bear protecting his taiga. You see, if we continue the analogy, sometimes I think that maybe it would be best if our bear just sat still. Maybe he should stop chasing pigs and boars around the taiga but start picking berries and eating honey. Maybe then he will be left alone. But no, he won’t be! Because someone will always try to chain him up. As soon as he’s chained they will tear out his teeth and claws. In this analogy, I am referring to the power of nuclear deterrence. As soon as – God forbid – it happens and they no longer need the bear, the taiga will be taken over.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Putin’s declaration after Beslan tragedy (4 September 2004) is online: [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/09/04/1752\\_type63374type82634\\_76320.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/09/04/1752_type63374type82634_76320.shtml).

<sup>8</sup> Reid Standish & Elias Groll, *Putin Says Russian Bear Isn’t About to Sit Back and Just Eat Berries and Honey*, Foreign Policy, 18 December 2014, is online: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/18/putin-says-russian-bear-isnt-about-to-sit-back-and-just-eat-berries-and-honey/>.

Those 1,500 nuclear warheads – that Moscow now has – turn in Vladimir Putin's eyes into the only factor that equates Russia with the United States, the most potent world power, and keeps them on a level playing field. This can explain why the Kremlin has so painfully perceived the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty 1972 and the US intention to deploy a missile defense system. The ABM Treaty was a unique international document, which stated that there was a state capable of destroying the United States, and, moreover, that the United States have to put up with this fact.

These militarist stereotypes have a decisive impact on Russian policy in the post-Soviet space. The logic of Moscow's actions in Ukraine and Georgia is explained by the certainty that the rapprochement of these countries to the West will inevitably turn the arrival of the 'NATO bases.' As a result, the Kremlin is embroiled in a lengthy and pointless conflict, remaining in a serious state of international isolation. Another sign of the militarist mindset of the Russian government of its 'securitization.' The secret side of any activity seems the only important. Any public information is seen as specially prepared disinformation. This situation, inevitably leads, at best, to narrowing channels of information, and at worst – an inadequate perception of it. As a result, unverified rumors are brought to the attention of the head of state. At the same time, no one pays attention to very important processes taking place in plain sight.

#### *4. Reforming the mobilizing system*

For three years (2008-2011), Russia underwent the most radical military reforms experienced in the past 150 years. As a result of a dramatic reduction of the officer corps and the elimination of skeleton units (about 80 percent of all ground forces), Russia effectively abandoned the concept of a mass mobilization

army. My initial theory was that rejection of the concept of mass mobilization army in the long term meant a radical change in the relationship between the Russian citizen and Russian state. The rejection of mass mobilization threatened to destroy the entire system of 'ideological' government. The rejection threatened to destroy all systems of state militarism, which is a seemingly strong basis for Russian national identity. However, the results were astonishing. The State disposed of the concept mass mobilization, but it's wastages kept enough power to support and sustain state militarism. It would seem that the basis for state militarism has disappeared. However, it has managed to persist as an element of ideology, politics, propaganda, and military organization. As a result, reform was halted halfway. Putin's regime has provided a few combat-ready units, which were enough to swiftly capture the Crimea. Average trained, well-paid military units carried out the order for aggression.

In order to understand the present, it is interesting to compare Russia with Germany in the context of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Basic principles of the German armed forces were laid down by 'liberals in uniform': Clausewitz, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. It was a constant process of self-education by officers of the conscript army, which according to organizers would represent a community of 'citizens in uniform.' It should be noted that when the 'liberal' model was applied in an absolute authoritarian Prussian state, it led to the creation of an almost perfect war machine that would blindly obey the orders of its 'leader.' Did Russia follow the same path? Are we watching the emergence of a 'new militarism' in which 'modern' models of military organization join with the ideology of a mass mobilization army?

## Chapter VII

The Interplay Between the ‘Hybrid War’ Narrative  
and the ‘Sovereignty-Territory-Resources’ Discourse  
*Pavel K. Baev*, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

In the aftermath of the Crimean ‘*anschluss*’ in March 2014, the content and the style of public and expert debates in Russia acquired such a homogeneity of self-righteous aggressiveness that the theme ‘the evolution of Russian political thought’ appeared exhausted. The intensity of official ‘patriotic’ propaganda gained yet new heights in the months leading to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in the so-called ‘Great Patriotic War.’ However, that over-driven self-glorification was backgrounded by economic stagnation and international isolation, forcing a reckoning with the reality of degeneration and dead-ends. From the shadows of doubt, a stream of thoughtful analyses has resurfaced, and it is now possible again to contemplate the emerging new directions in the above-mentioned evolution.<sup>1</sup>

It is certainly hard to expect any kind of blossoming of a “brand-new political thinking,” which would require a meet-

<sup>1</sup> A few examples of such analyses could be *Tatyana Stanovaya*, *Rossiya i yeye ten’: chto meshayet rossiyskoy vneshney politike byt’ uspeshnoy*, Carnegie Moscow Center, 28 July 2015 (<http://carnegie.ru/2015/07/28/ru-60859/idzg>) on the Russian foreign policy-making; Andrei Kortunov, *Posbli na popravku? Rossiysko-amerikanskiye otnosheniya: ot kriticheskogo sostoyaniya k stabil’no tyazbelomu*, Lenta.ru, 22 May 2015 (<http://lenta.ru/articles/2015/05/21/kortunov/>) on Russia-US relations; Georgy Bovt, *Mezh dvukh mirov*, Gazeta.ru, 13 July 2015 (<http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/column/bovt/7634797.shtml>) on Russian ‘pivot to Asia’; Alexei Arbatov, *Zachem Rossiya ugrozhayet Zapadu yadernym oruzhiyem*, Voenno-Promyshlenniy Kuryer, 1 July 2015 (<http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/25868>) on nuclear issues.

ing of two pivotal conditions: *milieu*, as a critical mass of brain-power in open space for debates, and demand, considering that funding is perhaps less important than the ability to make a difference. The former started to emerge during Dmitry Medvedev’s failed *Rossiya, Vperyod!* (“Go-Russia”) interregnum but has been severely deformed by the onslaught of jingoist state-think; while the latter has all but disappeared over the course of regime transformations from the ‘enlightened semi-authoritarianism’ to plain corrupt despotism. Political thought seeps through the cracks of the fast-crumbling ‘pyramid of power,’ stimulated more by the foreboding of yet another collapse, than by expectations of a reshuffling of opportunities by the elite.<sup>2</sup>

What is stimulating for such an under-nourished growth of political ideas is the obvious incompatibility between the relatively coherent set of concepts stemming from the key proposition of ‘sovereignty,’ and the barely comprehensible – but aggressive – discourse generated by the fast-evolving ‘hybrid war,’ which Russia is effectively waging against the ‘brotherly’ Ukraine.

### 1. *The old mindset: ‘Sovereignty’ and its derivatives*

The centrality of the seemingly-innocent proposition of ‘sovereignty’ in post-Soviet Russian political thinking is determined by the particular interpretation of this term, according to which it is not an inherent characteristic of any independent state but rather a rare privilege awarded to only a few ‘powers’ that have a free will to determine their own destiny. One direct elabo-

<sup>2</sup> Nuances of this foreboding are discussed by Belkovsky and Pavlovsky in Mikhail Fishman, *Rossiya posle Putina. Stanislav Belkovskiy i Gleb Pavlovskiy o nasbem budushchem*, Slon.ru, 16 July 2015, online at: <https://slon.ru/posts/54031>. See also Grigory Golosov, *Kak Putin sdelał smenu rezbima neizbeznoy*, Slon.ru, 24 July 2015, is online: <https://slon.ru/posts/54400>.

ration of this proposition is the concept of ‘multi-polarity,’ which argues that the interactions between several ‘sovereign’ centers of power shape the character of the world order, and Russia’s belonging to this exclusive club is accepted as an axiom, particularly since proving it is rather difficult. Another conceptual avenue goes in the direction of ‘non-intervention,’ and seeks to counter the Western, in particular the US, propensity to interfere in various crises under the guise of ‘humanitarian interventions.’ What makes such opposition a matter of crucial importance is the tendency to see anti-authoritarian revolutions – from Belgrade to Bahrain – as US-orchestrated attempts at ‘regime change,’ therefore indirectly threatening Russia’s ‘sovereignty.’<sup>3</sup>

Each of these trains of self-centric thought could be researched through their particular features. Nevertheless, the special connection between an over-loaded notion of ‘sovereignty’ and such elementary characteristics of any *status quo* as territory is the target here. In the Russian case, its ‘XXXL size’ constitutes one of the main elements in its claim to the status of ‘Great Power,’ particularly since the figure given for population – not to mention the data on a demographic decline – appears less and less convincing. Russia’s ability to exercise its highly valued ‘sovereignty’ is therefore conditional on its capacity for controlling the inhospitable space inside its extraordinary long borders. The value of territory is heavily symbolic – hence the political impossibility to reach a compromise on the South Kuril Islands with Japan – but it is also material, because the unexplored Siberian space is seen as a vast reservoir of natural resources.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This tendency is pronounced to the extreme degree in Aleksandr Bartosh, *Razrushitel'nyy tandem: tsvetnaya revolyutsiya – gibridnaya voyna*, Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, 24 July 2015, online at: [http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2015-07-24/1\\_revolution.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2015-07-24/1_revolution.html).

