EURASIA 2.0

RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICS
IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA

EDITED BY

MARK BASSIN AND MIKHAIL SUSLOV

Eurasia 2.0

Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Politics

Series Editor: Michael O. Slobodchikoff, Troy University

Mission Statement

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, little attention was paid to Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. The United States and many Western governments reassigned their analysts to address different threats. Scholars began to focus much less on Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, instead turning their attention to East Asia among other regions. With the descent of Ukraine into civil war, scholars and governments have lamented the fact that there are not enough scholars studying Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe. This series focuses on the Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European region. We invite contributions addressing problems related to the politics and relations in this region. This series is open to contributions from scholars representing comparative politics, international relations, history, literature, linguistics, religious studies, and other disciplines whose work involves this important region. Successful proposals will be accessible to a multidisciplinary audience, and advance our understanding of Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe.

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Eurasia 2.0

Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media

Edited by Mikhail Suslov and Mark Bassin

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For Anna, Dorian, and Kalina

Contents

Editorial Foreword

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, little attention was paid to Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. The United States and many Western governments reassigned their analysts to address different threats. Scholars began to focus much less on Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, instead turning their attention to East Asia among other regions. With the descent of Ukraine into civil war, scholars and governments have lamented the fact that there are not enough scholars studying Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe. Scholars must again turn their focus on this extremely important geographic area. There remains much misunderstanding about the politics of the region. With tensions between governments at heightened levels unprecedented since the Cold War, scholarship addressing the politics of the region is extremely vital. The Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Politics book series aims at remedying the deficiency in the study and understanding of the politics of Eurasia.

The study of geopolitics, especially in Eurasia, is extremely dynamic. Outside pressures such as globalization and Western soft power have challenged traditional ideologies and cultures and created new challenges for the states within the region. Drs. Suslov and Bassin have edited an amazing volume entitled *Eurasisa 2.0: Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media*. All of the contributors of this volume add to our fundamental understanding of the politics of identity in Eurasia. While some of the scholars examine the complex issues of defining a Eurasian identity, others examine the role of ideology in modern Eurasia. Perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects of this volume is the attention to digital media and its effect on power and influence not only in the region, but more specifically the role of digital media on some of the most important regional conflicts. This book truly advances our understanding of the connection between various media and the construction of identity and ideologies. It is an extremely important contribution to the scholarship of not only the region, but global power politics and identity as well.

Michael O. Slobodchikoff
Series Editor
Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Politics Book Series

Foreword

Stephen Hutchings

The relentless march of globalization generates contradiction, heterogeneity, and complexity at the same pace as it engenders sameness and uniformity. One example of this complexity is the intersection of, on one hand, the global connectivity associated with the digital revolution and, on the other, the localizing effects of the rise of geopolitics as a force in international relations. (As is often the case, academic research lags behind these developments, with fields like political science and economics struggling to wean themselves from the comfortingly abstract universals of "theory" and acknowledge the importance of the less compliant specificities that preoccupy proponents of the still unfashionable "area studies.") The fact that the results of the intersection are particularly discernible in post-Soviet space is perhaps apposite. For the fall of the Soviet Union, itself in part precipitated by globalization, and the very first posting to the Internet both occurred within the same two-week period in August 1991.

It is also no coincidence that there is as yet no consensus on how the region covering the nations that emerged from the rubble of the Soviet Union should be referred to. "Former Soviet Union," "Post-Soviet Space," "Eurasia," "Commonwealth of Independent States" have all vied with one another for dominance, yet none has managed to prevail. One reason for this is that each name is saturated with ideological significance and proves objectionable to one or other nation. It is in this sense that, as the authors of this volume have perceptively grasped, the region in question epitomizes the need for a "critical" geopolitics: the notion that geography is invariably bound up with politics and ideology and cannot therefore be studied neutrally. Thus, "Eurasia," for example, may appear on the surface merely to describe the landmass in which Europe merges into Asia, but from the emergence of the deeply ideological Eurasianist movement of the early twentieth century down to the foreign policy aspirations of Vladimir Putin, the term has in fact been laden with political meaning and controversy.

The title of the present volume, *Eurasia 2.0: Russian Geopolitics in the Age of New Media*, refers to more than one "doubling," however. For it is also underpinned by a parallel insight relating to the digital revolution, and in particular its second, "interactive" phase. Initial optimism about the capacity of new "Web 2.0" interactive media platforms to foster grassroots democratic movements throughout the world has given way to pessimism and alarm about the potential that these platforms offer to powerful authoritarian states, and to populist extremisms of one sort and another. They serve, in fact, as the battleground over which proponents of the two (or three) trends fight for supremacy: the *digital* geopolitics that the authors place at the center of this book. The phenomenon is well illustrated by the promotion by the Putin regime of a "Russian World," with Russia as the center of a wider, Russian-speaking community, via the Runet (or Russian-language Internet). The Runet has become the point of a three-way encounter

of Kremlin-supported media initiatives, the discourses of various forms of grassroots nationalism, and the online activities of the West-leaning democratic opposition.

The encounter has acquired new resonance in the context of the continuing fall-out from the Ukraine crisis of 2014. As important as Russia's sudden move to annex Crimea in the aftermath of the fall of the pro-Russian Yanukovich regime in Kiev and the ensuing violence in Eastern Ukraine has been the intense "information war" between Russia and its Eastern Ukrainian supporters, and advocates of the new Poroshenko regime in Kiev, including much of the Western world. The war, which has been conducted through traditional media (television broadcasting) as well as via social media and the web, has entailed a struggle to claim legitimacy for competing narratives about how and why the Yanukovich government fell, the motivations of its successor, the purpose and nature of Russia's subsequent actions, and the role of the Western powers in resisting those actions. Rather than the one-way barrage of Kremlin lies and deceit to which the democratic West has no option but to respond with the weapons of truth (though there is no inconsiderable merit in that line), the information war has been rather more two-sided and interactive than some Western commentators would have us believe. In many ways, the complexities of the Ukraine crisis are evidence of its thoroughly "mediatized" status: the crisis is itself in part the function of a clash of media narratives played out on screen, online, and via social media networks that establishes it firmly as a conflict of the digital age.

Yet the crisis cannot be properly understood without recourse to a more traditional analysis of its historical, political, and economic causes and contexts, some of which are traceable to the specificities of Russia's imperial past. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that this collection of ground-breaking discussions, in which the Ukraine conflict features prominently, should take a bold and unashamedly interdisciplinary approach to its subject. Specialists in media, history, film studies, politics and international relations, cultural studies, linguistics, and economics all have a role to play in interpreting the issues at stake. They are brought together here in a productive synthesis which the editors ensure is much more than the sum of its parts. It is fitting, therefore, that the provenance of the contributors to the collection covers a geopolitical spectrum—from Russia, through Europe, to the United States. The perspectives they bring to bear are subtly different and reflect the intellectual traditions that shaped them.

Given the advent of what some have controversially called a New Cold War between Russia and the West (a term riddled with its own geopolitical assumptions and biases), the project this book represents is, of course, a timely one and will be looked back upon as a definitive contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon. But the analyses that it offers have resonance for an emerging intellectual paradigm whose significance and applicability stretch well beyond the post-Soviet region. It is above all in this spirit that the book should be read.

Stephen Hutchings, professor

of Russian studies at the

University of Manchester

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Mark Bassin and Mikhail Suslov

THE "RETURN OF GEOPOLITICS"

As an academic perspective, geopolitics has had a highly uneven life history. Originally formulated in the context of the imperial Great Power competition of the late nineteenth century, it was developed actively during the interwar decades. Interest reached far beyond the university, and included the political elites supporting authoritarian regimes in Europe and beyond, who freely borrowed its theories and concepts for their own purposes. It was by virtue of these latter associations—in particular with the ideology and military policies of Nazi Germany—that geopolitics was broadly stigmatized after 1945. For most of the Cold War, geopolitics was denounced as a doctrine of national chauvinism and imperialism and scrupulously avoided by mainstream academic and political discourses, in the West and the Soviet bloc alike. This stigma began to break down in the 1980s, however, and with the end of the Cold War a "renaissance" or, as the title of a recent collection on the subject puts it, a "return" of geopolitical analysis has become a much-noted phenomenon (Guzzini 2012; Bassin 2001). It can be seen on the one hand in the emergence of an entire academic industry or indeed industries of scholarly geopolitical studies and analyses, which are highly varied in their underlying assumptions, analytical approaches, and political conclusions (Dietz 2004; Wacker 2006; Lo 2009; Mead 2014). At the same time, and more strikingly, geopolitics has become a part of the formal political discourses of national governments and political parties. This latter development is particularly evident in the countries of post-Cold War Europe, but it is true more broadly across the globe.

Yet while the fact itself of a return of geopolitics in our own day is widely recognized, deeper questions remains as to what exactly the geopolitics in question consists of. The image of a renaissance suggests some sort of continuity with the original "classical" geopolitics of the interwar period. The conceptual bases of classical geopolitics were set forth in the work of the eminent German geographer Friedrich Ratzel and the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, and down to the mid-twentieth century national schools of geopolitics flourished among the leading powers of the day, associated with still-famous names such as Halford Mackinder, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Rudolf Kjellén (Murphy 1997; Lorot 1995; Black 2009; Parker 1985; Sprengel 1996). As noted, geopolitics originally developed in a context of intense rivalry and conflict between the great powers, on the one hand around centuries-old issues of influence on the European continent and on the other in regard to more modern concerns about imperial expansion and global domination. Geopolitics was conceived explicitly and exclusively for the purposes of promoting the respective national interests of these powers in a struggle that was seen by all parties to be both existential and zero-sum. The

proponents of classical geopolitics sought with considerable success to speak directly to national leaders, in order to shape the way "national interests" were understood and to influence the formation itself of policies designed to promote these interests. This influence took different forms in different countries, but in all cases "geopolitical" promotion of national interest was associated with enhanced militarism, imperial expansion, territorial aggrandizement, and the quest for *Lebensraum,* all invariably formulated in the language of bellicose nationalism. Moreover, classical geopolitics presented itself as a science, and claimed that political behavior was governed by so-called geopolitical laws dictated by the objective geopolitical "realities" in the external environment. Geopoliticians argued that political leaders had no choice but to recognize these geographical or "geopolitical" imperatives and follow their policy prescriptions.

If we look at the contemporary geopolitical renaissance, we can indeed in many cases see certain continuities with the classical period. The more egregious elements of militarism, expansionism, and chauvinism are absent for the most part, but a strong focus on national interest remains in place, as does the notion that national policies must be shaped to reflect "realities" and imperatives that are inherent in the external environment and not subject to negotiation or alternation (Sloan 1988; Gray and Sloan 1999; Haslam 2002; Bassin 2003). And while relations between states are no longer conceived starkly in terms of endemic struggle, neoclassical geopolitics continues to assume that these relations do involve a zero-sum balance in which an opponent's gain necessarily entails one's own loss.

At the same time, however, the post-Cold War interest in geopolitics also involves perspectives that are entirely new. Perhaps the most prominent of these is what is referred to as "post-modern," "post-structural," or simply "critical" geopolitics (Ó Tuathail 1996; Reuber 2000; Soja 1989). As these names suggests, this is a geopolitics inspired by a postmodern concern for the construction and manipulation of meaning in all forms of social discourse. Implicitly, the very existence of objective "geopolitical realities" assumed by classical geopolitics is questioned. Such "realities" are viewed by critical geopolitics not as real-existing circumstances but rather as discursive themes and images that reflect the subjective political perceptions and interests of particular groups and agencies. Much critical geopolitical research is concerned with perceptions and constructions that are shared by political leaders and intellectual elites active in shaping national and global political policies. At the same time, however, critical geopolitics is not strictly nation-centric in the spirit of classical and neoclassical geopolitics, and it also studies the geopolitical imagination of actors and entities that are at least nominally non-political. This latter approach takes the form of "popular" geopolitics, which considers everyday geopolitical perceptions and images in popular culture (films, books, newspapers, television), social media, social movements, and discourses around group identities (Dodds 2005; Sharp 2000a; Falah, Flint, and Mamadouh 2006).

The new popularity of *geopolitika* or geopolitics is very apparent in post-Soviet Russia; indeed it can be argued that in no other country is the contemporary engagement with this subject as pervasive or politically significant. But geopolitics in Russia has had a very special

fate. Historically, Russia was always highly resistant to the tradition of classical geopolitical thinking described above. Although there was scattered interest in geopolitical theories before the revolution, the embrace of Marxism-Leninism after 1917 meant that political relationships on all levels were analyzed in a conceptual framework that was opposed in principle to that of geopolitics. The USSR was of course itself an imperial Great Power—indeed a superpower—and thus was guided by imperatives of national advantage and interest no less than any other. But in contrast to its competitors, these imperatives were not articulated in the language of geopolitics. The Soviets were equally as reductionist and deterministic as the Western geopoliticians, to be sure, but theirs was an economic rather than a geographical-environmental reductionism and determinism. The geopolitical perspectives formulated by Ratzel, Haushofer, Mackinder, and Mahan were denounced by the Soviets as the ideology of a decrepit bourgeois order, a *lzhenauka* or false science which sought to justify capitalist exploitation, imperialism, and racial oppression on the basis of what it claimed to be the scientific analysis of supposed objective reality (Modzhorian 1974). Soviet analyses, by contrast, explained international and global relations almost entirely in terms of class solidarities or antipathies, and the struggle against a repressive capitalist order.

By the end of the Soviet period, however, the orthodox dogmas of Soviet Marxism had been thoroughly discredited, and there was a broad interest in precisely those perspectives that had been at least unassociated with or—even better—actively opposed by the Soviet ideological authorities. For those who believed that the country needed a new "national ideology" to replace Marxism-Leninism, geopolitics emerged as a very strong contender. Indeed, the ascent of geopolitics in Russia has been little short of sensational. Since the 1990s, dozens upon dozens of geopolitical textbooks have been produced (Razuvaev 1993; Sorokin 1996; Gadzhiev 1998; Dergachev 2000; Tuzikov 2004; Isaev 2006), and numerous courses of study devoted to geopolitics have been organized in universities and military academies. Probably the most influential theoretician of geopolitics in Russia today is Aleksandr Dugin, who has published many books and hundreds of articles and blogs on the subject, and served as political adviser for prominent politicians (Dugin 2000; 2014). A fervent advocate of the vision of Russia as a Eurasian empire, Dugin's geopolitical perspective has become particularly influential in recent years for the political policies of the Putin administration and with the Russian president himself (Barbashin and Thoburn 2014).

Geopolitics has also been taken up by leaders of Russia's major political parties, who have written books on the subject, and for some time there was a standing "Committee for Geopolitical Analysis" in the State Duma (Ziuganov 1998; Zhirinovskii 1998; Mitrofanov 1997). Like contemporary neoclassical geopolitics described above, post-Soviet geopolitics is also inspired by the legacy of classical geopolitics. Indeed, it is explicit in its idolization of the theories of Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer, and Carl Schmitt, many of whose works have now been translated and made available to Russian readers for the first time (Khauskhofer Haushofer 2001; Bassin and Aksenov 2006). In a rather different direction, the analytic framework of classic geopolitics and the preoccupation with conflict between nations is applied to a very new subject, namely the information society. The key concept here is

"information warfare," which with the onset of the crisis in Ukraine has entered popular discourse. Information warfare conveniently transfers the dogmas of geopolitical antagonism (e.g., between continental and maritime powers) from physical territories and geographical spaces into the cyberspace of (new) media (e.g., Nartov 2014; Panarin 2003).

If these various forms of neo-classical geopolitics are all too alive and well in Russia, however, the same cannot be said for critical or popular geopolitics, which has only recently begun to attract some limited interest as a critical framework for interrogating political or popular discourses (Okunev and Savin 2014; Suslov 2015; Kolosov 2011). To some extent, the lack of engagement with this perspective may be related to the absence of an established Russian geopolitical tradition. It also reflects the fact that the postulates of classical geopolitics—the prioritization of national interest, the prospect of endemic great-power competition, and the determinist belief that external objective realities dictate the imperatives for national political policies—all resonate very strongly with post-Soviet public opinion, making a "critical" alternative relatively less appealing. Whatever the reasons, however, developments in Russia since the 1990s make such a critical alternative perspective not only timely but necessary: a perspective that can describe and analyze the vital political significance of space not as an objectively given "reality" but rather as a constructed and contested part of social discourse. Post-Soviet debates about the priorities of national politics and current events all assume a necessary spatial context, but how this context is perceived and valorized by different political and social constituencies varies enormously. On the most basic level, the chapters in this volume are intended to help develop a critical geopolitical perspective on political and social affairs in post-Soviet Russia, and to focus this critical gaze on the phenomenon of digital geopolitics.

DIGITAL GEOPOLITICS

Approaching post-Soviet geopolitics from this critical perspective, our collection focuses specifically on the new phenomenon of "digital geopolitics." This term refers to geopolitical practices and visions that are being developed on the platform of the digital communicative environment. As far back as the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan noted that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan 1964), and today digital media have indeed become a major game-changer in geopolitical culture globally. The chapters in this collection emphasize the role of mediation in shaping geopolitical identity. The new media that enable our everyday communication invisibly shape the way we think, speak, and feel about geopolitics. On the one hand, blogging politicians, tweeting diplomats, and public intellectuals, who spread their ideas online, "colonize" the digital landscape. These all have the effect that the Internet becomes the most important platform for debating geopolitical ideas and struggling for geopolitical recognition. On the other hand, cultural practices that are perfected online flow "backward" to the offline world, sometimes inciting people to actual violence against geopolitical adversaries with whom just yesterday they had (only) waged "web wars."

Theorizing "digital geopolitics," our point of departure is the canonical—and still very useful—tripartite analytical division of geopolitics into categories of "formal" (ideologies and

theories), "practical" (political decision making), and "popular" (grassroots' imagery) (Tuathail 1999; Dawkins 1989). While digital geopolitics as such is a inherent part of popular geopolitics (Dittmer 2010; Sharp 2000b), the communicative possibilities opened up by the new media environment in fact place it at the intersection of all three levels, facilitating the flow of geopolitical knowledge from the expert community and policy makers to the "grassroots" and then back again.

The impact on the processes of geopolitical identity-making of this growing connectivity between what might be called "profane" and "elitist" geopolitical knowledge is ambiguous. On the one hand, it enables people to participate actively in (geo)political deliberations and to resist attempts to impose cultural hegemony. For example, the Internet in Russia, at least in its first decades of existence, was famous for accommodating intellectuals, artists, and writers who often inclined toward political opposition (Kuznetsov 2004). In the same way, the LiveJournal.com blogging platform has quickly become a proxy for the late Soviet *kukhnia* or "kitchen," a place of gatherings of dissenting intelligentsia (Gorny 2006). The power of social networks to rally and coordinate "offline" opposition has been demonstrated in recent years by the "Arab spring" movement as well as the Russian "Bolotnaia" protests and the Ukrainian "Euromaidan" demonstrations.

On the other hand, below the surface of the empowering function of "digital geopolitics" one can easily find increasingly powerful state-run technologies for the observance and manipulation of mass opinion—technologies which are deployed by "armies" of paid bloggers and online commentators. An irreducible suspicion that your interlocutor is a paid troll has become an ever present backdrop for all political debates in Runet, especially since bloggers exposed an office of hired pro-Kremlin commentators in Ol'gino, near St Petersburg, so that "Ol'gino" came to signify a common noun for the attempts of the state to manipulate the public opinion online. Moreover, the digital environment spreads geopolitical concepts and a more generalized meta-geopolitical style of thinking among broad layers of the population, at the same time that social media "entrench" geopolitical knowledge through the performative, non-representational function of online debates (Dittmer and Gray 2010). Geopolitical ideas, closely connected with conservative ideology, are repeatedly "rehearsed" in acrimonious online debates known as flame wars, in which adversaries trade denunciations supported by insulting graphic images. Since the Euromaidan protests and the annexation of Crimea, such flame wars between Russians and Ukrainians in particular have become a virtual "folk school" for developing and familiarizing geopolitical ways of thinking and feeling on a truly mass scale, involving millions of people on both sides of the barricade.

As part of these sorts of vitriolic polemics, participants are forced into modes of expression that are highly emotionalized, and in so doing "learn" to apply practically geopolitical concepts and tropes that are in copious supply in university textbooks and mass media geopolitical analyses (Suslov 2013). In these cases, the logic of geopolitical argumentation is based on the same "zero-sum game" described in the previous section and accordingly is necessarily antagonistic, to the extent indeed that the notion of "geopolitical debate" becomes an oxymoron: there is in fact nothing to "debate" in the sense of reasonable discussion. Little

wonder, then, that these sorts of polemics tend to be speedily brutalized (Honneth 2012) and the exchange of opinions is reduced to a mere display of contending geopolitical affinities, often through iterative, highly emotional visualization (Jackson and Purcell 1997: 219; Kuntsman 2010; Pile 2010; Anderson and Smith 2001), or trolling (Hopkinson 2013). In this manner, it might be said that the digital environment separates "politics" from "geopolitics," as groups formerly defined by their attachment to particular ideologies are replaced by groups of "fans" of different "brands," be it the "Russian World," the "Eurasian Union," "Novorossia," or "Russia as a Great Power." Studies of the audience reception of these kinds of geopolitical brands show that groups of "fans" are counterbalanced by groups of "anti-fans," whose online polemics in fact rarely touch upon ideological issues and concentrate instead on simple mutual humiliation (Dittmer and Dodds 2008; Dodds 2006; Goletz 2012; J. Gray 2003, 71; Harman and Jones: 2013, 952).

Importantly, the main source of inspiration for "fans" and "anti-fans" of geopolitical brands does not come from doctrinal or theoretical works. Rather, they mostly use a specifically digital form of geopolitical knowledge–online *memes*. This term was originally proposed by Richard Dawkins as an analogy of "genes," and referred to replicable pieces of information which are spread like a virus, beyond people's will and conscience (Spitzberg 2014). In form of memes, geopolitical knowledge is represented in its intellectually compressed, emotionally charged, and often visualized form. Through them, conceptual change becomes more dynamic and defies attempts to control it directly from above. At the same time, this memetic form of geopolitical knowledge raises concerns about the pervasiveness of political power, which is capable of organizing grassroots activists to produce a surge of desirable memes.

In our collection, we explore the new possibilities and threats associated with this digitalization of geopolitical knowledge and practice. Our authors consider new spatial sensibilities and new identities of global as well as local Selves, the emergence of which is facilitated by the Internet. They explore recent reconfigurations of the traditional imperial conundrum of center versus periphery. Developing Manuel Castells argument that social activism in the digital era is organized around cultural values (Castells 2003), the chapters discuss new geopolitical ideologies which aim to reinforce Russia's "spiritual sovereignty" (Kirill 2013) as a unique civilization, while at the same time seeking to rebrand Russia as a greater "soft power" by utilizing the Russian-speaking diaspora or employing traditionalist rhetoric. Great Power imagery, enemy-making, and visual mappings of Russia's future territorial expansion are traditional means for the manipulation of "imperial pleasures" (Said 1994) and "geopolitical fears" (Pain and Smith 2008). In the age of new media, however, this is being done with greater subtlety by mobilizing the grassroots, contracting private information channels, and de-politicizing geopolitics. Given the political events of recent years, it is logical that the Ukrainian crisis should provide the thematic backdrop for most of the authors.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

The first part of our collection deals with representations of space and power in the post-Soviet context. It raises the central question of people's agency in constructing "usable spaces" by means of representing and experiencing geographical expanses in their global, national, and regional dimensions. Saara Ratilainen analyzes popular blogs of Russian travellers, arguing rather optimistically that the digital environment enables a new generation of travellers to master space discursively at the same time that their physical mobility is being increased by new strategies of budget tourism and (relatively) open Russian borders. In this sense, the chapter, opening the book, offers a stimulating anti- or non-geopolitical perspective for shaping the "global Selves" of the post-Soviet Russians.

Birgit Beumers presents a less optimistic vision. Her subject is the genre of the road movie as realized on Russian soil—which is commonly regarded as inappropriate and infertile for this particular cinematic category. In contrast to the previous chapter, Beumers shows how post-Soviet films expose the loss of personal agency in the face of Russia's territorial vastness. The road often leads to a dead end, or an impasse. The cinematography of car travel, which is usually deployed to glorify personal freedom and the quest for the true self, acquires in this context unexpected overtones of disorientation and losing one's way, leading ultimately to the death of the (Russian) protagonist.

The theme of (dis)connection between the center and periphery in Russia is further explored by Galina Zvereva. She considers different discursive strategies for narrating spatial identities, focusing on YouTube discussion threads about Russian regionalism. Her research sounds a keynote for the book in that it uncovers the central paradox of geopolitics in the age of new media. On the one hand, new communicative possibilities politically empower people (in this case, for example, in order to debate federalization), while on the other online users reproduce the official "civilizational" rhetoric at the regional level, disseminating the same essentialist visions of "local civilizations" and the belief in their ethno-cultural exclusiveness.

The chapters in part 2 discuss contemporary geopolitical ideologies less well-known that those of prominent ideologues such as Aleksandr Dugin and Vladimir Zhirinovsky. The fact that the Internet can accommodate a wide variety of ideological dissidence does not mean that the state's cultural hegemony is shattered; instead, the state can successfully play with different viewpoints at the same time that it prevents them from rallying significant social support. Andrei Tsygankov illustrates this idea powerfully through the example of the Izborsky Club and its geopolitical concepts. With the Kremlin's recent turn toward anti-liberal, traditionalist values and civilizational rhetoric, the Izborsky Club seemingly turned into a reservoir of supporting ideas, mixing political Orthodoxy of the Slavophile stamp with a variety of Eurasianist nationalisms. However, by selectively engaging with some of those ideas in a pragmatic fashion, the Kremlin is successful in preventing the consolidation of these "revolutionaries from the right" into a single camp.

Geidar Dzhemal, the notorious ideologue of political Islam, is the subject of Marlène Laruelle's chapter. Providing details of his intellectual background as an esoteric philosopher of the so-called "Conservative Revolution," the author portrays Dzhemal's engagement with idiosyncratic Muslim "liberation theology" as a geopolitical undertaking whose ideological

facets imply confrontation with the liberal global West and with "Atlanticist civilization" in particular. Although he supported terrorists attacks by Islamic radicals in Russia, Dzhemal is not altogether hostile to official Russocentric Eurasianism (discussed in chapter 8), and his vision of "Ottoman geopolitics" deploys the same notion of a common Byzantine legacy shared by the Orthodox and Islamic countries of East Europe and Middle Asia as does Eurasianism. As Laruelle's essay demonstrates, the digital environment is a key to Dzhemal's popularity, for through this medium his eclectic and highly contradictory ideas can appear to fit together and make sense.

The ingrained distrust of the Kremlin towards intellectual and political elites is further explored by Sirke Mäkinen in a study of the geopolitical visions of Konstantin Kosachev, the former head of *Rossotrudnichestvo*. Neatly following the old Slavophile distinction between the "public" and the "people," Kosachev elaborated his understanding of public diplomacy as "people's diplomacy"—an enterprise aiming to appeal to "masses" instead of foreign elites. Underlying this idea is the assumption that Russia promotes concepts important to all "common people" such as family values, national traditionalism, and non-infringement of the principle of sovereignty, whereas Western liberal elites stand for neo-imperialist and Euro-centric universalism. But in this struggle against Western universalism, what is now officially propagated as Russia's "civilizational model" effectively claims a universalist role for itself as an alternative to the postmodern West.

Derzhavnost' or "great-powerness" in geopolitical discourses is the thread that links together the three chapters in part 3. The elaboration of a vision of Russia as a great power in the present day involves an ideosyncratic reincarnation of Russian Messiansim. Hanna Smith examines popular representations, expert opinions, and official statements, in particular President Vladimir Putin's programmatic articles about Russia's character as a *derzhava* published in 2012–2014. Drawing on the Slavophile as well as Eurasianist traditions, she argues that this vision of Russia represents a kind of a common denominator in current debates about foreign policy. Constitutive for Russia's identity, the assumption of *derzhavnost'* is obstructed by the fact that Russia seeks confirmation for it from its "significant Others," most commonly the West. This conundrum drives identity-making to a dead end, because while "great-powerness" is perceived as essential for Russia's identity, the emotional quest for recognition constructs the West as not (sufficiently) recognizing "us" as a "Great Power." The paradoxical result is that this common denominator comes to be inseparably linked with the bitter sense that in fact "we" are not a "Great Power."

Further developing the "Great Power" problematic, Fabian Linde addresses the recently implemented project of the Eurasian Economic Union. He examines state-sponsored attempts to cultivate a common Eurasian identity through pro-Kremlin youth organizations. He argues that the elaboration of such an identity has been effectively checked by the official proclivity toward Russo-centrism which views the newly established Union as "Russia writ large."

The subtleties of the struggle for recognition as a "Great Power" are taken further by Per-Arne Bodin, who writes about three imaginary maps of a future Russian Empire, drawn by well-known gurus of Russian geopolitical fancy: the aforementioned Aleksandr Dugin,

Aleksandr Prokhanov, and Mikhail Iur'ev. Bodin focuses on the bombastic expansionist ambitions inspiring these visions, in which Russia is represented as a superpower on an unprecedentedly grand scale. The author refers to these visions and imagery as "geopolitical porno" and locates them in the grey zone between earnest commitment and overt clownery. The strategy of deploying irony and cynicism for the purposes right wing radicalism capitalizes here on the marketability of Russia's "Great Power" imagery.

The essays in part IV address the process of migration of geopolitical ideologies into digital media platforms such as webpages and social networks. Vlad Strukov opens this section with a discussion of the micro-blog of Margarita Simonian, the director of *Russia Today,* who attacks the Western media as hypocritical and biased against Russia. The author proposes the term "geopolitical patriotism" to refer to the shifting role of patriotism in Putin's Russia away from generating loyalty to a nation of individuals and toward self-identification with the state imagined as a geopolitical entity. The task of propagating this geopolitical patriotism is delegated by to Putins regime onto lower level agencies—of which Simonian's Twitter account is a vivid example—which are highly successful in saturating popular discourses with conservative and loyal imagery.

Geopolitical instrumentalization of new media constitutes the focal point for Ryhor Nizhnikau. In line with the previous chapter, Nizhnikau demonstrates that media not expressly aligned with the cause of the "defense of the regime" can function—thanks to their outreach and the ability to present their material as politically disengaged—even more successfully than overt governmental mouthpieces in bolstering the legitimacy of the latter. This thesis is tested through a close examination of popular Belarussian news agency www.tyt.by, which positions itself as neutral and independent. Its take on the "Russian World" concept is generally critical, and it opposes the official line of the government toward a greater rapprochement with "fraternal" Russia. However, its dissident flirting with pro-European and pro-democratic opinion in Belarus ends up lending support to the Lukashenko regime's quest for legitimacy and sovereignty.

Rounding off the theme of the geopolitical instrumentalization of the digital communications environment, Alla Marchenko and Sergiy Kurbatov provide an examination of the Facebook accounts of Ukrainian officials and public figures, including the Donbass battalion commander Semen Semenchenko, the popular political journalist Dmitry Tymchuk, and the minister of Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov. This chapter discusses the key tropes and strategies used for constructing the image of the enemy in blogs, and show how the proliferation of geopolitical metaphors representing Russia as an essentialized geopolitical body helps bloggers to frame Ukraine's enemies as an external threat. This extreme case of the "geopolitization" of online political discourses demonstrates just how instrumental geopolitics can be for identity-building.

The final group of papers, presented in part V, reconnects with the problem raised in the book's initial chapters of how geopolitical knowledge is produced and consumed by the grassroots. Specifically centered around popular geopolitics, these chapters discuss narratives and visual representations of the Ukrainian conflict on the internet. Dirk Uffelmann considers

the cartographic binarism in representing the linguistic divide in Ukraine. He presents an overview of the complexities of languages distribution, and moves on to discuss maps which have been circulating on the Internet since the beginning of Euromaidan. Assuming that language is an important factor in geopolitical essentialism, the author uncovers strategies of language mapping—such as dotting Ukrainian territories with the Russian flag to indicate the regional status of Russian in the Ukraine or the representation of native Russian speakers as "Soviets"—as a significant weapon in geopolitical struggle.

Greg Simons focuses on information warfare, specifically the manipulation of emotions by pro- and anti-Euromaidan discussion groups on Facebook. His argument is that supporters of Euromaidan frame this social movement as a natural, organic protest against the corrupt regime, which logically ensued from the course of Ukrainian history. By contrast, the opponents of Euromaidan use the tropes of the evil external geopolitical force (read: the West) which tries to set brothers against one another.

Our collection concludes with a contribution by Mikhail Suslov, whose study reveals the shifts in narrative and visual representations of the "Russian World" concept in social networks. Suslov demonstrates how speedily online geopolitical debates have degenerated into a brutalized dysfunctional form of mutual non-recognition. In this digital environment, the "Russian World" concept loses its initial political significance altogether and is reduced to a set of geo- and bio-political metaphors. The latter embrace different and sometimes diametrically opposite views, which range from anti-Kremlin radical nationalism to Soviet nostalgia and anti-capitalist militancy. Emptied of its precise ideological content, the "Russian World" becomes a synonym for the image of Russian *derzhavnost'* discussed earlier.

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Chapter One

Russian Digital Lifestyle Media and the Construction of Global Selves

Saara Ratilainen

The Internet has replaced the compass and map for the world traveller, instead he follows the Wi-Fi signal until he has navigated his way to the destination.[1] In his blog, the Russian travel guide writer Valerii Shanin describes how during his stay on a remote island Labuan, the Internet signal with the name "Backbackers" provides him with information not detectable with his eyes. It leads him to an "unnoticeable door" of a "hostel for international travellers (. . .). And, indeed, you could find Internet here as well" (*Mir bez viz* 2014; Federal'naia territoriia Labuan). The hostel is also the important space of shared double beds and stories that now travel to the outside world through the shared wireless connection. The guest house is a heterotopian "place outside of all places" (Foucault 1967/1984, 2) that neutralizes cultural barriers and acts to be home for those who want to be away from home. For the blogger Anton Krotov, another Russian advocate of independent travel, international guesthouses and Internet cafes represent the evils of commerce touching even the remotest of locations, bringing them into part of the global monoculture of tourism. Whilst the two Russian travellers appear to have differing opinions regarding tourism-related services, their motivations for travelling are almost identical. Shanin travels the world in order to gain the "maximum multitude of impressions" (*Mir bez viz* 2014) while Krotov asserts that although the entire world has already been "photographed, published in glossy magazines, and uploaded to the Internet, people still want to witness the diversity of the world with their own eyes" (avp.travel.ru).

  Both Shanin and Krotov share travel tips and stories through their blogs and travellers' community sites with a wide online audience. Through these forums, anyone can also join them on their travels. This means that they do not only add to the existing body of travel representations but rather create an interactive window to the world of travel. The position of an experienced world traveller and travel blogger also provides them with a geographically and geopolitically active gaze from which they examine and map the possibilities of a Russian citizen for individual global mobility, and which acquires meaning in the interaction between the Russian speaking online audience, the global community of travellers, and different techniques of digital communication.

  In this chapter, I analyze Russian travel blogs focusing upon the online representations of the contemporary traveller's identity as digitally organized "global Self." I ask how the popular genre of travel blogs shapes and determines global identities and how popular geopolitical imaginations about individual mobility are created and maintained on the Runet. I argue that

one of the main devices for this is the geopolitically active traveller's gaze that is produced in individualized digital communication environments, such as the blogosphere and on social networking sites. The individualization of content production and perception characterises the Internet as a communicative space in general as, for example, Lev Manovich (2001: 269) following the ideas of Walter Benjamin, defined the "navigable" space of the Internet as a "subjective space"—"its architecture responding to the subject's movement and emotion." I maintain that travel blogs negotiate with and reflect on the dominant ideas of migration and globalization, thus participating in the formation of the popular geopolitical understanding of the globally mobile Self.

I draw this conception from John Urry's ideas about the "tourist gaze" (Urry 2011). According to Urry, the tourist gaze is "the gaze directed to features of landscape or townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary" (2011: 4). Urry argues that through the diversification of societal structures and the mass media in modern societies, the tourist gaze has become an essential way of seeing the world in general. The types of changes, such as the development of consumer society, and the increasing emphasis on entertainment in the mass media, have, according to Urry, universalized the tendency to picture the world with fresh eyes. Furthermore, digital communication technologies diversify and intensify the possibilities for virtual tourism and engagement with the world through the tourist gaze. As Vera Rukomoinikova argues, the increased online access to video and audio material on various types of tourist projects have made travel easily manageable for Internet users as she notes, "the former orientation to geography with the help of compass and different land marks is now replaced by the new media" (2013, 135–36).

Urry's theory responds to Daniel J. Boorstin's (1973) famous idea of the opposite cultural types of the traveller and tourist based on the distinction between high and low cultures. The nostalgic type of traveller represents high culture's "authentic" and spiritually uplifting practice of interacting with the world, whereas the tourist attaches to mass culture thereby representing the standardizing powers of consumption and the entertainment industry. This dichotomy has been discussed and challenged by many later scholars (see, for example, Urry 2002; MacCannell 1989; Gorsuch and Koenker 2006; Bauman 2011), however, it persists in the popular discourse in general and in travel blogs in particular. Therefore, the key question here does not only concern the independent traveller's attitudes to global tourism but also the digital media's capability to transfer authentic experiences into representations of independent travel in the age of mass consumption.

My research materials comprise of Russian travel blogs and other related online resources such as videos produced and/or starred by the bloggers available on YouTube, and the bloggers' newsfeeds on social networking sites, such as on Facebook and Instagram. Whilst the blogs serve as the core material of my analysis, it would be unwise to not take these other channels of online communication into consideration, as publishing content on the Internet is a constantly evolving field of communication possessing the special feature of multimodal, multichanneled, and interactive communication between people and publishing platforms.

Runet hosts a lively community of travel bloggers and travellers' community sites such as travelbloggers.ru and storyfinder.ru, which maintain ranking lists of the most read Russian travel blogs and the most talked about destinations, as well as updates of the newest blog posts, interactive maps, and search engines through which specific information about a country or a blog can be found. Travelbloggers.ru, for instance, lists 134 blogs whereas storyfinder.ru has a searchable database of 225 blogs (as of June 2015). These sites overlap with traditional lifestyle media as several blogs consisting primarily of travel reports are also hosted by the websites of popular glossy magazines, such as, *Vokrug Sveta* (Around the World) and the Russian editions of *National Geographic*, and *Yoga Journal*. Therefore, I read my research materials in the broad framework of lifestyle media, which support the worldwide multibillion industry entertaining and improving one's self and everyday life (see, for example, Noppakari and Hautakangas 2012; Raisborough 2011: 3–5; Zvereva 2010, 271).[2] However, as Angela McRobbie (2004) observes in the case of British television makeover shows, the lifestyle media are grounded in strong class and gender dynamics, which ultimately makes the public representation of personal transformations political (see also Heyes 2007; Jones 2008). Travellers' personal blogs and community sites present alternative ways of participating in the global flow of tourism, whilst simultaneously committing to the general agenda of lifestyle media by promoting travel as a tool for identity-building and even as a site of personal transformation.

For closer analysis I have selected three popular travel blogs that represent different trends of online lifestyle media: currently the most followed Russian travel blog by Maria Dubrovskaia who publishes on her website traveliving.org (2007–present),[3] the popular blogger Artemy Lebedev's travelogue on his website tema.ru (2001–present),[4] and the blog *Mir bez viz* [A world without visas] by Valerii Shanin published on the Internet site of *Vokrug sveta* (2011–2013).[5] All these blogs are based on the idea of travelling the world, that is, travel destinations are not restricted to any specific country, area, or continent. On the contrary, they all strive to travel as extensively as possible. Travelling the world, however, means different things for each blogger both geographically and conceptually. Maria Dubrovskaia who was originally from the Northern Siberian republic Yakutia, mainly travels in the countries of Far East Asia. Shanin and Lebedev are Moscow-based world travellers systematically aiming to travel around the world and to visit every country in the world although for Shanin this means only the countries a Russian citizen can access without a visa. As the result, Shanin's visa-free world tour comprises thirty-eight countries mainly located in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South America, and in the Pacific Ocean.[6] By conducting a close analysis of the different ways in which these Russian world travellers use online communication to represent global mobility and to construct the identity of a "digi-traveller," this chapter contributes to the study of the Russian new media from the viewpoint of the geopolitics of Self.

TRAVEL CULTURE AND POPULAR GEOPOLITICS

Popular geopolitics, distinct from practical and formal geopolitics, as Tuathail and Dalby (2002: 5) define, is found within the artifacts of transnational popular culture, whether they be mass-market magazines, novels or movies (see also Dittmer and Dodds 2008: 441). Tourist guide books, travel magazines, and also travel blogs fall into this category of transnational popular culture as they offer their readers popular models of how to build a relationship with foreign countries as part of everyday life and leisure. These models are closely connected to the dominant ideologies and trends in society.

The popular understanding of travel and tourism has drastically changed in Russia over time. For example, in the wake of the emergence of the European tourism industry in the early nineteenth century, the pre-revolutionary Russian critical discourse addressed leisure travel as frivolous and as a non-productive waste of time (Dolzhenko and Savenkova 2011). Later, the Soviet ideologists intentionally attached the meanings of education and socially productive activity to the concept of tourism in order to make a distinction between the Soviet and the assumed Western and bourgeois ways of recreation. Simultaneously, in the Soviet everyday discourse the notion of leisure travel [*otdykh*] held a number of different meanings, from visits to well-known health resorts or hiking or to travel in order to have sex with strangers (Gorsuch 2006).

The state made tourism available for the Soviet masses but the industry was centralized and tourist flows were directed to domestic resorts. Ideologically, tourism was employed as an important tool for making and perfecting the New Soviet Man through an "individual's encounter with new territories and experiences" (Gorsuch and Koenker 2011: 2). Soviet modernity was to a great extent created through "spatial imaginations" including representations of an individual citizen's mobility across the vast homeland, which "offered a multiethnic and multicultural space for Soviet tourists" (Turoma 2013, 240). Furthermore, international travel functioned as a means for social distinction as it was available only to the political and cultural elite, although tourism to the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union's other allies increased during the 1960s (Gorsuch 2006).

Russia and Russians have now become part of the global market of mass tourism, which is the largest industry in the world (Leheny 1995: 367).[7] The Russian tourism market exploded in the 1990s which required institutional, economic, and cultural traditions of travel and tourism to be renegotiated (see, for example, Stepchenkova and Morrison 2006; Burns 1998). Travel abroad by post-Soviet Russians has, however, been studied predominantly in the context of the post-Soviet consumer revolution, and from the viewpoint of the economies receiving large amounts of Russian tourists such as Finland, Poland, and Turkey.[8] Therefore, the focus has been on explaining the phenomena typical of the 1990s and the early 2000s Russia, such as shuttle trade and shopping tourism, and stressing the role of individual Russians in taking part in the international flows of consumer goods and currency (Gurova and Ratilainen 2015; Bar-Kolelis & Wiskulski 2012; Mukhina 2009; Pitkänen and Vepsäläinen 2008; Yükseker 2007).

This research has shown that Russian tourists have a great economic, social, and cultural impact vis-à-vis the most popular countries of their destination. However, neither digital media's role in creating and maintaining the idea of travel as a lifestyle choice, nor the self-

perception of Russian travellers have been adequately discussed. Moreover, while the statistics show that 57 percent of Russians have never travelled abroad (Levada Center 2014), new media creates novel tools for making popular geopolitical interpretations based upon virtual travel. In other words, experiencing and imagining exotic places and tourist attractions from the comfort of one's own home via the Internet makes the link between the globalizing effects of travel and mass media even stronger.

GLOBAL CONSUMER MARKET VS. GLOBALLY MOBILE SELF

Lifestyle media are often characterized by a high level of consumer loyalty. On the other hand, they are not regarded as belonging to the category of serious media but rather to the sphere of popular culture. Therefore, the influence of the lifestyle media on people's everyday-level understanding of political, social, and economic issues is often left out from public discussions. However, lifestyle media do create important tools for identity-building and for maintaining the feelings of community and belonging (see Hermes 2005). Joke Hermes (2005, 10) discusses this dynamics through the concept of *cultural citizenship*, which she defines "as the process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, that is, text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticising offered in the realm of [popular] culture." She continues, "[popular culture] provides, within limits, an alternative sense of community, one not provided by social institutions such as political parties, trade unions, sports clubs, or the family" (Hermes 2005, 10–11). The Internet as a communicative space has similar symbolic and practical functions as many traditional forms of popular and lifestyle media have had. The Internet facilitates access not only to the consumer market but also to the community of consumers by introducing different consumer choices as an essential part of the overall information flow, and by offering technological tools for making purchases and discussing them with others in the privacy of one's home. This type of consumption is not restricted to one's own local marketplace, as Vlad Strukov explains, "The possibility of purchasing the item online enables the consumer to enjoy instantly an interactivity that defies geographical remoteness" (Strukov 2011: 146–47).

   Both actual and symbolic defying of geographical remoteness between the desired consumer item, the global community of consumers, and the local consumer market has been important especially when creating middle-class values and identities in post-Soviet Russia. In this framework, lifestyle has also become "one of the societal priorities" (Zvereva 2010: 269). For example, a number of international lifestyle programs were launched on Russian TV in the early 2000s, which coincides with the consolidation of the post-Soviet middle class as a distinct social group, and the emergence of new consumer culture as one of its main attributes (Zvereva 2010: 269; Gurova 2015: 3). Moreover, as Vera Zvereva insists, formatted lifestyle programs, "invite viewers to explore the identity of a 'European' citizen or a citizen of the global world who follows fashionable trends" (2010: 275). This means that in the post-Soviet context, the idea of transforming one's Self and everyday life with the help of lifestyle media entails some interesting implications about the place and status of Russians in the globalized

world of consumption and popular culture. The popular lifestyle media in Russia thus helps to draw parallels between the post-Socialist individualized space and the global market space.

The term global Self refers here to a class sensitive cultural and consumer identity created through lifestyle media and popular culture.[9] Furthermore, global self could also function as an identity category, which connects closely to a certain type of online communication, and community building that can be exemplified through the study of the representations of travel and tourism in general, and travel blogs in particular. Firstly, in the same manner as travel, digital communication also suggests a de-territorialized, that is, detached from physical locations and communities, and even publishing platforms, subjectivity (see Strukov 2011: 165). Secondly, the distinctive feature of the Internet (as a medium and a media technology) is to support free distribution of information.[10] Thus, we can argue that the Internet as a medium and communication technology, and travelling as a human activity are very closely connected both ideologically and conceptually to the dream of free mobility and escape from set norms and institution. The crossing of geographical borders serve as the underpinning motifs in the travel blogs. Therefore, I assert that the representations of tourism and travel in the Russian digital media create a specific venue for making popular geopolitical interpretations of the global space as connected to the post-Soviet identity construction.

DEFINING TRAVELLER'S IDENTITY ONLINE

In addition to a multitude of experiences and impressions, the travel bloggers search for alternative lifestyles abroad which, however, would not fit the traditional definition of migration. This very idea is embedded, for example, in the title of Dubrovskaia's blog *Traveliving*. Furthermore, traveliving as a lifestyle means constantly moving from one place to another without any long-term plans or final destinations. The main purpose of travel is just to move freely and to be spontaneous. Therefore, the people who possess this lifestyle are prepared to adjust their professions and living standards in accordance with the dream of seeing the world and to actualize this dream into their everyday life. Additionally, this means that a blog can provide a venue of professionalization through which travel itself becomes a source of income. In some cases, the blog has substituted the traveller's former professional field altogether. For instance, before embarking on travelling full-time, Dubrovskaia worked as a state tax official and photographer in St. Petersburg. Selling advertising space in her popular blog now provides her and her partner with a modest but steady income. The blog thus helps to guarantee a long-term perspective for travelling (which is usually thought of as something temporary) and mixes the traditional boundaries between work and leisure, profession and lifestyle.

According to Dubrovskaia, traveliving is also active and independent travelling and therefore implicitly contrasted with organized and/or seasonal tourism. It is defined as a slow and time-consuming movement from one place to another. Dubrovskaia describes the tranquil and almost meditative mode of this type of travelling in terms of finding and realizing one's true wishes. As she explains: "You can sit quietly somewhere on the beach by the ocean, let's say, for example, in Thailand, and do the things you've always wanted to do but for which you didn't

have the time." At the same time, as her partner Adzhei Verma explains: "Traveliving is not migration, that is, you don't get settled, which would include getting a job, buying a car, a house, etc. It's not this kind of travelling. It is something out of the ordinary. You don't tie yourself to a place; you don't grow roots" (*Traveliving. Zhizn' v puteshestviiakh* 2012).

On the one hand, these thoughts reflect the traditional division between the traveller and tourist, on the other, they suggest that a different outlook on life can be acquired as the result of a thorough lifestyle change, that is, appropriating a position from which one can bond with the world differently while recognizing that it is impossible to escape from the tourism industry completely once involved in international travel. Dubrovskaia and Verma's depiction also suggests that it is possible to cast the tourist gaze inward, that is, to project a new life situation against the backdrop of travel.

Urry explains that mass tourism has become such an inseparable part of many contemporary societies that it is impossible to avoid even by staying in one place. A number of people live in metropolises and other places, which attract large amounts of tourists and therefore they are exposed to the industries responsible for creating and maintaining the tourist gaze in their everyday life.[11] While rejecting the dichotomous way of thinking as obsolete, Urry does differentiate between the *romantic* and *collective* gaze and this distinction follows a similar logic to Boorstin's conceptualizations about the differences between the traveller and tourist as Urry notes: "There is [. . .] a romantic form of the tourist gaze, in which the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and personal, semi spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze" (2002: 43). Here the romantic gaze is defined through its private and individual character as contrasted to the collective gaze which is most likely to be employed during a mass sight-seeing tour or a package holiday trip.

This type of romantic relationship between the traveller and his/her destination is strongly present also in the travel blogs, especially in a certain type of representation of the places that aim to show the scenery as if seen for the first time. In such cases, the landscape or a sight is often portrayed as devoid of people and therefore implying an encounter with an unspoilt and/or authentic environment. In addition, this type of representation of a place suggests that the person behind the camera is privileged to view the landscape privately, even though it does not correspond with reality. Another method of producing a representation of the romantic gaze is to embed the viewer in the image as part of a majestic landscape which shows how the traveller becomes one with his/her surroundings, completely immersed in the experience of seeing the world with fresh eyes, as, for instance, in an entry in Dubrovskaia's blog (October 12, 2014). The entry introduces a travel report of Turkey and includes a photograph, which is a veritable image of the gaze and is typical of travel blogs (Figure 1.1). Here, Dubrovskaia is portrayed from behind as gazing in to the historic site of Kayaköy. The privacy of her romantic gaze and her semi-spiritual attitude to travelling are implied by the tranquil and all-encompassing mood, which is conveyed to the reader through both the image and the text, as the caption reads, "We stopped and took our time to look at everything" (Kayaköy, the Ghost Town, 2014).

Figure 1.1. The blogger Maria Dubrovskaia involved in the romantic gazing of the historical town Kayaköy. Courtesy of Maria Dubrovskaia.

The digital publishing environment creates circumstances for defining travellers also in terms of how virtual they are, that is, whether the traveller shares his/her photos and stories online in a personal blog or on social networking sites. As noted above, for a number of travellers this type of sharing is mandatory because they are professional travellers and travel guide writers, which makes the blog just one form of publication in addition to printed travel guides, travel programs, films, etc. Consequently, it is important to write a blog, which would attract as many readers as possible in order to gain additional publicity for other products and publications. This creates a situation in which bloggers compete against one another over the status of "top-blogger," and this has an impact on the way the places visited are represented in travel blogs in general.

For example, the travel guide writer and popular blogger Artur Shpiganov explains that today, a professional traveller exists only by sharing his/her experiences online, sometimes even at the expense of missing the truthful scenes and moments as he notes in one of his blog entries: "It is equally important to remind of oneself as to live one's life. You are not alive

unless you write about yourself on social media" (popados.info, Top-blogger). Through this process, the Internet becomes one of the most significant reserves of evidence and memories of travel in the modern digital age, as noted by Vera Rukomoinikova (2013, 136) but in the manner dominated by a certain type of marketing logic as described by Shpiganov above. On the other hand, the sheer fact of sharing one's experiences online can also function as a negative fact about the traveller's identity. This is the case when the distinction is made between the *virtual* and *authentic* traveller as Dubrovskaia explains in an online interview: "To my mind, the most important travellers are the ones who do not exist on the internet at all. They're hard to find)) They are busy with real life and they are hugely experienced and they have hundreds of interesting stories to tell." Furthermore, she characterizes herself as not being a traveller with an "upper case T" but as somebody who is "still on the level of a tourist who simply stays for a long time where ever she likes" (livefree5.ru 2013).

The Internet, that is, the blog and continuous posts on social media, can further be understood as the traveller's social safety net on which he or she can rely in many ways. In other words, the traveller gains not only economic capital but also social capital on the Internet where he or she is found by others. At the same time, to follow Zygmunt Bauman's (2011: 29) ideas of postmodern identity, the strangeness and alienation of the travel experience is tamed and domesticated through the "virtual home" (Strukov 2012: 165) provided by the internet. Consequently, the online *representation* of travel, that is, sharing the travel experience so as to please the online community's expectations: "Makes the world [. . .] obedient to the tourist's wishes and whims, ready to oblige; but also a do-it-yourself world, pleasingly pliable, kneaded by the tourist's desire, made and remade with one purpose in mind: to excite, please and amuse" (Bauman 2011: 29).

Online publication, however, exposes the bloggers' ideas and definitions to instant comments and feedback from the audience. For example, Dubrovskaia and Vezhma's use of the term traveliving to describe their lifestyle and attitude to travelling without set destinations is being re-evaluated and redefined in viewers' comments, which are based on a number of contrasting opinions and ideologies. For example, in the comments chain attached to the film *Traveliving. Zhizn' v puteshestviiakh* on YouTube, the user Alex Morozov wonders how this type of lifestyle which "before was vagrancy is now called travelling."

On the other hand, without taking a stand on whether traveliving is to be seen as a legitimate form of free mobility or just the vagabondism of a couple of social outcasts, the commentator Sergei Dubrovin goes on to define it in terms of rebellion: "It is impossible to beat the system, which really leaves you with only two options: to accept its rules or to choose your own" while another commentator, Georgii Shakhnazarov, confesses to have shed a few "tears of happiness" while thinking that "people can live differently" (YouTube. *Traveliving*. All comments). Thus, the authorial voices of the bloggers become part of a chain of different meanings and ideas on a platform that is based on hypertextuality and on which the open-ended process of meaning making always leaves room for new definitions of travel and international mobility.

APPROPRIATING AND RE-APPROPRIATING THE GLOBE

Does the representation of the travel experience (an image of a beautiful landscape, or a written description of a new place) in a blog, then, transform a supposedly unique and non-material experience into a reproducible and reified commodity? Urry attaches the gaze into the romantizised view to making social distinctions in the field of tourism and travel culture. In this framework, the view targeted by the tourist's gaze is compared to a positional good, and its value is relational to other views available in the tourism market through its private character (i.e., it is not available to others). The consumption of the positional good separates the subject of consumption from other individuals by the rarity of the good. In other words, as one individual is involved in the consumption of positional goods, the others have to, at the same time, be prevented from consuming the same goods (Urry 2002: 42; see also Featherstone 2007: 86–87). Based upon these ideas, I suggest that the online sharing of the representation of the romantic and privatized tourist gaze is connected to the accumulation of a certain type of capital made possible by digital communication technologies and connected to the values inherent in the ideology of travelling.

Both the traveliving lifestyle and the project *Mir bez viz* are very much based on anti-material values. Travel costs are kept to a minimum and when staying in destination countries, the travellers seek to live as close to local standards as possible. In this context, the images of moments spent in exquisite places signify the type of capital, which is gained when material well-being in the home country is voluntarily exchanged to the non-material experiences of freedom, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries, and turning one's dream of constant mobility into an everyday practice. This logic is present in the blogs also when explaining the exchange of an expensive but must-see tourist attraction to some sort of cheaper variant.

This is, for example, the case when the travellers of the *Mir bez viz* project are considering a cruise while in Egypt. Shanin writes that this is an important attraction for a world traveller as the cruise on the river Nile from Cairo to Aswan belongs to the group of three most popular touristic routes in the world. The problem just is that the cruise market is mainly taken over by entrepreneurs whose enormous ships look like "swimming hotels" and whose services are overpriced for such budget travellers as Shanin and his friends. Instead of an expensive but obvious option of the liner cruise, they decide to board on a traditional felucca—a small sailboat—for a shorter cruise. In addition to offering Shanin and his friends the possibility of taking part in a global traveller experience, this choice of a primitive boat has some significant added value as the blog describes:

> The felucca floats very slowly and . . . quietly: one can only hear how the wooden parts of the boat's body make a crunching sound and the wind whistles in the sails. [. . .] Instead, you can relax for real and take it easy. You can follow with your eyes how the sun sinks behind the horizon, how the birds fly above the sea and listen to the shingles rustle. (Po Nilu pod parusom 2011)

Shanin's blog further implies that the multitude of these types of subtle and *natural* (as compared to the organized entertainment on a big boat) sensual stimuli can be perceived only as the result of one's frugal consumer choice. Simultaneously, it becomes the authentic option

not only in terms of consumption (i.e., choosing a small entrepreneur and local tradition over organized corporate tourism business) but also on the level of sensual experience.

What makes the representation of this, rather traditional division between backpacking and organized tourism interesting here is the fact that blogs and other constantly expanding digital outlets have created an easy venue for the accumulation and preservation of the added value embedded in different consumer choices during travel. The travellers' mania for taking photographs (characteristic of the digital era in general) can also be understood against this idea—the most precious moment or an imposing view to be captured and then digitized is potentially waiting behind every corner, as, for example, Shanin describes: "Hands are groping for the camera and even though the battery is low and all memory cards full, it feels like the best shot is still ahead" (Na stenakh Dubrovnika). Ultimately, this type of investment of one's time, energy, and perceptiveness to the details of the travel experience can be shown to others in a constantly updating image flow on social media. Potentially, the whole world can turn into a possession, visualized through interactive map applications.

Artemy Lebedev represents his own version of the world map on the main page of his travelogue and although different from the ready-made interactive online map applications, it is still to a great extent based on the idea of quantizing the capital embedded in the travel experience through a visual representation (Figure 1.2). The map also visualizes his ongoing project and his wish to visit all the countries on the globe. He strives to belong to the group of the few in terms of the number of countries visited by him and this of course makes his travel project more elitist than the other examples analyzed in this chapter. Lebedev's blog also represents a different level of professionalization when it comes to writing a blog; he does not want to support travelling as a lifestyle choice by writing a blog but he uses it to present an approach to the world which is probably more closely connected to his identity as a professional designer and member of the Russian creative elite—a global Russian.
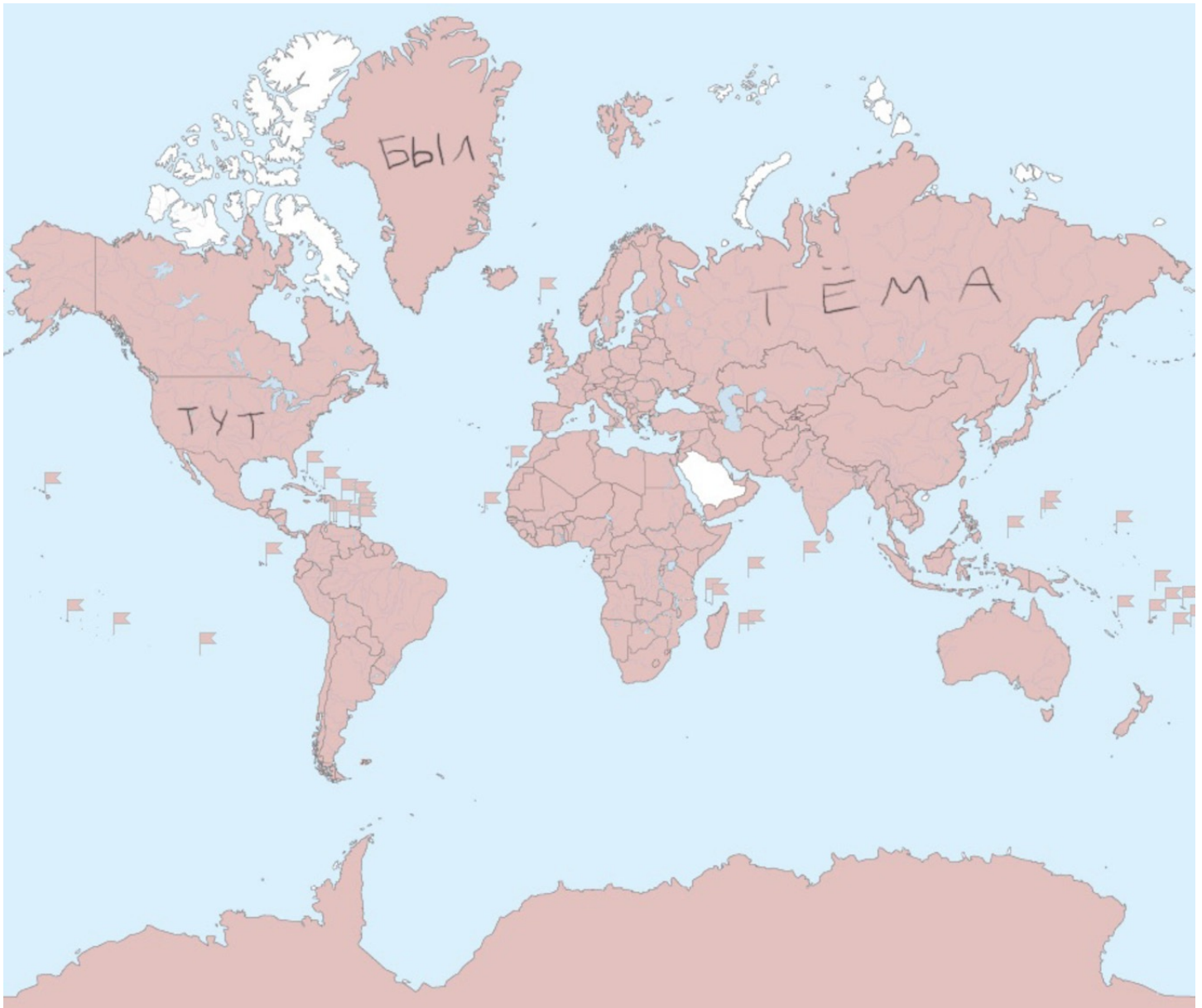
Figure 1.2. A representation of the world as private possession acquired by the traveller's global gaze. Courtesy of Artemy Lebedev.

Therefore, we can argue that as a world traveller he is neither a tourist nor a backpacker, but an explorer. This is seen, for example, in the systematic method of depicting the places visited. From his blog, it can be said that Lebedev employs a certain folklorist outsider's eye when recording and representing his travel experience by systematically revealing the overview (be it a landscape or a street view) in the light of a number of small and often banal details. Through his representation, exotic, faraway countries visited by him can be seen merely as bits and parts of the whole globe—the bigger picture. Distorting idealized images through uncanny details can also be called the *leitmotif* of Lebedev's travel blog. It originates in his visit to Trotsky's house in Mexico at the beginning of the 1990s, as Lebedev writes in the very first entry: "Then a very important thing happened, which has had an influence on all my remaining

life. At the Trotsky house museum, a water closet (*sortir*) caught my eyes. That moment I lost my interest in ordinary sights forever" (Meksika 1990).

This sudden occurrence of a banal everyday fact at a location where thousands of tourists come yearly to witness how the Russian revolutionary was killed with an ice pick, can be seen as an instantaneous demystification of a historical person or an event by the tourist gaze. This tiniest of detail changed Lebedev's view of travelling altogether, and his blog systematically strives to demystify not only the places and sights he visits around the world but also the very processes of gazing into new places and representing travel. His traveller's gaze, his accumulating travel experience, and his version of the world map, respectively, turn into an expanding authorial artwork which he puts on display in his blog.

The representation of the travel experience as a means of the accumulation of a certain type of capital thus raises the question of appropriating and re-appropriating the world socially, culturally, and aesthetically by a post-Soviet person through global mobility. But what exactly does it mean to be a post-Soviet person in this framework? Put differently, what does it mean to possess a Russian passport at the precise moments of crossing borders? A short look at Shanin's blog offers some answers to these questions.

Shanin's blog starts with the following elaboration of the Russian passport:

> Already in the times of Mayakovsky who pulled his passport out of his "wide trouser-pockets" and proclaimed "read this and envy—I'm a citizen," it was perceived with irony, even sarcasm. The majority of my compatriots viewed the Soviet, and later Russian, passport with disdain. Many rushed abroad with the single aim of getting a "good" passport, with which one could travel without a visa. Even today, many people think that it is very hard to travel with the Russian passport (Ideia proekta).[12]

Shanin wants to liberate his readers from this perception and simultaneously introduce an alternative view of the world, that is, the visa-free world. This worldview would free the traveller from having to visit embassies and consulates, and from filling in forms and paying fees. Travelling without a visa thus saves both time and money. Consequently, the description of how the travellers cross borders becomes a significant element of the whole blog as stories connected to border formalities, and the behavior of the officials are a recurrent theme in the blog, in addition to detailed information on stamps, vouchers, and rules concerning transit visas. This gives the reader interesting information and emphasises the role of the blog as a storage of information which can be used to navigate the visa-free world in practice.

In addition, the project aims at the visual appropriation of the visa-free world. For instance, in the first photograph taken at the airport in Moscow just before departure, the group is wearing the typical budget travellers' gear: heavy backpacks, thigh pocket trousers, and camera bags. The gear changes slightly once they have left the home country as in all photos taken in different foreign countries, the travellers wear a bright orange T-shirt with an image of a tiny hiker carrying the globe on his back, which is the project's logo. These T-shirts function as an effective visual element that repeats throughout the blog. They mark the route across the visa-free world and, figuratively speaking, they draw a new map of the world discovered by Shanin and his co-travellers. Consequently, if Lebedev's version of the world map, "Tema was here," is an individualistic and elitist image of the globe only accessible to those few who

have enough skills and resources, the world map re-drawn by the project *Mir bez viz* is rather a democratized, collectively re-appropriated version of the world by an average post-Soviet person. Moreover, if Lebedev aims to take over the whole world by visiting as many countries as possible and viewing all the places he visits with a gaze that he has reconstructed and defined by himself, then the members of *Mir bez viz* collective aim to mark the world with their orange T-shirts and ultimately rebuild a new concept of the visa-free world.

Figure 1.3. The travellers of the project *Mir bez viz* photographed against a tourist view as wearing their orange team T-shirts—a repetitive visual element in the blog. Courtesy of Valeri Shanin.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of Russian travel blogs I have demonstrated that digital publication formats create novel tools for lifestyle media and their representation of identity work. I have argued that popular travel blogs negotiate different viewpoints of the geopolitics of Self as they reflect the life situation and social status of an individual against the ideals of free global mobility and personal ability to cross borders between countries and cultures. For the Russian online audience, the blogs also introduce an arena for virtual tourism—a window to the different practices of travel culture and global community of travellers. The bloggers' ideals of

free mobility are conveyed to the online readership through the geopolitically active gaze, which projects different imaginations and interpretations of individual Russians as global actors against the backdrop of travel culture. One of the key findings of this chapter is that the digital publication format helps to preserve and accumulate the immaterial social and cultural values embedded in the travel experience. Moreover, it emphasizes the individual's possibility to acquire and produce means not only for extensive geographical mobility but also for economic flexibility beyond the traditional job market regulated by the state as, for instance, the example of Dubrovskaia and her conception traveliving as the ruling ideology of mobility and lifestyle demonstrates.

In the blogs scrutinized in this chapter, popular geopolitical imaginations are also created through a certain type of creative and/or conceptual approach to world travel, as the examples of Lebedev and Shanin show. Both blogs represent travel as a continuous and goal-oriented project in the process of which the traveller's gaze expands, gradually reinventing the whole globe in a way that it becomes a newly organized terrain of mobility liberated from state institutions, as exemplified by Shanin, or even a private possession, as shown by Lebedev. As the result, a new version of the world map is being digitally visualized in the blog. These maps are based on the way of thinking that emphasizes personal choice and freedom over state control and thus they strive to give an alternative to the social and political reality image of the power relations between the state and individual citizen.

The travel blogs portray free global mobility first and foremost as the freedom to put on one's travel gear at any time and thereby become part of a global lifestyle. The popular geopolitical image of the world is tackled on the highly individualized level and connected especially to the question of what kind of global agency is accessible to the post-Soviet individual in the globalized world of leisure and lifestyle industry rather than to the question of what kind of geopolitical power Russia as a country represents. In other words, the blogs do not comment on the cultural, political, and economic relations that the countries of destinations have with Russia but the purpose of travel is to become a global Self and to make the whole world home. As the result, an idealized version of both the Self and globe is being created through different digital publication formats—the world outside the home country becomes a heterotopian space of self-reflection and seeing differently.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Vlad Strukov, Laura Lyytikäinen, Inna Perheentupa, and Cai Weaver for their insightful comments on the previous versions of this chapter. I also thank Emil Aaltonen Foundation for financial support.