While oil is perceived as the uniquely valuable resource – which is quite natural for the heavily petro-dependent economy – the underlying assumption is that the global demand for every kind of natural resource (including even water) is growing, and so the net value of Russia’s territory is set to increase.

## 2. *The re-interpretation of “territory” in the Ukraine crisis*

While the initial phase of the Ukraine crisis challenged most directly Russia’s counter-revolutionary stance, the astonishingly successful operation of capturing and annexing Crimea brought to the forefront the connection between ‘sovereignty’ and territory. The swift incorporation of this province into Russia’s territory appeared to prove and to expand its self-conception of “sovereignty” – in the sense of confirming its ability to act on its political will, rejecting the objections of the guardians of *status quo* – and to compromise Ukraine’s sovereignty. The Russian leadership probably understood more than anyone else that no explanation for this land grab could be convincing for EU, USA, or, for that matter, China. However, it still saw the value in spelling to an overjoyed domestic audience how the ‘sacredness’ of this land, where Russia – or more precisely, the Kievan Rus’ – was baptized in 988.<sup>5</sup>

The need to spin these dubious justifications came during the next phase in the escalation of the Ukraine crisis, when

<sup>4</sup> Nikolai Patrushev, the Secretary of Security Council, spelled the conviction that USA sought to destroy Russia because of its richness in resources; see Nikolai Patrushev, *Za destabilizatsiyey Ukrainy skryvayetsya popytka radikal'nogo oslablyeniya Rossii* (interview), Kommersant, 22 June 2015, is online: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2752246>.

<sup>5</sup> On Putin’s comparison of Khersones with the Temple Mountain, see Petr Bolgov, *Chto v realnosti delal Knyaz Vladimir v Sakralnom Krymu*, Slon.ru, 10 December 2014, is online: [http://slon.ru/world/chto\\_v\\_realnosti\\_delal\\_knyaz\\_vladimir\\_v\\_sakralnom\\_krymu-1193505.xhtml](http://slon.ru/world/chto_v_realnosti_delal_knyaz_vladimir_v_sakralnom_krymu-1193505.xhtml).

Russia encouraged and manipulated the civil war in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The post-Crimean geopolitical vision in Moscow anticipated a complete collapse of the Ukrainian state through the secession of a half dozen Eastern and Southern regions, forming a pro-Russian ‘Novorossiya.’ This vision, however, collapsed in just a few weeks as the escalation of hostilities brought an unexpected consolidation in Ukraine around its newly-elected government. The barely-camouflaged deployment of Russian troops prevented a forceful suppression of the secession, but the much-trumpeted ‘victories’ in Ilovaisk (August 2014) and Debaltsevo (February 2015) left Moscow with the burden of an awkward territorial problem. There was neither a political option nor public support for incorporating the “rump Novorossiya” into Russia, but providing supplies and establishing a semblance of order in this war zone with two major cities was an expensive proposition. Instead of adding another territorial acquisition, Moscow has created a ‘black hole’ which not only consumes material and human resources but also implicitly undermines the *fait accompli* of Crimea’s ‘reunification’ that has been internationally condemned.<sup>6</sup> Territorial expansion has turned out to be detrimental for Russia’s imagined ‘sovereignty’ as its freedom to maneuver in the international arena has become increasingly constricted.

<sup>6</sup> During a visit to Moscow on 10 May 2015, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel characterized the annexation of Crimea as a “criminal” event. There has been no communication between Putin and Merkel after that statement. See Anton Troianovsky, *Merkel raps Putin over Ukraine conflict during visit to Moscow*, Wall Street Journal, 10 May 2015, is online: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/merkel-raps-putin-over-ukraine-conflict-during-visit-to-moscow-1431273705>.

### 3. *The devaluation of (and the disappointment in) resources*

Russia’s vulnerability as a state that depends heavily on the export of natural resources has been a concern for its elites since the spasms of the 2008 economic crisis. For that matter, Dmitry Medvedev’s ‘modernization’ discourse exploited this theme, in contrast with the ‘energy super-power’ rhetoric. It was a striking coincidence that the crisis in Ukraine happened concurrently with a sharp decline of oil prices precipitated by long-accumulating shifts on the global energy markets, ensuring that the ‘oil curse’ concerns blended with conspiracy theories in order to produce a perception of Western pressure on Russian vulnerabilities. Putin continues to claim – and maybe also to believe – that in one or two years the oil price will recover. However, there are stronger reasons to assume that it might slide to a lower plateau.<sup>7</sup> Such a scenario could derail the train of thought tethering ‘sovereignty’ to natural resources, but in fact the annexation of Crimea makes a poor fit into this scheme, not only because Moscow needs to pour resources into this new province but also because Crimean agriculture depends upon importing from Ukraine the most basic of all resources: water. The “rump Novorossiya” has significant reserves of coal, but Russia has neither the need for this resource, nor the capacity to invest in its production.

It is remarkable in this context that the only macro-region where a resource-centric discourse still prevails is the Arctic. The surrealistic perceptions of this inhospitable space as a ‘treasure trove’ of hydrocarbons – that are becoming available

<sup>7</sup> On the impact of this slide, see Olga Solovyeva, *Rossiya vozvrashchayetsya k neftyanym tsenam 1986 goda*, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 July 2015, online at: [http://www.ng.ru/economics/2015-07-27/1\\_oil.html](http://www.ng.ru/economics/2015-07-27/1_oil.html). On the longer-term trends, see Vladimir Sidorovich, *Mirovaya energeticheskaya revolyutsiya: zbizn’ posle nefti*, *Forbes.ru*, 31 July 2015, is online: <http://www.forbes.ru/mneniya/konkurentsiya/295441-mirovaya-energeticheskaya-revolutsiya-zhizn-posle-nefti>.

for exploration and inevitably invite geopolitical rivalry – cannot stand any cost-efficiency evaluation. However, it does not stop the ill-assorted Arctic lobbies in the Kremlin (as Nikolai Patrushev who became a key figure) from recycling themselves. While Gazprom and Rosneft cannot develop feasible plans for off-shore projects, it is the High Command – led by opinionated Sergei Shoigu – that is presently the most vociferous advocate for expanding Russia’s ‘possessions’ on the continental shelf, even if the claim to the UN CLCS<sup>8</sup> – submitted after long delays in August 2015 – has slim chance of being approved. In the military-strategic statements on Russian priorities, the Arctic is invariably defined as one of the key ‘theaters’ – and the allocation of resources follows suit, so that the scale and intensity of military activities in the High North are steadily growing.<sup>9</sup> It is plainly impossible to identify any hostile intent towards the prohibitively expensive and far-from-enormous resources in the Russian Arctic, but that does not check the militarized ambitions.

#### 4. Shortcomings and risks of the ‘hybrid war’ proposition

Despite engaging in a very particular sort of conflict with Ukraine – that is often defined as a ‘hybrid war’ – Russia remains unable to conceptualize it in a coherent way, partly because it remains in denial of its own military intervention. This denial – transparent as it is – influences the character of combat operations, so that, for instance, Russian Air Force cannot deliver any strikes, while it is exactly the aerial dimension that is considered crucial to modern wars. At the same time, it is possible

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

<sup>9</sup> My examination of this train of thought is in Pavel Baev, *Russia’s Arctic aspirations*, in Juha Jokela (ed.), *Arctic Security Matters*, EUISS Report, 24, 17 June 2015, pp. 51-56, online at: <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/arctic-security-matters-1/>.

to make some assumptions on the changes in thinking regarding the projection of Russia’s power after it has accumulated this experience mismanaging the Ukraine crisis.

The initial design of this ‘hybrid war’ featured a very limited use of military force – primarily special operations – in combination with other instruments of policy, including well-known economic pressure and new means of cyber-warfare.<sup>10</sup> What is interesting for this analysis is the departure from the traditional military aims of capturing key strategic points in an enemy’s territory, alongside the introduction of non-territorial goals like weakening the opponent’s sovereignty by undermining its capacity to mobilize material resources and political will.