2. The lifestyle media consists of a number of different media formats from home decor magazines to shopping guides to makeover television shows to fashion and travel blogs.

3. Thanks to her popular blog, Dubrovskaia has become a minor Internet celebrity and role model for other Russian backpackers and travel bloggers. She has been interviewed by a number of web publications and major Russian lifestyle magazines such as *Afisha* (O puti iz iakutskogo detstva . . .). Dubrovskaia and her partner Adzhei Verma also appear as the main heroes of the documentary film *Traveliving. Zhizn' v puteshestvii*, directed by Maksim Vasil'ev, available on YouTube (viewed more than 57,000 times, May 2015).

4. One of the most followed Russian LiveJournal bloggers and Russian IT pioneer (see Strukov 2014) Artemyi Lebedev is also a famous designer and entrepreneur. As the son of the writer Tatiana Tolstaia, also a popular blogger (see Rutten 2014: 2009), he has a background in the Russian literary intelligentsia.

5. *Vokrug sveta*, founded in 1861, is the longest-standing popular lifestyle magazine in Russia. *Mir bez viz* stands for an online travelers' community headed by Valerii Shanin. On top of several Internet entries and YouTube video clips he has produced a full-length feature film and a book.

6. In addition, the travelers come from different socioeconomic backgrounds: Dubrovskaia and Shanin are frugal backpackers, whereas Lebedev belongs to the cosmopolitan elite for whom the travel budget is never an issue. Shanin travels with a group of people who have signed up to the world tour through his website and Dubrovskaia travels together with her life companion whom she met through the travelers' online community.

7. For example, in 2013 more than eighteen million tourist trips abroad were made by Russians, which was a 19 percent increase from the previous year. Their most popular destinations were Turkey, Egypt, Greece, China, Thailand, Spain, and Finland, respectively (Russian Tourist Association 2014).

8. On the post-Soviet consumer revolution, see Gurova (2015). On consumer revolutions as setting up the theoretical and methodological framework for the study of modernity, see Appadurai (1996): 72–73.

9. The term is a modification of the term "global Russian," which is often connected to the new media project *Snob* launched in 2008. In addition to *Snob*'s flagship publication—the luxurious glossy magazine with literary content—the project maintains an online news portal and provides social networking tools for registered, paying customers. *Snob* was established by the businessman and billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov, and it strives to create a community of global Russian around its print and online publications. The global Russian, as defined by the producers of *Snob*, stands for an affluent, Russian speaking, metropolitan, and highly educated "citizen of the world" (Nikolaevich 2011). Therefore, the use of the term in this particular context is, at least to some extent, an attempt to re-conceptualize the Russian economic elite, the *nouveau riche*, by attaching some high cultural values to it. The initial idea of the publication was not only to produce quality reading matter for international, affluent, and liberal minded Russians, but also to form a new identity category, and to create a virtual meeting place for them (see Roesen 2010). However, the global Russian remains an imaginary category combining the ideals of Russian intelligentsia and emigrant culture.

10. Especially when seen from the cyber optimistic, or hacker culture's point of view. (See Thomas 2002; Castells 2001).

11. For a discussion of people living in popular tourist spots, see Sherlock (2001).

12. Quotes from Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem "My Soviet Passport," translated into English by Herbert Marshall (Mayakovsky 1929).

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Chapter Two

Crossing Borders/RoadMovies in Russia

The Road to Nowhere? Destinations in Recent Russian Cinema

Birgit Beumers

The sociologist Lev Gudkov has noted a sense of disempowerment in connection with shifting borders and loss of center already in the years immediately following the collapse of the USSR, and linked this phenomenon to an identity crisis:

> The collapse of the USSR and the subsequent processes of disintegration caused a serious crisis in Russia's self-consciousness. Previous barriers were (maybe temporarily) blurred: borders, territorial and political symbols, the arrangement of the main players and roles within this space, rules and norms of social relations (for example the character of the cultural or linguistic supremacy). (Gudkov 1994, 176)

More recent debates on Russian culture and identity have seen a shift from historical perspectives to spatial and geopolitical issues, exploring how Moscow lost its status as imperial center to become a city on the global periphery, as Edith Clowes has astutely commented in her study of the discourses that seek to redefine the lost center (Clowes 2011, xi, 1). She argues that the theme of center/periphery is focal in debates, echoing "Russia's—and particularly Moscow's—greatest historical fear of being nothing more than a hinterland of the world's older and richer empires to the east, the west and the south" (Clowes 2011, 12). This shift in perspective toward the geographical status has changed the view of the center, but also that of the periphery, in shaping national identity. Whilst this issue lies at the heart of Clowes' study, I am less interested here in space as a means to shape national identity, but more in the relationship between center and periphery as reflected and defined through the trope of the road. After all, the road, and with it the journey, traditionally leads to the center: it is this destination, I suggest, and thereby a sense of purpose and orientation, that contemporary Russian cinema lacks, failing the nation's (and the viewer's) quest for an identity and leaving the viewer with anguish and fear in the face of the loss of Moscow's (and by extension Russia's) dominating and centralizing role in asserting Russia's pride, both nationally and internationally.

 This chapter is concerned with the representation of the periphery through the genre of the road movie. It explores the space/power relationship as reflected in those contemporary films which use the journey as their principal metaphor. In the analysis of the films, I draw on the conventions of the (American) road movie and investigate some reasons why the road movie is an unsuitable genre for Russian cinema by establishing the destination "dead-end" as a reflection of the impasse of Russia's geopolitical search.

CENTRE/PERIPHERY

The relationship between center and periphery has been a dominant theme in Soviet culture in general, and in cinema in particular, as it tended to focus on the center, Moscow, with a centripetal movement from the periphery (see Widdis 2003), thus emphasizing the status of the capital as power-center. In the 1990s, however, rather than shifting to a centrifugal movement, away from the center, the Moscow-centric mode of the Soviet era continued even after the collapse of the USSR (see Beumers 1999, 76–87), confirming the center at a time when its role began to be threatened in a more global perspective. During the power-centric Putin-era one might expect a return to the depiction of Moscow as overpowering center, especially the new, capitalist sites such as the City. However, these new complexes serve largely as crime sites, for example in Aleksandr Atanesian's debut *24 Hours/24 chasa* (2000), where the key crimes are linked to the Bagrationov Bridge, or Marina Liubakova's *Cruelty/Zhestokost'* (2007), where the Moscow International Business Center (Naberezhnaia Tower) features as a prime location. Similarly, shopping malls reflect wealth, but these also serve as shelters for orphaned and homeless teenagers in Valerii Priemykhov's *Who, if Not Us / Kto, esli ne my* (1998), while the old city center (*Staropimenovskii pereulok*) is a spot for prostitution (Iurii Moroz's *The Spot / Tochka* 2006). The final sequence of Roman Prygunov's *Dukhless* (2011) shows the "top manager" Maks Andreev (Danila Kozlovskii) significantly ending up on a landfill, thus stripping the (business) center of Moscow of alluring or historical attributes altogether: this is not a city that attracts, but that repels. Meanwhile, the historical center is created through CGI images as, for example, the visualization of the (destroyed, and at the time of filming not completely restored) Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Nikita Mikhalkov's *The Barber of Siberia / Sibirskii tsiriul'nik''* (1998) or the (never built) Palace of Soviets in Aleksei Andrianov's *The Spy / Shpion* (2012); alternatively, the center of Moscow is substituted with footage shot in St. Petersburg, as in Nikolai Khomeriki's *Heart's Boomerang / Serdtsa boomerang* (2011), when permission was declined to film in the metro, thus making room for a paradigmatic shift away from the center and toward the periphery. Moscow itself is a chimera —it only seems, pretends, or claims to be a central power.

  If we take art house cinema—rather than the new mainstream and blockbuster cinema—as indicative for the search of new modes of visual representations and the discovery of new cultural discourses, then such films are increasingly set in provincial towns or in the countryside: Larisa Sadilova has filmed in Briansk and Trubchevsk; Lidia Bobrova in the Vologda region; Svetlana Proskurina in central Russia, and recently (*Goodbye Mom / Do svidaniia mama*, 2014) on the outskirts of Tallinn; Taisiia Igumentseva has shot near Murmansk; Natal'ia Meshchaninova in Noril'sk; Aleksei Popogrebskii and Andrei Zviagintsev near the Arctic circle. Indeed, there is also an increase in cinematic production in regional studios such as Tatfilm in Kazan', Sakhafilm in Yakutsk, Studio Bashkortostan in Ufa; Buryatkino in Ulan-Ude, not to mention the never-ceasing activity in Ekaterinburg, not only at Sverdlovsk Film Studio, but also in independent production (think only of Vasilii Sigarev, Aleksei Fedorchenko).

Since the shift to the periphery concerns not only representation but also production, we cannot therefore explain the move along the lines of a return to the countryside as observed in village prose during the 1960s, when it marked an escape from urban narratives and a rejection of the tropes of Socialist Realism. Instead, the new interest in the provinces includes, as mentioned above, film production and coincides with the move into suburbs (from Rublevskoe Chaussee to Skolkovo) of the financial and industrial elite in the capital itself. With the move out of the center comes a shift from the vertical to the horizontal (Paperny 2002), which is reflected in the frequent use of handheld cameras and mobile devices for filming (e.g., Pavel Kostomarov and Aleksandr Rastorguev in *I Don't Love You / Ia tebia ne liubliu*, 2012 and *I Love You / Ia tebia liubliu*, 2010 use exclusively footage from devices used by their subjects) rather than professional shots, including crane shots. Motion, mobility, and with it the road, become new tropes in Russian cinema, along with experiments in the genre of the road movie and explorations of its adaptability or suitability for Russia.

In this context, it is appropriate to reconsider briefly some concepts of mapping space and new territories from the 1930s, when Soviet values were disseminated across the country when the central power explored and appropriated southern and eastern territories. As Emma Widdis has convincingly argued, cinema played an important role in this exercise of grasping, visually, the vastness of the land, which is regularly highlighted in the visual discourse of the late 1920s and 1930s: "The formless, unknowable *prostor* shapes Russia's unique historic destiny, frequently evoked through the symbol of the folkloric *put'*, or journey" (Widdis 2003, 5; emphasis in the original). Two aspects are important here: first, the emphasis on the vastness of the land that resembles an empty page onto which the new Soviet identity can be mapped; it is a vastness that, as I have argued elsewhere, Nikita Mikhalkov remembers and clings on to with what Svetlana Boym has called a "restorative nostalgia" (Boym 1994, 283–291; Boym 2001, xviii) throughout his cinematic oeuvre (Beumers 2005). It is the discourse that Widdis describes as the end of the phase of taking control over and mastering the periphery, when the view changes to one that reifies the countryside, making it an object for the gaze and for the pastoral idyll: "The peripheral space is thus configured as a playground for the centre. . . ." (Widdis 2003, 139). Second, the word *put'*, here translated as journey, can also mean track (on the railroads, for example). So the journey is not only an exploratory movement, but also one that is prescribed, pre-determined, controlled through tracks. Therefore, the preferred mode of transport in Soviet cinema has always been the train, with an occasional appearance of the plane to emphasize the speed of connection or to facilitate miracles of displacement. The road, meanwhile, is ". . . a universal symbol of the course of life, the movement of desire, and the lure of both freedom and destiny" (Laderman 2002, 2), a structure that offers a choice of destination at (almost) any given moment, or turn of the road.

The train, used to take the very medium of cinema to the countryside on the so-called film train (*kinopoezd*), remained the preferred means of transportation. The road, on the other hand, became a significant trope in post-Soviet cinema when the figure of the trucker occupied the television screen in the series *Truckers* (*Dal'noboishchiki* NTV, 20 series 2001; 12 series 2004; 12 series 2012). In these early trucker films the road suggests in the first instance an

infrastructure that connects locations to each other, not only to the center, and through private rather than public transport, allowing individual access: the road facilitates trade, exchange, and communication. It connects rather than dominates, to use Henri Lefebvre's distinction; it is not steered from the center—even if built by the state; there are smaller roads that are part of peasant land planning (Lefebvre 1991, 193)

This chapter, then, is concerned with the periphery as seen through the road, predominantly the car but also the truck, in Russian films of the 2000s. While exploring the representation of the periphery in Putin-era cinema I also attempt to define the usefulness of the term "road movie" for Russian cinema, and challenge both the genre and the assumption that the Russian road has a destination point. The relationship of center and periphery remains an important aspect, but the road and its connectivity seems more important here than the image of center or periphery alone. Instead, I argue, the films demonstrate not only the lack of a center, but also the lack of a destination, suggesting a flawed relationship between center and periphery.

THE ROAD MOVIE

The road movie typically represents a journey in a car, typically by a group of male teenagers/adults, typically across a vast expanse of land. Borne in the United States, the road movie emerged from a strand of literature that some scholars trace back to the *Odyssey* (Russian scholars would trace it no doubt to Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*), while others tie it to the rebellious youth movement of the 1950s and especially Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (1955), which has been turned into a film by Walter Salles (2012), challenging the values of American life: ". . . the genre of the road movie explores the 'borders' (the status quo conventions) of American society [. . . and] asks, What does it mean to exceed the boundaries, to transgress the limits, of American society?"(Laderman 2002, 2). The emergence of the road movie in American cinema is also intrinsically linked with the building of a road network after World War II, modeled in part on Europe's highway system, and the growth of the automobile industry.

The road movie conventionally involves a journey that takes the character/s out of their habitual, normal, static environment. The restlessness and mobility associated with the journey, the dynamism and the disconnection from the norm, allow the protagonist to gain a different view. It is obvious why the genre was deemed unsuitable for Soviet cinema—for reasons beyond the lack of cars. Often characters return to their home, but they have changed: we may draw a parallel here to the fairy tale, where the heroes traditionally venture on a journey into foreign lands, from where they return home, matured and experienced, ready for adult life (Propp 1975). This learning experience and process of growing up, of acquiring a different view and crossing a border into another land previously not visited, are typical features that the road movie shares with the fairy tale.

The journey is never uninterrupted: there are stops on the way, which makes for a fragmented narrative without proper beginning or end. The protagonists tend to be male—friends, buddies —with women taking a more decorative and secondary role. The protagonists search for the self, for a role in society, for their authentic and true identity. David Laderman (2002) has

argued that the tension between stagnation and mobility, between the dynamic and static is a constituent element of the road movie. He further differentiates between the road movie that tells of a journey motivated by a quest for identity, for something different and new; and the flight, mostly found in the criminal and detective genre, such as the classic *Bonnie and Clyde* (dir. Arthur Penn, 1967), which takes the characters to the open road in an act of rebellion, where they transgress social, legal, and state borders (Laderman 2002, 59). He associates the recent resurgence of the road movie with "postmodern anxiety and restlessness" (Laderman 2002, 4), as well as the fact that the road movie places the individual in a situation where there are no constraints, spatially and in terms of the narrative. The road movie offers a blank page for the creation or definition of a new identity. Precisely this feature, one might assume, would be a suitable genre for post-Soviet cinema in search of its new "Russian" identity.

However, when we try to trace elements of the road movie in Russian cinema of the last twenty years, we get a somewhat different picture. We may find journeys, but they are rarely in cars or on motorcycles, which is characteristic of the road movie: "Cars and motorcycles represent a mechanized extension of the body, through which that body could move farther and faster than ever before and quite literally evade the trajectory of classical narrative" (Corrigan 1994, 146).

So, on the one hand, I explore films where the car plays a central role for the protagonists' mobility—a mobility that is not mapped and controlled by a center that tries to (re-)define its relationship with the periphery; on the other hand, I offer some readings of the absence of cars and the emphasis on other means of transport in Russian cinema, and—following the first major television series around a mode of transport—I begin here with the truck.

SCREENING TRANSPORT: THE TRUCK

A country where the public rather than the private sphere has dominated cultural practices throughout the twentieth century is unlikely to suddenly discover the genre of the road movie. There are very few Soviet films that would easily fit into the category "road movie," simply because the concept of the car as man's best friend is not part of the Soviet discourse. The car —a privilege means of transport in Soviet times—provides a private, secluded space, and thereby encourages a private life independent of public transport systems. Therefore, the train, the ship, and even planes are more common locations in Soviet cinema: usually they are presented not as intimate spaces whence characters can withdraw from the outside world, but they serve to connect places. Even Russian Railways (*Rossiiskie Zheleznye Dorogi*) use excerpts from old Soviet films to demonstrate the historical heritage of train travel—something that would be hard to imagine for adverts of the Soviet/Russian car industry. However, the truck as means of transportation for goods (of whatever sort) features in a number of films in the Soviet and post-Soviet era, from the television serial *The Truckers* (2001–2012) to Aleksandr Proshkin's *Trio* (2003), which combines a criminal plot with the trucker-on-the-road-movie, showing three cops working undercover as truck drivers (the female cop also acts as a prostitute) to catch a gang that attacks and pilfers lorries. The film contains long scenes inside the truck, where the "trio" sort out their relationships; this enclosed little world is

juxtaposed to the open Siberian steppe through which the truck travels. As Vlad Strukov (2004) aptly stated in his review of the film: "The road itself provides the bonding agent in this travelogue for the two narrative levels and the two types of spaces, as well as for the otherwise disconnected episodes assembled in the film."

The truck—a vehicle with a private space for the driver, but one that serves society at large—as a replacement of the car in films that revolve around journeys into other lands makes frequent appearances on screen. Thus, the truck features as one means of transport (alongside the train) in Boris Khlebnikov and Aleksei Popogrebskii's *Koktebel* (2003)—confusingly titled *Roads to Koktebel* for the international release—where the mobility of father (Igor' Chernevich) and son (Gleb Puskepalis) is hindered by the absence of money, so they walk, hike, and travel in a train's storage compartment. The protagonists are propelled by the search of another life, which also marks this film as a "road movie": they search for relatives in the southern resort of Koktebel on the Crimean peninsula, having lost their mother, their home, and work in Moscow. Likewise, in Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother* (*Brat*, 1997) we can discern the train that takes Danila (Sergei Bodrov Jr.) from the provinces to St. Petersburg—running from a dull and corrupt environment to find a new life, and hiking to Moscow on a truck to develop his criminal career at the film's end; in *Brother 2* (*Brat 2*, 2000), Danila travels by plane to the United States, then briefly by car (which breaks down around the corner) and then by truck to Chicago to accomplish his criminal mission, before returning to Moscow—now a new man: a respected killer who has avenged the death of his best friend. Both *Koktebel* and the *Brother* films fit into the genre of the road movie also in focussing on a journey that takes the characters outside their normal environment and changes their lives; and they both focus on male characters and the bonding that occurs—between father and son, between the brothers Viktor (Viktor Sukhorukov) and Danila—where women have no major role in the story and where, at least for Balabanov, music plays a crucial role in rendering the rebelliousness of the hero. It is also noteworthy that the exploration of other lands—periphery and abroad—leads to returns (to Moscow) in both instances: at the end of *Koktebel*, father and son are united on the pier, with a suggestion that they return, as there is no place to stay in Koktebel; at the end of *Brother 2*, Danila returns to Moscow. The journey here serves as a means for exploration of one's own values, testing strengths and weaknesses and allowing a process of maturation, while still following the traditional template of a Moscow-centric world view.

If in these films the truck serves as a means of transportation and hiking, but is not driven by the protagonist/s, then in later films—Svetlana Proskurina's *Truce* (*Peremirie*, 2010) and Sergei Loznitsa's *My Joy* (*Schast'e moe*, 2010)—it is a truck that literally "drives" the narrative, but one that is steered by the protagonist. In *My Joy* the truck driver Georgii (Viktor Nemets) is the central character, but this does not in any way suggest that he is in control of the narrative, or indeed his *put'*, his path, his life: his truck is stolen, he is beaten up and suffers trauma and memory loss; moreover, there are abrupt shifts between past and present in the second part of the film, where the truck is stationary in the courtyard of a woman's house, who is taking care of Georgii: it has been turned into symbol for the lack of movement, unable to go forward or backward without the driver. The road has led to an impasse, first in the form of the

backwoods where Georgii is robbed, and then in the form of the courtyard: roads lead to stagnation and ultimately death. The key location for death is, interestingly, a road post—a place that suggests control of the road, of the traffic and the movement on it: control is denied, and so is orientation—both in time and in space. In this sense, *My Joy* reflects the center's loss of movement control.

Proskurina's *Truce* also follows the adventures of the truck driver, Egor Matveev (Ivan Dobronravov), who takes a truck only seemingly to a destination: throughout the film Egor drives the truck only to stop and visit friends and relatives, offering people a lift on the way—from assisting his friends to steal metal in the form of electric cables, down to taking a priest to a wedding to be held in the middle of nowhere. Egor has no destination (his cargo might, but we don't know what that destination is, nor what he has loaded) and searches for a meaning in his life, for friends, for a wife, for a home. In this sense, Elena Stishova has a point when claiming that the film is a road movie:

> The strong structure guarantees an additional "genre" element: the material is lined up like a road movie. The protagonist—a trucker—drives a lorry covered with tarpaulin along impassable roads and slipshod expanses. (Stishova 2010)

However, unlike a road movie, this driver goes literally in circles, and the journey for him is not one where he will reach a destination in the end, but one that purely serves as a process of discovery, partly reconstructing past friendships and alliances. Therefore, the director's concern about the label "road movie" is also justified: "When people talk about *Truce* as a 'road movie,' I clench my teeth. I don't accept these classifications. They seem too simple-minded" (Gusiatinskii 2010).

Figure 2.1. Still from Svetlana Proskurina's *Truce* (2010). Courtesy of Studio Slon.

For Proskurina, what matters is the journey to the self; the truck plays a minor, inferior role in her conception of the film's narrative. However, it is maybe less the truck that is symbolic in

this film than the shots of the above-mentioned "impassable roads and slipshod expanses" where roads end in the middle of nowhere (the road along which Egor takes the priest); where roads are the "property" of the military as they conduct exercises in the fields; where roads meander through the land and signposts are simply absent; where there is no sense of location or destination. The road in the "Russian road movie" leads nowhere: it exists to confuse and mislead those who use it. There is no view of Moscow, not even a sign: both audiences and characters are lost in the middle of the vast Russian lands.

THE CAR ON THE ROAD

In order to explore the Russian road movie proper (involving a car), it seemed at first that we might need to adapt the form of mobility. Or do we? Travel in a car, where the automobile is a commodity and represents an individualized space (Lefebvre 1991, 259), extending the individual's mobility (without tying the characters to particular routes, timetables, and networks) remains a rather novel and rare concept in Russian cinema. I suggest two main reasons for this: first, the absence of a history of both the car as a tool that enhances the individual's mobility, and of the road movie as a narrative about alternative (subversive) ways of life:

> The driving force propelling most road movies [. . .] is an embrace of the journey as a means of cultural critique. Road movies generally aim beyond the borders of cultural familiarity, seeking the unfamiliar for revelation, or at least for the thrill of the unknown. Such travelling, coded as defamiliarization, likewise suggest a mobile refuge from social circumstances felt to be lacking or oppressive in some way. [. . .] Thus the road movie celebrates subversion as a literal venturing outside of society. (Laderman 2002, 1–2)

Second, the fact that the genre of the road movie seems to be characteristic of American cinema: borne in a time of youth rebellion, it remains—even in its European manifestations—associated with the United States, and the locations of many road movies by European directors (think of Wim Wenders with his 1984 *Paris, Texas* or Walter Salles)[1] are non-European. At the same time, as a genre that allows the individual to explore ways into alternative models of life, the road movie should have been more popular in Russia and Europe than it has been so far.

The road movie as a film revolving around an individual's journey in a car has emerged in Russian cinema only quite recently, and only a few films follow the Bonnie-and-Clyde model that reads the road movie as the story of a criminal flight away from society: mainly these road movies actually focus on individuals in search for new ways of life, for an identity, for an existence unregulated by social and legal norms. Yet we—scholars and film critics—often read such films in other ways than as road movies.

The first "road movie" proper in post-Soviet cinema is most likely Karen Shakhnazarov's *The American Daughter* (*Amerikanskaia doch'*, 1995), co-produced with Kazakhstan. The film represents a journey by a father, Aleksei Varakin (played by Vladimir Mashkov) to San Francisco, where he wants to see his daughter after his ex-wife has taken the child to America when she remarried. As Varakin is not allowed to see his daughter, the two run away together and hitchhike across America, until they are detected by the police and the father is arrested.

The film contains structural elements of the fairy tale: the journey to another land by a father who wants to be reunited with his daughter, which ends with his daughter taking a helicopter to free her father and fly him back to Russia to see grandma (we shall leave aside here the patriotic message embedded in this narrative). Shot in the United States and partly with an American cast, this is a true road movie, including the use of song that brings the characters together, a police chase, and the theme of transgression of social and legal norms as well as state borders.[2] However, the film is shot in the United States, as the road movies by Shakhnazarov's European and Latin-American colleagues Wenders and Salles.

A whole decade passed since this first experiment until the interest in the road was rekindled in Russian cinema: in the meantime, characters tended to travel to new places for the experience, focussing on the place and not on the journey, on stasis rather than motion—as is the case in Kirill Serebrennikov's *Yuriev Day* (*Iur'ev den'*, 2008), where opera singer Liubov' Pavlovna (Kseniia Rappoport) travels with her son Andrei to her hometown in her own—Western—car, before her son and subsequently her own life are sucked up by Russia's provincial lifestyle. The car facilitates a journey to a place that represents the past (but that has changed), and where people are trapped: the car soon stalls, failing to provide the mobility that allowed the journey to the past in the first instance; therefore, a return to the present is impossible. Liu-bov' Pavlovna is entrapped in a place and in time, not unlike Georgii of *My Joy*. She, too, in a sense, kills her old self by immersing herself in the stupor of provincial life and religious worship. The road, once again, leads into an impasse, to entrapment and death.

The car makes its debut as a protagonist in Ivan Dykhovichnyi's *The Kopeck* (*Kopeika*, 2002), about the launch of the VAZ 2101, lovingly called the "kopeck." The film offers a survey of Soviet life through the history of the car, following the lives of its various owners over thirty years. Only a year later, Petr Buslov completed *Bimmer* (*Bumer*, 2003; sequel *Bimmer-2* in 2006) where the Western automobile BMW 750 IL became the film's true protagonist. *Bimmer* traces the flight of four criminals—Petia-Rama (Sergei Gorobchenko), Kostian-Kot (Vladimir Vdovichenko), Lekha-Killa (Maksim Konovalov), and Dimon-Oshparenny (Andrei Merzlikin)—from the police and from their competitors, and is perhaps the first successful import of the genre of the road movie into a Russian setting. The four gangsters accomplish a journey from Moscow to nowhere, ending up somewhere in rural Russia. Having overstepped social and legal boundaries, they pay with their lives—yet the car survives. Their plight for a different mode of existence is, as is typical for the genre, voiced by a soundtrack composed by Sergei Shnurov, whose lyrics undermine social conventions and mock official culture. The sleek, black BMW features in the first shot, even before we see human faces. There follow voices, and only then faces appear on the screen. The four friends escape from Moscow after a clash with another criminal grouping and travel through the vast countryside, which is filmed from the moving vehicle, drenched in early light and gorgeous sunsets. The road here is idyllic, but it is also a place of corruption and bribery: the truckers beat up the four men although they have helped them; the police extol money from them, alleging they have drugs in the car; an ambulance is busy taking stolen vegetables to a nearby market and fails to rescue an injured man. Only a healer in the remote settlement that lies at the

end of a road is kind and helpful. When Dimon has recovered, the men go back on the road, to a small town, where two are killed and one arrested during a robbery. Dimon, behind the wheel and supposed to save them, lets down his friends to save his own life, finally taking a bus to get back to Moscow. The film contains several flashbacks that explain the happy past in Moscow, as well as the incidents that led to the flight, but this past is an explanation for the present. Moscow is a temporary past and a temporary absence, until things settle down. The road leads somewhere—to the house of a friend where they want to hide out—but that destination becomes an impasse when their plans are discovered by the enemy. What is most significant in this film, though, is the image of the road as a place of crime and corruption, a track that leads nowhere; the protagonists seem to travel back and forth (the filming is accomplished in such a way that sunsets appear on different sides of the car, suggesting a back-and-forth movement rather than progression in one direction), and the journey ends in a snow-covered field. The road may not have a destination, but it reveals crucial moments where the protagonists take the right or wrong turn.

Figure 2.2. Still from Andrei Zviagintsev's *The Return* (2003). Courtesy of Intercinema Agency.

The car also makes a prominent appearance in two films that are not traditionally classified as road movies at first sight, which I would like to explore here in those terms in order to draw some conclusions about the Russian road movie and the destinations it suggests: Andrei Zviagintsev's *The Return* (*Vozvrashchenie*, 2003) and Aleksei Fedorchenko's *Silent Souls*

(*Ovsianki*, 2010). *The Return* tends to be read primarily in terms of its metaphysical and aesthetic qualities rather than as a road movie, yet the story starts with the father (Konstantin Lavronenko) arriving at his family home in a red, Soviet-era car. The father then takes his sons Andrei (Vladimir Garin) and Ivan (Ivan Dobronravov) in the car across the country, through barren northern landscapes (near Lake Ladoga), before crossing over in a boat to an island—crossing the border of life and death. When the father falls to his death, the boys return to the mainland, take the car, and drive it back home. The film thus explores a journey to another (is)land where the boys encounter death, after which they return to their old life, only they have now changed: like the three sons of the fairy tale, they have grown up, matured, become adults. More important, though, is the concept of mobility that informs the camerawork (Mikhail Krichman) of the film: Ivan and Andrei are shown in long takes, almost statically, while they are at home: Ivan is so immobile that he even refuses to jump from the tower; the boys run home, only to assume a series of static poses: they stand and stare at their father; they sit at the dinner table, and they lie in their beds. The car offers them mobility hitherto inexperienced, and the camera captures—in the best tradition of the road movie—the moving vehicle, inside of which the boys are protected. The camera captures them from both sides of the car, and also follows their gaze out of the car windows. After the father's death it is Andrei who takes the wheel and steers the car back home, back to safety. The static images (photos) from their childhood in the epilogue further emphasize the stasis of their existence as opposed to the dynamism of the journey. This journey, however, leads to the father's death. Dynamism and movement, mobility and exploration of unknown lands are thus read as de-stabilizing the status quo, which makes *The Return*—when read as a road movie—a film that confirms social norms rather than undermining them, subverting one of the main characteristics of the road movie.

Fedorchenko's *Silent Souls* also takes the form of a car journey undertaken by two men, Miron (Iurii Tsurilo) and Aist (Igor' Sergeev), who prepare the body of Miron's wife Tania (Iuliia Aug) for burial: following the (fictional, invented) rites of the Merya people, they take her to a remote place by a river where they burn the corpse and send it down the river. Indeed, the film begins with Aist cycling back home from work; his car is prominently parked outside the house. For the journey the men take Miron's Land Rover, and again the camera (held by the same DoP who worked on *The Return*, Mikhail Krichman) captures the men from the sides and behind, as well as following their gaze onto the road. The narrative is fragmented through flashbacks to the marriage of Miron and Tania, which forms temporal stops in the past, while the men also physically stop several times on their journey to buy things and, on the way back, to pick up two prostitutes. Where in *The Return* Krichman and Zviagintsev played with the idea of movement and stasis through the use of photos and paintings that fixated movements captured by the motion camera, with Fedorchenko the cameraman also underlines the binary of static photo-images and mobile footage in the images Aist captures on his mobile phone and deletes shortly before the accident.

The destination for Tanya's body is the water, the world of death: the same destination that the car in *Silent Souls* reaches at the end. And, like in *The Return*, the car can go no further: at the water (river, lake), it reaches a cul-de-sac, from which the driver has to reverse in order to

continue. This break of the journey, the return, is another signal of stagnation, of the inability to move forward. The water (the river) may be crossed by boat (in *The Return*) or by bridge and ferry (in *Silent Souls*) and stands for death: it becomes the final destination for the two men on their way home as they drive into the Volga, directly entering the legendary burial place of the Merya—the world of the river. The road then stands as a man-made path that leads to a place of no return: death. The road as a link between center and periphery has no longer a role to play. Instead, locations such as cemeteries and landfills dominate later films (e.g., Andrei Proshkin's *Orleans/Orlean*, 2015; Anton and Il'ia Chizhikov's *The Guy from Our Cemetery/Paren' s nashego kladbishcha*, 2015).

CUL-DE-SACS

In the classical American road movie the criminals on the road may perish, but the quest model (à la Kerouac) leaves the heroes alive and changed, returning to society: social rebellion is either lethal or doomed to failure. The Russian road movie presents the road not as a path, but as a network of ways that are misleading or end in the middle of nowhere. The road is a symbol for certain death for those who drive along it in a car. The Russian road leads nowhere: there is only a dead end, where death is beheld in the image of water.

The Russian road movie thus echoes a fatal disorientation. Debuting as a narrative about a journey during the Putin era, the Russian road movie is less concerned with a quest than travel across the countryside—with the road as the way/path through it—ending with death. It is neither the space of the 1930s that had to be appropriated and conquered, nor the idyllic place for contemplation or haven for relaxation of the 1940s and later; instead, it is a lost territory, unconnected to the center (it has little or no infrastructure), like a dead body part. In Igumentseva's apocalyptic vision in *Bite the Dust / Otdat' kontsy* (2013), the periphery (in this case an island) is submerged under water entirely. The location "periphery" has to be revived and reconnected, not conquered as in the 1930s. Despite all the power discourse and Moscow-centricity under Putin's rule, the periphery is left dangling from the center in need of reconnection, while in production terms regional studios are increasing their autonomy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1. However, Wenders first experimented with the genre in the low-budget road movie trilogy *Alice in the Cities* (1974), *The Wrong Move* (1975), and *Kings of the Road* (1976), which was filmed in Germany.

2. Another film using elements of the road movie is *Montana* (2007) by Aleksandr Atanesian, where the gangster-hero travels to America to carry out a killing and hits the road, on a motorbike, to realize his childhood dream and visit Montana.

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Chapter Three

Digital Storytelling on YouTube

The Geopolitical Factor in Russian Vernacular Regional Identities

Galina Zvereva

Since the year 2000, the Russian central government has sought to develop geopolitical priorities in regional management policy. In order to reduce the risk of disintegration and to guarantee security, the central government has attempted to set up a system of distribution measures designed to adjust economic imbalances and to encourage the development and promotion of border territories and other areas which are strategically significant for the nation as a whole (Zubarevich 2014). Those who live in peripheral areas are engaged in the struggle to survive and to find their place in a changing world. By exporting energy, raw materials, and food, the regions have been attempting to become economically self-sufficient. Within Russia we are now witnessing an increasing tendency for large multicultural, multireligious, multiethnic regions such as Siberia, the Urals, and the Middle Volga (Tatarstan and Bashkortostan) to split off and define themselves as separate entities (Khenkin 1997; Gellman and Khopf 2003). Local communities in a number of Russian regions are developing their own popular assumptions about geopolitical alignment. Those in the Far East and Primorye are looking to China, Japan, and South Korea; those in the Kaliningrad region are seeking to align themselves with a united Western Europe; and those in Iakutia are looking to the United States and Canada. In the Urals Volga region and Siberia, the idea of international self-determination for the Turkic, Euro-Asian, and Asian world is gaining currency.

The process of redefining relations between the center and the regions in post-Soviet Russia has created distinctive styles of political and geopolitical behavior among local communities and regional elites (Gellman 2003; Achkasov 2005). The shared, everyday notions of Russian citizens regarding belonging to "one's place" in one's "own" local space, like ideas about the distinctive natural character of one's "own" region, or its unique historical, ethnic, and cultural identity, are a set of moveable mental attitudes and perspectives that are made manifest ("materialized") in various sociocultural practices (Treivish 2009; Krilov 2010; Erokhina 2012). The creation of a mythology of regional identity is a powerful resource used by local elites both in order to govern, and in order to put pressure on the administrative and political center, to establish specific relations with it and to seek, by so doing, to secure additional financing or benefits to guarantee the implementation of regional projects, etc. (Nechaiev 1999; Murzina 2013).

At present, the existence of social networks is qualitatively redefining the practice of defining local regional identity in everyday social interaction. A number of different ways of demonstrating mediated identity can be seen on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and on videos and comments posted on YouTube. These are expressed in hybrid digital forms and take the form of disjointed accounts by users about themselves and others—stories woven from past and present personal experience and spatial and temporal self-identification. Online stories created by ordinary users on the Russian segment of social media tend to be based on individual real-life experiences in the offline environment of contemporary Russia. These experiences are reworked, and contain evidence of reflection on various contexts: spatial, political, sociocultural, public, media information, etc. The particular character of these narratives is determined not only by general technological features of the new media, but also by the specific format of whatever media platform is chosen for interaction.

This study is concerned with the collective spatial identities created and promoted by ordinary users on the Russian segment of YouTube. In particular, it will explore the specific methods by which users create collective identities which correspond spatially to large regions of Russia (Siberia, the Urals, the Far East, the Middle Volga) and which involve a geopolitical element. The aim of this study is to identify how geopolitical factors are expressed in digital narratives by ordinary users: narratives that contain commonly held ideas about spatial regional identity. As a researcher I am particularly interested in the interface between the *imaginary space of cultural meanings* and the "*real*" (*concrete, geographical*) *space*—in which social and political relationships between ordinary people who use social media are constructed—and in how this interface or interrelationship is expressed in digital narratives. I would like to concentrate on three key areas which relate to how vernacular regionalism is represented in digital narratives: firstly, on how users express or reaffirm their belonging to their "own" region in their digital stories; secondly, on how the regional markers of this or that regional community are signalled; and thirdly, how spatial regional identity is presented in the representations in the media.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In studying how narrative identities are constructed on social media, we can make use of approaches and analytical tools used by group identification specialists to study how spatial identity is determined in everyday life. Recent years have seen an intensive development of this subject in certain interdisciplinary areas within the social sciences and humanities, particularly in human geography and sociocultural studies. This has made it possible to conceptualize *territory* as an object of human affection and love, to explore relationships between *space* and the individual on an emotional level, and to define the role of the imagination in the public understanding of a local space (Lefebvre 1991; Tuan 1990, 2002).

Scholars in these fields have been seeking to show how people's commonly held perceptions about the physical, material, and geographical area they inhabit are mentally transformed into *spaces of meaning* (*spaces of significant sites, images, and symbols, general social space*

and imagined space) (Zamiatin 2004, 2006; Mitin 2009). A number of new metaphors and concepts related to this theme, such as *a developed sense of place,* or *vernacular* (*everyday*) *regionalism*, are now in active use in the specialized vocabulary of interdisciplinary research. (Cresswell 2004; Pavliyk 2006; Krilov 2010). Meanwhile, the semantics of basic concepts such as *place*, *space*, *locality*, *region*, and *geopolitics* have become broader and increasingly complex, making them useful tools for studying questions of spatial identity (Tuathail and Dalby 1998; Smirniagin 2007; Erokhina 2012; Okunev and Savin 2014).

The type of commonly held, vernacular paradigms of regional identity used when people identify themselves with a specific territory or imaginary social space are, in turn, reproduced in digital stories, products of a mediated, virtual reality. Approaches used in interdisciplinary work on spatial identity can also be applied to the analysis of social media resources.

The empirical basis for my research consists of content from the media platform YouTube. The content on YouTube is produced and uploaded by many types of users, including ordinary users, user groups, social networks, social organizations, political parties, educational institutions, bloggers, and leaders of public opinion, trolls, and bots.

YouTube is an important meeting point for social media users whose mental attitudes, life maps, and behavioral practices are associated with various roles and statuses (related to gender, age, social status, education, profession, politics, ideology, etc.) (Strangelove 2010). YouTube users can engage with various media environments simultaneously (including the traditional media environment), as well as carrying on "non-accountable," mediated social communication. YouTube allows users not only to navigate their way around the flow of information, but to adapt content themselves into dynamic products which combine features of common and specialized knowledge.

Ordinary users of YouTube actively engage in the production, promotion, and consumption of digital stories made up of videos and comments made about them. These videos are created using clips from documentaries, feature films and television programs, photographs, and amateur films. During the process of network distribution, these video-stories undergo various formal, technological, and semantic changes. Verbal comments made about the videos develop and transform their narrative components. This stream of comments has the effect of creating shifts in emphasis in the semantics, imagery, and discourse of digital stories, as new users join in the "conversation on a theme" at various times (Walker, 2004).

For the purposes of my research, I have selected Russian YouTube content thematically linked to the subject in hand from the period 2010–2015. One hundred fifty videos were studied, each of which had received between one and a half thousand to one million views, and attracted comments from no less than one hundred users. From this mass of digital data, thirty videos and their respective commentaries were selected for a more detailed analysis. For ethical reasons, I do not disclose names of the YouTube commentators whom I quote; instead I replace them with numbers (e.g., "U1" is "user 1" in my selection of texts).

An initial analysis of the test material suggests that those who produce these digital products, are, for the most part, ordinary users of social media. Where gender is concerned, they present themselves more often as men than women; as regards to age, they project themselves

primarily as young and middle-aged people, and in relation to spatial identity, they present themselves as inhabitants of various regions of Russia.

The choice of 2010 as a starting point for the study of the topic is quite deliberate. This was when the All-Russia Census was carried out, which included a question relating to informal expressions of personal identity (ethnic, regional, and cultural). Russian citizens living in the regions began, for the first time, to actively express their identity in network media communications, including YouTube.

Working with mediated texts implies the use of qualitative research methods and techniques of narratology and discourse analysis. However, an additional difficulty presents itself in examining digital stories produced and consumed on various social media platforms; this is related to the way such stories are created and how they exist on the Internet (Lundby 2008; Hoffmann 2010; Thumim 2012; Page 2012). In analyzing digital stories, researchers must necessarily take into account the multilinearity, fragmentation, and the interactive, multimodal nature of such narratives. In addition, it is important to note the intensity with which such sociocultural products are transferred, and the dynamic quality of their semantic modification and consumption in IT environments. These research paradigms took priority in analyzing the content chosen for study.

By studying the videos and commentaries posted by YouTube users in the period 2010–2015 as open, fluid narratives, we can recognize the varied typology of stories relating to the everyday spatial and geopolitical identification of various groups in different regions of Russia. Our research identified three types of digital narrative which can be classed as cultural, civilizational, and political.

SPATIAL IDENTITY: THE CULTURAL STRAND IN DIGITAL NARRATION

Regional identity, as presented by YouTube users in their digital stories, is expressed by means of both a local civilization strand and a geocultural strand.

The All-Russia census of 2010 provides a striking indicator of everyday geocultural preferences among the inhabitants of the Russian regions. The question on "national self-identification" turned out to be an important method of monitoring the ethnosocial, ethnocultural, spatiocultural and geopolitical orientations of Russian citizens. In defining their "nationality," many residents of the regions of the North, the South, the Volga region, the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East took as their starting point everyday spatial and cultural perceptions. Thus, answers given on questionnaires made reference to geocultural and ethnocultural designations of regional identity such as *Pomor* (a dweller of the northern coastal region), Cossack, *Maloross* (Little Russian), *Kavkazets* (dweller of the Caucasus), Tatar-Bashkir, Tatar-Bulgar, Turk, *Sibiriak* (Siberian), and many others.

The census encouraged ethnographers, historians, and sociologists working in regional universities and research centers to carry out more in-depth studies of the ethnocultural and sociocultural principles underlying local spatial identity (Remnev 2011; Anisimova and Iechevskaya 2012; Zhigunova 2012, 2014; Vasekha 2014).

The results of the census were also a strong incentive for Russian users of social networks to conduct public discussion in the media on pressing issues regarding collective spatial and cultural identity.

Digital stories posted on YouTube about the special identity of Siberians, Urals dwellers, *Pomors,* Cossacks, Bulgars, and other groups often draw on documentary and feature films, television programs, and videos made by media professionals.

In the last five to seven years documentaries and video projects on regional communities have been making their presence felt in both the traditional and new media. A joint project by the TV journalist Leonid Parfenov and the Urals writer Aleksei Ivanov "The Backbone of Russia," a documentary series exploring the distinctive history and culture of the Urals region (2009–2010), proved hugely popular with a large media audience which included social media users.

Other documentary video projects by professional filmmakers Dmitrii Vasiukov ("Happy People" 2014, 2015) and Dmitrii Slobodchikov ("Journey into the Siberian Wilderness" 2014, 2015), were, from the start, designed to be promoted on new media platforms, and have been transformed into live digital stories attracting a huge number of comments from users in different regions of Russia. These video projects depicted the "simple life of ordinary people" in remote or neglected areas of Russia. At the heart of these programs is an idealized view of the everyday lives and habits of ordinary people living a "natural life" close to nature. These people, as the filmmakers see it, have a highly developed *sense of place* and high cultural values, long since lost by those who live in big cities.

By adding their comments to video-stories of this type (documentary films by Vasiukov about the "happy people" who live in the Siberian wilderness on the Ienisei River), ordinary users readily participate in the idea of the exotic, isolated geocultural worlds presented to them by the storyteller. At the same time, they respond heatedly to the social, economic, and personal problems experienced by those who dwell in these remote regions, connecting them with the general problems of state administration in modern Russia:

U1: "Stunning nature, amazing people. Russians have f***-all need of the powers that be! These people have been abandoned, but they survive thanks to their strength and spirit. It's amazing that in the 21st century they have no communications. . . . They're not people, but rocks!"

U2: "Well, I wouldn't call these people abandoned. It's their choice. They live a modest life, but have complete freedom to do what they want, and close ties with nature."

U1: "When you have a choice you have the possibility of choosing one, another, or even a third option. But here, it's like being on a submarine—there's nowhere to go, so they've worked out a way to survive and got used to it. . . ."

U3: "Yeah, of course, they are happy people, they love their hard work. But you don't see any happy faces when it comes to selling their squirrel pelts at the collection point. Which shows yet again, people are making money from them and paying them peanuts."

U4: "You're wrong. There's no happiness in the cities, but in these places life is real and the people are genuine, with happiness in their eyes. Who have you ever seen who looks like

that? Factory workers? Collective farm workers? Office workers? Who!?!"

U5: "These Happy People really are happy. What use is civilization to them? Ask them, do you need a saw mill, a pulp and paper mill, an apartment in a high-rise block with a heated toilet?? . . . These people have made their choice and they are fine and healthy to look at. These people are the salt of Great Russia."

U6: "What can I say? These people have integrity. . . . What amazed me is was the incredibly pure speech of the people in the village; their ability to speak and express their thoughts, especially the hunters. . . ."

U7: "Yes, that's right! That surprised me at first. But then I realized—people with that sort of integrity don't depend on other people's opinions, they aren't afraid of solitude—solitude teaches them to think while they are on their own, they live in harmony with nature and find true happiness in this way of life, they think and reason wisely. . . ." (Vasiukov 2014).

The success of these video products and others like them in a popular online setting is largely due to the widespread existence of a "nostalgic" mindset which laments the disappearance of a vanished world of integrity and harmony. In the minds of many users, this world is connected with the idea of "unspoilt nature" which remains far in the past and presents a sharp contrast to the everyday realities of urban life with its many problems.

SPATIAL IDENTITY: THE CIVILIZATIONAL STRAND IN DIGITAL NARRATION

Everyday, "vernacular" geopolitical perceptions in the Russian regions are intrinsically linked to civilizational ideas. The concept of *civilization* (*Russian civilization, Russian national and civilizational identity*), actively used by the ideological apparatus of central government over the last twenty years in the course of constructing the political nation (Lapkin and Pantin 2004; Kondakov 2010; Pantin 2011; Zhade 2014), has also become popular in regional communities who use it to validate their own sociopolitical and economic importance and affirm their own distinctive spatial identity. Since the beginning of the 2000s, discourse on *local civilization* has determined the agenda for the mediated social environment in the larger Russian regions. At present, the influence of several factors on local communities guarantee the dissemination of this idea: these include political and legislative, socio-economic, historical and cultural, ethnocultural, social, and psychological factors. In other words, the manifold challenges in the Russian regions are, in regional communities, translated into a map of *civilizational differences*.

In creating the idea of a local civilization that may be applied to this or that Russian region, an important role is played by the educated community of a given area: its historians, ethnographers, archaeologists, and philologists. These are the people who offer regional communities explanatory concepts designed to affirm the spatial integrity of a region and the unbroken dynamic of its historical development. The development of a *regional* (*local*) *civilization* is portrayed in such stories as the centuries-old history of some unique, collective organic body, whose distinct character requires international geo-political recognition and

which deserves to take its rightful place in the modern world. For example, in the 1900s and early 2000s, the outline of an idea of a Siberian civilization began to take shape in the Russian sociohumanitarian consciousness (Tiugashev 2007; Tomilov 1992, 2006, 2014), as did the idea of a Turko-Tatar and Golden Horde civilization (Khakimov 2002, 2008), a Bulgar — Povolzh'e civilization (Davletshin and Khuzin 2011), and a circumpolar, Arctic civilization (Vinokurova 2011), etc.

The idea of *local civilization* is now being actively produced and promoted in regional educational organizations and in the public sphere, as well as in literature and the mass media.

The content of "regional" stories consists of ideas and images that mirror Russian-wide ideological and mythological constructs of a *special path*. Stories about local civilizations and the unique character of each region reproduce semantic constructs of civilized discourse employed in historiosophical and geopolitical works on Russia's place in history and the modern world. Those who create stories about *local civilizations* tend to adopt ready-made images and language wholesale from works of this sort, using them as a simple, accessible means to elevate the status of a particular Russian region in the nation as a whole and in the world.

Social media are actively involved in the process of creating *local civilizations* within territorial or imaginary boundaries in the Russian regions. In YouTube content (amateur videos, movies, clips from local television programs, videos made by regional political and public organizations, all of them accompanied by the active commentary of ordinary users) the idea of *local civilizations* is visualized and verbalized using simple explanatory models widely used in mass education and social communication. These ideas form the core of digital stories about the specific qualities of regional communities, both historically and in the present day.

As people create digital stories, they draw on common-knowledge spatial paradigms, stereotypes, sketchy narrative constructs concerning collective memory and group identification. There is an array of such digital stories on YouTube concerning unique identities (Siberian, Ural, Perm, Samaran, Iakut, etc.) in the context of some *special civilization* (Siberian, Ural, Arctic, etc.). Concepts such as *antiquity*; *greatness*; *unique character*; *spiritual values*; *one's "own" path* (civilizational choice) form the focal point of such stories.

To take an example, one of these stories (a clip from a report by a regional television company in Omsk, posted by an ordinary user on YouTube) is constructed around the idea of the historical superiority of Siberian civilization over other civilizations in the world. When describing the content of the video, the user not only cites "scholarly opinion" but greatly intensifies the modality of his own statements:

Two kilometres from Omsk, archeologists have discovered traces of an ancient Siberian civilization. Experts call the ancient settlers of the village by the name "Sargatians," after the name of the village [Sargatskoie], which is near the excavations. "These tribes were on the same cultural level as the well-known culture of the Scythians!!!" In the Stone Age they had mastered the art of producing TITANIUM from ore and other technologies still unknown to us today!!! (Evgenii Petrushenko, Sargaty 2012)

In digital narratives about regional identity, YouTube users suggest various answers to the question "Who Are We?", which incorporate various ideas (everyday, social, political,

artistic) about the geopolitical niche occupied by their "own" region in history and in relation to the rest of the world.

The content of such stories is largely determined by an array of "grey" hybrid information (a mixture of public, common, and specialized knowledge) about mysterious, unexplored phenomena and objects in world civilizations, past and present, information spread throughout society by means of traditional and new media. The producers of this information—television channels, public interest groups, movements of various ideological and political coloring, popular social commentators and others—present their products to a mass audience as documentary, popular science, and educational material.

Of central importance to these media products is the idea of civilizations of great antiquity on the territory of Russia (in various Russian regions, the Central region, the South, the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East). These include the ancient Sunghir settlement in Vladimir Oblast (which shows that twenty-five thousand years ago people had a mastery of techniques beyond the reach of modern man), the ancient observatory in Arkaim in the southern Urals (which supposedly existed long before Stonehenge), the wooden Shigir Idol in the Urals (created during the Mesolithic era, before the Egyptian pyramids), and the megaliths of ancient Altai (which are larger than the stones of the Baalbek terrace). These and other pieces of media evidence about "scientific discoveries" encourage ordinary YouTube users to create their own products which support the idea of the distinctive civilization and culture of their territories.

The collective content of digital narratives about the specific qualities of a particular Russian region is often shaped by competing cultural meanings and values. For example, one of many digital stories about the Republic of Sakha (Iakutia) posted on YouTube contains a narrative about the decisive role of the Iakutsk region in the development of an ancient Arctic civilization, a dramatic story about social problems experienced by indigenous peoples in Iakutia, and the visual presentation of a geocultural brand (Sakha7777 2009).

SPATIAL IDENTITY: THE POLITICAL STRAND IN DIGITAL NARRATION

The rise of social protest sentiments in the Russian center and in the larger regions in 2012–2013, together with active grassroots reactions in Russian society to the political events of 2013–2015 and the war in Ukraine are significantly affecting the way regional identity is presented in social media.

Inhabitants of the Volga region, the Urals, Siberia, the Far East, the Kaliningrad Oblast, and the Far North are showing an ever more marked awareness in their online communications, of the serious disparities in the social, economic, and everyday situation in the regions, and the lack of dialogue and mutual understanding between the administrative center and Moscow, on the one hand, and the outlying regions, on the other. In online social communication, this awareness of these inequalities is articulated as an affirmation of the colonial predicament of Russia's regions. These grassroots sentiments make the idea of spatial regional identity more current and encourage the trend toward territorial separation. (Remnev 2000; Fadeicheva 2007; Verkhoturov 2009; Anisimova and Iechevskaia 2012; Remnev, Zhigunova, and Suvorova 2012; Vasekha 2014).

Reminiscences of the unsuccessful attempts to gain political autonomy for Western Siberia and the Urals in the 1990s are being widely broadcast, both in local intellectual communities and online. The story of Siberian *oblastnichestvo* (regionalism), a widespread social and political movement among the Siberian intellectual community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose members developed and attempted to realize the idea of self-determination, autonomy, and possibly the future independence of Siberia from Russia, is now a topic of particular interest and lively debate (Shilovskii 2008; Remnev 2011; Zhigunova 2014).

In new digital narratives, ideas about *local civilization* are changing noticeably. Narratives about the *distinct civilizational character* of particular regions and their *cultural and historical uniqueness* are becoming important arguments used to justify territorial separation (autonomy or independence). Concepts such as *federalization* are appearing in digital stories about spatial regional identity, but the familiar meanings of these concepts are being transformed by users of social media in keeping with the current political context. The core content of such stories is a conglomerate of visual and verbal constructs designed to prove the unequal status of the regions under the system of the Russian federative state, social and economic injustice on the part of the Center, colonial "oppression" of the regions, etc.

One of these stories has at its center an amateur video (by user Olga Smakova) "Siberia: a Promised Land." In this video, a "pseudo-scientific" narrative about archaeology and the unique ancient history of Western Siberia is combined with a discussion of the probability of a global manmade disaster and the subsequent revival of world civilization. The author argues that Western Siberia will, in future, be a "Noah's Ark" for those who have survived the "end of the world." With 160,000 views, this video is accruing a multilinear verbal narrative consisting of comments from storytellers from various regions of Russia. In the course of the collective commentary to the video, notable semantic and thematic shifts can be seen to take place:

U8: "We need to show films like this to schoolchildren and to our children in general, rather than exposing them to American propaganda which tells them that they are not one of the most ancient peoples of the world. People need to watch films like these, it's absolutely vital for our national spiritual development . . ."

U9: "Guys, fellow Siberians, our Siberian soil is full of riches. We have forests, and underground mineral resources, oil and gas. But we send up to 80 percent of all our profits and taxes to Moscow. Only after Moscow's deputies have filled their pockets do we get a little of this money back in our budget. Why do we need this? Nature itself has divided us from them. The Ural Mountains are a natural border between those parasites and us. We have our own history and our own Siberian culture."

U10: "But separation from the centre won't help—it will only aid the collapse of Siberia and its conquest by the Chinese. . . ."

U11: "As always . . . it sounds good, and since the Maidan, comments like this have begun to invade every YouTube clip possible. No, my friend. Russia needs to be big and strong! By the

same token you could break Siberia up into several zones. I'm writing this as a resident of Novosibirsk and a patriot of our lands."

U12: "It's interesting how comments against the secession of Siberia are all written by Russians who understand that Siberians will separate from them and that will be the end of it. . . . and soon we'll see a new stage in the colonization of Siberia: after being abandoned by Siberia, all the people from Muscovy will rush to Siberia to save their skins" (Smakova 2012).

In the course of making these comments, users trace out a hybrid identity that combines features of spatial and regional identity with features of geo-political identity.

In digital stories of regional identity and the commentaries to them, it is possible to detect a broadening of meaning and a "resemanticizing" of traditional concepts, such as the term *People's Republic*. Between 2013 and 2015 a number of videos created by activists in radical regional organizations with arresting names such as: *the Kuban People's Republic*, *the People's Republic of Kaliningrad, the People's Republic of the Urals*, *the People's Republic of the Far East*, and so on, have been successfully promoted on YouTube. In this case it is clear to see that the new political language generated in the offline public sphere as a result of the events in South-East Ukraine has had a considerable impact on users of social media.

One example is a video with the title "No More Feeding Moscow! Free Siberia!" In choosing a title for this story the authors have adapted the slogan "No More Feeding the Caucasus," which has enjoyed wide popularity in Russian society in recent years. The clip is a digital account of the cultural and historical identity of Siberia, the history of its colonization by European Russia, and of its attempts to gain regional self-determination during the nineteenth century. Central to the story is the phenomenon of *Siberian regionalism* (*oblastnichestvo*). The story culminates with the idea that it is vital to allow Siberia freedom from the center of power in Moscow. Extensive comments on the video semantically extend the story of the Siberian past to embrace contemporary politics.

U13: "If it weren't for Russian freeloaders, Siberia would be a rich country with a standard of living as good as Switzerland's. Siberians, throw off this dead weight which is just pulling you down and start to live with dignity!!!"

U14: "Siberia is a colony of Russia! If it weren't for parasitic Moscow, my native city, Krasnoyarsk, would be the capital of a wealthy country with a standard of living as high as Switzerland but with a territory the size of Europe. . . . Siberia needs self-determination, quickly. Right now we are a Russian colony."

U15: "Well, nobody's interested in keeping the Siberians. If they want their own country let them have a referendum."

U16: "What "own country?" We already have our "own countries": Tyumen' Siberia, Central Siberia, Yenisei's Siberia, etc., but they have no political rights, nor do they have adequate economic and geographical autonomy." U17: "I live in Kemerovo and I don't think, I *know,* that the vast majority here are in favour of greater autonomy or secession. . . . we say that the countries of Siberia, the Volga region, the Urals and the Caucasus are colonies of Russia. . . .

our demands (which should be taken to a nationwide referendum): are for military conscripts to serve in the territory of their own federal district, for 90% of all taxes collected in any federal district to remain within that district, and for customs duties on imported goods . . . to be determined in each federal district. The people of each locality should make the decisions which concern that locality."

U18: "And I say Siberia is not a colony at all. And if you're so desperate to go, then you should state clearly that you want to go back to the days of the Siberian Khanate, that you see Yermak as the first invader. . . . And that you want to live in yurts, like in the days of Kuchum Khan (in the 16th century—G.Z.). I myself am a Siberian and I can't associate ravings of this sort with my fellow countrymen. . . . We need to change the Constitution, not tear the country apart, for the sake of power and money. . . ."

Another example of such transformation of the political content in digital stories about spatial regional identity is one of the many videos on the topic of the *federalization* of Siberia. The clip states:

> Siberia requires a real federation, not just the semblance of one. On August 17th in Novosibirsk there will be a "March for the Federalization of Siberia." Siberians are going to go out on the streets to demand autonomy from Moscow and the creation of a Siberian Republic within the Russian Federation, or for the regions to be given the same rights as republics. Kaliningrad has already joined the initiative and has promised to hold a march on the same day. Members of the public are already speaking about the possibility of establishing a republic in the Urals region and Kuban.

User comments to the video itself increase the performativity of this story:

U19: "Enough of feeding Moscow!!!!! Give us the SPR!!! Siberian People's Republic!!!"
U20: "I am ALL FOR IT. How does a Siberian People's Republic differ from the Lugansk People's Republic, for example?" (Moskva Maynidan 2014).

Signs of political regionalism and separatism as evidenced on YouTube will no doubt influence the level of online activism among users. Digital narratives about the spatial regional identity include features of heightened expression, aggressive modality, and performatism. However, many of the stories that express identificational tendencies among social media users never leave the realm of Internet communication.

Ordinary users of social media, including YouTube users, actively use information products such as popular digital stories, memes, and demotivators. They participate in discussions about them and often become storytellers themselves, taking on the role of critical or positive commentators. For the most part, however, the media activity of Internet users does not translate into offline public or political activity (Deviatkov and Makarychev 2012). Sociologists Anna Asinisimova and Olga Echevskaia, who have carried out fieldwork in a number of large Siberian cities, have accurately observed,

> At present we are seeing a lack of agreement between people's awareness of regional identity (which is based on a sense of injustice and often accompanied by the desire and willingness to do something to improve the poor state of affairs within the region) and civil activism *per se*, within the framework of which certain emerging regional interests may be expressed and realized (Siberians joining together to solve their shared problems). The local inhabitants are aware of many problems in their region and are able to show critical engagement in talking about these problems, the reason for their appearance of and persistence, but the majority of them are extremely reluctant to get involved in public activity related to these problems.

Siberian identity is not yet a strong enough unifying force to bring together the inhabitants of a region or even a single city. The development of solidarity based on shared Siberian identity is only taking place in small groups of civil and political activists, who confront the problems of their region, in the course of their work and experience a sense of resistance in connection with this. (Anisimova and Echevskaia 2012, 11–41)

While digital stories about political self-determination for the Russian regions express patterns of identification among the users of social media, they are seldom made manifest in grassroots social and political activity in the Russian regions.

At the same time, the existence of a huge body of content relating to collective spatial identity, and the intensive production, promotion, and consumption of mass content of this sort in the media does point to a growing need in society for an open, public discussion of regional identity in Russia in connection with the restructuring of the relationship between the Center and the regions, and with problems regarding changes in the mechanisms of central, regional and local government.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of digital narratives containing stories about the local and geopolitical spatial identity of the Russian regions opens up possibilities for a more complex understanding of the sociopolitical processes at work in modern Russia.

This study has identified three types of digital narrative about regional identity on YouTube. These stories are related to construction of three lines in collective spatial self-identification and all include a geopolitical factor to a greater or lesser extent.

The first type of digital story about regional identities is shaped by a geo-cultural vector on local spatial identification. User-storytellers present the specific sociocultural and ethnocultural characteristics of a spatial community of people within the boundaries of a local *territory* and the specific *place* it occupies. In such stories the role of commonly held ideas about the distinctive cultural and territorial identity of small regional communities is significantly increased. Stories of this sort not only support the argument that it is necessary to protect autonomous local cultures, but also encourage the promotion in the media of the idea of territorial regional diversification of Russian geopolitical interests.

The second type of digital storytelling, which is very common on YouTube, is part of a larger discourse on *civilization*. Here, storytellers seek to justify the significance of a particular region (territorial-administrative, "vernacular," or imaginary) in the context of the history of world civilization. In stories of this sort, regions are presented as unique *local civilizations*, with their own distinctive features, and occupying an important place in the modern global world. By building a "civilizational" vector into their stories of identity, ordinary users of YouTube are essentially redefining the semantic scope and limits of the concept of *local civilization* as they appear in Russian historiosophy and practical geopolitics.

The third type of digital story about regional spatial identities is associated with the construction of a political vector on territorial self-determination. Such stories reproduce notions about the distinctive qualities of particular regions (which may be either territorial-administrative or "vernacular") in line with anti-colonial discourse. The key to these

narratives is the re-semanticizing of the concept of *federalization*, which is used to argue for the revision of the strict vertical axis of Russian governmental control flowing from the centre to the regions.

All these three strands of discussion on spatial identity articulated in digital stories on YouTube play their part in changing public attitudes about the monolithic character of the geopolitical orientations and interests of the Russian State. The production and promotion of such stories in social media encourage the development of a "vernacular" regionalization in society and transform collective perceptions regarding the forms of territorial spatial identity in contemporary Russia.

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Part II

GEOPOLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Chapter Four

Uses of Eurasia

The Kremlin, the Eurasian Union, and the Izborsky Club

Andrei Tsygankov

This chapter analyzes Russia's Eurasia images and narratives, as developed by various political and ideological currents after the Soviet dissolution. More recently, such images and narratives have evolved in response to Vladimir Putin's (2011) proclaimed commitment to building a Eurasian Union (EsU) in the former Soviet region. Following Putin's introduced image of the EsU as an open space between the European Union and Asia Pacific, I propose to explore divergent visions of the EsU as they fit metaphors of fortress and bridge. In addition to the Kremlin's view, I analyze radically anti-Western discourse of Eurasia represented by the Izborsky Club (IC). Established in September 2012 with some involvement of state officials, the club is headed by Alexander Prokhanov and serves to combine those committed to understanding Eurasia as an imperial and autarchic system.

I argue that the Kremlin exploited some of their concepts and ideas while not sharing these ideas' radical implications and recommendations. Several writers overstated the dependence of Putin on ideas of the IC's members by presenting those as leading influences on his thinking on Ukraine and the EsU (e.g., Barbashin and Thoburn 2014; Snyder 2014). Crimea's annexation and Putin's new nationalist rhetoric seemed to point to his conversion to imperial nationalism. Imperial nationalists since the 1990s have advocated defending Russians across Eurasia and "re-unifying" all formerly Russian lands. Putin's exploitation of the nationalist rhetoric was unmistakable in his speech on Crimea, which includes over twenty references to "Russkii," rather than the more racially inclusive "Rossiiskii" (Putin 2014a) However, in practice, even while couching his vision in Eurasianist terms in order to reach out to traditional critics of the state, Putin kept political and ideological distance from radical nationalist organizations and ideas. This was demonstrated during the Ukraine crisis when the Kremlin refused to recognize separatist entities in the eastern Ukraine, let alone annex them in the manner of Crimea, as nationalists expected. Those who expected Putin to assemble the historic Russian lands were disappointed. While appropriating key concepts from the nationalist vocabulary, he continued to alternate them with ideas that nationalists find objectionable. Preservation of the power of the state remained his true priority and his exploitation of nationalism has more to do with American and European, rather than domestic, pressures. In the age of new media, methods of power and control are shifting from violence to dominance in the area of information. The IC and radical nationalist organizations increasingly market themselves online. The Kremlin seeks to remain competitive in the area of values and

soft power by establishing ties with various constituencies at home and abroad. The new ideology of conservative values as articulated by Putin assists the state with developing such ties internally in order to then project the new gained soft power externally.

Methodologically, the paper follows the schools of thought approach by establishing the meaning of Eurasia and the EsU on several interrelated levels, both state- and society-based (Tsygankov 2014). Each school may be defined as an idea-based community that has been formed in response to various historical developments. Together, schools of thought reveal the country's competing identities that constantly evolve and reproduce themselves across time and space. The approach helps to make sense of ideological and discursive currents within society during periods of its change or uncertainty.[1] By connecting those to position of the state, we learn to what extent various subjective meanings in Russia are shared across the spectrum and what distance, if any, the state maintains from various socially held views. By studying how the state justifies its ideas and policy and comparing those to perception of various social groups, we also have an opportunity to develop a rich understanding of official discourse, as well as tentatively assess state chances of future success or failure.

This chapter is organized in three parts. The next section describes the spectrum of images and narratives of Eurasia and the EsU. In the following section, I analyze the IC discourse and vision of the EsU. The last section explores the state complex relations with Eurasianists. A conclusion summarizes my findings.