In reality, however, the Russian leadership discovered that any experiment with cyber instruments could backfire, and also the energy instruments are far from reliable. In fact, gas exports to, and via, Ukraine has continued with only minor interruptions. The propagandistic means were exploited to a maximum, but they have failed to significantly impact Ukraine, whose Eastern regions firmly refused to subscribe to the proposition of ‘Novorossiya.’ Russia found itself on the receiving end of well-targeted economic sanctions, while NATO is eager to explore new options available in building a ‘hybrid defense.’<sup>11</sup>

This mutation of the initial ‘neither-war-nor-peace’ plan has delivered Russia into a situation where the ‘hybrid’ features of the conflict work more against its interests than in favor of them. Russia’s economic posture is particularly compromised, and this leaves the Kremlin with the conclusion that only mil-

<sup>10</sup> This design presented by the Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov, is evaluated in Mark Galeotti, *The ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’ and Russian non-linear war*, In *Moscow’s Shadows*, 6 July 2014, is online: <https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>.

<sup>11</sup> Galeotti suggests a useful menu of such options. See: Mark Galeotti, *Time to think about ‘hybrid defense’*, War on the Rocks, 30 July 2015, is online: <http://warontherocks.com/2015/07/time-to-think-about-hybrid-defense/>.

itary instruments could possibly guarantee its sovereignty. The intervention in Syria was supposed to prove the usefulness of these instruments, but it has delivered Russia to just another military deadlock. It has to regain the initiative for putting these instruments to political use, thus proving that Russia has one major advantage over the hesitant West – the readiness to accept greater risks – while it is factually approaching the point of over-exertion.

### 5. *The denial of diminished 'sovereignty' sets a political trap*

As the official discourse turns more primitive without gaining in coherence, the question “What is he really up to?” acquires greater urgency and involves a disappearing possibility of actually finding a comprehensible answer. Putin cannot fail to see that the model of a resource-exporting state has stopped working but the only alternative that ensures Russia’s ‘sovereignty’ is the military-mobilization model, which was noisily advertised during the celebrations of the ‘Great Victory’ in May 2015. This model, however, does not fit with the lifestyle of Putin’s elites and it is clearly unsustainable due to an elementary shortage of money and technologies. It has become plain clear that the Kremlin – where the shrinking of Putin’s ‘narrow circle’ of courtiers has resulted in a noticeable reduction of brain-power – cannot invent a new discourse for proving Russia’s ‘great-powerness.’ The Russian leadership has to insist on the infallibility of its course to asserting ‘sovereignty’ at the expense of neighbors, and so Russia finds itself compelled to proceed along the track that cannot possibly succeed.

Turning Crimea into an ‘unalienable’ part of Russia necessarily means that Moscow could not abandon the rebel ‘quasi-republics’ in Donetsk and Luhansk, whatever are the mutual false pretenses in the ‘Minsk process.’ This means that it

remains locked in the confrontation, which it cannot hope to bring to a draw (not to mention win). The only way for sustaining this confrontation is through upgrading its strategic partnership with China, but this ‘too-close-for-comfort’ embrace brings a different problem for Russia’s shrinking ‘sovereignty’: it finds itself in a dependent and subordinate position *vis-à-vis* its almighty neighbor, which in fact, prioritizes its own development of a “new type of great power relations” with the USA.<sup>12</sup> Moscow finds it increasingly difficult to prove its strategic value to Beijing, particularly as natural resources depreciate, and suspects that the bold assault on the foundations of the international order has put Russia in the position of a revisionist power gone-too-far and, therefore, a designated loser. The intervention in Syria did momentarily create an impression of Russia’s ability to make a difference by taking high risks in projecting military power. Nevertheless, by spring 2016 that impression changed into a recognition of limits of Russia’s power. The logic of the ‘hybrid war,’ however, has gained plenty of self-propelling dynamics, so the ability of the Kremlin leadership to break from its self-made trap of making a limited military power into an instrument of over-ambitious-but-muddled policy is severely constrained.

<sup>12</sup> Vladislav Inozemtsev, one of the participants in *The Evolution of Russian Political Thought after 1991* International Workshop, made a similar argument in Vladislav Inozemtsev, *Propustit' povorot*, *Gazeta.ru*, 29 July 2015, is online: [http://www.gazeta.ru/column/vladislav\\_inozemtsev/7659597.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/column/vladislav_inozemtsev/7659597.shtml). For an obdurate counterpoint, see Sergei Karaganov, *Kitayskiy veter duyvet v nashi parusa*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 31 May 2015, is online: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/05/31/evrazia-site.html>.

## Chapter VIII

America as the 'Other' in Russian Political Discourse:  
Post-Soviet Reality and International Challenges  
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The American 'other' continues to be significant for the creation of post-Soviet Russian identity. In the period of 1990s an image of the friendly American 'other' prevailed in Russian social and political discourse because of the new American crusade for Russian freedom and of the liberalization of post-Soviet Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Russian *Amerikanistika* also reacted to these changes by shifting the focus of the historical representation of the American past from conflict to continuity and success. The translation into Russian of classic works of Max Lerner,<sup>2</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin,<sup>3</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.,<sup>4</sup> and Louis Hartz<sup>5</sup> was sponsored by the United States Information Agency at the peak of this new pro-American attitude in Russian society. These books highlighted those traditions and features of the American character

<sup>1</sup> About the American crusade for Russian freedom see: David Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, pp. 196-218.

<sup>2</sup> Max Lerner, *America as civilization: Life and thought in the United States today*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, Random House, Allied, New York-Bombay 1958; Idem, *The Americans: The National Experience*, Random House, New York 1965; Idem, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*, Random House, New York 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The cycles of American history*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Hartz, *The liberal tradition in America*, Harcourt & Brace, New York 1955.

that allowed the United States to emerge as a country of liberty, democracy, economic leadership, and advanced technologies and promoted a positive image of the United States in Russia.<sup>6</sup> However, by the early 2000s, the general attitude toward the United States had changed.

### 1. The New Russian narrative on 'the other'

Anti-American feelings skyrocketed as a result of the disappointment with Russia's 1990s domestic policies, government efforts to build a new national identity, using the United States as the 'other,' and the reaction to the U.S. foreign policy decisions in the last years of Bill Clinton's presidency and during the whole George W. Bush administration, including the bombing of Yugoslavia, policies in Georgia and Ukraine, the war in Iraq, and the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As if it wanted to introduce the Russian readers to the U.S. critics of the American experience, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the American Embassy sponsored the 2006 Russian-language publication of the radical historian Howard Zinn's now-classic *A People's History of the United States*.<sup>7</sup> Zinn's book provided the Russian readers with an alternative history of the United States through the eyes of disadvantaged Americans, including women and representatives of racial and ethnic minorities. The Russian book

<sup>6</sup> About the evolution of the Post-Soviet *Amerikanistika* see in details: Ivan Ivanovich Kurilla & Victoria Ivanovna Zhuravleva, *Teaching U.S. History in Russia: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects*, The Journal of American History, 96 (4), March 2010, pp. 1138-1144. See also editors' introduction in: Ivan Ivanovich Kurilla & Victoria Ivanovna Zhuravleva (eds.), *Russian/Soviet Studies in the United States, Amerikanistika in Russia: Mutual Representations in Academic Projects*, Lexington Books, London 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*, Harper & Collins, New York 2003.



market was flooded with translations of American books that espoused a critical view of the US domestic and foreign policy, such as the new translation of Zinn's one under the title *Amerikanskaya Imperiya. S 1492 goda do Nashikh Dney* (literally "The American Empire from 1492 to our days"),<sup>8</sup> Oliver Stone's and Peter Kuznick's *The Untold History of the United States*,<sup>9</sup> Dinesh D'Souza's *America: Imagine a World without Her*.<sup>10</sup> Today, the image of the hostile American 'other' predominates in political and social rhetoric and media representations.

In retrospect, it can be argued that the rapprochement between Russia and the United States and the rejection of simplified schemes of mutual understanding that accompany it, have always taken place during those periods when Russia and the United States have expanded the agenda of their relationship by resisting a common enemy, or global challenges and threats. This was the case of the two World Wars and the large-scale anti-terror campaigns after the 9/11 terror attacks. It has also happened in the times of political reforms and/or economic modernization in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, post-Soviet Russia, when the U.S. exported goods, capital and technologies and Americans taught Russians the lessons of capitalism and reforms. With respect to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one can recall the period of industrialization in the Soviet Union, the idea of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev "to catch up and surpass the United States in production,"<sup>11</sup> the modernization program that built on the American experience during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, or the Partnership for Modernization program

<sup>8</sup> Howard Zinn, *Amerikanskaya imperiya. S 1492 goda do nashikh dney*, Algoritm, Moskva 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Oliver Stone & Peter Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, Gallery Books, New York 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, *America: Imagine a World without Her*, Regnery Publishing, Washington D.C. 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Alan M. Ball, *Imagining America: Influence and Images in Twentieth-century Russia*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham 2003, p. 156.

declared by the then-President Dmitry Medvedev. During these periods, the U.S. had served as an example to be copied.

From 2000 onwards, during the period of stabilization with its characteristic consolidation of power structures, growing authoritarianism, and rejection of reforms, the trend that emerges is that of creating the image of a hostile American 'other' in Russia and of a hostile Russian 'other' in the U.S. This, in turn, has led to the rise of anti-Americanism and 'rus-sophobia,' both of which can be actively deployed to achieve political goals and to revitalize nationalism. This phenomenon had reached its full height during the Cold War, whose legacy influences the current crisis in Russian-American relations.

## 2. The 'hostility-building process'

The Ukrainian crises became an indicator of a critical crisis in the relationship between the U.S. and post-Soviet Russia and actualized an image of the hostile American 'other' in Russian social and political discourse, since both of these crises are directly connected with the broader crisis of managing global and regional processes in a post-Cold War world. Currently, all the factors that influence the process of mutual perception – the climate of Russian-American relations, the national (respectively Russian or American) socio-cultural and political context, the international situation, and the historical legacy (not only the legacy of the Cold War but also that of the 1990s, when the asymmetrical character of bilateral relations was established) – are unambiguously negative.

The 'information war' has become one of the most important features of the current crisis in Russian-American relations. We are dealing with the practice as well as the discourse of the Cold War, although there is no reason to talk about the start of full-scale Cold War II for a number of reasons. Firstly,

the Cold War was a systemic phenomenon, and Russia, ceasing to be a superpower, was no longer capable of offering the world an alternative model opposed to liberal capitalism. Secondly, with the collapse of the bipolar system of international relations, the world has become polar-centric and Russian-American relations per se no longer determine the course of international development, while being seen in its context. Thirdly, unlike the Cold War, this crisis does not have the character of a military confrontation with its inherent arms race. Instead, its main dimensions are geopolitical, geo-economic and informational. Fourthly, the Iron Curtain is absent, and it is already impossible to prevent the flow of information and the development of people-to-people contacts in the context of globalization. Fifthly, the Ukrainian crisis is one of many current crises taking place in the world in which there remains the possibility of Russian-American cooperation that doesn't only include non-proliferation and arms control.

Old stereotypes are mutually repeated in speeches by politicians and social figures, experts and journalists, and also visually in political cartoons on both sides of the Atlantic. This practice is characterized by the disregard of some facts for the sake of others. It has led to simplistic explanatory sketches that 'demonize' the enemy and to the use of the 'American card' in Russian domestic political games and vice versa.

In today's Russia, the work of constructing the image of the United States as a hostile country – that views itself as the victor in the Cold War, that wants to impose its dictates and double standards on the whole world, that has irresponsibly played with religious extremists and radicals to achieve political goals – has reached unprecedented levels. Anti-American sentiment is on the rise in Russia, hitting the highest level in almost fifteen years. According to the Levada Center opinion poll, half of the Russian population is sure that America impedes Russia's development. 31 per cent of Russians fear a military intervention

and occupation by the USA. At the same time, 33 per cent are sure that, in a hypothetical case of a war against the US and its allies, Russia would be able to gain a victory.<sup>12</sup> According to the Pew Research Center polls only 15 per cent of Russians have a favorable opinion of America, down from 56 per cent in 2011<sup>13</sup> and there is hardly another nation in the world that has such a high level of resentment as well as such a negative attitude towards the USA.<sup>14</sup>

This anti-Americanism is being used both to support a siege mentality and to construct the national idea. The President Vladimir Putin himself encourages the political discourse to follow these lines. It is sufficient to look at Putin's Valdai speech given in Sochi on October 25, 2014<sup>15</sup> or to see the documentary television film entitled *Krym. Doroga domoy* ("Crimea. The Way Home," 2015). Putin cranked up the volume of anti-Americanism after protest movements in late 2011 and 2012, which he blamed on the State Department. But it wasn't until the Ukrainian crisis that anti-Americanism spreads from ordinary street vendors all the way up to the Kremlin. The Russian federal television channels, the main source of news for more than 90 percent of Russians, feed and propagate these sentiments and prejudices.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Levada-Tsentr, *Ugroza dlya Rossii so Storony SShA*, ATsYuL, Moscow, 12 May 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Jacob Poushter, *Key findings from our poll on the Russia-Ukraine conflict*, Pew Research Center, 10 June 2015, is online: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/10/key-findings-from-our-poll-on-the-russia-ukraine-conflict/>.

<sup>14</sup> PRC, *Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image*, Pew Research Center, 14 July 2014, is online: <http://www.pew-global.org/2014/07/14/chapter-1-the-american-brand/>.

<sup>15</sup> Putin's speech at Valdai International Discussion Club, 24 October 2014, is online: <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/46860>.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Birnbaum, *Russia's anti-American fever goes beyond the Soviet era's*, The Washington Post, 8 March 2015, is online: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russias-anti-us-sentiment-now-is-even-worse-than-it-was-in-soviet-union/2015/03/08/b7d534c4-c357-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russias-anti-us-sentiment-now-is-even-worse-than-it-was-in-soviet-union/2015/03/08/b7d534c4-c357-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d_story.html).

Russian high-ranking officials like to emphasize that the Western countries and, first of all, the United States bend their efforts to prevent Russia from getting of its knees and to discredit all Russian attempts to do something of international significance as the Russia's actions in different regions or the organization of Olympic Games and the 2018 FIFA World Cup. President Putin suggested that “the Washington obkom” had “prohibited” some countries in Europe from joining ‘Victory Day’ celebrations in Moscow on May 9, 2015 and Russia’s Security Council, in its turn, accused the United States of plotting to oust President Vladimir Putin by financing the opposition and encouraging mass demonstrations, less than a week after a protest leader Boris Nemtsov was murdered near the Kremlin. War of sanctions against Russia became an important argument in this rhetoric. Being anti-American at the bottom, it correlates with the nationwide demand for greatness, which has emerged in the second half of Putin’s lengthy reign as the part of a new and unspoken social contract between the authorities and the people.

The reference to the double standards of the American politics has become a favorite communicative strategy that aims to reassert the legitimacy of Russia’s actions in Ukraine within anti-American discourse. Political, public, and media figures have eagerly taken up and broadly used Putin’s famous thesis – “Why do they have the permission while we do not?” However, what lies behind this anti-American message that seems quite persuasive to a broad layer of the Russian society is a complex spectrum of love-hate feelings towards America, all of which are deeply rooted in the public consciousness and play an important role in Russia’s identity discourse.

As the Russian sociologist Alexei Levinson accurately observed in 2007,

America is our only significant *Other*. The rivalry with America does not unravel in the ‘real’ world arena, but in its reflection that exists in the Russian mass consciousness. And in this sphere, what matters is not to defeat the *Other*, but to be completely certain that we ‘are not worse than them’ [...] In this worldview, examples of good relations with America are an acknowledgement that they are equal to us or similar to us, and we – to them as the only basis for mutual good feelings.<sup>17</sup>

In its turn Angela Stent argues:

The recognition of the reality that Russia is less important per se, that indirectly is a continuing source of irritation to Russian officials. In this sense, the various American resets have represented attempts to engage Russia productively by persuading it to acknowledge and accept the asymmetries in the relationship and move forward on that basis. Putin’s 2001 attempted reset, by contrast, was a bid to establish a strategic partnership of equals, acting as if these asymmetries did not exist.<sup>18</sup>

The image of America as a singular ‘dark twin’ to Russia is essential to this mindset. The constant urge to highlight that America has serious problems in domestic and foreign politics, that their claims to mentor Russia are ludicrous, and that Russia has never engaged in the kind of foreign policy that the U.S. has made, for example, in Kosovo and that establishes dangerous international precedents. Paradoxically, Russia is currently attempting to legitimize its policy actions towards Crimea by describing them precisely as being similar to the US actions that it considers to be illegitimate.

<sup>17</sup> Alexei Levinson, *America as «Significant Other»*, Pro et Contra, 11 (2), March-April 2007, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford 2014, pp. XI-XII, 257.

### 3. *The legitimizing 'other'*

Just as it was common for the Soviet propaganda and its what-aboutism, Russian state-controlled media are now increasingly drawing public attention to the events in Ferguson and Baltimore and to the general upsurge of racial controversy in the U.S., the spy scandals and Edward Snowden's revelations, tortures in secret CIA prisons, and to the U.S. foreign policy from Iraq to Syria.<sup>19</sup> These events are undoubtedly a blow to America's international reputation. Yet, their use as a means of legitimizing one's own breaches of international legal norms has its limits. Once again, these references underscore Russia's potential lack of preparedness to play the role of defender of global norms, which Russia had cultivated with so much effort before the onset of the Ukrainian crisis. In addition, Russian authorities, politicians and some journalists have started drawing parallels not only with the current U.S. foreign policy, but also with its continental expansionism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (in this case, Crimea's incorporation is compared to the incorporation of the Texas). Thus, the arguments in favor of Russia's 21<sup>st</sup> century policy are found in the American 19<sup>th</sup> century policy. In the context of the construction of the image that America is a hostile 'other' to Russia, the dichotomy American universalist liberalism versus Russian national conservatism has been actualized.