VISIONS OF EURASIA AND THE ESU

Following the Soviet disintegration, Russian intellectuals and policy community advanced several discourses of Eurasia and the EsU. These discourses can be usefully understood by applying metaphors of a fortress and a bridge. While the "fortress" metaphor presents Eurasia as a community with fixed cultural, political, and economic boundaries shielded from the outside, particularly the Western world, the "bridge" makes sense of the region in terms of its relative openness to outside influences. Actual discourses are richer than the two proposed categories, and each metaphor should be viewed as a Weberian ideal type, rather than a definition of individual discourses. Indeed, the categories represent a continuum of attitudes from those relatively open to cooperation with the West to those isolationist and expansionist.[2]

The more globally-minded thinkers tend to view the EsU as a bridge between Europe and Asia and argue for a balance of the union's regional and international orientations. One school emphasizes the role of geoeconomic over geopolitical factors in the post-Cold War world. Geoeconomists defend the image of Russia's Eurasianist identity as that of "intersection" of various economic, as well as cultural, influences in the region. They view the world as culturally pluralist, but economically interdependent. According to this group, the main threats in the world are not of a politico-military nature, but rather have to do with economic backwardness and marginalization. Since the late 1990s, geoeconomists have advocated the idea of taking advantage of Russia's "intersection" position in the middle of Eurasia by developing a strategy of transregional development. One of the first (if not the first) was director of the Institute of the United States and Canada Sergei Rogov who proposed that

political solutions in Eurasia would come from Russia building the "communicational bridge" to connect the region's southern, western, and eastern peripheries. In particular, he argued that such design would benefit all those involved by shortening the length of networks of ground, air, and electronic transportation routes that link Europe and East Asia and preserving the region as economically open and politically stable (Rogov 1998). This thinking has come of age and today is defended by moderately pro-Western commentators who do not oppose the EsU, but argue that it must get rid of security mentality to be successful (e.g., Vinokurov and Libman 2012; Vinokurov 2013).[3] Politically, this vision is closer to those in Russia and Kazakhstan who are not comfortable with development of the EsU at the expense of ties with the outside world and who want the union to be centered on economic relations (Panfilova 2014).

Another school of thought is centered on Russia's political role in stabilizing Eurasia. Members of this school want the EsU to potentially serve functions of facilitating negotiations and maintaining peace in the continent. The key emphasis for supporters of this approach is political stabilization, which, they argue, must precede successful economic development (e.g., Gadzhiev 2007). Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenka advocates a more expansive vision of the EsU that would be responsible for delivering internal peace and order for its members. In Russia, such politically and state-minded approach is shared by many of those fearful of colored revolutions that over the last decade took place in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and the Middle East. They argue that in order to effectively play the role of a stabilizer, Russia must remain a great power and develop a policy of "multivector" cooperation with all major countries in the Eurasian region (Lukin 2014).

Others, more isolationist thinkers advocate Russia's concentration on mastering its own geographic, economic, and cultural resources before re-engaging with the outside world. The best known advocate of this approach was Vadim Tsymburski who proposed that Russia restrict its international responsibilities in Eurasia to neutralizing potential threats from peripheral areas. He argued that, while the danger of the region's destabilization was serious and could translate into a great war, Russia was sufficiently secure if it managed to guarantee a minimal peace within a buffer zone, or "the Great Limitrof" separating it from Europe and Asia by engaging in defensive balancing politics. Indeed, Tsymburski maintained that, while transitioning from the imperial status to that of the geopolitical "island," Russia remained an indispensable power.[4] In contrast to those focusing on external political stabilization, he concentrated on the country's internal developments and saw its greatest contribution to the continent's stability as stemming from Russia's domestic strength. This perspective was never widely shared in the country's intellectual and political circles. However, today those defending the objective of Russia's development in isolation from Europe are emboldened by the EU and the U.S.-imposed sanctions on the Russian economy following the Kremlin's support for eastern fighters in Ukrainian civil war (e.g., Glazyev 2014).

Finally, in response to the region's instability and the West's ill-conceived efforts to influence Eurasia since the colored revolutions,[5] another version of a fortress mentality developed in Russia and grew ever more powerful since the Ukraine crisis. This discourse presents Russia

as a culturally and politically anti-Western state dominant in the Eurasian region. Members of this group are associated with imperial clubs within the ruling United Russia and radical nationalist organizations such as the Izborsky club. They advocate restoration of empire in place of the former Soviet territory as the only viable political and economic entity and view the EsU as a prelude to development in this direction. This thinking attracts support from hard-line military and imperial nationalist political movements, such as "Eurasia," Communist Party of the Russian Federation, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party. The leading ideologists of this group include Alexander Prokhanov, Alexander Dugin, and others who formed the IC.

The Kremlin's perspective on Eurasia is complex and heterogeneous with different officials emphasizing different aspects of the EsU depending on their position and political contexts in which they speak. Traditionally, the state maintained distant relations from hard-line nationalist advocates of Eurasian unity under Russia's hegemony.[6] Vladimir Putin wanted to preserve Russia's great power status by cooperating with Western nations, rather than siding against them. He showed little interest in building a neo-Soviet empire and preferred to exercise influence in the region through informal channels and exploitation of Russia's soft power capital in Eurasia (Tsygankov 2006, 2013b). In fall 2011, Putin proposed to move beyond bilateral ties by building a new Eurasian Union among the CIS states. Despite Russia's growing tensions with the West, he emphasized an open nature of the proposed union and laid out economic incentives from joining it, including increase in trade, common modernization projects, and improved standards of living.

More recently, however, the Russian state has become more responsive to arguments and rhetoric of imperial nationalists. Beginning with his election campaign, Putin has promoted the vision of Russia as a culturally distinct power, committed to defending particular values and principles relative to those of the West and other civilizations. In July 2012, in his meeting with Russia's ambassadors he called to actively influence international relations by relying on the tools of lobbying and soft power (Putin 2012c). In his 2012 address to the Federation Council, Putin (2012d) spoke of new demographic and moral threats that must be overcome if the nation is to "be preserved and reproduced." He further stated that "In the 21st century amid a new balance of economic, civilizational and military forces Russia must be a sovereign and influential country. . . . We must be and remain Russia." Inside the country, the president advanced the idea of state-civilization by recognizing ethnic Russians as "the core (*sterzhen'*) that binds the fabric" of Russia as a culture and a state (Putin 2012a). While proposing to unite the country around Russian values, Putin also argued against "attempts to preach the ideas of building a Russian 'national,' mono-ethnic state" as "contrary to our entire thousand-year history" and "the shortest path to the destruction of the Russian people and the Russian state system."[7] Being especially concerned with national unity, Putin pointed to "deficit of spiritual values" and recommended strengthening "the institutions that are the carriers of traditional values" especially family and schools. In multiple statements, he further criticized what he saw as Europe's departure from traditional religious and family values. In his Valdai Club speech, he quoted Russian traditionalist thinkers and declared "the desire for independence and

sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and foreign policy spheres" as an "integral part of our national character" (Putin 2013b). In his 2013 address to the Federation Council, Putin (2013c) further positioned Russia as a "conservative" power and the worldwide defender of traditional values.

The new emphasis on distinct civilizational values implies that the Kremlin's thinking on the EsU has moved beyond the initial emphasis on economic openness and toward viewing it as a self-sufficient cultural and power entity. Increasingly, Russia seeks to position the EsU as a community of political and cultural values that include national unity and sovereignty in foreign affairs. In response to nationalist critics, the Kremlin proposed an active values-based international agenda that includes rebuilding global ties and building the Eurasian Union as a new cross-ethnic community and a civilizational alternative to the European Union. This is further confirmed by Russia's position on the Ukrainian Maidan revolution. Until the revolution, Moscow was relying on economic tools and diplomacy in relations with Kiev. In 2011, Russia invited Ukraine to join the Customs Union, promising a major discount for gas prices (Sidorenko 2011). Although Ukrainian leaders declined the offer, the Kremlin kept pressing the issue. In November 2013, following President Victor Yanukovich's decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, Putin gave Ukraine a major discount in energy prices and pledged $15 billion in aid. However, in response to the revolutionary change of power in Kiev, Russia's rhetoric changed and incorporated a critique of new Ukrainian values as incompatible with those in Russia and Eurasia. In his press conference on March 4, 2014, Putin (2014a) referred to Ukraine as the "rampage of Nazi, nationalist, and anti-Semitic forces."

THE IC'S VISION OF THE ESU

The IC came to represent Russia's shift toward a more imperial nationalistic perception of Eurasia and the EsU. In contrast to those advocating modernization, those prioritizing defense of sovereignty and cultural distinctiveness have grown increasingly influential in political and policy circles. Officials such as Vladimir Yakunin, minister of Railroad Transportation, advanced the notion of Russia-civilization in their speeches and public writing (Yakunin 2012, 2013). A number of Orthodox priests, including Patriarch Kirill, endorsed the idea of Russia's religion-centered civilizational distinctiveness. Politicians from the relatively marginal to the well-established ones, such as the Communist Party leader Gennadi Ziuganov regularly spoke on issues of Russia's national interests as tied to Eurasian geopolitics and self-sufficiency. Several clubs were established to promote the idea of Russia's distinct civilizational values. The IC was founded on September 8, 2012, to serve as an umbrella organization that combines intellectuals, experts, and politicians of Eurasianist, neo-Soviet, and Slavophile convictions affiliated with the ROC and various nationalist media and think tanks. The IC maintains an active web presence with regular news coverage and updated analytical reports.[8] The club was established in opposition to the more liberal and government-affiliated Valdai club. Vladimir Medinsky was present at the inaugural meeting of the club, and executive secretary at the Eurasian Economic/Customs Union Commission, Sergei Glazyev, holds membership.

Increasingly, following the Ukrainian revolution, the IC members enjoy state support in disseminating their ideas via mainstream and state-controlled media. For example, Alexander Prokhanov, Alexander Dugin, and Nikolai Starikov now contribute regular columns to *Izvestii* and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*. Starikov also became a co-chairman of the pro-Kremlin Anti-Maidan movement.

The distinct feature of the IC is its objective to bridge Orthodox and Eurasianist ideas of Russia's distinctiveness under its umbrella. The club's founder is Aleksander Prokhanov, the editor of radical newspaper *Zavtra* with long-standing sympathy for imperial and Eurasianist ideas. A prominent activist and writer, Prokhanov is an advocate of bridging Soviet and Eurasianist ideas with those of tsarist Russia. For example, while endorsing the idea of Russia's cultural self-standing, the two camps did not agree on the role of ethnic Russians in the new civilization. The ROC positioned Russia as an essentially white, European nation that has historically had to coexist with and be tolerant of Islam. Eurasianists, however, saw Europe as the most prominent threat and argued that in the process of interaction with Muslim people, Russia became a special cultural symbiosis of Slavic and Turkic influences. Politically, ROC has been close to the Kremlin and generally oriented toward the status quo, whereas many Eurasianists activists critiqued the official position and advocated aggressive steps toward rebuilding Russia as Eurasian civilization.

Still, despite their attempts to bridge Orthodox and Eurasianist ideas into a "red-white" synthesis as essential for preserving Russia's national unity, the club generates largely neo-Soviet Eurasianist ideas. In addition to the idea of unified history "beyond red and white," the IC promotes ideas of Stalin-like development project and social mobilization; the establishment of Eurasia as an economically, politically, and culturally autarchic regional union; and severing of ties with Western nations as the source of Russia's most important cultural and geopolitical threats. These ideas underly the club's public reports "Po tu storonu krasnykh i belykh" (Beyond the reds and whites), "Strategiya 'bol'shogo ryvka'" (The strategy of a big breakthrough), "Izborsky klub o evraziiskoi integratsii" (The Izborsky club on Eurasian integration), "Anonimnaia voina" (The anonimous war), "Setevye voiny" (The network wars), "Psykhoistoricheskaia voina" (The psycho-historic war).[9] Orthodox and Slavophile activists may find objectionable an acceptance of the Soviet legacy and a reliance on Stalin as a prototypical leader or entering a geopolitical alliance with China and the Islamic world against Europe and the United States. So far, of the thirty listed permanent members of the IC only two can be viewed as associated with ROC views. These two are Natalya Narochnitskaya and Archimandrit Tikhon (Shevkunov). Others are better known as experts, politicians, and media activists sharing Eurasianist and neo-Soviet views. Among them are Vitaly Averyanov, Zhores Alferov, Sergei Cherniakhovskii, Sergei Glazyev, Leonid Ivashev, Alexander Dugin, Mikhail Leonti'ev, Maxim Kalashnikov, Shamil' Sultanov, and others.[10] Their radical ideas go beyond the Kremlin's officially stated conservative values which include those of sovereignty, strong state, and traditional family (Tsygankov 2015). While conservatives and radical imperial nationalists share commitment to certain unifying values such as Orthodox Christianity, strong state, and the special role of Russia in Eurasia, they

advocate different methods of preserving those values. Conservatives do not support a forced Stalin-like industrialization in isolation from Europe and continue to oppose the Eurasian Union's autarchic development.

Overall, attempts by the IC or other organizations to articulate a coherent program for Russia as a distinct civilization are yet to be effective in terms of rallying support within the political class sufficient to persuade the Kremlin to act on their ideas. The IC's main priorities remain different from those of the officials. The latter, judged by Putin's public speeches and statements, include the exercise of foreign policy flexibility and working relations with both Western and non-Western nations; the establishment of Eurasian Union as a bridge between the European Union and Asia Pacific region; and the preservation of a relative openness of Russia's economy to global influences. In response to Western sanctions against the Russian economy, Russian imposed its own sanctions against European agricultural products, but the Kremlin remained keenly interested in preserving strong ties with the EU (Voice of Russia 2014).

Table 4.1 compares the IC's images and policy recommendations with those of Putin.

Table 4.1. Images and Policy Recommendations: The IC Compared to Putin

	IC	Putin
Foreign policy	Anti-Western alliance with China and Iran	Flexibility under global uncertainty
Eurasian Union	Regional autarchy	Bridge between EU and Asia Pacific
Domestic priorities	Stalin-like "breakthrough"	Limited industrialization and social obligations

The IC and Putin's perception of the EsU's rationale, ties with the outside world, and compatibility with European values diverge considerably. Although the Kremlin is clearly interested in developing the union into a powerful economic and political bloc, it has no ambition to turn it into an autarchic anti-Western entity favored by the IC. Putin wants to overcome Russia's backwardness via a limited integration with the outside world—both Western and non-Western—whereas the IC views the West as the main threat to Russia's development. The latter perceives global economic processes as fundamentally inconsistent with Russia's objectives of Stalin-like "breakthrough" (e.g., Deliagin 2013; Glazyev 2014)

The thinking about the EsU in terms of obtaining qualities of an inter-cultural bridge is alien to the club's ideologists who define Eurasia as a distinct culture-civilization closed off of external influences. As advocated by Dugin (2013), the EsU should develop in the direction of integration within "natural civilizational borders" with "unified geopolitical, strategic, economic, and political structure." Alternatively, Putin's vision is to develop a measurable degree of regional cohesiveness and sovereignty held by the EsU members, while establishing multiple economic links with both the EU and Asia-Pacific region. It remains to be seen whether this vision will further progress in the anti-Western direction. The hardening of Putin's anti-Western discourse after the Ukraine's revolution was not predetermined and will be shaped by Russia's external and internal developments.

Previously, Putin's civilizational discourse allowed room for moderate interpretations of the term. In particular, he spoke about "universal principles of democracy and market economy" and civilizational values as a way to adapt to those principles. Russia's official documents continue to present the country as an "organic" part of European civilization. The Foreign Policy Concept signed by Putin into law in February 2013 describes the world in terms of a "rivalry of values and development models within the framework of the universal principles of democracy and the market economy" (Kontseptsiia 2013). Although Putin feels threatened by the West's human rights rhetoric and is concerned with the European Union and the United States' international policies, he continues to value their contribution to global civilization and Russia's development. Even while being critical of the European states' policies, Putin (2012b) commonly presents Russia as "an inalienable and organic part of Greater Europe." Nor is the contemporary Kremlin's civilizational discourse alien to the notion of dialogue between different cultures in the world. On many occasions, Russia's officials have advocated the importance of cross-cultural dialogue in the world by positioning their country as respectful of both Western and non-Western/Islamic values (Putin 2012b, 2013a).

Finally, Putin finds Russia's values to be partially compatible with those of Europe. His defense of "traditional" values and critique of minority rights, as well as his positioning of Russia as a "conservative" power seeks to highlight his country's compatibility with "genuine" European values. However harsh Putin might have been in attacking the EU position on the Ukraine crisis, he never went as far as to compare European policies toward the Eurasian region to those of Adolf Hitler. Alternatively, the IC made no distinction between the Europe of Napoleon, Hitler, and Angela Merkel by presenting the continent's values as fundamentally incompatible with those of Russia.[11]

Table 4.2. Rationale, Ties, and Values of the EsU: The IC Compared to Putin

	IC	Putin
Rationale	Regional autarchy	Bridge between Europe and Asia
Ties with the outside world	Isolation from the West	Limited integration with West and Asia
Compatibility with European values	Incompatible	Partially compatible

THE KREMLIN AND THE IC

The Kremlin does not seem threatened by the IC and seeks to influence, rather than undermine, the movement represented by the club. This is evident in particular from the supportive role by the officials from Medinsky to Glazyev in the club's establishment and evolution. Indeed, it seems that the state is increasingly relying on the IC's ideas and political development for shoring up the Kremlin's legitimacy. Putin's state remains internally vulnerable due to absence of unifying ideas or myths that help to manage internal diversity and preserve national unity. In a systematized form, such myths constitute an ideology of relationships between the core and minority ethnic groups, on the one hand, and between the unified national self and the outside world, on the other.

Management of diversity is an essential problem of nation-building, and every ideology seeks to preserve national unity by creating common values—typically by proposing socially compelling interpretations of historic events—and disseminating these values across the socially defined national space. Russia has traditionally solved the national unity/ethnic diversity problem by introducing a transnational idea, or an idea with cross-ethnic and cross-cultural appeal. Initially, such was the Eastern Christian idea that provided various Slavic tribes with concepts of social unity and justice. Although tensions between the Russians and other nationalities were a part of the empire's existence, these tensions were not as pronounced as in other, overseas empires.[12] At a later stage of the Russian Empire's existence, Russians had to learn to coexist with Islam, and supported those Muslim authorities that were willing to submit to the empire's general directions.[13] Under the Soviet system, the state sought to further integrate Muslim communities by introducing secular communist ideology as a new transnational idea. Even members of some of the most independent Islamic nationalities, such as the Chechens, generally accepted the new system. Despite Stalin's mass deportation of Chechens to Central Asia in 1944, most of them did not collaborate with Hitler during World War II and fought bravely on the Soviet side. Many Chechen intellectuals also fully shared the vision of diverse nationalities' coexistence within the framework of a single Soviet state, and supported Gorbachev's idea of democratic reform (Gakayev 2005). However, the collapse of the Soviet state ended the appeal of the communist transnational idea and created a vacuum of values. Following the 1991 dissolution, Russians have lacked a national idea of unity and justice, as well as the state capacity to enforce unified rules across the nation. At home, multiple interethnic riots have taken place, and ethnic Russians have developed strong resentments toward immigrants from Central Asia, Caucasus, and China.[14] Abroad—in part due to the lacking moral vision—Russia is frequently perceived as a corrupt power with a ruling elite preoccupied with political survival and personal enrichment, rather than the advancement of national ideals.

The IC assists the state in its search for a new national idea and forging a greater loyalty among elites and ethnic groups. The language of national unity appeals to various elite strata and supporters of Russia's cultural distinctiveness. It helps to deflect the domestic appeal of ethnic nationalism, appear supportive of a dialogue with Islam, and remain critical of Western human rights pressures at the same time. It also strengthens the Kremlin's bond with the masses by identifying the conservative majority sympathetic with the notion of Russia's distinct values, as opposed to the more cosmopolitan and West-leaning middle class.

Externally, the Russian state feels vulnerable to pressures of Western democracy promotion and the radicalization of the Islamic world. The Kremlin views the Western language of democracy and human rights as a form of cultural pressure from those who seek to justify the legitimacy of hegemonic and military actions toward others from the former Yugoslavia to Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Fearing that democracy promotion is aimed at regime change in Russia, the Kremlin also insists that military interventions radicalize the local population and isolate moderates. Russian analysts and politicians often speak of special relations with Muslims but differentiate between moderate and radical Islamists. Putin on numerous occasions expressed

his respect for traditional Islam as integral to Russia's religious, cultural, and social fabric by separating such Islam from "all forms of religious intolerance and extremism."[15] From Russia's point of view, what began as a counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan with relatively broad international support turned into a "war of civilizations," or a U.S. crusade against Muslims. As a result, the Westernist and radical Islamist trends collided and spread violence and instability across the world (Tsygankov 2013a).

Despite the Kremlin's relations with and a partial reliance on the IC's ideas, the state is not overly dependent on those ideas. Although Putin's exploitation of the rhetoric of civilizational values is unmistakable, he remains noncommittal on the IC's hard-line civilizational agenda and preserves flexibility that he needs for addressing priorities of state power preservation. While appropriating key concepts from the IC's vocabulary, he uses those in a non-essential way by merging them with ideas that the club's members would find objectionable.[16] A meaningful historical parallel here is with Nicholas I's relations with Slavophiles during the Crimean War. Nicholas was sympathetic with the some of the Slavophiles' ideas such as their vision of Russia as the only representative of "true" Europe.[17] He also favored providing more support for pro-Russian revolutionaries in the Balkans. Soon after the beginning of the Crimean War, the Slavophile Mikhail Pogodin sent a letter to Nicholas urging him to provide strong support to all revolutionaries who were the Slavs and fought against Turkey and Austria. Nicholas wrote a positive response (Curtiss 1979, 37), yet was not driven by those ideas in his actions toward the Ottoman Empire. He never endorsed the Slavophiles' urge to topple Constantinopole and did not provide the full-fledged assistance expected by the Slavophiles for the Slav and Orthodox revolutionaries, just as Putin did not act on nationalist expectations by sending troops to eastern Ukraine.

Putin's flexibility was made possible due to the IC's lack of organizational cohesiveness and domestic influence. Similarly, with Slavophiles in the mid-nineteenth century, the IC lacks influence and resources to mobilize public opinion and integrate the nationalist movement. In particular, the IC failed to integrate diverse and competing nationalist ideas of Eurasianists and Slavophile Orthodox activists. The larger social factors also complicate the task of strengthening political influence of radical nationalism in Russia. Economic stagnation makes elites and the public skeptical of isolation from the outside, particularly European, world. In addition, Western leaders' commitment toward isolating Russia is lacking. Although Western nations continued to mistrust Russia following the Soviet disintegration and even introduced sanctions against prominent members of Putin's entourage in response to the Kremlin's Ukraine policies, these sanctions are not strong enough to have the required isolation effect. Increasingly, Western commentators are aware of the dangers of trying to punish Russia for its annexation of Crimea and actions aimed at destabilizing the east and south of Ukraine (Aris 2014; Adomanis 2014; MacFarquhar and Herszenhorn 2014).

CONCLUSION

The chapter has argued that the Kremlin continues to exploit ideas of radical Eurasianism pragmatically by pursuing its own priorities regarding the establishment of the EsU. The age of

new media makes the state more vulnerable to criticisms, but also provides it with new opportunities to consolidate power without resorting to violence by, instead, reaching out to different constituencies and establishing flexible information dominance. The state needs to appeal to different domestic and foreign constituencies and cannot become a hostage of the IC's nationalist vision of Eurasia. Putin's regime seeks to maintain an equal distance from anti-Western nationalists and pro-Western liberals alike. The state also has sufficient resources to be ideologically flexible and noncommittal on the hardline nationalist agenda. Such adaptability is made possible due to Russian nationalists' lack of organizational cohesiveness and domestic influence. The diverse and competing nationalist ideas of Eurasianism and the Slavophile Orthodox Empire remain poorly integrated and the two movements eye each other with suspicion. The IC was created to bridge Eurasianist ideas with those of tsarist Russia, but ended up serving as another voice of neo-Soviet Eurasianism. Larger social factors also complicate the task of strengthening political influence of nationalism in Russia. Economic stagnation makes an important strata of elites and the public skeptical of isolation from the outside, particularly European, world. Future crises in Russia's relations with the West are likely, but the state will continue to guard its autonomy and flexibility in relations with Eurasianist nationalists.

NOTES

1. Themes of these essay are further explored in Tsygankov (2015).

2. I follow here my earlier classification of Russian Eurasianist thinking (Tsygankov 2003). For other helpful classifications, see Bassin and Aksenov (2006), Laruelle (2012), and Richardson (2015).

3. For opposition to the EsU from pro-Western liberal perspective, see for example, Inozemtsev (2013).

4. For more on his views, see Tsymburski (2007). Many of his articles are assembled by the site *Russki Arkhipelag* at http://www.archipelag.ru. Tsymburski passed away in December 2009.

5. For analysis of Russia and Western nations' less than constructive role in Eurasia, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, "The Heartland No More: Russia's Weakness and Eurasia's Meltdown," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2012).

6. For the argument about hard-line nationalists' failure to shape Russia's foreign policy until the mid-2000s, see Tsygankov (2009).

7. Along these lines, the new official nationalities strategy until 2025 signed by Putin in December 2012 reintroduced Russia as a "unique socio-cultural civilization entity formed of the multi-people Russian nation" and, under pressures of Muslim constituencies, removed the reference to ethnic Russians as the core of the state (*Kommersant*, December 19, 2012).

8. The web address of the club is http://www.dynacon.ru/esovet/. The reports have been appearing on the site since the early 2013.

9. Available on line: http://www.dynacon.ru/esovet/.

10. The full list is available here: http://www.dynacon.ru/lpr/izborsk.php.

11. For example, in his report Leonid Ivashev (2013) argued that the Nazi's *Drang nach Osten* ("push toward the East") reflected what today should be viewed as *Drang nach Norden* by Anglo-Saxonian elites, the main objective of which is to destroy Russia.

12. As Geoffrey Hosking wrote, "annexed territories became full components of the empire as soon as practicable" (Hosking 1997, 40).

13. Since Catherine the Great, Russians even served as arbitrator in disputes between Muslims from the Volga River to Central Asia (Crews 2006).

14. According to polls, a majority of Russians associate immigrants with crime and want their number to be reduced. See, for example, "Number Of Russians Hostile To Other Nationals Increased To 50%," *Interfax*, October 16, 2012; "Russia: Recent Polls Show Growing Patriotism, Anti-Immigrant Sentiment," *RIA Novosti*, November 28, 2012.

15. "Islam is inseparable part of Russia's society and culture—Putin," www.russiatoday.com, August 30, 2012.

16. Paul Richardson (2015) makes a similar argument by proposing that Putin seeks to borrow from two distinct visions of Russia as a Euro-Pacific and Neo-Eurasianist power.

17. Unlike Westernizers, Slavophiles were convinced that the West was finished in its role as the world's leader and that Russia must now become the capital of world civilization (Lincoln 1978, 250).

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Chapter Five

Digital Geopolitics Encapsulated

Geidar Dzhemal between Islamism, Occult Fascism, and Eurasianism

Marlene Laruelle

Geopolitics is conventionally defined as the study of international affairs through the prism of geographic variables. Largely delegitimized after the World War II because of its use by Nazi Germany, geopolitics saw a major revival after the end of the Cold War with, among many others, Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington 1996; also Kearns 2009; Bassin 2005). In this new conceptualization of geopolitics, world affairs are studied through the prism of the cultural, religious, and/or ethnic *longue durée*. This Geopolitics 2.0 has been successful in (re)integrating myriad, often conspiratorial, "meta-narratives" about the hidden aims or invisible forces and plots trying to manipulate state relations and state-society interactions. Geopolitics 2.0 also prospers thanks to the digital revolution. It can reach a large number of citizens across the world, and it reduces the status of mainstream knowledge by making the discourse of individuals equivalent to that of the state, scholars, or other experts. In just a few years, digital geopolitics—defined here as geopolitical meta-narratives disseminated online— has revolutionized the way many people interpret world events and connect with them, from the negation of the 9/11 terrorist acts to the Arab Spring's "Twitter revolutions."

There are some regions that are particularly sensitive to digital geopolitics: Western countries, especially the United States, where conspiratorial narratives against the federal government have been rife since the mid-twentieth century; the Middle East, where the fight against Israel has fed old analytical patterns about the West's supposed struggle against Islam through Jews; and post-Soviet Eurasia, where the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist regime fueled the need for alternate explanation about the loss of great power status (Laruelle 2012). Geidar Dzhemal, a well-known figure in Russia and one of the founders of Russia's Islamic geopolitics, has positioned himself at the intersection of these three strands of digital geopolitics. Dzhemal has pioneered a unique Islamic geopolitics that links calls for an Islamist political revolution with Russia's mainstream geopolitical narrative on Eurasia and references to European far-right esoteric theories that he cultivated since his time as a Soviet dissident.

AT THE INTERSECTION OF RUSSIAN NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL ISLAM

Dzhemal was born in Moscow in 1947 to a Russian mother from a bourgeois family of aristocratic descent and an Azerbaijani father who worked as an artist. His maternal grandfather, a professor, embraced classical German philosophy, whereas his paternal grandfather was a "red commissar" for the Nagorno-Karabakh region during the Bolshevik Revolution. Dzhemal's ideological trajectory is encapsulated in this dual heritage of German philosophy and the Muslim world. He has acknowledged the early influence of the German texts he found in his family's library—namely Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and to a lesser extent, Hegel (Dzhemal 1997b; "V gostiakh"). In 1965, he entered the Institute of Oriental Languages at Moscow State University—the same year as Vladimir Zhirinovsky—but was expelled two years later for "bourgeois nationalism." He refused to perform his mandatory military service and spent a short time in Soviet prisons and psychiatric hospitals. He later claimed to have been arrested six times during the Soviet decades ("Geidar Dzhemal o sebe, 'Yushinskom krushke' i Evgenii Golovine"). He then became an editor at the Meditsina publishing house, where he met Ilya Moskvin, a specialist in psychiatry who introduced him to the dissident Yuzhinsky Circle (Pozner).

The Yuzhinsky Circle deeply molded Dzhemal's worldviews. Formed in the 1960s around the "satanist" writer Yuri Mamleev, the Circle, critical of everyone from liberal dissidents to monarchists and Stalinist groups, called for a third way shaped by esotericism and metaphysics. The Circle drew on the traditionalism of the French intellectual René Guénon, Hermeticism, Gnosticism, Kabbalah, magic, and astrology. In the 1970s, driven by the dissident poet Evgeny Golovin, and Dzhemal, the younger members of the Circle went further in their search for counter-ideologies to Soviet doctrine. German philosophers, especially Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger, as well as the whole series of esoteric Fascist and Nazi theoreticians such as Julius Evola became must-reads among the Circle's members. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Golovin promoted the Circle as an "SS Black Order" and instituted a Masonic-style initiation ritual—with the addition of sex and unlimited alcohol. He wrote a hymn for the Black Order and proclaimed himself its *Reichsführer* (Chelnokov 2012). The reference to the Nazi ideology allowed the Circle to denounce the egalitarian ideology of the Soviet regime, blamed for the mediocrity of Soviet life, to question its roots in the Enlightenment and Christianity, and to call for a return to a pagan and Aryan society where men innately belonged to hierarchies or castes (Laruelle 2015; Umland and Shekhovtsov 2009).

From his decades in the Circle, Dzhemal took away a fascination with philosophy and meta-politics, knowledge of European right and far-right ideological traditions, and a strong eclecticism. In 1988, on the recommendation of Evgeny Golovin, Dzhemal and a young fellow thinker, Alexander Dugin, joined the Pamyat movement, the main "training ground" of Russian nationalism. But after only a few months on the movement's coordinating council, the two men were expelled for "contacts with émigré dissident groups with occult and Satanist tendencies, in particular with Yuri Mamleev" (Pribylovskii 1990, 25–26; see also Verkhovskii, Pribylovskii, and Mikhailovskaia 1998, 52). And yet, since then Dzhemal has continued to cultivate an ambivalent relationship with the Russian nationalist milieus (see below). However, he did not limit himself to exploring Western occultism and extreme-right

metaphysics. He also was drawn to Islam, his father's religion. Some sources suggest that he "converted" to Islam under the influence of Guénon, the founder of traditionalism (Analytical Group RB-21 vek, 2009), but it is not known whether Dzhemal's father was a practicing Muslim. In an interview, Dzhemal said that he always felt Muslim and anti-Soviet, even though he had been raised in a secular party family, and he did not begin to practice religion until his time in Tajikistan during the 1980s ("V gostiakh").

The broad geopolitical context greatly influenced Dzhemal's rally to Islam. The 1979 Iranian Revolution created shock waves in both the West and the Soviet Union. Moscow worried about the potential appeal of the revolution in Central Asia, particularly in the Persian-speaking (although majority Sunni) republic of Tajikistan. In 1973, Sayid Abdulloh Nuri, who was schooled in the teachings of the Islamic theologian Muhammadjon Hindustani, clandestinely organized a first Islamist movement in coordination with other religious leaders from the Kurgan-Teppe region. As early as 1979–1980, Dzhemal started to print Korans in *samizdat*, and in 1980 he went to Tajikistan to distribute them in the Zeravshan region and possibly in the Pamir Mountains, as well (Guzman *Shkola magov*, 2005). He published in *samizdat* a key text, "*Orientatsiia—Sever*" (Orientation to the North), which, with strong Hegelian influences, addresses the relationship between reality and the spirit and became a classic work in the Soviet Islamic underground. These contacts with dissident groups in Central Asia and the Caucasus presumably grew stronger in the 1980s, but further information about this time is scarce.

In June 1990, the Islamic Rebirth Party of the Soviet Union, borne from this first underground Islamist movement, took advantage of Gorbachev's political liberalization and obtained legal status. It held its first congress in Astrakhan, which highlighted several internal factions: some members (especially Dagestanis) favored Saudi Arabian Wahhabism, some preferred the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood (including Akhmed-Kadi Akhtaev, chairman of the party), while others, like Dzhemal, saw Khomeini's Iran as a model. Vali Sadur, an Orientalist by education, advocated Turkey as a model, but he quickly left the party to create the Islamic Congress of Russia (Malashenko 1998, 121). With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the party divided into national branches. Dzhemal and Akhtaev called for maintaining a unified, pan-Soviet framework, while Tajik leaders Sayid Abdulloh Nuri and Akbar Turazonzoda called for the party to become a national structure in each republic. To this day, Dzhemal criticizes the post-Soviet Tajik leadership, especially Akbar Turazonzoda, who he accused of serving Boris Yeltsin and the Russian security services ("Geidar Dzhemal' o svoem uchastii"). Tajikistan rapidly descended into civil war in 1992, which marred the IRP's image across the post-Soviet space and accelerated its demise.

After this failure, Dzhemal sought other structures through which to spread his views. In 1993, he participated in a gathering of five hundred delegates of the so-called Popular Arab and Islamic Conference. This Islamist Internationale, founded in 1991 to denounce the first Gulf War, was funded by Sudan, which at that time hoped to become the head of this alternate Islamist institution against the traditional Saudi leadership (Burn 2009). During this conference the decision was made to establish an international Islamic Committee. Dzhemal became the

head of its Russian branch, which officially registered in Moscow in 1995, after the committee had lost Khartoum's support. The Islamic Committee of Russia still exists today and is tightly linked to Dzhemal himself, who is its president for life, and to his son Orkhan, who writes under the pen name Karabaagi. The committee lacks meaningful institutions or even a developed website; it seems to be an empty shelf on which to display Dzhemal's theories.