President Vladimir Putin, in the spirit of Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century conservatives, loves to discuss Russia's genetic code or to talk about the unique Russian soul.<sup>20</sup> This has resulted in a return to the famous debates among Westernizers (*zapadniki*)

<sup>19</sup> The visualization of these ideas you may find in the cartoons of Vitaly Podvitskiy who works for the pro-Kremlin RIA Novosti, a news agency, also known as *Rossiya Segodnya*. Online at: <http://podvitski.ru/>.

<sup>20</sup> Nina L. Khrushcheva, *Inside Vladimir Putin's Mind: Looking Back in Anger*, World Affairs, July-August 2014, is online: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/inside-vladimir-putin%E2%80%99s-mind-looking-back-anger>.

and slavophiles that took place more than a century ago and have been stimulated by Russia's turn to the East. By reminding the Russian people of their civilizational and sacred roots, Putin explained the incorporation of Crimea in his Federal Assembly Address on December 4, 2014.

The Russian annexation of Crimea<sup>21</sup> made the West to subject Russia to an unprecedented pressure, which has in turn contributed to the growth of conservative and patriotic sentiments in the country.<sup>22</sup> Discussions resumed about the so-called Russia's unique development destiny, the existence of a unique Russian civilization in the world, and the role of Russian traditions and history. One side of this debate is monopolized by the Russian conservatives, whose ranks have recently started to increase. They argue that in the 1990s the Modern Russia has had its own destructive 'revolution' that was driven by the desire to break with the country's historical experience and to implement Western/American prescriptions for political and economic development, without taking into account the existing conditions. Over the past decade, the country has barely started to overcome the serious negative consequences that these efforts had produced.<sup>23</sup> Now Russian conservatives prefer to respond to domestic and foreign critics, who are demanding drastic change, with the words of Stolypin: "You need great upheavals – we need a great Russia!" This phrase of the former Russian prime minister is well known and commonly used outside the context in which it was spoken. On the other side stands the relatively

<sup>21</sup> Petr Kopka, *Ukrainian statehood after Crimea, what comes next?*, Russia Direct, 13 March 2015, is online: <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/ukrainian-statehood-after-crimea-what-comes-next>.

<sup>22</sup> Eugene Bai, *The real reason why a resurgence of conservatism in Russia is dangerous*, Russia Direct, 24 April 2015, is online: <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/real-reason-why-resurgence-conservatism-russia-dangerous>.

<sup>23</sup> Nikolay Pakhomov, *The future of Russian conservatism is a lot less scary than the West thinks*, Russia Direct, 12 May 2015, is online: <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/future-russian-conservatism-lot-less-scary-west-thinks>.

small but active number of Russian liberals<sup>24</sup> and representatives of the democratic opposition, supported by the West. These critics began to reproach Russian conservatives for various sins, including nationalism, isolationism, obscurantism, and ignorance.

The image of the United States as a hostile 'other' correlates with the ardent social and political debates about the role of Russian liberalism in the political life of Putin's Russia as well as the meaning of the word 'liberal.' According to the actual propaganda, the liberals are those who stole from the public coffers in the 1990s, joined the opposition ranks in the 2000s, and since 2010 has been simply hoping for the disintegration of their semi-mobilized country. 'The fifth column,' 'the national-traitors,' and 'the US State Department agents' have become popular epithets for market economy and fair election advocates.

Sergey Obukhov, a Duma deputy and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) Central Committee Secretariat, has expressed this idea with great clarity:

The meaning of word 'liberal' in the mass conscience has been completely changed, because the liberal project and its leaders have failed in Russia. To be more precise, what failed is what was carried out under the name and the banner of a liberal project, which was really the US global project that has all the markings of a geopolitical confrontation. This project imposes the US values on the entire world. Its understanding of human rights goes against our traditional cultural and mental values. In my opinion, these are the origins of the mass negative attitudes towards the word 'liberal,' which has become a swearword in our country.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Eugene Bai, *Putin's Orthodox conservatives vs. Russia's unorthodox liberals*, Russia Direct, 20 January 2015, is online: <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/putins-orthodox-conservatives-vs-russias-unorthodox-liberals>.

<sup>25</sup> Meduza – a group of Russian journalists and reporters that promotes the freedom of information – asked politicians and public figures to explain who 'a liberal' is. See, Meduza, *V znachenii «porjadochnyy chelovek» «Meduza» vyyasnila u politikov i obschchestvennykh deyateley, kto takoy «liberals»*, Meduza News, 10 April 2015, is online: <https://meduza.io/feature/2015/04/10/v-znachenii-poryadochnyy-chelovek>.

#### 4. A value-based approach in Russian-American relations

Meanwhile, the American political and media discourse responds to the current crises with a predominantly value-based approach to the image of Russia. Unlike the pragmatic approach, it correlates directly with the American socio-cultural context and is based on the certainty that Russia's foreign policies are an extension of its domestic policies. And this manner of thinking is a typical outward projection of one basic self-representation of the American society itself: the belief that the U.S. foreign policy is based on its democratic political system. A value-based approach determines the Russian strand of the American foreign policy. It is derived from the domestic political situation in Russia, whose leaders, from an American point of view, should be punished for their growing authoritarianism and for their foreign policy, first of all, for their policy toward Ukraine. US democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton labels Russia, Iran, and North Korea 'traditional security threats' to the United States and calls for more sanctions on Russia.<sup>26</sup> The Republicans promise to 'teach Russia a lesson.' The new National Military Strategy of the United States describes Russia as the threat to the American interests because Russia is a 'revisionist power' that violates the norms of the world order.<sup>27</sup> The coverage of U.S.-Russia policy<sup>28</sup> is, by and large, one-dimensional in US media. As James Carden explains in his article in the *Nation*, dissenting opinion on US

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Hillary Clinton's speeches about Russia are online in the Huffington Post website: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/hillary-clinton-russia/>.

<sup>27</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, June 2015, p.2, is online: [http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Eugene Bai, *The information war between the US and Russia is just getting started*, Russia Direct, 3 February 2015, is online: <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/information-war-between-us-and-russia-just-getting-started>.

policy toward Russia becomes impermissible. He emphasizes that a plurality of voices on Russia can no longer be easily found within the U.S. mainstream media and this atmosphere reminds the period of McCarthyism, when any voices thought to be sympathetic to the Soviet Union were publicly exposed and denounced.<sup>29</sup> The attack on the Carnegie Moscow Centre accused of being a “Trojan horse” for Russian influence is rather symptomatic in this context.<sup>30</sup>

Russia, in turn, uses this American approach and this anti-Russian campaign to foster the anti-American sentiment in order to shape the image of a hostile American ‘other.’ A campaign to eradicate ‘hostile’ foreign influences, first of all American one, was launched in Russia. The Flex exchange program, the American Council for International Education, the American Cultural Center, the MacArthur Foundation became the objects of this ‘foreign agents-hunt.’ James Carden found a McCartism trend in contemporary US media attitude towards Russia, but the political era in today’s Russia is reminiscent of the McCarthy era in 1950s America in a greater degree.

<sup>29</sup> James Carden, *Neo-McCarthyism and the US Media. The crusade to ban Russia policy critics*, The Nation, 19 May 2015 is online: <http://www.thenation.com/article/neo-mccarthyism-and-us-media/>.

<sup>30</sup> James Kirchick, *How a U.S. Think Tank Fell for Putin*, The Daily Beast, 27 July 2015, is online: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/27/how-a-u-s-think-tank-fell-for-putin.html>. For a critic response to this article, see: Leonid Bershidsky, *Putin Hurts a Think Tank by Not Banning It*, Bloomberg, 28 July 2015 is online: <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-07-28/how-putin-tarnishes-moscow-carnegie-center-by-omission>.