Dzhemal also tried to enter politics and form an alliance between nationalist and communist movements on one hand, and Muslims on the other (see below). To this end, he joined up with General Alexander Lebed's conservative group in the 1995 elections, then Viktor Ilyukhin and Albert Makashov's Movement to Support the Army in the 1999 legislative elections, but he failed to win a parliamentary seat both times. His years in the Yuzhinsky Circle and short stint with Pamyat have indelibly linked Dzhemal with Russian nationalist movements. In 1991, he published some articles in the nationalist and communist opposition weekly *Den'* (renamed *Zavtra* in 1993), under the leadership of Alexander Prokhanov, and maintained links with him and his fellow traveler Dugin. However, from the early 2000s, while Dugin successfully forged close ties with some high-ranking figures in the Putin establishment, Dzhemal followed another path and moved closer to the leftist opposition to the regime. In 2000, he tried to launch a new International Socialist League that would have rallied both leftist Russians and Muslim populations, but without success. He then grew close to Eduard Limonov, the founder of the National-Bolshevik Party, who he knew from the Yuzhinsky Circle. In 1996, the two men organized some protests together, most of all against the publication in Russian of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Limonov (2009) has always spoken positively of Islam, saying that he understands the appeal of this religion because it offers both "protest and discipline." For his part, Dzhemal supported Sergey Udaltsov's Left Front from its founding in 2008 and is still today a member of its organizing committee. In 2010, he was one of the first to sign the opposition petition "Putin must go" (*Putin za ostavku*), which liberals Garry Kasparov and Boris Netmtsov started on LiveJournal and eventually collected 150,000 signatures (see http://www.putinavotstavku.org/).

This brief overview of half a century of activism offers a glimpse into Dzhemal's ambivalent political positioning. He cultivates his links dating from the Yuzhinsky Circle: he teaches at a small organization called New University, which Dugin launched in 1998 to teach far-right esoteric traditions, especially the traditionalism of Guénon and Evola.[1] In 2011–2012 Dzhemal founded a the short-lived Florian Geyer Club—whose name references the nickname of the Third Reich's 8th SS Cavalry Division, which was deployed on the Eastern front in 1943–1944—a small think tank which attracted more mainstream public figures such as Alexander Prokhanov and Mikhail Leontev (Umland 2013, 2–5). However, the club rapidly ceased its activities and was absorbed into the more significant and more politically connected Izborsky Club that includes almost thirty of the main conservative ideologists and politicians under Prokhanov's umbrella (Goble 2014). Dzhemal did not join the Izborsky Club as his political position is too oppositional and pro-Islamic compared with this relatively pro-Putinian club (Laruelle forthcoming). His links with the Dugin-Prokhanov duo are complex. For example, Dzhemal is absent from the list of authors on Dugin's main website, Arctogeia

(http://arcto.ru/article/968). He does not publish in the *Journal of Eurasian Affairs* (http://www.eurasianaffairs.net/magazine/), Dugin's main platform to reach Western audiences, and his presence in volumes of Dugin's Center for Conservative Research at the Moscow State University is limited to a handful of articles (http://books.4pt.su/publikaciya-v-pdf).

At the same time, Dzhemal has continued to be a part of the anti-Putin opposition that encompasses liberals and leftists, as seen in his vivid denunciation of the assassination of Boris Nemtsov in 2015 (http://www.online812.ru/2015/06/09/005/). Last, but definitively not least, he remains one of the most discussed and controversial figures in Russia's Islamic world. In 2009, some Duma deputies accused the Islamic Committee of supporting terrorism in the North Caucasus, and, in 2012, the FSB opened an inquiry against the Committee for suspicions of support for terrorism and extremism ("Islamskii komitet i terrorizm"; Pirkova 2012). Dzhemal's apartment was searched, but no compromising documents were found.

DZHEMAL'S ISLAMIC "THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION" IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET

Dzhemal advances a very political version of Islam. He can hardly be considered a religious thinker, strictly speaking, but rather uses religion as a political tool. He articulates an Islamic version of liberation theology, which he summarized in a collection of articles entitled *Osvobozhdenie islama* (The Liberation of Islam) in 2004 and a collective volume under his leadership, *Islamic Intellectual Initiative in the 20th Century* (Dzhemal 2004, 2005). Similar to the Catholic liberation theology that emerged in Latin America in the 1950s, Dzhemal links faith with the fight for social justice, wherein religion should be both the weapon and the defense of the poor against the rich (Dzhemal 2004). In his theories Dzhemal makes recurrent references both to Marx, especially Marx's early work, and to Lenin, in whom he sees a "passionate" (*passionarnost*[2]), positive figure, but he regrets that both underestimated the revolutionary potential of Islam.

According to Dzhemal, class opposition is being transformed into opposition between countries or civilizations. The enemy is embodied by the United States, the "party of Satan," as the symbol of all the evils of the modern world: colonialism, capitalism, and inequality. The New American World is engaged in a lethal fight with the Ancient World, which represents the "party of God," shaped by the three religions of Abraham. Dzhemal's insistence on unity among the three monotheistic religions comes from his reading of René Guénon, who defined all three as standard bearers of authentic Tradition (Segwick 2004). However, Dzhemal has broken away from Guénon's assumption of a unity of (religious) traditions and from his Sufi position already at the end of the 1970s. He posits instead the existence of a fundamental opposition between the priestly class, which preach but remain bound to the "system," and that of the prophets, who alone are capable of bolstering the revolutionary character of the faith and turning it into a political instrument against injustice (Kaugonov 2012). Therefore, according to Dzhemal, both Judaism and Christianity are tainted with "pan-theism." Moreover, Christianity failed in its mission because it let the clergy "steal" the word of God, as did Judaism for its misplaced pro-Americanism and capitalism. Therefore, of the three religions of Abraham, only

Islam has managed to preserve the authentic revolutionary tradition of monotheism and to avoid making a compromise with the liberal order. In merging the protest potential of Islam with socialist resistance to the American world, Dzhemal hopes to make Islam the new vanguard of international resistance. He has complained of the "infantilism" of Islamic geopolitical thinking, its slowness in shedding the myth of the nation-state that comes from colonial domination, and he proposes a new political theology that will "awaken" the entire *Ummah* (community of believers) (Dzhemal 2003, 6, 9).

Dzhemal's legitimacy to advance his agenda of an Islamic liberation theology is largely based on his ability to occupy the media space. While he has edited fewer large theoretical works than his friend Dugin, he is very active online, publishes many opinion pieces, and is regularly invited to appear on radio and television. His son Okhan carries on journalistic activities similar to those of his father. He has worked for several newspapers, including *Vecherniaia Moskva*, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, *Smysl*, *Novaia gazeta*, and *Russkii Newsweek*, and he has covered the North Caucasus, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. He was one of the founders of the Union of Religious Journalists of Russia.

Dzhemal's career parallels the evolution of the Russian media: from print to television, and then to the Internet, social media, and webcasting. Between 1991 and 1993, he published the monthly newspaper *Al-Vakhdat* (Unity), which was associated with the Islamic Renaissance Party, and created a small think tank, Taukhid. But written media is costly and has limited reach. Between 1993 and 1996, Dzhemal invested in television. He hosted programs about Islam on the three main channels: State Channel One (on the Islamic part of the then-popular religious program *Nyne*); RTR (*Tysiatsa i odin den'*); and Kultura (*Vse sury Korana*). Between 1996 and 1999, when he was closely allied with Chechen insurgents such as Movladi Udugov, he collaborated with *Kavkaz-Tsentr*, the main website advancing the Chechen perspective on the conflict. In the 2000s, he again worked with Dugin to develop webcasts, which gave him a major presence on sites such as YouTube. There he chose topics far different from Islam, of the occult and old Yuzhinsky Circle topic such as "sacral geography" ("Sakral'naia geografiia Geidara Dzhemalia").

His own websites have experienced difficult moments. In 2009, after the Islamic Committee was forced to shut down under the new Russian extremism law, the site islamcom.ru was closed and reregistered as islamcom.org. Dzhemal's personal site, kontrudar.ru, also was officially shuttered, but many pages are again available with the full http address. Another site, http://dzhemal.ru, which aggregated his personal blogs posts since 2011, is accessible and features weekly comments on the current geopolitical situation. This is also the case with his LiveJournal site (http://geydardzhemal.livejournal.com/), which often reposts the same messages.

Two other sites were working as of September 1, 2015. Poistine.org is a good example of the geopolitical alternative that Dzhemal promotes. It features news topics, mainly on violence in the Middle East, the growing power of the Islamic State, the endless Syrian civil war, and the fallout from the Greek debt crisis, alongside articles about the greatness of Hugo Chavez and other socialist leaders in Latin America, Pol Pot's Cambodia, and China. The site also

includes articles defending Azerbaijan's position in the conflict with Armenia and critiques of the Putin regime. In addition, there is a "sacred" page dedicated to lofty religious and mystical theories about the beginning and end of the world. There one can find articles on the so-called Jewish-Masonic conspiracy, the role of paranormal beliefs within the KGB and its successor, the FSB, and an explanation that "kikes/yids" are different from Jews as the former represent a degenerate aspect of the Jewish world and are carriers of "global disinformation" (Amirkhanov n.d.) Building on his Western European alliances that date from the Yuzhinsky Circle, in 2011, Dzhemal launched a new website in Spanish, Peninsula Iberica InterUnion. Despite its name, the organization is mainly Russian, as are its authors (Andrei Fursov, Mikhail Khazin, Andrei Kobiakov, Shamil Sultanov, Israel Shamir, Iliya Ioffe, Ruslan Aisin, Vladislav Zhukovskii), who are all close to Dugin and Prokhanov. The exception here is Arturo Marian Llanos, who is likely responsible for translating texts into Spanish. The movement declares itself to be against "the system" and seeks to unify all "anti-system" movements, combining leftist revolutionary themes and right-wing National-Bolshevik theories (see http://interunion.info).

Dzhemal had to adapt his evolving philosophy to the Russian context. In the 1990s, he could easily position himself as a thinker of Islam and Islamism. But in the following decade, many new competing figures emerged, individuals with far better credentials in terms of their theological knowledge, practice, and status within official Islamic institutions in Russia. He was, for instance, gradually eclipsed by one of his disciples, Fatima Ezhova (a convert). Ezhova now runs the Research Fund on Islamic Culture, a joint Russian-Iranian institution that translates Islamic classics into Russian. Ezhova has earned a solid reputation in the Russian Islamic media for her opinion pieces on the website Islam.ru and IslamNews, her Islamic feminism, and her outspoken support of Iran (Kemper 2012). Another woman, Valeria Pokhorova, is one of the main television figures presenting Islamic principles ("Vse sury Korana").

Even inside the Eurasianist camp, Dzhemal is no longer alone in promoting an Islamic voice. He joined the Eurasianist International Movement that Dugin created in 2003, although he opposes one of its prominent members, Mufti Talgat Tadjuddin, leader of the Russian Spiritual Board of Muslims ("Geidar Dzhemal' obvinil islamskikh liderov Rossii v zabitosti i trusosti"). He must further deal with other figures who advocate for a Russian-Islamic alliance, for example, the director of the Moscow Islamic Cultural Center, Abdul-Vakhed Niazov (a convert). One of the leading figures within the Council of Muftis, the rival institution to Tadjuddin's Spiritual Board, Niazov has encouraged several initiatives to politicize Russian Muslims in favor of Moscow: the Union of Muslims of Russia, the Refakh movement, the Eurasian Party of Russia (*Evraziiskaia partiia Rossii*), and the "Muslims for Putin" movement. Now based in Istanbul, Niazov launched Salamworld, an alternative to Facebook that claims to respect "core Islamic values" and is supposed to offer a clean slate for Islamic social media (Bohn 2012). Competition is also growing with Shamil Sultanov, the president of the Strategic Center "Rossiia – Islamskii mir," also a close ally of Dugin and Prokhanov, and someone better acquainted with the Russian establishment. Dzhemal has had to adapt to this

growing competition and present himself today less as a spokesman for Islam and more as a publicist, commenting on Russian and international news, in particular about the Middle East. As such he has written columns or regular blog posts on the sites of Ekho Moskvy and Govorit Moskva. He weighs in during major political debates on the Muslim world, such as those over the cartoons published in the Danish and French presses, which he saw as a Washington-orchestrated sceme inflaming the Muslim world and dividing Europe (Dzhemal 2006).

DZHEMAL'S DIGITAL GEOPOLITICS: A PRO-RUSSIAN, PRO-ISLAMIC, AND PRO-FASCIST BLEND

Dzhemal advances a paradoxical brand of geopolitics that combines pro-Islamic, pro-Russian, and pro-Fascist traits into an eclectic "postmodern" blend that is typical in the era of digital geopolitics. His geopolitics is a succession of theories on the proximity of a new world war (Dzhemal 2015a) and conspiratorial theories on the roles of the United States, NATO, and Jews/Masons/liberals in world affairs. According to him, this great war between good and evil is being realized through many small conflicts ("Geidar Dzhemal' o dzhikhade i istinnom naznachenii Rossii").

  Dzhemal's geopolitics is intrinsically connected to his religious affiliation. He professed to be Shia of the Jafari school of thought—the main form of Shia jurisprudence, which some Sunni legal scholars consider to be most "compatible" with Sunni Islam. He has never concealed his support for the tenets of the Iranian Revolution. In 1992, he came into contact with Ahmad Khomeni, the son of the founding father of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. After Ahmad passed away in 1994, Dzhemal kept close ties within the Iranian establishment, for instance Chairman of Parliament Ali Akbar Nategh-Nouri, and the Revolutionary Guards, the most ideological and repressive branch of the Iranian regime. His conception of Islam as a political revolutionary tool is largely borrowed from Ali Shariati (1933–1977), an influential Iranian sociologist who is often presented as the ideologue of the Iranian Revolution. Dzhemal regularly visits Iran and maintains friendly ties with the Iranian embassy in Moscow. To him, Iran is the natural regional power of the Middle East, given its history, culture, and location; it is the only country to implement revolutionary anti-Western and anti-Israeli policies over several decades (Dzhemal 2011c). Dzhemal also is a fervent supporter of the pro-Iranian movements Hezbollah and Hamas. He shares the discourse of former Iranian president Mahmud Ahmadinejad on the illegitimacy of Israel, which he sees as a "fascist state" (Dzhemal 2013b). He believes Israel was built on myths about victimization during World War II and the Holocaust, and that it should be categorized as rogue state and replaced with a mixed Jewish-Arab state ("Geidar Dzhemal' o evreiakh"). Dzhemal has made repeated anti-Semitic remarks, denouncing the "Jews hiding behind liberals" (2015d).

  Although Shi'ite, in 2008, Dzhemal recognized as legitimate all the caliphs descended from Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, thus making himself, theoretically speaking, a Sunni.[3] This "evolution" indicates the cursory value Dzhemal places on formal theological debates between schools of thought and interpretations of the Koran and Sunnah. What counts for him is the geopolitical "value" of each society, which explains his passage from Shiism to Salafism. Dzhemal does

share several agendas with Salafism, a literal, strict, and puritanical reading of the holy text that feeds into contemporary radical Islam: he states that Islam must regenerate itself by emulating the prophet Muhammad and his earliest followers, the "pious forefathers"; that religious innovation (*bida*) must be forbidden, and that Islam must be purged of its non-Islamic elements, in particular Sufi traditions (the mystical movement in Islam). However, Dzhemal does not refer to quietists or purists, who focus on their own salvation through the rigorous practice of faith, and does not appear to be a strict observant either; rather he calls for Islamic societies and citizens to engage in politics in the name of Islam (Dzhemal 1997a). Dzhemal's statement of faith is embedded in its vision of Islam as the political solution to the ills of the modern world. Nonetheless, he runs counter to Islamic orthodoxy by adding beliefs borrowed from Western occultist theories, for example in an article called "Aryan Islam," in which he rejected Adam's status as the first man (saying instead that the pre-Adam paradise already was populated by men and that Noah lived in Atlantis), and rejecting the immortality of the human soul, arguing that at the End Times God will re-create each human.

Dzhemal's Shiia-Sunni balancing act can be seen in the light of current geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East. One on hand, he unfailingly supports the Iranian position and thus the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, as well as his allies in Lebanon and Palestine, against the Sunni Gulf powers, with their backing from Washington. Until Russia's intervention in Syria in September 2015, Dzhemal rued the Kremlin's lack of association with the entrenched pro-Syrian position of Tehran and criticized what he saw as Putin's prevarications toward Damascus (Dzhemal 2015c). On the other hand, he celebrated the regime changes of the Arab Spring and "the Arab Street" for its refusal to be compromised by U.S. interests ("Geidar Dzhemal' o situatsii v Afganistane, Irake i Sirii"). He sees al-Qaeda as an American construction that spun out of U.S. control but has remained ambiguous in his judgment on the Islamic State, a symbol of Sunni revolt against both the United States and Iran. He defines it as the first "inception" of the future political Islam: a still imperfect and unsophisticated phenomenon, as was the first proletariat in its actions in the early nineteenth century before the creation of a structured Socialist movement at the end of the century. Dzhemal's position thus goes both ways. He supports Sunni radicalism in its opposition to the West, but defends Iranian regional domination. A telling example of his ambivalence is his assertion that "Shiites are, in reality, Salafists. They are Salafists who are more powerful than the Salafists themselves" ("Geidar Dzhemal' o dzhikhade i istinnom naznachenii Rossii").

Armed with Salafist convictions, Dzhemal can only cast a critical eye on Muslims in Russia and the post-Soviet space. He has denounced the survival of the Sufi traditions, common in the region, as well as the political submission of Russia's Muslim spiritual boards—institutions created in the eighteenth century by Catherine the Great to give an institutional representation to Muslims of the Russian realm, but which contradict the idea that Islam does not allow clergy. On behalf of his Salafist interpretation, Dzhemal also rejects the importance accorded to ethnic, local, and regional identities in Eurasian Islam because he sees the religion of Muhammad as universal and detached from local affiliations. He thus opposed another theoretician of Islam, Khodj-Ahmed Nukhaev, who emphasizes Islam as an ethnic religion

(Altukhov 2011, 100). Dzhemal believes that the only way to deliver Eurasian Muslims from their theological errors and geopolitical dependence is to adopt Salafism as an ideological driver toward Islamic modernity. He thus invites the systems of *jamaats* (communities or religious cells) to spread among the Muslims of Russia and infiltrate the country's political and administrative structures (Malashenko 2007, 22). He compares these *jamaats* to the earliest Bolshevik Soviets and sees them as the carriers of the revolution (Analytical Group RB-21 vek 2009).

Dzhemal has openly supported violent actions in the North Caucasus performed in the name of Islam, and terrorist attacks such as in Budennovsk in 1995 and Beslan in 2004. He backed Chechen leaders such as those Djokhar Dudaev and Movladi Udugov during the first Chechen War (1994–1996), as well as the leaders of the second Chechen insurrection (starting in 1999), including Shamil Basaev, and the movement's turn to terrorism. He also defended Said Buriatskii, a convert known for his inflammatory sermons, who left to fight alongside the Caucasus Emirate (2009). Dzhemal apprehends *shahids*, Islamic suicide bombers, as the "pinnacle of Islam" ("Geidar Dzhemal': Muchenicheskaia smert'"). He is also radically pro-Azeri in his view of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, stating that not only was there no Armenian genocide a century ago, but that the Armenians carried out genocide against Turks and Azeris (Dzhemal 2015b). He thinks that Armenia simply should not exist as a state (Dzhemal 2014a).

To Dzhemal, the Islamist insurrection on Russian territory is the beginning of a global fight of good versus evil, made possible because Russia is the "weakest link" of the Western alliance and because only Moscow will be capable of making a major geopolitical shift (see Huntington 1996 for a similar idea). By this reasoning, Russia will leave the degenerate West behind to form a new alliance with the Islamic world against the United States, NATO, and capitalism. However, as long as Russian elites fail to understand where their real interests lie and remain subordinate to the West, Russia will continue to be rocked by Islamist violence.

Dzhemal further believes that the Soviet elites betrayed the Soviet ideal at the end of World War II, and that both Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev worked hand-in-hand with the Western powers (http://www.kontrudar.ru/material.php?id=51). This view came to him from Jean Parvulesco, a Romanian author in exile in France, an intellectual heir to Guénon and Evola, close to the New Right, and known for his conspiracy theories. Parvulesco gave Dugin and his circle a mysterious report entitled *The GRU Galaxy: The confidential mission of Mikhail Gorbachev, the USSR and the future of the great Eurasian Continent*, which was partly based on Pierre de Villemarest's best seller *GRU: The Most Secret among the Soviet Special Services, 1918–1988*. In it Parvulesco described the history of the Soviet Union as an invisible battle between a Eurasian order represented by the GRU (the military intelligence services), Lenin, and Stalin; and an Atlanticist order represented by the KGB, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Andropov (Dugin 2013). Winning the World War II signaled the beginning of the victory of the Atlanticists over the Eurasians. Dzhemal shares this idea, which explains his views that contemporary Russia falsely believes it is part of the West and must rediscover its authentic Eurasian mission by growing closer to Islam.

Dzhemal called for his "brown-green" alliance in a manifesto article published by *Zavtra* on August 31, 1999. His theories played an important role in the conversion of some Russians to Islam. He attended the founding congress of the National Organization of Russian Muslims (NORM, *Natsional'naia organizatsiia rossiiskikh musul'man*), but the following year the Shia branch was excluded. Notable among his converted disciples are Anastasia (Fatima) Ezhova; Viacheslav Polosin, a former Orthodox priest who converted in 1998; Aleksei Tsvetkov, a leftist journalist; and Ilya Kormiltsev, who heads the Ultra Kul'tura publishing house, but whose conversion has not been confirmed (Bekkin 2012). In the late 2000s, in order to avoid overly confrontational discourse with the increasingly influential Orthodox Church, Dzhemal affirmed he did not support positions that called for the Islamization of Russia and proposed only a geopolitical alliance between Russia and the Muslim world (Dzhemal 2015d). He expressed this alliance using the term "Ottoman geopolitics," emphasizing the weight of the Byzantine legacy for Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East ("Geidar Dzhemal' o dzhikhade i istinnom naznachenii Rossii"). This notion of Ottoman geopolitics draws on the Eurasianist theories of his longtime friend, Alexander Dugin.

Nonetheless, this "brown-green" position does not mean Dzhemal rallies the Russian mainstream narrative. For instance, he drastically dissociated himself from the Russian nationalism camp during the Ukrainian conflict of 2014. According to him, this is a conspiracy organized by the West with the help of Ukrainians and Russian oligarchs to force Russia into a suicidal new world conflict. Dzhemal does not believe in the Russian narrative that the Donbas population sought to secede from Ukraine and to join Russia, nor in the insurgent leadership's self-proclaimed heroism. He also renounces the Russian discourse of the neo-Nazi threat in Kiev and the support received from Western European neo-Nazi parties such as Jobbik and Golden Dawn: for him, "Neo-nazism is a simulation product directed by Mossad on Jewish money" (Dzhemal 2014b). He thus positions himself very far away from Dugin's and Prokhanov's ideological stance.

Although the militaristic and aggressive Russian nationalism promoted by Dugin's networks do not correspond to his own credo, Dzhemal continued to participate in joint activities when they touched on esoteric and philosophical issues or the heritage of the Yuzhinsky Circle for example, celebrations of Evgeni Golovin (Dzhemal 2011a). He shares with Dugin the myth of a new mankind which would embody the encounter of the spirit and body, of a new political soldier ready to fight Satan (Dzhemal 2011b), and called for a "union of traditionalists and radicals" to better counter liberalism (Dzhemal 2012, 23). He also continued to share the attraction of the Circle to esoteric Nazism, for example, by rehabilitating the swastika symbol ("Sakral'naia geografiia Geidara Dzhemalia") and by cultivating links with the European far right. He, for instance, participated in the conference "Against the Postmodern World," held in October 2011 near Moscow, alongside Christian Bouchet, a French National-Bolshevik now aligned with the National Front, and Claudio Mutti, an Italian representative of the New Right, supporter of a postwar Fascist revival, and convert to Islam (Savino 2015; see "Sektsiia 'Traditsionalizm i ezoterizm v islame,'" on the website of the conference, http://against-postmodern.org/sektsiya-v-traditsionalizm-i-ezoterizm-v-islame).

Although Dzhemal is the main example of this pro-Islamic, pro-Nazi blend in Russia, this combination is not exceptional per se. It can be found in several Muslim countries such as Turkey, where a historical alliance with Germany is a part of the nationalist narrative on Turkish/Turkic messianism and its parallels with German messianism. During the dark years of Nazism, Berlin and Ankara displayed mutual admiration. Hitler saw Turkey as the model of a "prosperous and völkisch modern state" and celebrated Ataturk as an incarnation of the *Führerprinzip*, which demanded absolute obedience, and someone who transformed the religious legitimacy of the Caliphate into an ethnic, even racial, Turkish nationalism (Ihrig 2014). Even outside Turkey, Nazis and Islamists had a kind of political-spiritual romance during the 1930s and the war. Both groups hated Jews in Europe and Palestine (Haj Amin al-Husseini, the founder of Palestinian nationalism, tried to persuade the Nazis to extend their genocide of the Jews to the Palestinian Mandate), the Bolsheviks, and the Soviet regime (which had dominated Islamic territories in the Caucasus and Central Asia), liberal democracy, and especially the British Empire (Motadel 2014a, 2014b; Nicosia 2014). It is possible to discern the same mix in Iran, where philosophers such as Ahmad Fardid (1909–1994) and ideologues of the regime are focusing on rehabilitating Heidegger and, through him, some central ideas of Nazism (Mirsepassi 2010; Rafi 2013).

CONCLUSION

Geidar Dzhemal is a relatively unique figure in the Russian political and intellectual landscape. There are many Islamic public figures who advocate for an alliance between their homeland, Russia, and their faith, Islam. This takes many forms, from discourse inspired by the Soviet "friendship of the peoples" that celebrated Russia's multiethnicity (the official position of the Muslim Spiritual Board), to a more muscular narrative that invites Russia to respect and praise Islam and to ally itself with the rest of the Muslim world (the position of the Moscow Council of Muftis), to calls to convert to Islam (the position of the proselytizing NORM movement). However, Dzhemal is the only one in Russia coming from the esoteric European extreme right that inspired the occult rituals of Nazism—and who seeks to merge this tradition with Islamism. He combines contacts with major Islamic movements from the Middle East, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, and with pro-Islamic European far-right circles who are the descendants of Guénon and Evola, such as Claudio Mutti.

Dzhemal therefore offers a multifaceted front. His Islamic liberation theology resonates with the current debates in many Muslim countries and Islamist movements, which call, as he does, for Islam to become a new Communism, able to drive a new revolution against world social injustices. At the same time, Dzhemal reproduces the mainstream geopolitical narrative of Russia nationalists, denouncing the West's hidden goal of negating Russia's great powerness. He shows his difference by supporting leftist opposition to Putin and not participating in so-called systemic opposition that defend the Kremlin's position, for instance on the Ukrainian issue. Last but not least, Dzhemal continues to be a fellow traveler of Western far-right esoteric groups and their Russian allies, echoing Dugin's rehabilitation of occult theories that fueled fascist historical movements. Dzhemal thus encapsulates the paradox of simultaneously

representing leftist Islamic liberation theology and/or a kind of Islamo-Fascism, a mix of genres typical of digital geopolitics, which offers a fertile background to all those who cross traditional ideological boundaries.

NOTES

1. However, none of his lectures are available on the web archives of the New University, see http://arcto.ru/article/1029.

2. The notion of "passionarity" was crafted by Lev N. Gumilev (1912–1992), a Soviet, semi-dissident, semi-official historian of the steppic world. By passionarity, Gumilev describes the merging of "*ethnos* as collectives of people with the ability of men as organisms to 'absorb' the biochemical energy of the biosphere's living substance." Beyond Man's primordial needs (eating and dwelling), all other human activities—the pursuit of glory or happiness, victory, the accumulation of wealth or values, the development of culture or religion, etc.—would result from passionarity, which is the opposite of the survival instinct, since it can lead a man to die for his ideas. According to Gumilev, every individual may be classified on a scale of passionarity: some were great passionaries (the great men and women, among whom he mentions Alexander the Great, Jan Hus, Joan of Arc, Avvakum, and Napoleon), others were sub-passionaries. Every person possesses a set ratio of passionaries and sub-passionaries. This notion is widespread in the post-Soviet world (Laruelle 2008, 65–70).

3. The relevant text has been removed, but was previously available at http://www.kontrudar.ru/material.php?id=342.

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Chapter Six

Russia as an Alternative Model

Geopolitical Representations and Russia's Public Diplomacy—the Case of Rossotrudnichestvo

Sirke Mäkinen

This chapter addresses practical geopolitical reasoning in contemporary Russia. As O'Loughlin, Ó Tuathail, and Kolossov (2004, 6) argue, "practical geopolitics concerns the daily construction and spatialization of world affairs and state interests by foreign policy leaders and elites within geopolitical cultures." The analysis of practical geopolitical reasoning may help us to answer questions such as how decision makers understand international crises, how they explain them, and how they define problems and solutions (Tuathail 2002, 603, 605). Accordingly, this chapter draws upon the field of critical geopolitics which is commonly understood as the critical study of geopolitical discourses and more specifically geographical representations that influence the perception and justification of foreign policies (Mamadouh 2008, 207). "Critical geopolitics deals with geopolitical discourses that explain and justify foreign policy and it does acknowledge that these policies need legitimacy and popular support" (Mamadouh 2008, 208).

In this chapter I study practical geopolitical reasoning in a narrower context of the Russian foreign policy elite—geopolitical representations of one particular actor of public diplomacy —Konstantin Kosachev, the head of the Federal Agency on Questions of the CIS, Compatriots Living Abroad and Humanitarian Cooperation, *Rossotrudnichestvo,* an agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for 2012–2014. This agency has been represented as one of the instruments in "strengthening the position of our country, safeguarding national interests by humanitarian means," a "key instrument of so called soft power" (Medvedev 2012). For its part, this agency implements Russia's foreign policy. Thus, the agency and its head represent part of the foreign policy elite.

The role of public diplomacy as a foreign policy tool has become more important during the past few decades. States are increasingly paying attention to how they are seen by foreign publics. Russia is no exception in this regard. Accordingly, previous studies have touched upon Russia's public diplomacy and Russia's image (Feklyunina 2008; Avreginos 2009; Osipova 2012; Saari 2014; Simons 2014) and in particular, Russian understanding of soft power or Russia's current or future opportunities to employ soft power (Ćwiek-Karpowicz 2013; Makarychev 2013; Rukavishnikov 2011; Tsygankov 2006, 2013; Wilson 2015). In addition, practical geopolitical reasoning of Russia's foreign policy elite has previously been examined (O'Loughlin et al. 2004, 2006; Mäkinen 2008; Morozova 2009). However, I claim

that discourse of significant actors in Russia's public diplomacy has not yet been comprehensively analyzed, and particularly not within the framework of geopolitics, that is, what it tells about the conception of Russia's place in the world, and of world politics in general. This chapter seeks to answer the question of which geopolitical representations are constructed within the context of public diplomacy and what they tell about Russia's foreign policy thinking.

In order to analyze geopolitical representations I apply the tool of geopolitical vision. Geopolitical visions are visions of order, they are translations of national identity concepts in geographical terms or symbols. To be more precise, Dijkink (1996) understands geopolitical vision as "any idea concerning the relation between one's own and other places, informing feelings of (in) security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy." A geopolitical vision comprises justification of the naturalness of the territorial borders (or in general a conception of a national territory and its border), a geopolitical code (the world around the state, friends, and foes), a model to follow or reject, a national mission to be accomplished, and assumptions about impersonal (even Divine) forces such as modernization or globalization that shape world politics.

Dijkink has discussed geopolitical visions at the national level—that is, there has to be a political subjectivity of a nation for geopolitical visions. Even if his focus has been on the national geopolitical vision formed through shared experiences, he does not deny the possibility of competing geopolitical visions within this political entity. Geopolitical visions, I would argue, may vary between different levels of geopolitics—formal, practical, and popular, and even within these levels. I should emphasize that the construction of the Russian Self—for example, where its borders should go, how Russianness is defined, etc., varies between these different visions, and thus there is no a priori fixed entity whose identity is being constructed. Geopolitical visions of any actor should not be taken as something permanent either, but they may change in time. Moreover, geopolitical visions should not be reserved to the national level only, geopolitical visions may be constructed at the local or supranational level, which, however, go beyond the reach of this chapter.

The focus will be on the national and elite level; Kosachev's geopolitical vision may be taken as a representative of a geopolitical vision of the Russian foreign policy elite. His construction of the Russian Self (and others) is part of these visions of order, part of Russian identity construction on the elite level. Taking into consideration the current political system in Russia, I may argue that the elite-level matters most in foreign policy making even though other levels should not be ignored either. This chapter analyzes the geopolitical vision from the point of view of geopolitical code (Russia's friends and foes), a model to reject and a model to follow and a national mission to be accomplished. Following said, we can argue that geopolitical visions tell more about those constructing these visions, for example, Russian foreign policy elite examined through Kosachev's texts, than about the constructed foes or friends. As the interest here lays in no particular event in Russia's foreign policy, but on geopolitical representations of one actor in 2012–2014, the concept of geopolitical vision seems a more appropriate tool for analyzing these representations, than what Gearóid Ó

Tuathail (2002) has suggested for the examination of practical geopolitical reasoning, that is, the use of the grammar of geopolitics—categorization and particularization process, the concepts of geopolitical storyline, and geopolitical script. I am also interested in how Russia's geopolitical vision is justified in practical geopolitical reasoning, on what grounds arguments are constructed. These grounds are called premises. Premises are beliefs accepted by the audience: they can be facts and truths or particular values, accepted hierarchies, and loci of the preferable (Perelman 1982).

For this chapter I analyze texts of Konstantin Kosachev published in the media, either in his blog or in Russian newspapers/journals such as *Rossiiskaia gazeta*. The blog with the title *Neofitsial'no o glavnom—blog Konstantina Kosacheva* was available from March 2012 until December 2014 on the website of Rossotrudnichestvo, first in the address blog.rs.gov.ru and later in the address rs.gov.ru/node and rs.gov.ru/blog. There was a possibility to comment on Kosachev's texts, and each text received from zero to twenty-six comments, which are not included in the analysis. The texts, varying between two and half and six A4 size pages in length when printed out, included also some texts published originally in or planned to be given in other fora, for example interviews published in the media or speeches for public events. The texts usually discussed foreign policy issues, Russia's relations with others, or issues directly related to the agenda of Rossotrudnichestvo such as the position and promotion of the Russian language abroad. I have gathered texts from the period when Konstantin Kosachev was the head of Rossotrudnichestvo, that is, 2012–2014. In late December 2014, Kosachev was nominated the senator to the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, and the head of the council's committee for international affairs. His successor Liubov' Glebova was nominated in March 2015. Even though Kosachev does not continue in Rossotrudnichestvo, he continues to be part of the foreign policy elite.