## Chapter IX

### Transformation of Security Culture in Russia: Domestic and Foreign Factors *Olga Pavlenko*, Russian State University for the Humanities

The notion of ‘security culture’ holds a special place in the political knowledge system. Christopher Daase interprets it as a “sum of values, discourses, practices” developed within societies and giving rise to various models of interaction of “security” and “freedom.” In Russia, it is viewed as a “system code” of macro-(globalization) and micro-dynamics (regionalization) of the modern world and associated with a phenomenology of trust.<sup>1</sup> ‘Security’ and ‘trust’ are the categories that lately have been in the limelight of Russian specialists and politicians. Affected by the Ukrainian crisis, EU and US leaders declared that they lost their trust in Russia. But since February 2015, this process has become reciprocal. The ‘symbolic universe’ of the post-bipolar world found itself split open, and as for the institutions and values of Western democracy, they were discredited in the eyes of a considerable part of Russian population. Against this back-

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Daase, *Sicherheitskultur – Ein Konzept zur interdisziplinären Erforschung politischen und sozialen Wandels*, Sicherheit und Frieden, 29 (2), 2011, pp. 59-65; Dmitry Lukyanov, *Aggression der Sicherheit*, in Arnd Bauerkämper & Natalia Rostislavleva (eds.), *Sicherheitskulturen im Vergleich*, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 2014, pp. 181-192; Petr Alekseyevich Nikolaev, *Kul'tura kak faktor natsional'noy bezopasnosti*, Russkiy impul's, Moskva 2007; Vyacheslav Nikolayevich Kuznetsov, *Geokul'turnaya entsiklopediya: kul'tura razvitiya cherez kul'turu bezopasnosti*, Kniga i Biznes, Moskva 2009; Idem. *Sotsiologiya bezopasnosti*, MGU, Moskva 2007; Yuliya Vital'yevna Fetisova, *Kul'tura bezopasnosti*, Candidate of sciences' dissertation, OGPU, Omsk 2009; Aleksandr Semonovich Kopto, *O kul'tury voyny kak kul'ture Mira*, Respublika, Moskva 2002; Diana Edikovna Gasparyan, *Sotsial'nost' kak negativnost'*, KDU, Moskva 2007.

ground, the phenomenon of the ‘aggression of security’ – created by media manipulations – has been growing in strength.

The Giddens’ ‘risk mentality’ is typical of the political class of the post-Soviet Russia that has acquired a considerable experience in overcoming internal and external threats over the past twenty-five years. In this paper, the security culture should be understood as a system of value paradigms, discourses, political practices and social communications whose combination creates the society’s self-identity and its reflections on the outside world. In other words, it is a special sociocultural reality combining the ‘space of experience’ and the ‘horizon of expectations.’ Despite a hypersensitivity to external and internal influences, dialectic flexibility and mutability, it reproduces certain ‘constants’ emerging in existential conditions of any historical era, irrespective of political regimes. They form a frame that was conveniently named the ‘Russian system’ at the turn of millennium by political experts Pivovarov and Fursov, who were trying to uncover the factors of stability and development of the gigantic Eurasian state.<sup>2</sup>

It is certain that the conceptual schemes of the policy description, monitoring, evaluation and analysis directly depend on the ‘ideological filters’ existing in the minds of researchers that involuntarily determine the selection of information and the ways of commenting on it. In addition to personal and collective preferences, as well as a current state of affairs, there is often a certain something defined as ‘self-censorship.’ Any research paper may be compared to a closely woven fabric with an intricate pattern made of fibers that vary in composition and quality. This article will present only a brief outline of key trends in the interpretation of security-related categories with-

<sup>2</sup> For these attempts of historical-cultural and politological analysis of the ‘Russian system,’ see: Yuriy Sergeyevich Pivovarov & Andrey Il’ich Fursov, *Russkaya sistema*, Rubezhi, 1, 1995, pp. 45-69; and 2, 1995, pp. 32-53; 3, 1995, pp. 42-60; 4, 1995, pp. 32-44; 5, 1995, pp. 29-46; 6, 1995, pp. 44-65.

in the Russian political thought. Any attempt at systematization is always subjective. I left out of my analysis all the texts of political rather than research nature that distort reality through the lenses of set ideologemes. It is the politologic research that interests me and not the tools of information warfare. Even though they undoubtedly deserve a particular attention. One can distinguish several levels in the analysis of security culture of Russia – sociocultural, geopolitical, strategic thinking, military-technical. All of them are tightly intertwined with each other.

### 1. *The sociocultural level*

A study of the history of security notions and perceptions, the reflections of intellectuals and politicians on the cases of challenges and threats, the society’s mobilization potential in various historical eras are crucial aspects. Modern research, as a rule, is focused on the transformation of discourses of the ‘other’ and the consecutive steps of the historical maturing of ‘foreign-enemy-other-another’ in the strata of folk and elite cultures. The symbolic interaction between the ‘me’ and the ‘other’ reveals the typology of risks, standards and values of the Russian society,<sup>3</sup> as well as Russian ‘geopolitical fears’ generated by historical experience.

There were several attempts at the systematization of numerous opinions and visions existing among Russian political scientists. One of the first generalization schemes was suggested in 2004 by Ivan Tyulin in the MGIMO textbook *Sovremennyye Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya i Mirovaya Politika* (“Contemporary International Relations and World Politics”).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The famous school of Mikhail Bakhtin, exploring the development mechanisms of ‘me/other’ discourse, had significantly affected the progress of Russian cultural studies of international relations.

In the course of the following ten years, this analysis matrix has not undergone any substantial changes. Tyulin distinguished two main approaches that differed from each other in their geopolitical interpretation of the West and consequently of national values. There are two key interpretations of the Russia-West dichotomy: a conservative and a liberal one. It should be noted that the perception of conservatism and liberalism in Russia is quite different from the definitions generally accepted in the West. The Russian interpretations are based on a geopolitical paradigm that corresponds to the centuries-old existential Russian question: Is Russia a part of the Western world or does it have its own, unique path? Through the changes of political eras and regimes, this question has always remained relevant for the Russian society. Over the last two centuries, the Russia-West dichotomy, the topic introduced already in the middle of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century by the discussions of Slavophiles and pro-Western thinkers, has been redefined, updated through new discourses, but has preserved essentially the same semantic codes.

The conservative thinking in Russia has a very long-standing tradition.<sup>5</sup> It is focused on the stabilization of social structure, the national forces, the centrist type of administration. Since the nineties, a new school of political realism began to emerge in Russia alongside with the Neo-Eurasianism. Over the last five years, the political conservatism has turned into a dominant trend and the Neo-Eurasianists joined forces with the new statist.

The second, pro-liberal group includes the political scientists that realize the need for Russia to closely cooperate with

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Georgiyevich Tyulin, *Novyye Tendentsii v Rossiyskikh Issledovaniyakh Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniy*, in Anatoly Vasilyevich Torkunov (ed.), *Sovremennyye mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya i mirovaya politika*, Prosveshchenie, Moskva 2004, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Gunther Rormozer & Anatolij Frenkin, *Konservativnaya revolyutsiya*, Polis, 1-2, 1991; Tatyana Filippova, *Predchuvstvie nostalgii. O konservatizme v Rossii XIX veka*, Svobodnaya mysl, 9, 1993.

transatlantic institutions when it comes to economy, finances, information and communications, environmental protection and security.<sup>6</sup> But it would be cognitive simplism to present Russian conservatives and liberals as the complete opposites of each other. While they oppose each other in specific political circumstances, they still share many cultural and ethical values. The political texts of both movements feature such common elements as advocacy of reforms, war on corruption, protection of traditions and stable development of society. Yet, bitter disputes break out between them over the essence and character of the political power, the nature of its cooperation with civil society. In their *Sotsiologiya Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniy* (“Sociology of international relations”),<sup>7</sup> Pavel and Andrey Tsygankov place special emphasis on the analysis of movements within the Russian liberalism. The authors identify three major groups: modernizers, national democrats and institutionalists. The debates between them concern, in authors’ opinion, the following notions: “world order”, “sovereignty and national interests”, “foreign policy guidelines.”<sup>8</sup> The same old circle of geopolitical concepts that the Russian political thought is possibly doomed to continue to run around in.

In 2013, Andrey Tsygankov singled out three key principles shared by the ‘Russian pro-Western thinkers.’ Firstly, the superiority of the Western civilization as a model of historical

<sup>6</sup> I.e. Vladimir Baranovsky, Andrey Zagorskiy, Vladislav Inozemtsev, Vladimir Kulagin, Marina Lebedeva, Andrei Melville, Andrey Piontkovsky, Viktor Sergeev, Dmitry Trenin, Yevgeny Fedorov, Liliya Shevtsova.

<sup>7</sup> Pavel Afanas'yevich Tsygankov & Andrey Pavlovich Tsygankov, *Sotsiologiya mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, Aspekt Press, Moskva 2008.

<sup>8</sup> The authors consider as modernizers all the die-hard pro-Westerners – above all Andrey Kozyrev and Yegor Gaidar – who are convinced that Russia has no other alternative but to integrate into the West. Institutionalists, on the other hand, believe that Russia needs to join international institutions instead of getting modernized. Which does not prevent them from criticizing the activities of the existing global international organizations. Within this movement, Pavel and Andrey Tsygankov single out two competing groups, where the first one considers the concept of



and institutional development. Secondly, the secondary and dependent nature of the Russian development path. The future of Russia is associated with its ability to adopt the best of the Western civilization in the hope of one day becoming perfectly integrated into it. Thirdly, the need for a pro-Western foreign policy inasmuch as it perfectly satisfies the Russian national interests.<sup>9</sup> A good example of a coherent pro-Western approach is the research of Liliya Shevtsova who wonders:

Why the fact that the Western civilization is drawing closer to Russia is considered a threat for the Russian society, instead of a blessing and a security guarantee? By joining the EU institutions, the former communist states managed to overcome their mutual distrust and historical hostility. Is it not in the best interests of Russia to have stable and successful states? And, if so, why does Moscow see as a threat to its security any steps that enable these states to become stable and successful?<sup>10</sup>

The logic of the modern Westernism is countered by an alternative civilization project based on the values of the Russian statehood and sovereignty. While the pro-Western doctrines feature transnational elements, the historical tradition of Russia is built on the idea of a strong State that is the only one capable of preventing the Eurasian space from falling apart. It is no wonder that its priority is placed on the idea of power and individual political leadership. The international processes

'sovereign state' to be obsolete (Krasin, Kapustin, Lebedeva), while the second one believes that international organisations protect and reformulate the role of nation-states (Davydov). National democrats, in the opinion of the authors, are close to moderate institutionalists but think that "Russia should not copy somebody else's models or put its trust in international institutions, but first and foremost it needs to find its own path to a global economic and political system, the one reflecting its cultural specifics." This group advocates the interests of Russia's multiple-vector diplomacy. It includes Gadzhiev, Abolin, Polyakov, Kortunov, Makarenko. See: *Ibidem*, pp. 27-31.

<sup>9</sup> Andrey Pavlovich Tsygankov, *Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya: traditsii russkoy politicheskoy mysli*, Al'fam, Moskva 2013, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Liliya Fyodorovna Shevtsova, *Odinokaya derzhava. Pochemu Rossiya ne stala Zapadom i pochemu Rossii trudno s Zapadom*, Rosspen, Moskva 2010, p. 75.

of the last decade have turned the world into a pulsating volcano. The Western project of reformatting the traditional Middle East regimes has resulted in a global humanitarian disaster, the ISIS terrorists, the invasion of refugees and migrants in Europe. The attempts to steal the power in the post-Soviet space have provoked a series of bloody conflicts and civil unrest. Against this background, the number of supporters of independent statehood and unique system of cultural values in Russia has considerably increased.<sup>11</sup> Contemporary pro-great power politicians – that include both conservatives and certain types of liberals – interpret freedom as a political independence, insisting on the priority of a strong state.

## 2. *The Geopolitical level*

This dimension is manifesting itself, above all, in territorial and spatial perceptions of 'one's own' and 'someone else's' worlds, determined by the development process of collective identity in the post-Soviet Russia.<sup>12</sup> The renaissance of 'critical geopolitics' in the 1990s and early 2000s was a distinct feature in many nations. This fashionable trend was not unexpected in the academic and the expert communities because it originally corresponded to traditional ways of thinking in the Russian political class. In 1998, the scholar Leonid Abalkin outlined the main features of Russian geopolitical thinking. For modelling the future of international relations, he identified three global scenarios: the first is a dominance of the U.S. 'superpower' as the world leader; the second is a dominance of the world

<sup>11</sup> Andrey Pavlovich Tsygankov, *Mezhdunarodnyye cit.*, pp. 16-38.

<sup>12</sup> Olga Vyacheslavovna Pavlenko, *Geopolitical Visions in Russia: The Post-Soviet Interpretations*, in Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (ed.), *Russland's Imperiale Macht. Integrationsstrategien und Ihre Reichweite in Transnationaler Perspektive*, Böhlau Verlag, Köln 2012, pp. 103-123.

elite (the so-called ‘rich world’), strictly controlling the global markets by means of transnational companies and by political lobbies of the leading economies; and the third is a multipolar world with six to eight regional groups in their zones of attraction and influence that could establish the interoperability and diversity of the civilizational areas.<sup>13</sup> He considered the third scenario the best for Russia’s future. However, the development of global processes followed such an intricate and unpredictable path that in essence all three scenarios could be observed. At the same time, the Russian geopolitical tradition, no matter which models of world development had been created, was characterized by a significant degree of attention to Russia’s role and place. Whatever the geopolitical models were, as a rule they integrated three themes: Russia’s integration in the world economic and political system – guided by the pattern of basic actor/incorporated member/outsider –; the predictable stability of the domestic situation and economic growth; and Russia’s capacity to ally with other countries and to direct its foreign policy strategies.

Westernism and anti-Westernism in Russian politics represented two contrasting systems of values. Nevertheless, they involved varying discourses that incorporated a number of concepts, images and myths. Here one might look for neo-Eurasianism.<sup>14</sup> Its geosophy – a category of ‘self-development’ – was inspiring in the 1990s among representatives of the different directions. Nevertheless, it did not become the

<sup>13</sup> Leonid Ivanovich Abalkin, *Evolutsionnaya ekonomika v sisteme pereosmysleniya bazovykh osnov obschestvoznaniya*, in *Evolutsionnaya ekonomika i “meyustrim”: Doklady i vystupleniya uchastnikov mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma g. Pushchino*, 29 maya – 1 iyunya 1998 g., Nauka, Moskva 2000, pp. 12–14.

<sup>14</sup> The Neo-Eurasianist doctrine was formed on the basis of historic Eurasianism, having been developed in the 1920s–1930s by Trubetskoy, Savitsky, Karsavin, and Gumilev who called himself the last proponent of Eurasianism in the mid-twentieth century. Yet in a period when there was a disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Eurasianists received a second chance.

common theoretical-methodological platform for consolidating the Russian academic expertise. Used by several groups, it shared the notion of the original and ‘self’-oriented nature of Russian civilization, interpreting Petr Savitsky’s formula that “Russia is neither Europe, nor Asia, but a specific geographical ‘world’ that is called Eurasia.”<sup>15</sup> Neo-Eurasianists did not perceive geopolitics in its new interdisciplinary dimension, as it had started to develop in Europe and the U.S. One can identify certain features of the neo-Eurasianist doctrine: first, Russia is the synthesis of Europe and Asia, a bridge between East and West; second, Eurasians are a special cultural-historical type, a super-ethnic group and, third, Russia – by virtue of its geographical location – represents a center that integrates the entire system of the continent’s periphery, i.e. Europe, Central Asia, Iran, India, Indochina and Japan.

The political scientist Anastasiya Mitrofanova tends to interpret the modern Eurasianism as “the most promising of the existing ideologies of the political Orthodoxy.” In her opinion, its focus on Asia and the union with the Islamic world, its broad understanding of religious unity makes the Eurasianism “a political religion” that allows to build “bridges” with China, India, the Islamic world.<sup>16</sup> Over the last decade, it has turned from a fringe movement into a major alternative to the pro-Western geopolitical orientation. The concept of the ‘Russian world’ as part of the Eurasian doctrine has acquired an official standing in the Russian national policy. Even the detractors of Eurasianism admit that the strategy of equidistance in relation to major centers of forces enables Russia to make optimal choices in order to satisfy its own interests.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Petr Nikolaevich Savitsky, *Kontinent-Evraziya*, Agraf, Moskva 1997, p. 283.

<sup>16</sup> Anastasiya Vladimirovna Mitrofanova, *Politizatsiya “pravoslavnogo mira”*, Nauka, Moskva 2004, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> Kamaludin Serazhudinovich Gadzhiev, *Kavkazskiy uzel v geopoliticheskikh prioritetakh Rossii*, Logos, Moskva 2010, pp. 44–45.

### 3. *The political-strategic level*

The political and strategic thinking of Russian elites is recorded in the doctrines of national and information security, military doctrines, foreign policy concepts, and annual President's messages to the Federal Assembly. Mobilization dynamics of security culture is influenced by internal and external factors. A considerable impact is exerted by a political and strategic interpretation of 'borders' and 'zones of influence.' The political review of this particular level of Russian politics noticeably divides experts. This paper distinguishes several groups of Russian and Western specialists based on the following criteria: 'ideology,' 'political realism,' 'confrontation' and 'culture of mutual understanding.'

Russian and Western scientists give different interpretations of the notion of security. In the Russian political thought, the 'security' category is closely linked to such key concepts as 'national interests' and 'state sovereignty.' Security is perceived as a case in which the state and the society are fully protected from both internal and external threats. As a rule, one distinguishes several levels of security: political, economic, military, environmental, information-related and the "security of the nation's cultural development."<sup>18</sup>

The feeling of the country's vulnerability in the face of external threats prompted the Russian political elite to review the previous guidelines of the nineties and the beginning of the noughties. This push for transformation of the security discourse came not only from the post-Soviet space – that is of key importance for Russia from the strategic point of view –

<sup>18</sup> Alisher Yakubovich Babadzhanov, *Voyenno-politicheskoye sotrudnichestvo postsovetskikh gosudarstv. Problema sochetayemosti natsional'nykh podkhodov*, Aspekt Press, Moskva 2013, p. 101; Vladimir Mikhailovich Kulagin, *Mezhdunarodnaya bezopasnost'*, Aspekt Press, Moskva 2007; Sergey Vadimovich Kortunov, *Natsional'naya i mezhdunarodnaya bezopasnost'. Kontseptual'nye osnovy*, GU-VSHE, Moskva 2007.

but also from other parts of the world. There is a consistent interdependence between an increase in international instability and a heated reaction of the Kremlin when it comes to security issues. One may single out a sequence of international events that directly affected the official approach to the issues of military reform and the development of military-industrial complex as the 'color revolutions' in the post-Soviet space in 2005-2006, a five-day war in the Caucasus in 2008, the coups d'état in Libya in 2011 and in Ukraine in February 2014. These crises affected the transition of the security discourse from the ideas of transatlantic partnership to the understanding of 'threats and challenges' caused worldwide by the 'poorly designed strategy' of the US global domination.