Most of the analyzed texts have been written in Russian, so their main audience is within Russia or among Russian-speakers elsewhere. Accordingly, here the emphasis is not on how Russia's public diplomacy communicates with non-Russian speaking foreign publics but on geopolitical representations behind Russia's foreign policy as represented to domestic/Russian-speaking audiences. However, the reception of these texts is not addressed in this paper. In addition, I leave it for further studies to evaluate how well Kosachev succeeded as the head of Rossotrudnichstvo, for example, whether Russia's public diplomacy was financially and functionally strengthened during his term of office, or what consequences his discourse actually had. The focus of this paper is limited to geopolitical representations only, which, however, are assumed to tell about and have impact on foreign policy (see for example, Hansen 2006).

The period of study coincides with the last months of Dmitri Medvedev's presidency, the presidential "campaign" of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, and the first year and a half of his third term as president. In addition, this period includes such tragic developments on the international arena as the escalation of the Syrian conflict and the following humanitarian disaster with refugee flows and the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, and a continuation of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, again followed by a humanitarian crisis

and both internal and external refugee flows. Regarding Russian geopolitical representations, during this period we have witnessed a turn from what has been termed as statist foreign policy thinking (or great power balancing)[1] to something closer to civilizationalism (or nationalism) (on Russian foreign policy schools, see Tsygankov 2006; Kuchins and Zevelev 2012; Zevelev 2014).

This turn has taken place gradually since September 2011 when then president Medvedev and then prime minister Putin announced that they would switch places. The turn took place together with the change in the perception of Russian identity—Russia was not necessarily any longer perceived as part of the West, but as a unique civilization following its own path, and presenting an alternative to the West (Zevelev 2014). Russia's self-image is also claimed to incorporate the idea of Russia as a larger entity than its current borders would suggest; Russia has responsibility toward Russian citizens abroad, compatriots, and Russian-speakers and those identifying with Russia(n culture), that is, the supranational community of the Russian world (Zevelev 2014). We may argue that Putin's Russia has turned (even) closer to an Eurasianist identity emphasizing Russia's uniqueness and Russia as part of the non-West, and a vanguard of conservative or "traditional" values (Zevelev 2014; Sergounin 2014; Wilson 2015). However, Tsygankov (2015, 280, 285) has refuted the idea of any radical "paradigm shift" in Russia's foreign policy, instead he argues that it would be a continuation of a more assertive foreign policy since 2004 even though he does not deny a more ideological dimension in Putin's discourse since 2011. As we can see below, Kosachev's argumentation represents an interesting example of wider reasoning within the Russian foreign policy elite.

In what follows, I will first justify why we should study practical geopolitical reasoning in the context of public diplomacy and why we should focus on this one particular agency and its leader Konstantin Kosachev. Second, I will move on to the analysis of the geopolitical vision of the former leader of Rossotrudnichestvo. The concept of geopolitical vision helps us to grasp the polarized nature of the worldview, predating the Ukrainian crisis, reproduced by Konstantin Kosachev. In his geopolitical discourse two models of foreign policy are presented. The first model, which is usually identified with the Western model, or in a more narrower sense, the U.S. or the EU model, argues for "universal" values, accepts inequality, shows no respect for the principle of sovereignty, and adheres to colonial thinking. This is the model to reject. The second model is represented as a complete opposite to the first one. Russia is this other pole, and it should be able to offer a viable alternative. This is Russia's mission—others should find the Russian alternative as a model to follow. This Russian alternative cherishes the principle of sovereignty, seeks to equality, respects "uniqueness" of all peoples, and argues for their traditional values. In the conclusion, I bring up the premises which the audiences are expected to share. The first is the belief in Russia's rightfulness and Russophobia outside Russia, and the second is optimism in the victory of this rightfulness.

THE CONTEXT: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND ROSSOTRUDNICHESTVO

The term public diplomacy was first coined in 1965, even though the practice itself is much older (Cull 2008, 31). It refers to the process in which "international actors seek to accomplish

the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics" (Cull 2008, 31). Its practices can be divided into five: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting (Cull 2008, 31). Public diplomacy is no longer perceived only as one-way communication of a state to foreign publics but also as a dialogue between them or even as a collaboration between different actors (Cowan and Arsenault 2008). Moreover, in the "public diplomacy of the 21st century" the border between the domestic and foreign publics—the audience of public diplomacy—has also been blurred; it is no longer possible to address public diplomacy at foreign publics only due to the changed information channels (Huijgh 2011). In Russia's case public diplomacy could be addressed at citizens of the CIS countries residing in Russia (or who have Russian citizenship), that is, the domestic public, but also at Russian citizens living abroad, so called compatriots in the CIS. Public diplomacy's domestic dimension is also connected with the assumption of foreign policy democratization which may be called into question in many parts of the world, including Russia.

The reasons for why states engage in public diplomacy vary: they might want to get recognition among other states, strengthen their position in global economic competition, spread what they take as universal values to others, or their purpose might be more altruistic: "to deliver public goods" (Melissen 2011, 14). In Russia's case, the role of public diplomacy has been defined as to "develop international cultural and humanitarian dialogue among civilisations," to establish "positive image for Russia, worthy of its culture, education, science, sports achievements . . ." and to "improve the application of soft power" (Foreign Policy Concept 2013). Accordingly, we can recognize many of the above mentioned reasons such as getting recognition.

Recently more and more studies have appeared on Russia's public diplomacy and soft power. These studies have noted the strengthening of Russia's public diplomacy activity during the second term of Putin's presidency (2004–2008) as a response to the so called colour revolutions in particular in Ukraine and Georgia, which have been perceived as a consequence of workings of West's soft power tools (e.g., Ćwiek-Karpowicz 2013, 50; Feklyunina 2008). These studies address the institutions of public diplomacy and their functions. For example, Feklyunina (2008), Wilson (2012, 2015), Simons (2014), and Saari (2014) mention institutions such as Rossotrudnichestvo, Russian International Affairs Council, The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Foundation, Russkii Mir (Russian World), the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, the Valdai Club, information channels such as RT (formerly Russia Today), RIA Novosti, Voice of Russia, and the use of lobby firm Ketchum.

Previous studies have also concluded that Russia's public diplomacy has not been successful —Russia's image has remained negative—even before the crisis around Ukraine, and Russia has not been able to gain support for its foreign policy from foreign publics. The reasons for Russia's negative image have been seen both in Russia's domestic policies, foreign policies (perception of imperialist Russia), and in the lack of ideas or values which would attract foreign publics. In the perception of the Russian leadership, the negative image has had to do with stereotypes and propaganda of Russia's foes. The main reason for why public diplomacy

has failed is that the image that Russia has offered does not correspond to the "reality" in the field—that is, the image does not correspond to Russia's domestic and foreign policies (Feklyunina 2008; Solov'ev and Smirnov 2008; Avreginos 2009; Osipova 2012; Ćwiek-Karpowich 2013). Osipova (2012) suggests to employ "public diplomacy by deed": "Russian leaders should consider adjusting both their foreign as well as domestic policies so that they better reflect the positive image they are trying to project abroad."

Following the geographical priority of Russia's foreign policy (Foreign Policy Concept 2013; 2008) and the assumed success of the Western public diplomacy in the post-Soviet space in the form of colour revolutions, Russia's public diplomacy has mainly focused on the post-Soviet space (see also Saari 2014). Russian discussions on soft power are usually connected with "halting the continuing decline of Russian influence in the former Soviet republics" (Wilson 2012, 12). However, it has also been argued that Russia's soft power is already considerable in Eurasia (Tsygankov 2013). As for public diplomacy techniques, Saari claims that Russia's public diplomacy in the post-Soviet space "draws strongly on the Soviet Public Diplomacy tradition: propaganda, cultural diplomacy, political influence techniques." The logic of action is, according to Saari, that of pressure and manipulation (a similar argument made by Ćwiek-Karpowich 2013). Instead, Russia's public diplomacy in the West is based on attempts to attract and persuade (Saan' 2014).

As argued above, the purpose of this chapter is not to study public diplomacy per se, but use public diplomacy, and in particular one key actor in Russia's public diplomacy, the head of Rossotrudnichestvo 2012–2014, Konstantin Kosachev, as a context in which geopolitical representations behind Russia's foreign policy are examined.

ROSSOTRUDNICHESTVO

According to the official Russian interpretation of Russia's public diplomacy, this "activity" was started already in 1925 when the Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (*Vsesoyuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi svyazi s zagranitsei,* VOKS 1925–1958) was established. It was followed by the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (*Soyuz sovetskikh obshchestv druzhby i kul'turnykh svyazei s zarubezhnymi stranami*, SSOD, 1958–1992), and then after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Centre of International Scientific and Cultural Cooperation under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (*Rossiiskii tsentr mezhdunarodnogo nauchnogo i kul'turnogo sotrudnichestva pri Ministerstve inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Roszarubezhtsentr,* 1992–2008), and finally the Federal Agency on Questions of the CIS, Compatriots Living Abroad and Humanitarian Cooperation, Rossotrudnichestvo (website of Rossotrudnichestvo).

Rossotrudnichestvo has been vested with the leading role in public diplomacy in the Foreign Policy Concept (2013). Prime Minister Medvedev also defines this agency as one of the instruments in "strengthening the position of our country, safeguarding national interests by humanitarian means," as one of "key instruments of so called soft power" (Medvedev 2012). According to Kosachev, Russian government has moved from focussing on funding ministries

to funding of programs such as foreign policy activity. One of the four sub-programs in this state program is called "Cooperation and assistance to international development." Rossotrudnichestvo is, as Kosachev claims, "if not the conductor then at least one of first violins" in coordinating and implementing this sub-programme (Kosachev 2013, March 4). Accordingly, we may take Rossotrudnichestvo as one of the key actors in Russia's public diplomacy and Russia's foreign policy implementation. Konstantin Kosachev, former chair of the Duma Committee on International Affairs (State Duma deputy from United Russia, and previously Fatherland, 1999–2012) and a former diplomat, became the head of the agency in 2012. Nominating this public political figure as the head of Rossotrudnichestvo may also be interpreted as a sign of acknowledging the importance of public diplomacy for Russia's foreign policy goals. In December 2014, Kosachev left the leadership of Rossotrudnichestvo to become a senator from Chuvashia to the Federation Council in the Federal Assembly. He also heads the committee for international affairs.

RUSSIA AND THE SIGNIFICANT OTHERS—THE WEST, CHINA, AND THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

Within the context of public diplomacy, Russia's geopolitical identity is constructed in comparison with the "West," China, and the post-Soviet space—three main reference points; the first two of them could be named significant others, but the third—post-Soviet space—has an ambivalent position in Russian identity construction. It is located somewhere between the Russian Self and the significant others. This is also connected with the idea of the gap between the ruling elites and the people in these entities. As we can see below, in Kosachev's discourse, partly following Slavophile thinking of people's "authenticity," the ruling elites do not necessarily represent the "real" or "true" essence of the nation or country; instead the people are its "true" representatives. These true representatives share the same values and interests as Russia whether in the case of "true" Georgians, "true" Ukrainians, "true" Europeans; they understand and support Russia. It may be argued that the ruling elite represent the other, whereas "true" representatives should be identified as part of the Self.

When it is the question of the West, Russia is perceived as being in competition with the West; this competition takes place particularly in the CIS space. Konstantin Kosachev quotes Foreign Minister Lavrov and argues that the West has invested so many means and efforts in the CIS space in order to strengthen its positions. Accordingly, it is not a question of any altruistic intentions, but of geopolitical rivalry in this space (Kosachev 2014, July 10). In order to win the competition, Russia should invest in education, real economy, development of culture in this space, and show respect to the "uniqueness" of these peoples. In this context, Kosachev brings up the example of Ukraine: people there have not realized the input of Russia for supporting them, they have not recognized Russia's and Russians' role in their life. A similar claim was previously made on Kyrgyzstan and Russia's participation in multilateral assistance programs—those assisted did not realize that it was Russia's assistance (Kosachev 2012, October 7). Russia should be able to follow its interests more closely in international cooperation projects. Therefore, Russia has made a decision to favor bilateral programs

instead of multilateral programs in development assistance. (See for example, Kosachev 2014, May 8; on different roles of Russia in international development assistance in education, see Piattoeva and Takala 2014).

Coming back to Ukraine, Kosachev argues that President Viktor Yanukovich finally realized Russia's role in Ukraine's economy and the real consequences of the EU integration, and therefore, he postponed the signing of the association agreement (see Tsygankov 2015, 283–284, for Putin's arguments on Russia's subsidies to the Ukrainian economy, and Russia's offer to postpone the signing of the association agreement). However, as Kosachev's argument goes on, the Ukrainian people ("true" Ukrainians) were not told the whole truth, but only about the benefits of euro-integration. The difference between the EU funding and Russia's assistance is represented so that the EU has funded Ukrainian authorities in order to acquire their support for the European integration, whereas Russia has supported the Ukrainian economy as a whole which has in its turn benefited the whole population (Kosachev 2014, July 10).

If the West makes up the foe or at least a geopolitical rival, then it is China, which represents a more positive example to follow. China is usually taken as the point of comparison in public diplomacy. There are references to how much money China has invested in public diplomacy and how Russia should learn from China. Kosachev (2013, September 6) for example mentions that China has opened more than eight hundred Confucius Institutes since 2007 and in Russia there are more than ten of them, whereas Russia has only one center of science and culture in Beijing. France represents another example in this field with the references to the International Organization of Francophonia, all those whom the French language and culture have united, may join this organization. This should serve as an example to the Russian World, the organization of Russophonia (Kosachev 2012, April 27).

In Kosachev's argumentation, Estonia and Georgia are those constructed as the main foes—or to be more precise as two manifestations of the foe in the post-Soviet space, because the real foe, one in par with Russia, is the United States, the EU, or NATO. Post-Soviet states are instead used by the stronger ones in the rivalry between more equals. Kosachev gives examples such as how local Russians in Estonia were accused of working for Moscow, or in Georgia pro-Russians have been treated as traitors and hired agents, and this all reminds of the 1930s when "purity of culture and nation" was cherished (Kosachev 2014, June 20). Kosachev uses a similar argumentation to that of the communists (CPRF) and other nationalists about the "Russian question"—Russians in the suppressed position within Russia (not real Russia, but a stump) and outside (see for example, Mäkinen 2012). According to Kosachev, no other people (*narod*) in Eurasia have been so massively discriminated against because of its national characteristics as Russians have. Russians have been taken as an exception—they deserve no rights or freedoms. For example, Russians have not been able to acquire citizenship in the Baltic countries. Kosachev wants to remind us that this has even been accepted by the EU, it is the "Russian exception," or "soft apartheid." This is one of the reasons why the Baltic countries, and the EU, are represented as non-friends. However, according to him, Russia has been misunderstood: Russia's demands are of humanitarian and not territorial nature: Russia condemns the requirement for assimilation and isolation of Russians from bodies of power, the

use of Russophobic schoolbooks (Kosachev 2014, April 24). Previously, "de-russification" was mentioned as a point of concern in the case of Georgia and closing down classes of primary education given in Russian (Kosachev 2012, April 11).

A long-term concern of Russia's political leaders has been Russia's negative image abroad which has been perceived as a security threat to Russia (Feklyunina 2008). Russia's image abroad is a key issue to which Rossotrudnichestvo should be able to make a positive contribution. Russia's leadership has argud that "Russia is faced with the issue of selective information processing" (Osipova 2012). Kosachev reproduces this line of argumentation. Russia's negative image is not comparable to the reality, and not comparable to images of countries with similar problems, level of development, and political system that Russia has (Kosachev 2013, March 4). One example offered is how human rights violations in the Middle East are represented in comparison with those in Russia—the representation is unequal. The same goes for how the Sochi Olympics were criticized in comparison with the Beijing Olympics—again criticism against Russia is unreasonable (Kosachev 2014, March 16; 2014, April 24). There has been intended action for discrediting Russia, for example, Georgia is being accused of this. This is also named as an "anti-brand" which is intentionally promoted by rivals (Kosachev 2013, September 6). Kosachev brings up popular culture examples of "discrediting Russians," re-enforcing stereotypes, which comprise Hollywood movies representing Russians as villains (2014, April 24).

There are of course also other reasons for Russia's negative image, but they are linked with accusations of misinformation. The first of them is history, the Soviet legacy, which has caused fear and phobias about Russia, which however today is a "completely different country" built on "democratic principles" and following "universal values." Russia is not the Soviet Union—aggressive and imposing peoples of other countries its own political model (Kosachev 2013, September 6). Russia as "not Soviet Union" has been a reoccurring theme in Russia's leaders' argumentation (see also Sukhov 2015). The second reason for Russia's negative image is Russia's behavior in world politics, that is, Russia has conducted *independent* foreign policy and has not agreed to follow those who do not respect sovereignty and equality of all states, those who try to bypass the UN "like now in the Syrian case" (Kosachev 2013, September 6). One more reason for Russia's negative image, the reason why Russia is misperceived, and misunderstood is that there has not been enough of "direct inter-society dialogue with other countries." One way to improve the situation is the New Generation program—inviting young people from abroad to visit Russia; another is a more active presence in the information space ("without it there can be no soft power")(Kosachev 2013, March 4).

The Ukrainian crisis is taken as a turning point in how Russia is perceived abroad. Russia is now, according to Kosachev, perceived as a threat. Here Kosachev talks in the framework of Russia's soft power. Previously, he argues, the attitude toward Russia's soft power was "patronizing"—Russia was said to have a lot to learn in that sphere (Kosachev 2014, June 20). However, as for the current situation, Russia's soft power has been recognized. Kosachev gives examples such as McCain's statement in which he claimed that "propaganda of Putin was effective in post-Soviet space," or he refers to "Poles" who have argued that "in the

propaganda frontier Russia has beaten the West . . ." (Kosachev 2014, June 20). Here I would argue that the perception of Russia as a threat is represented in a positive tone—it is better that Russia is feared than that Russia would not be recognized as a significant player in international relations and global politics (cf. Wilson 2012).

Furthermore, Kosachev tries to convince his audiences of disagreement within Western societies on how Russia is represented and dealt with. "Ordinary citizens of other countries are troubled by the actions of their own authorities and not happy with one-sided information that they are offered about very important events from the point of view of the future of the whole continent" (Kosachev 2014, June 20). So it is not ordinary citizens (i.e., "true" Europeans or "true" Americans) who would be Russia's foes, but instead those who have created a "media phantom, a country which by its sole existence justifies any sanctions and actions against it," "a dictatorship which creates military unions against us, started military action, attacked a neighbouring country, shuts down airplanes, shoots at a civilian convoy, . . ." (Kosachev 2014, June 20). Those responsible for creating a "demonised image of Russia" are American and European politicians, media, and social activists. Western publics are thus not written as a foe because they do not have many alternatives—the media creates a one-sided picture of Russia. Russia should directly communicate with foreign publics—not only "friends of Russia but also those with a critical attitude" (Kosachev 2014, August 21).

A MODEL *TO REJECT*

The models not to follow are the U.S. models (or later the EU model), and the model to franchise or to ape this model. The U.S. model is about imposing one's own political, social, and economic model on others, about attempts to assimilate others; it represents colonial thinking. Another model to reject is represented by those countries which have allowed themselves to become "objects" of the U.S. model, and have later tried to impose this model on others. Here it is the question of *de-sovereignization*, of countries which have voluntarily given up their sovereignty—they have moved from the Soviet patronage to the U.S. and/or EU patronage. Representatives of the Russian political elite have previously named the Baltic States as examples of this process (see for example, Mäkinen 2011 on Surkov; also Kosachev 2012, October 7). However, Kosachev most often refers to Georgia as a country which is represented as an independent country, but in reality is not.

According to Kosachev, then Georgian president Saakashvili tried to represent Georgia as a model to follow for others. This model, supported by the U.S. and European powers, was based on the slogan of "breaking away from the Soviet mentality." However, in Kosachev's interpretation, this is actually promotion of soft power of others, Georgia does not possess resources or soft power itself, but instead Georgia "advances 'soft power' of others it "re-transmits values," it participates in "ideological franchising." Georgia is one of the "diligent disciples of the West" who are "subject to constant monitoring, as loans and assistance are only given under the condition of democratic process." Accordingly, Georgia is not given the status of an independent actor—its sovereignty is severely questioned by Kosachev.

Despite the current relationship between Russia and Georgia, the synthesis is "the values of Georgia and Russia are actually identical." However, it would be ideologically inconvenient for Georgia to acknowledge this because of Washington (Kosachev 2012, December 27). It follows that the real foe is always the United States, and *true* Georgia would be Russia's friend. Russia and Georgia could potentially have the same model to follow. Part of Russia's mission is thus make Georgia (or any other post-Soviet country) to realize this—they (i.e., "true" representatives of these countries) have mutual values and interests (see also Kosachev 2012, April 11). To repeat, the model to reject is that of dependence, loss of sovereignty, and acceptance of universal values, examples of which Georgia and the Baltic States represent.

However, in the context of the crisis around Ukraine, Kosachev accuses the EU of building the dividing line between "bad values" of Russia and "good values" of the EU. In other words, according to him, it is not Russia who is making the division into good and bad, but the situation is represented as such elsewhere in Europe or in the West (Kosachev 2014, October 21). Moreover, Kosachev brings up the possibility of "dialogue between Eurasian and European integration processes," cooperation is fully possible. It has been an artificial choice which Ukraine has been forced to make, to choose between these two processes (Kosachev 2014, December 3).

Kosachev tries to refute the idea of "good values" represented by the EU by referring to disagreement within Europe itself. That is, not all agree with the fact that "violations of human rights" from the Ukrainian side would constitute these good values. Kosachev refers to the French newspaper *Marianne*, Swiss *Le Temps*, Polish *Newsweek Polska*, Czech *Free Press* (Kosachev 2014, December 3), and later (2014, December 16) to the open letter signed by many German politicians and published in *Die Zeit* when he tries to convince the audience that not all accept the European/Western model in Europe either, there is internal opposition. Kosachev searches for evidence among "them" for the existence of "us," or friends of "us."

This model which should be opposed is also that of those who are only interested in their own interests. For example, the EU is not aspiring any "common good," but only self-interest. This is manifest also in the case of Ukraine and in other cases when there is no intention of giving membership to the former USSR republics; "engagement but no marriage" model however will be counterproductive to Europe's "soft power" as Kosachev argues (2014, October 21).

A MODEL *TO FOLLOW* AND A MISSION TO ACCOMPLISH

Kosachev represents Russia's model in the post-Soviet space to rest first of all in "Russia's closeness in all respects," and there he refers to cultural and linguistic ties. Second, according to him, it has recently become evident that Russia has the ability to support those who have close cultural and linguistic ties with Russia. Third, Russia's model is attractive because Russia has means to support its partners economically, not to mention its energy resources (Kosachev 2014, May 14). Russia will not let down its friends. Kosachev argues that Russia has returned to the position of "international guarantee of security" and that of a real alternative. Accordingly, the Ukrainian crisis, the annexation of Crimea, is represented as a

victory for Russia—it makes Russia's model visible. The previous model, opposed by Russia, was "Do as the West tells you to do or your will be severely punished" (Kosachev 2014, May 14). Russia's mission in the world is to offer an alternative model.

The difference between the model to reject—that is, the Western model, and Russia's alternative model is that the West promises financial assistance but Russia offers real integration: the purpose is to work together. Previously, in 2012, Kosachev defined Russia's model—Russia's soft power method—as resting on "three pillars: cooperation, security and sovereignty" (Kosachev 2012, October 7). Russia is ready to "cooperate and assist in independent development." In addition, Russia is capable of offering smaller countries real sovereignty and considerable independence. Russia advocates "a dialogue without imposing its own cultural code in the form of "universal values" (Kosachev 2012, October 7). Here, Russia seems to follow the Chinese model, as China "tries to expand its influence without interfering in the internal affairs of other states or imposing some civilizational models upon them" (Kosachev 2012, October 7). However, later ideas of the Russian president on traditional values and ideas have also gained more and more support (Kosachev 2014, May 13), accordingly, Kosachev represents Russia's model also as an ideological alternative. This "ideological" aspect becomes evident also when Kosachev refutes Western criticism toward Russia by saying that it lacks any principles or values, instead, it is all about interests and ambitions (2014, August 20). "Western liberal values" and "more ancient civilization values rooted in traditions, religion, and basic ethic norms (respect for the elders, help to one's neighbour, family, honour, dignity and love for the homeland)" (Kosachev 2012, October 7; traditional thinking regarding ethnic and religious issues 2012, December 27) are juxtaposed, and Russia is represented as the main bearer of these "traditional values" (similar argumentation in Putin, see for example, Tsygankov 2015, 291). Attraction of Russia's soft power is that an individual does not have to lose one's cultural and linguistic roots, one's connection with the historical motherland (Kosachev 2014, May 13).

However, again in October 2014 Kosachev represents Russia's "non-ideological" approach as a merit which will help in promoting Eurasian integration. Pluses and minuses of the integration will be counted, its practical side will be evaluated among those considering this option. Kosachev tries to convince the audience that also actors outside the post-Soviet space could be interested in Eurasian integration (2014, October 21).

Even though the Western model, or mimicking or franchising the Western model, are not the models to follow for Russia (or should not be for any post-Soviet country), there are also things to be learnt from their experience and behavior—and here we may refer in particular to the practices of public diplomacy. The Western actors have been able to have influence on foreign publics—that is, non-govermental influence by non-governmental foundations, NGOs, experts and politicians, media. Russia should also act accordingly, to react in advance and not only when a crisis is going on. Kosachev emphasizes that now it is time to "tell Yerevan, Minsk, Tbilisi, Baku and Astana schoolchildren which role Russia has and has had in the life of their countries, what we have in common and why it is important to be together" (2014, July 10). Here Kosachev also builds the case for Eurasian integration.

Part of Russia's mission should also be to make Russia seen (in a correct way—as argued above when discussing Russia's image), to emphasize Russia's greatness, Russia's and Russians' role in the history. This includes also building memorial sites abroad, that is, sites which will commemorate Russians—for example, Belgrade cemetery is mentioned in more than one occasion (Kosachev 2013, March 4; 2013, September 6; 2014, August 20). Kosachev accuses professional Russia researchers (*professionalnye "rusologi"*) of representing Russia in an incorrect way. They give wrong evaluations of the situation in Russo-Ukrainian relations, of Ukrainian society, Russia's position, and these have led to "fatal mistakes in the EU actions" (Kosachev 2014, December 16). This is connected with the open letter of German politicians in *Die Zeit* 5 December 2014, and a response to it, which was initiated by Andreas Umland and signed mainly by researchers based in German universities. According to Kosachev, these Russian experts play a negative role in the relations between Europe and Russia.

Russia's model is represented as attractive in Europe, too, because people will realize that Russia does not leave its own ones in misery, but does everything for them. Kosachev gives the example that Russia has sacrificed its reputation, and its relations with the United States when supporting Russians in Ukraine. Moreover, Russia has shown willingness to have dialogue, and is not getting into the war of sanctions (Kosachev 2014, October 21). Thus, there is optimism about Russia getting others to its side. And this is also related to Russia's "massive economic, diplomatic and political activity in the non-Western world." Russia sees its audience in the "majority of ordinary clear-headed people in any society who do not wish for confrontation, mutual sanctions, conflicts, strengthening of radicalism and weakening of security, growth of crises and problems in domestic and foreign affairs" (2014, October 21). Again the hope is laid on "true" representatives of foreign countries who are represented as supporters of Russia and its position in key questions (see also Kosachev 2013, February 4).

CONCLUSION

Analyzing representations in Konstantin Kosachev's blog and in his articles and interviews published in the Russian media, I may conclude that Kosachev reproduces a polarized world. There seems to be two models available for the "citizens of the world" to choose from. Russia should be able to offer one of these models. This model is based on the respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality, uniqueness of all peoples, and traditional values. That is, Russia is represented as non-colonizer, non-intervener, non-imperialist. Russia is sovereign, and respects others' sovereignty, tolerant toward different cultures, and traditionalist. The other model—be it a more general Western model, or a more particular U.S. model or EU model—is a complete opposite to the model represented by Russia.

This bipolar world may also be confrontational, even though Kosachev blames the representatives of the other model of creating unnecessary and artificial confrontation, and actually of making these sharp divisions between the two models, that of the Good and that of the Evil. Kosachev partly tries to build bridges between these two models; that is, argumentation is not always systematically seeking to construct two separate models, but argumentation depends on the context.

As the majority of the blog entries dealing with themes under examination here were written in 2014, and in particular, during "Euromaidan" and the crisis around Ukraine, the context of the open conflict between Russia and the "West" with the sanctions and countersanctions, must have had its impact on practical geopolitical reasoning. However, the polarized world view, the idea of competition, if not confrontation, between different models was present in Kosachev's argumentation even before 2014, and in general, in the argumentation of the political elite. Kosachev without any doubt follows the current argumentation line of the highest foreign policy elite representing Russia as an alternative to the West, and this follows, it is claimed, from the actions of the West threatening Russia's (or other sovereign states') interests. The new polarization and ideologization of Russian foreign policy elite's discourse reminds of the Cold War discourse, even though there are also significant differences between the old and the new Cold War (see Legvold 2014).

If we then come to the premises, what are the grounds on which Kosachev's argumentation rests, what the audience is expected to believe, which values to share with Kosachev, I would characterize the first as a belief in that Russia—the political elite—has not done anything wrong. Instead, Russia is intentionally represented—by the foreign media, by politicians, by the academic community abroad in a negative light, and therefore, Russia is misperceived by the foreign publics. It follows that the first belief shared by the audience and the speaker is righteousness of Russia and the political elite and a parallel Russophobia which exists outside. If previously the accusation of Russophobia was most often limited to Georgia and the Baltic states, in particular, to their political leadership, it now reaches the EU sphere.

The second point that needs to be emphasized is the optimistic tone in Kosachev's argumentation. The audience should believe that the rightness will prevail, that in the end the masses (i.e., "true" representatives of their countries) will understand the real nature of the situation, and turn to Russia. There is optimism that good, read Russia, will win in the end. This belief is supported by the presentation of evidence of the divisions within Europe, and the post-Soviet space. The ruling elite and the people do not share the same values and interests; instead, the people may understand and support Russia.

Practical geopolitical reasoning rests on the premises of Russia as righteous defender of the values of sovereignty and tolerance. Again, these two beliefs can be found as the grounds on which the foreign policy elite in general seems to rely on: for example, the blame on what is happening in Ukraine (or in Russia) is placed on the external forces, and not on Russia itself at all, and that Russia should take actions to prevent such harmful behavior, to safeguard its interests as a sovereign great power. We must hope that these polarized geopolitical representations do not prepare the ground for any further radical political action.

NOTE

1. See chapter 7 by Hanna Smith in this book.

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Part III

VISIONS OF RUSSIA AS A GREAT POWER

Chapter Seven

Putin's Third Term andRussia as a Great Power

Hanna Smith

When Vladimir Putin returned to the position of ultimate power in Russian politics, the presidency, in 2012 Russian society seemed to be split. Demonstrations in 2011 and 2012 suggested that in Russia a color revolution might even be possible. The new media played a decisive role in Russia as well as in other places in the world when it came to bringing together like-minded fellow citizens, organizing public gatherings, and expressing oppositional views. During Dmitry Medvedev's presidency the new media "revolution" anchored itself in Russia. Many Russian politicians today, like Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and Prime Minster Medvedev, do use Twitter and engage with other forms of new media. Therefore, it is interesting to observe that President Putin chose a very traditional media, newspapers, to write several articles prior to the presidential elections of 2012 as an answer to critical voices in Russia, mapping the road forward for Russia and his vision of Russia's problems and how to overcome them. In fact, the president seems to have a clear preference for more traditional media over the new forms. He also continued successfully to use television as his main channel for communication with Russian society and reinforced the ceremonial aspects of power like speeches, parades, presenting awards, and lavish shows—reinforcing the picture of Russia as a strong state and a Great Power. This form of politics has been successful, as evidenced by the continuing popularity of Putin himself and the acceptance of his message regarding the conflict in Ukraine. Some of this success has come down to the fact that one of the central messages of the traditional communication has been a traditional theme for Russia—Russian Greatpowerness, the self-perception of Russia as a Great Power.

  Greatpowerness is analyzed here as a part of Russian state and national identity that acts as a state ideology, and unites all Russian political elites and most Russian citizens. If this is a uniting factor in domestic politics it does cause contradictions and conflicts with interest-based partners, such as the post-Soviet countries and the West. This chapter takes a constructivist view of Greatpowerness as an embedded part of Russian identity and hence a major influence on policy formation, especially foreign policy. The methodological starting point is found in academic discussions on Great Power identity, Greatpowerness, in the Russian context and generally, and analysis of what makes a country a Great Power. Against this background, the chapter goes on to map the three main foreign policy schools inside of Russia and how each of them views Russia as a Great Power. Finally, it looks at the third presidency of President Putin in the light of how he expressed his vision on Russia in the seven election articles published in the winter/spring of 2012. It is argued that elements of each of the three schools' approaches can be found in Putin's approach to Greatpowerness, which is

therefore seen as a central unifying message for Russia which has played a major part in media representations during the Ukraine crisis.

Discussions of Great Powers in the context of international relations, particularly when it comes to more obvious forms such as military strength, are often framed within realist or liberal frameworks of analysis. The approach adopted here to Greatpowerness as a feature of state identity, however, owes more to constructivist understandings. Constructivism puts identity and its roots in historical and cultural experience at the center of state decision making. There is an abundance of literature available based on the constructivist approach in international relations in relation to Russia, each with a different emphasis (Neuman 1996 and 2008; Hopf 1999 and 2002; Tsygankov 2010 and 2012; Clunan 2009; Jackson 2003; Feklynina 2008 and 2012; Leichtova 2014; Morozov 2015). While the emphasis in each of these works may vary, one factor which is a common denominator for all of the research taking the constructivist approach is that Russian foreign policy actions and choices have a strong domestic base. They also share the understanding that Russia has yet to come to terms with the fall of the Soviet Union, and that the most important significant other is the West. The notion of Greatpowerness builds on the idea of identity at the core of foreign policy making by looking at a key feature which ties together Russian popular beliefs and elite attitudes, while adding substance to the sense of imperial loss and rivalry with the Great Powers of the West.