Since 2008, it was developed a whole set of new strategies and formulae further defining the challenges and threats aimed at the Russian Federation: i.e. the *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* of 2008 and 2013, the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020*, the *2010 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*. These documents recognize the existence of direct military threats to the national security of the Russian Federation, as well as the need to build up the state's military capability and pursue a more proactive security policy in the post-Soviet space.

The *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020* (approved in 2009) is focused on the "development and improvement of the state's military structure and defense potential."<sup>19</sup> The strategic targets include, firstly, "preventing global and regional wars and conflicts"; secondly, "realizing strategic deterrence in the interests of ensuring the country's military security"; thirdly, the national defense is provided "on

<sup>19</sup> Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii (SBRF), *Strategiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2020 goda* is online: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>.

the basis of principles of reasonable sufficiency and effectiveness”; fourthly, the nation’s leadership planned to expand the “means of non-military response, mechanisms of public diplomacy and peacekeeping.” A separate topic in the Russian security discourse is the correlation of the Russia’s foreign-policy resources and limits of their realization.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Military-technical level

This context directly affects the entire body of security-related issues. Particular emphasis is placed, on the one hand, on the Soviet experience in managing military-industrial sector, as well as current trends and its development prospects and, on the other hand, on the geopolitical aspects of exportation of Russian arms and military equipment, as well as competition with American export in different world regions.<sup>21</sup> Russian researchers pay great attention to the development of the military-industrial sector. Russia now has a considerably large community of reputable military experts specializing in specific topics. The research works of Vorob’yev, Kosenko and Khrustalev are dedicated to the military reform.<sup>22</sup> The issues of the army rearming and its reorganization in conformity with mod-

<sup>20</sup> Nikolay Alekseyevich Kosolapov, *Sila, Nasiliye, Bezopasnost’: Sovremennaya Dialektika Vzaimosvyazey*, in Aleksey Bogaturov, Mark Khrustalev, Nikolay Kosolapov (eds.), *Ocherki teorii i politicheskogo analiza mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, Nauchno-obrazovatel’nyy forum po mezhdunarodnym otnosheniyam, Moskva 2002, pp. 190-195; Artem Vladimirovich Malgin, *Vneshepoliticheskie resursy i predely ikh realizatsii*, Pro et Contra, 4, 2001; Olga Vladimirovna Shishkina, *Vneshepoliticheskie resursy. Rossiya i ES na prostranstve «Obsbhego sosedstva»*, Aspekt Press, Moskva 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Aleksandr Borisovich Bezborodov & Olga Vyacheslavovna Pavlenko, *Voennotekhnicheskiye aspekty natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, Vestnik RGGU. Seriya Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya. Zarubezhnoe Regionovedenie, 140 (18), 2014, pp. 133-153.

ern requirements were raised in the papers by Dvorkin, Barabanov, Pankratov, Aleksashin, Bel’yaninov.<sup>23</sup> They compare the Russian and American construction practices in defense sector and the development strategies of armament industry. The analysis of regional arms markets and the study of the military and technical cooperation of the Russian Federation with various countries can be found in the analytical reviews of Kolpakov, Logachev, Rybas, Sukharev, and also in the encyclopedic edition of the *Military-Industrial Sector of Russia*.<sup>24</sup> For a very long time (from 1992 to 2008), the matters of military reform were no priority for the national policy. An armed conflict in South Ossetia in August 2008 got the ruling elite concerned about the issue of the army and armament reforming. The military construction – that began in 2009 – is still gaining momen-

<sup>22</sup> Vasilii Vasil’yevich Vorob’yev, *Finansovo-ekonomicheskoye obespecheniye oboronnoy bezopasnosti Rossii: problemy i puti resheniya*, GUEF, Sank Petersburg 2003; Vasilii Mikhaylovich Burenok, Aleksey Aleksandrovich Kosenko & Gennadiy Aleksandrovich Lavrinov, *Tekhnicheskoe osnashenie vooruzhennykh sil RF: organizatsionnye, ekonomicheskie i metodologicheskie aspekty*, Granitsa, Moskva 2007; Dmitry Igorevich Makarenko & Yevgeniy Yur’yevich Khrustalev, *Kontseptual’noye modelirovaniye voyennoy bezopasnosti gosudarstva*, Nauka, Moskva 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Dvorkin, *Vooruzhennyye sily Rossii – reformy zavershilis’?*, Ezhegodnik SIPRI 2006, Moskva 2007; Mikhail Barabanov, *Problemy Realizatsii Gosudarstvennoy Programmy Vooruzheniy na 2011-2020 gg.*, Eksport Vooruzheniy, 100, 2012; Andrey Vladimirovich Pankratov, *Oboronno-promyshlennyy Kompleks: Mirovyye Tendentsii i Rossiyskaya Praktika*, Nauka, Moskva 2006; Anatoliy Alekseyevich Aleksashin, Sergey Vladimirovich Garbuk & Aleksandr Mikhaylovich Gubinskiy, *Rossiyskiy Oboronno-promyshlennyy Kompleks: Istoriya, Sovremennoye Sostoyaniye, Perspektivy*, IMU, Moskva 2011; Andrey Yur’yevich Bel’yaninov, *Integratsionnyye Protsessy v Oboronno-promyshlennom Komplekse Rossii*, Granitsa, Moskva 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Igor’ Dmitriyevich Sergeev (ed.), *Voyenno-promyshlennyy kompleks Rossii*. Entsiklopediya, Voll. 1-2, Voennyi Parad, Moskva 2005; Sergey Konstantinovich Kolpakov & Aleksey Aleksandrovich Sukharev, *Analiz i prognoz razvitiya rynka transportnykh samoletov*, Grazhdanskaya aviatsiya. Spetsial’noe prilozhenie k zhurnalu “Eksport Vooruzheniy”, 90, 2011; Aleksandr Leonidovich Rybas (ed.), *Voennotekhnicheskie sotrudnichestvo Rossii s zarubezhnyimi gosudarstvami. Analiz rynkov*, Nauka, Moskva 2008; Idem, *Proryv na mirovyy rynek vooruzheniy*, Rossiya v Global’noy Politike, 2, March 2008.

tum. The events in Libya prompted the authorities to approve a full-scale State Armaments Program 2011. By 2013, the volume of Russian military exports increased up to 15.7 billion US dollars.

There is another level of security culture in modern Russia that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this particular article, the media one. The evolution of online communities and the diffusion of information flows resulted in a significant democratization of foreign policy, which ceased to be the prerogative of the elite diplomacy and is gradually migrating into a public space. Foreign-policy discourses are turning into a tool designed to form collective identities. And to this effect, popular geopolitics deserves researchers' particular attention.

All in all, there are several key trends in the development of security culture in modern Russia. Its transformations are similar to the movement of a pendulum that keeps on swinging back and forth. On one side, Russia is attracted to the West meanwhile, on the other, it is rejecting it. These cyclic motions are largely affected by foreign policy factors, and not the internal ones as it is interpreted by many Western experts. For that matter, the quality of expertise in the Western analytical society when it comes to Russia is another story. It amazes me that the analysts who do not speak Russian, have no knowledge of the traditions of the Russian political culture, its internal political landscape, and even no access to local information database, still claim to be experts when discussing the Russian politics.

The reactions of the political class in Russia are "mirror like." The more the West tries to apply deterrence and even confrontation strategies in regard to Russia, the harsher is the "response." The escalation of threats is reciprocal. And these counter currents collide with each other within the framework of information and economic wars, the discriminatory discourse of the 'other,' the forceful political rhetoric. The capacities for aggression on both sides are growing, yet all the while, there is no real threat of invasion within the circle of nuclear

states. But the confrontational mechanisms bringing enormous profits to military and industrial lobbies and security agencies continue to function and enable politicians to successfully implement mass mobilization strategies. Is it possible though that there are limits to acceptable confrontations in this turbulent situation? Could it be that we need a new interaction algorithm to establish a real, instead of rhetorical, dialogue?

## Contributors

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