Based on this approach, the chapter concludes that Putin's vision for his third presidential term, as outlined in his election articles but also put into practice, involves a strong emphasis on Russia as a Great Power. This key element of Russian identity has been overlooked and is one of the reasons that tensions between Russia and the West have run so high during the Ukraine crisis.

GREATPOWERNESS—THE IDENTITY OF A GREAT POWER

The identity, the self-perception, of a Great Power is not a factor that has been widely used as a measure of a Great Power, but it does play an important role in both the domestic and foreign policies of a country that sees itself as a Great Power. Russia's self-perception as a Great Power—Greatpowerness—does not always coincide with either academic or popular understandings of what constitutes a Great Power in the West.

Greatpowerness is a concept that Russians have used to describe their country, and is one way of linking Russia into a more universal system while maintaining differences with the West. The concept is at the core of today's Russian cultural and political self-understanding. This self-perception has been expressed in many ways and, for many Russians, *derzhavnost'* is more like an emotion, it is a craving for a status which most Russians strongly believe is theirs by right, by virtue of the enormous size of the country, its resources, its history. In the past, this feeling has been expressed ideologically in terms of Russia as the defender of Christendom or as the guardian of international communism. These feelings were further reinforced by Russia's leading role in the Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century and its place as one of the two great superpowers for much of the twentieth century. These historical experiences have left the

impression that Russia is, and should be treated as, at least on a level with the world's other Great Powers.

Robert Legvold explains the use of the term in Russia: "*Derzhavnost'*, however, has a meaning all its own, one missing from the English language, simply because the phenomenon is missing. Only the Russians in moments of distress revert to an affection of great-power standing—that is, to asserting their natural right to the role and influence of great power whether they have the wherewithal or not" (Legvold 2006, 114). Where Legvold is right about Greatpowerness in the Russian context, he perhaps misses the fact that Greatpowerness does exist for all the Great Powers or in all countries that see themselves as Great Powers (Murray 2010, 658).

Mark Urnov has defined Greatpowerness in Russia's case as "The vision of Russia not as one among a community of equals but more as an independent player on the global stage that incites fear and therefore respect and is in a position to impose its will on others" (Urnov 2013, 70). The concept is old and plays a significant role in Russia's past and present as well as future foreign policy. Bobo Lo has observed: "If we interpret ideology more generously—as a 'predispositional influence' on policy thinking and decision-making—then there is no reason to exclude the re-emergence of Russia's sense of 'Greatpowerness' (*derzhavnost*) as one of the key strands of the post-Soviet foreign policy debate." In Lo's view Russian Greatpowerness is based on a belief in Russia's global status and gives Russia ipso facto a "right of involvement" in any matter Russia sees as important for its own interests (Lo 2002, 53).

Michelle Murray has discussed Greatpowerness explicitly from a constructivist point of view, linking identity and recognition to Greatpowerness. Taking the case of the development of the German navy before World War I, she argues that, since this investment took resources away from land defense, it was suboptimal in strategic terms and therefore contradicted realist assumptions of power maximization. Instead, she proposes "a social theory of great power politics that argues that in addition to physical security states also want recognition." Such recognition, a social act, is essential to a state's identity since "when a state is recognized, its identity is brought into existence, its meaning stabilized, and its status in the social order secured." On the other hand "if the international community does not recognize a state's self-understanding, then it will struggle to obtain the recognition it needs to secure that identity, sometimes at the expense of other goals, like security" (Murray 2010, 658–61).

Greatpowerness—the identity of a Great Power—then, can be understood as *a state's self-image as one of the dominant powers in the world which can have a variety of impacts on that state's behavior. Such behavior can be observed across a wide range of activities and includes measures not only to confirm Great Power status to the citizens of the state itself, but also to obtain and continually reaffirm the recognition of that status by the international community, and especially by other Great Powers* (Smith 2014). This follows Alexander Wendt's constructivist line of how the ideas of intersubjectively constructed identities form the basis of interests and therefore policies (Wendt 1999).

On the exact status of Russia as a Great Power the importance of *derzhavnost'* as a key element in Russian state identity with important impacts on foreign policy making has been recognized by scholars for some time. In a statement of this relationship, Margot Light has argued that "Russia was clearly not a superpower; indeed, it was questionable whether it was a Great Power. Yet to ordinary people, as well as to politicians, it was unthinkable that Russia could be anything less than this. The insistence that Russia should be regarded as a great power became an important theme in foreign policy statements and discussions and it remains an important driver of foreign policy" (Light 2010, 229). Mark Urnov has also made this point that Russian self-perception as a Great Power has had a profound effect on Russian policy making and that whether the Greatpowerness has had a direct effect or stays in a background role has depended on international events at any particular time (Urnov 2014).

The self-image of Russia as a Great Power exerts a decisive influence on how Russians interpret a particular situation they find themselves in and how interests are defined. It is this Russian state self-image that has become a problem in Russian international politics and strongly impacted the new age information sphere, both in the Russian domestic arena and in the international one. One of the aspects in the "information war" is the image-building of Russia as a strong state and one of the most influential Great Powers in the world.

When talking about Greatpowerness, recognition, status, and being a Great Power in world politics, it is also important to try to define power. This is not a straightforward task. Traditionally, power is seen as an ability to get others to do what you want and to gain political, economical, and military aims. That type of power is connected to a physical power base such as territory, population, and size of an economy, military capabilities, and also a "stable" political system.

Traditional power is very concrete and is easy to measure. It is also easy to measure whether the use of traditional power is successful. Aims are reached by coercive methods—making an offer you cannot refuse. The other actor agrees against its initial views. The one who has more "power" in this case can dictate rules. Threat is quite a usual method in traditional power.

In the international relations community there is to some extent agreement as to what makes a country a Great Power in the traditional sense. The agreement lasts as long as the factors are measurable, and there are numbers that can be put into play. However, already in the last decades of the Cold War era, factors started to enter the equation which cannot be so clearly defined and measured. Joseph Nye wrote in 1990 about the changing nature of power (Nye 1990) which had become already clear in the 1980s. In the Soviet Union Gorbachev's new thinking on foreign policy already reflected that change. To maintain Great Power status the economy, territory, population, and military might were still important but increasingly, factors like cultural attractiveness, knowledge, technology, efficiency, and institutional models played a role as part of the character of a Great Power.

Power that is based on ideas/institutions (state system, normative framework), attractiveness (cultural appeal, popular culture, language, history), or working models (education system, use of technology, infrastructure), are more difficult to define. In today's international relations community this type of power is called "soft power."

The existence of different ways of defining and measuring power creates some tensions in world politics. A country's own perception of itself as a Great Power may not coincide with the perceptions of others, including other Great Powers, who have different notions of what being a Great Power involves. Since constructivist (and indeed other) approaches emphasize recognition by others as an important element of Great Power identity, these differing perceptions can result in challenges to a state's identity.

Often the list of Great Powers from various historical epochs seems to be intuitive rather than based on agreed definitions. Kenneth Waltz defends such an intuitive understanding of Great Powers: "Historically, despite the difficulties, one finds general agreement about who the Great Powers of a period are, with occasional doubt about the marginal cases. Counting the Great Powers of an era is about as difficult, or as easy, as saying how many major firms populate an oligopolistic sector of an economy. The question is an empirical one, and common sense can answer it." Waltz thinks that the following factors all need to be present if a state is to be counted as a member of the club of Great Powers: size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability, and competence (Waltz 1979, 131).

Martin Wight's Great Power elements are slightly different to Waltz's list: "The power that makes a power is composed of many elements. Its basic components are size of population, strategic position and geographical extent, and economic resources and industrial production. To these must be added less tangible elements like administrative and financial efficiency, education and technological skill, and above all moral cohesion" (Wight 1978, 26). Paul Kennedy in his book *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* defines a Great Power as a state capable of holding its own against any other nation (Kennedy 1987, 539). In Kennedy's argument a Great Power can be properly measured only relative to other powers. Kennedy's argument is strongly reflected in Putin's views expressed in the "election" articles. Putin's Russia has taken the ultimate comparative reference point from the United States. Among other Great Powers worth making comparison with Putin picked up India, China, and Brazil first and foremost.

It is quite clear that most analysts argue that military might is an undoubted factor in being a Great Power, economic resources perhaps come in second place, but then arguments start to differ. The attractiveness of both military and economic approaches for comparative studies is, in part, that these factors are easily measurable. When it comes to other elements such as acceptance by formal or informal groups of Great Powers, regime type, and forms of soft power, it is harder to reach consensus and the possibility of different assessments by different international actors is evident.

In the Russian discourse the elements of what makes a country a Great Power have also been carefully studied, not only by the political elite as Putin's "election" articles show but also by the academic community. Tatiana Shakleina from Moscow State International for International Relations has carried out research on parameters of a Great Power. She sees the United States as the undoubted Great Power with all the parameters in place. From her analysis the biggest challenge to Russian Great Power status comes from demography, but she also sees some

weaknesses in the economy, science and research, and technological advances. As for the strengths, Shakleina also goes for those factors where there is agreement in the global international relations community: territory, natural resources, military strength. On top of that she counts as Russian strengths education, and the ability and tradition of thinking and acting globally (Table 7.1). In Shakleina's analysis there are four factors where only Russia and the United States fulfill the criteria: military, education, culture, and the tradition and culture of acting and thinking globally.

Table 7.1. Comparison of Parameters of Great Powers Between the United States, China, India, Brazil, and Russia.

Parameters of a Great Power	U.S.	China	India	Brazil	Russia
Territory	+	+/–	+/–	+	+
Natural resources	+/–	–	–	+	+
Demography	+/–	+/–	+/–	+	–
Military strength	+	+/–	+/–	–	+
Economy	+	+/–	+/–	+/–	–/+
Technological advances	+	+/–	+/–	– /+	+/–
Science and research	+	+/–	+/–	–	– /+
Education	+	–	–	–	+
Culture	+	+/–	+/–	-– /+	+
Tradition and culture to act and think globally	+	– /+	–	–	+

Source: Shakleina (2013).

Factors such as the capacity to govern, levels of democratic development, and so on, which are important for Waltz and Wight and other Western scholars, do not enter Shakleina's analysis. The possibility of divergence between Russian self-perception and external recognition of Greatpowerness is clearly apparent, therefore. Shakleina's approach does, however, reflect a way of thinking that is shared across Russian political elites, even where they differ greatly over other aspects of foreign policy.

APPROACHES OF RUSSIAN INTERNAL FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY SCHOOLS TO RUSSIA AS A GREAT POWER

Even if in many ways Russian society is divided and different opinions are floating around, both society and political elites agree that Russia is a Great Power. Denis Volkov, an analyst at the Russian public opinion center Levada, has given one of the main reasons for Putin's high approval rating is that people feel he has restored the status that belongs to Russia—Russia as a Great Power (Levada Center 2015a). In this perspective, Russia has shown itself as a Great Power to others through its annexation of Crimea and standing up to the West in world politics, as highlighted in the Ukraine conflict. These aspects of ignoring international law and standing against the West are seen as signs of strength.

Interestingly, it seems that Russian society, just as with its foreign policy elite, is divided by opinions as to what exactly would be the right way for Russia to be a Great Power. The Levada Center asked respondents what kind of country they would like to see Russia be. One

the one hand 49 percent answered that they would like to see Russia as a country with high living standards but not necessarily as powerful militarily, and on the other hand 47 percent replied that they want to see Russia as a traditional Great Power that is respected and feared by other countries (Levada Center 2015b). This division clearly followed the lines of traditional power versus the elements included into soft power ideas listed in the previous part. To some extent, these divisions are reflected in different categories of the Russian foreign policy elite.

Traditionally, the common way of breaking down political society into groups is to define three categories in Russian foreign policy thinking (Light 1996; Lukin 1992; Pushkov 1994; Jackson 2003). They have then competed in the foreign policy establishment for the leading place. Alla Kassianova has observed: "Most authors who have written on the evolution of the foreign policy discourse in Russia follow the method of breaking Russian political society into groups based on their ideological orientations, and comparing their respective narratives on key topics of Russian domestic and foreign policies" (Kassianova 2001, 824). Both domestic and outside factors have influenced how the different groups have been in the leading place and then changed places. The categories according to Andrei Tsygankov are Westernizers, statists, and civilizationists (Tsygankov 2010, 4). Igor Zevelev's equivalent groups are liberals, Great Power balancers, and nationalists (Zevelev 2012).

Some analysts break the Russian internal discourse down into several groups. Ted Hopf in his book *Social Construction of International Politics* (Hopf 2002) comes to the conclusion that there are not only many identities in Russia influencing at the same time but also many different others. Hopf looks at Russian identity through four different discourses and identities. Hopf's groups are the New Western Russia, which has explicitly adopted identity through the external other of the West; the new Soviet Russia, identity through the historical other of the Soviet Union; the liberal essentialist, whose identity is constructed through different elements mixed from the West, Russia, and the East; and then Hopf's fourth group is the liberal relativist that seeks the authentic Russia rejecting all aspects relating to modernity. Hopf concluded that all four discourses appreciated the Soviet past for the Great Power status attributed to the Soviet Union during the Cold War and continues: "Presumably, states that accorded Russia that kind of status in 1999 would be considered more favorably than those who denied such an identity" (Hopf 2002).

Anne Clunan has identified five different groups that played a role in the 1990s Russian political discourse based on Westernizer, statist, national restorationist, neocommunist, and slavophile ideas (Clunan 2009, 60). In Clunan's work those groups are also in some cases divided into subgroups making the picture of Russian politics even more patchwork-like. She concludes that given Russia's long history of seeking to be a Great Power and the Soviet Union's position as the second superpower during the Cold War, it is not surprising that all different Russian groups with a national self-image hold that Russia belongs to the group of Great Powers. Furthermore, according to Clunan the united view of these groups was that Russia's rights, privileges, and obligations as a Great Power were not respected by the Western Great Powers (Clunan 2009, 80).

Even if there are different ways of breaking down the Russian foreign policy inner groups with their own self-image of Russia, here only three are examined more closely. The three groups—Westernizers, statists, and civilizationists (following Tsygankov)—represent in the end the main foreign policy schools and are the base for subgroups. However, it is good to keep in mind that the three main groups do include variations within themselves, further fragmenting the picture and making reading of Russian foreign policy thinking even harder.

Russian statists come closest to the Western realist thinking, and are also known as eurasianist or liberal nationalist, or great-power balancers (*derzhavniki*). This group could be broken down further along a variety of different lines. In Clunan's work, for example, both national restorationists and neocommunists fall inside the general statist framework. In Hopf's work the new Soviet Russia group and the liberal essentialists can be placed in the statist group. The fact that there are many subgroups in the statist framework reflects the fact that it is also the most influential group overall.

Statists believe that foreign policy should be guided by national interests defined realistically with regard to the Russian geopolitical security situation, domestic economic objectives, and available resources. During Vladimir Putin's two first presidencies this line was also called pragmatist. They see the state as a central actor governing and preserving the social and political order as well as conducting economic policy. In statism, Russian identity is connected to language and it has been emphasized how important it is for Russia to defend Russian speakers outside Russia's borders. For them the fall of the Soviet Union was unfortunate from the point of view of lost prestige and status (Jackson 2003, 35). For statists, territory is a very important element of strength. The Russian territorial boundaries therefore represent for them either a status quo or revisionism (Clunan 2009, 61). Vladislav and Karaganov wrote early in the 1990s that "Russia must bear its cross and fulfill its duty by playing an enlightened post-imperial role throughout the ex-Soviet Union" (Sergunin 2007, 57).

Furthermore, these views lead to the conclusion that the area of the former Soviet Union was in Russia's Great Power interests (Clunan 2009, 62) and "military force was deemed acceptable if necessary to protect these vaguely defined interests" (Jackson 2003, 36). One important defining concept in foreign policy making is the notion of external threat and the relationship to the West. Marlene Laruelle has argued in relationship to Eurasianism, which here is included into the statist framework, "The love/hate relationship with the West is supplemented, to varying degrees, with a belief in irreducible national specificity, extreme relativism, cultural autarky, a religious and political messianism and a xenophobic rejection of mixing and borrowing" (Laruelle 2008, 213).

All these elements, in the statist view, add up to Russia being a Great Power between East and West. Its strengths are in its territory and unique ability to draw the best experiences from both Europe and Asia. It does view the area of the former Soviet Union as its sphere of interest. Inside of this group there is the more liberal wing sometimes cooperating with the Westernizers and the more conservative side finding friends from the Slavophile group. Furthermore, the statist economic policy is very much connected to state control of economic policies, thereby not rejecting the Soviet experience. The statists find their support more in the

peripheries than in the big cities and the Orthodox Church is their ally in many policy matters. In addition to that, they do declaim the democratic institutions and practices of the West and the importance of the Russian middle class (Hopf 2002, 158). Putin has now and then talked about the importance of the middle class, but for him the middle class is defined in a slightly different way from the Western concept. These factors do stand in the way of real reform and the idea of modernity in Russia.

The Russian liberal school the Westernizers (*zapadniki*) have been called atlanticist, liberals, democrats, and even "international institutionalist." For this group the West was the referent for Russia's evolving state identity. Russian discourses of modernization have roots in this thinking. Russia needs to become a modern state in the Western style. Westernizers emphasize the Russian similarity with the West and view the West as the most viable and progressive civilization in the world. For Westernizers the ideas of multilateralism and international cooperation are essential elements of international politics. Therefore, they saw the main task of Russian foreign policy as one of joining Western economic, political and military institutions, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Trade Organization, the G-7, and so on (Sergunin 2007, 46). This policy was shared with the statists at first but since the early 1990s has been modified, since the statists lost faith in the international institutions led by Western countries failing to accept Russian Great Power status.

The Westernizers differ in many ways from the statists. They do see the collapse of the Soviet Union as a positive thing, giving the possibility to finally build a Russian civic state inside the borders of the Russian Federation. This group feels strongly that they are the winners of the Cold War and those who actually defeated communism. Their economic policies are based on free market economy principles and the insistence that economic relations with the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union should be based on free economic zones (Clunan 2009, 63). With the West the relationship is very much based on the ideas of the market economy where cooperation and competition vary (Clunan 2009, 63). This naturally puts at the core of Russian Greatpowerness European civilization, education, democracy as a state model, and liberal economic policies. This is very much in line with the 49 percent that replied to the Levada center question about what kind of country they want Russia to be, that they want to see Russia as a country of high living standards.

Russian Greatpowerness in the view of the Westernizers includes strategic partnership and equality with Western countries. This, however, was one of the factors that those opposing the Westernizers attacked strongly in the 1990s. Those opposing the position of the Westernizers saw their policy toward the West as based on "ideological desires" rather than "firm foundations" (Lo 2002, 46). Also something that in the end was not viewed favorably for the Westernizers was their lack of interest in the former Soviet Union area and the argument that Russia is a normal state without an overarching mission (Jackson 2003, 34).

The last group—civilizationists—are also known as slavophiles (*slavyanofily*) or nationalists (Neumann 1996). This group seeks their arguments from what they call Russian

inheritance and values. They see the international environment as hostile. For them the West is a threat to Russian values and the vast land mass is essential for Russian greatness. Those subscribing to this group often circulate isolationist ideas. Their foreign policy discourse exploits mythologized narratives of Russian civilizational uniqueness and "mission." For civilizationists, the idea of the "Russian Empire" has been in the core of thinking. The civilizationists object to both Western and Asian influences in Russia, seeking Slavic unity.

A key difference between statists and civilizationists is that the civilizationists define Russia on an ethnic basis. Ethnic and assimilated Russians enjoy in this framework "first class" citizenship. For Slavophiles, Great Russia includes Ukraine, called among civilizationists Little Russia, and Belarus, called White Russia by civilizationists, as well as sometimes Latvia and northern parts of Kazakhstan with their large Russian speaking populations (Clunan 2009, 71). Also, the Slavophiles, like statists, do not rule out the use of military force for the protection of the ethnic Russian population (Sergunin 2007, 55).

In addition to the centrality of ethnicity for civilizationists there is an emphasis on the Orthodox Church which brings the essence of spirituality into Russian society. For them history plays a strong role in their argumentation. The collapse of the Soviet Union is seen by them as a very negative thing and most of the bad things in Russia are due to Western interference. It is especially in the civilizationist framework where the view is one of Russia surrounded and threatened by enemies. One of the threatening things is democracy and liberal ideas (Jackson 2003, 35).

All three foreign policy schools are present in current Russian politics. Their ideas were also picked up for Putin's election articles in 2012. They all agree with the fact that Russia should be a Great Power but they have very strong differences when it comes to the question of what makes a country a Great Power. The statists want to see Russia as an important pole between Europe and Asia drawing the best from both, making Russia a unique country. Russian strength is based on traditional hard power, military might. For statists a strong state role in all aspects of society is important. The Westernizers anchor Russian Greatpowerness into European civilization and the liberal market economy. They do expect a Great Power status for Russia to be granted by the Western Great Powers and depending on the issue see themselves either in cooperation or in competition with the Western partners. For them it is important to be a Great Power in technology and education. The attractiveness of Russia should be based on a high level of knowledge and an efficient society. And lastly but not least the civilizationists or Slavophiles form their own view of what kind of a country Russia should be. For them Russia is a unique civilization based on spirituality, ethnicity, and superiority. Because of this any Western attempt to introduce ideas into Russian society is seen as a hostile act. The Slavophiles base a lot of their ideas on threat perceptions.

A crisis situation tends to reveal many hidden domestic political agendas. The annexation of Crimea and war in Eastern Ukraine counts as one of those situations. The clear shift during Putin's third presidency to reducing the influence of Westernizers and increasing the statist conservative side's power with help from the ideas of the civilizationist side became very visible with the conflict. In March 2015, a Levada poll showed that 80 percent of Russians

understood the annexation of Crimea as part of a revival of Russian Great Power status (Levada Center 2015c). However, the division over whether Russia should be a feared Great Power or whether high living standards should be more of a priority indicates that the door is still open to other methods of asserting Russia's status as a Great Power.

PUTIN'S THIRD PRESIDENTIAL TERM AND RUSSIAN GREATPOWERNESS

The unrest at the end of 2011 was the largest that Russia had experienced since the fall of the Soviet Union. Vladimir Putin was preparing to return to power as president. It was clear that the authorities would need to make some kind of response to the feelings expressed by sections of Russian society, especially in large cities. Some expected and hoped that the expression of unhappiness with the Duma election in 2011 and about the general conditions in Russia would force the authorities to embark on a road of new democratization, while others feared that things would turn for the worse. Sergei Markov provided a forecast of what was to come in an interview for the *New York Times*: "The authorities will attempt to conduct themselves with society as a parent would a child who is crying and demanding some kind of toy. It is not correct to go out and buy the child a toy, but rather distract him with something else" (Herszenhorn and Barry 2011). The "something else" was for Putin to write seven articles touching upon different elements of Russian society and his vision of what was to be done. The articles were published in a very traditional form of media—newspapers. These articles indicated the initial thinking behind Putin's third presidential term and can also be interpreted as laying the basis for the arguments that were later used when events in Ukraine began to unravel.

The first of these articles was published in *Izvestiia* (Putin 2012a): "Russia muscles up—challenges we must rise to face." Putin reminded his audience about the chaos of the 1990s and said that national unity would be restored to Russia. In this article Putin placed a strong emphasis on education. According to him, the future potential of the country lies in its youth and its education system: "As many as 57% of people aged 25 to 35 in Russia have a higher education—a level seen in just three other countries: Japan, South Korea and Canada. This explosive growth in demand for educational requirements is continuing: the next generation (15- to 25-year-olds) will likely be one of universal higher education—as more than 80% of young people will either be in the process of attaining, or will have completed courses of higher education." Education was also one of the aspects that Shekleina highlighted as a Russian strength, contributing to its Great Power status. The claim that Russia has the fourth highest level of young people with higher education in the world backs up the notion that this achievement is an important marker of international status. In the first article Putin also made the point that "An absolute majority of Russians wants to see their country strong and powerful and respects national heroes who have given their lives for the greater good." Variations on this theme appear throughout the article. It is clear that Russia cannot be anything other than a Great Power but this point also needs to be demonstrated to others: "Russia muscles up, gathers its strength and responds appropriately to any challenge. Russia comes through any

ordeal and is always victorious." Putin also declared that the end of an era, the era of Post-Soviet Russian and global history, had come to a close.

In the next article published in *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (Putin 2012b), Putin continued to argue about the necessity of unity. "Incidentally, National Unity Day on November 4, which some superficially describe as 'the day we overcame the Poles,' should more accurately be described as the day we achieved victory over ourselves, over our internal strife and feuds, the day when the classes and ethnic groups saw themselves as a single entity, as one people. We can rightly consider this holiday the birthday of Russia as a civil nation." National Unity Day was a very new national holiday in Russia, established by Putin himself in 2005. The day marks the liberation of Moscow in 1612 from the Polish occupation. Interestingly, Putin mentions this as a birthday of Russia as a civil nation, even if in the same article he talks about a thousand years of Russian state history using the concept of a historical state. In this article Putin attacks with strong words anyone who is not for the unity of the Russian state, hinting at but not clearly naming who these forces trying to shake Russia were. Putin strongly emphasized the meaning of culture and traditions in this article. Just as with Shakleina's analysis of what is needed for a country to be a Great Power, Putin also puts a great deal of emphasis on the significance of Russian culture not only in purely cultural terms, but also in civilizational terms: "this kind of civilisational identity is based on preserving the dominance of Russian culture, although this culture is represented not only by ethnic Russians, but by all the holders of this identity, regardless of their ethnicity."

In the next article published in *Vedomosti* (Putin 2012c) Putin talked about cooperation, consolidation, and common interests as driving forces for a better future. Since the article was published in *Vedomosti*, a newspaper emphasizing the economy, Putin set out his vision of how to improve the economic situation of Russia. One aspect that touched directly on Russian foreign relations was Putin's vision to enlarge Russian markets by trying to establish common markets with its neighbors. This was naturally one of the factors that played a significant role in Russia-Ukraine relations and in the tensions that were on the rise in 2013. Also intriguing was the fact that Putin talked here about real integration for the first time since the breakup of the Soviet Union as a significant achievement. The tendency toward economic integration could be seen beyond Russia's closest partners in the Eurasian Customs Union, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The Eurasian Development Bank's integration Barometer 2014 shows that all of the CIS countries and Georgia still had a strong interest in cooperating with Russia especially in the area of the economy, but that Russian attractiveness was on the decline, and in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova a majority of the population expressed a preference for someone else (the EU, Turkey, United States) to be the first choice for cooperation and integration (EDB 2014).

The article that followed the *Vedomosti* piece was titled "Democracy and the quality of government," published in *Kommersant* (Putin 2012d). Putin talked about national awareness, national pride, and national affairs. This article can be seen as Putin's answer to those in Russia who demanded more democracy in Russia by taking to the streets. As in previous articles Putin also addressed corruption as a systemic problem in Russia with historical roots.

According to Putin true democracy is when people have their say in decision making. He also extensively stressed the modern ways of governing, including through the e-government program that was launched during Medvedev's presidency. As well as providing a response to critics of the government, the aim of the articles was to show that Russia could be an effective state with a functioning system of law. However, Putin did not use the term rule of law. Overall, his assessment was that "our policy in the 2000s consistently embodied the will of the people." This is also an argument that has been repeated throughout his third presidential term. He consistently presents himself and his administration as executing "the will of the Russian people" in his policies.

The next article emphasized social policy in Russia and was published in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (Putin 2012e). The main theme in this article was social policy highlighting how in his previous presidential terms living standards had improved. He also tackled in this article some of those aspects that make Russia weak, and which are also mentioned in academic approaches among those factors that count toward making a country a Great Power: demography, science and research, technological advances, and problems in the structure of the economy. Regarding all of those aspects, he offered concrete proposals as to how to improve the situation. He returned in this article yet again to the theme of education, but this time there was also some emphasis on the problems in this sector that were not highlighted in the earlier articles: "We must restore the prestige of Russian universities and the high quality of education. It is unacceptable to admit students onto government-financed programs if they do not have the required knowledge and skills to cope with the curriculum, especially in complicated areas such as engineering. We need to create a system in which only the best students in the required subjects or winners of competitions in those subjects will be admitted to government-financed programs." After boasting of the achievements of Russian education, he here stresses that improvements are to be made if Russia is to remain at the top tier internationally. He also remembered to mention that 40 percent of natural resources of the world are in Russia, one of the clear sources of Russia as a Great Power.

The sixth article was published in *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* (Putin 2012f), a newspaper known for its hard-line support of the presidential administration. This time the theme of the article was the armed forces, military industry, and preparedness of Russian society to defend itself. Putin's clear message was that without a strong army Russia is not Russia and in military development terms, especially in missile defense, Russia would fully match steps taken by the United States. Putin also made clear that Russian military reach had to be bigger than just the defense of its borders—as should be the case for a global Great Power—"The Russian Navy has resumed patrols of the strategic areas of the world's oceans, including the Mediterranean. We will continue with these displays of the Russian flag." The army, in the view of Putin, will be the institution that the Russian future is based on: "Obviously, we will not be able to strengthen our international position, develop our economy or our democratic institutions if we are unable to protect Russia." The underlying assumption is also that if Russia were weak, there are forces in the world that would take advantage of this. Putin's reference to the 1990s and the role of the Russian military shows this well: "Moreover, they defended the safety of

Russian citizens making it impossible to humiliate this country and to 'write' it off." The line taken in this article, that Russia is not secure and Russian policies need to concentrate on making Russia strong and able to defend itself, has been a characteristic of Putin's third term, especially in the Ukraine conflict.

The last article tackled the issue of Russia in the world. This time the article was published in *Moskovskie Novosti* (Putin 2012g). Putin strongly brought up Russia's central role in world politics. He also attacked the United States, arguing that the way U.S. foreign policy had been conducted had destabilized security in the world. At the same time Putin said that it was Russia's interest and duty to protect all Russians wherever they were and by all means. Putin clearly indicated that Russia had rights and power in the global arena. He did not talk about Russia as one of the countries of the world but as a country only comparable to other Great Powers like the United States and China. The article highlighted also the fact that the Russian perception, according to Putin's writing, was that Russia is a Great Power but that the outside world, particularly the West, does not sufficiently respect Russia. This quest for respect has been a strong policy driver in Putin's third term; "Russia is only respected and considered when it is strong and stands firmly on its own feet. In addition, I am convinced that global security can only be achieved in cooperation with Russia rather than by attempts to push it to the background, weaken its geopolitical position or compromise its defenses." The last article explicitly put what Putin's third term as president of Russia set out to do in the international context, but this was present in each of the previous articles as well: the task was to convince the rest of the world that Russia is an undoubted Great Power.

These articles set the tone for Putin's third period as president of Russia. The common denominator in all was that Putin wanted to underline strength and the fact that success for all reforms and Russia's international status comes from national unity and pride. He clearly targeted one aspect Russians hold close to their hearts—Russia as a strong state and as a Great Power in world politics. This message was bound to strike a popular chord. As David McDonald (2007) has put it: ". . .whatever the ambiguities or contradictions in the rhetoric of Russian absolutism and statehood, Russians from virtually all sections of society and on either side of the state-society divide agree that Russia is 'fated to be a Great Power.'" Over the articles as a whole, we also see elements of each of the Russian foreign policy schools' thinking on key elements of Greatpowerness, such as not only military strength, but influence in international fora, a leading place in education, and the only Great Power in the region of the former Soviet Union with rights in that region, especially in relation to ethnic Russians.

At the same time President Putin tried to tackle in his "elections articles" the Russian dilemma: on the one hand Russia needs to be strong on its own, develop different areas, and make decisions only according to its self interests from a Great Power perspective, but on the other hand it needs to act in a way which is recognized as the behavior of a Great Power. Russia needs the recognition of other countries, in the first place other Great Powers. This has been the Russian dilemma also in a historical perspective. One of the most famous early foreign accounts that cast a shadow over Russia's status as a Great Power was the Marquis de Custine's *Journey of Our Time* that describes Russian society and state very critically. de

Custine observed: "Do you know what it is to travel in Russia? For a superficial mind, it is to be fed on illusions; but for one who has his eyes open and added to a little power of observation, an independent turn of mind, it is continuous and obstinate work, which consists in laboriously distinguishing, at every turn, between two nations in conflict. These nations are Russia as it is and Russia as it would like to show itself to Europe" (de Custine 1953).

The longer Putin's third presidential term has proceeded the clearer it has become that Russia is trying to present itself as a Great Power with traditional means but also by using more "soft power" elements. In Putin's seven "election letters" of 2012 he stressed the same factors identified by Shakleina as the parameters of a Great Power: territory, natural resources, demography, military strength, economy, technological advances, science and research as well as education, culture and the tradition and culture to act and think globally. So against this background the Russian action in Crimea and involvement in the war in Eastern Ukraine should be a natural continuation of the foreign and security policy, turning "words into action."

During the Ukraine conflict beginning in 2014 writings about Russia wanting to become a Great Power increased once again. In some analyses this has been given as one of the reasons for Russian actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (Stoner 2014). From Putin's election articles this status seeking does emerge, but not in the way that Russia is aiming to *become* a Great Power. In his articles the tone is rather that Russia *is* a Great Power but that others have not yet acknowledged that position for Russia, therefore it has to seek to establish that place in world politics by its own means. Iver Neumann has observed that this quest for being recognized has not been successful. "The persistence of the theme and the intensity of its presence in Russian identity politics suggests that Russia's quest for recognition as a great power has not been a successful one. This is because, if an identity claim is successful, it forms part of the horizon of the political debate rather than its substance. Recognition of Russia as a great power can only be given by great powers that are established as such" (Neumann 2008, 129).

It is notable that, in an age when many world leaders and some leading Russian politicians have embraced Twitter and other forms of social media as a way of promoting their points of view, Vladimir Putin appears to have deliberately eschewed such media in favor of more traditional methods. The 2012 election articles discussed above all appeared for the first time in print newspapers, while television remains the preferred medium of mass communication. As the Ukraine crisis unfolded in the first part of 2014, television came to the fore in promoting the case for Russia's claims to Crimea, and was then the focus of a carefully orchestrated effort to influence opinion among Russian speakers of Ukraine as well as Russian domestic audiences (BBC 2014).

The possibility to use visual images both to reinforce the support of Russia's population and to project a powerful image of Russia around the world was exploited in the process of the annexation of Crimea. Colorful parades in the buildup to the annexation and Putin's emotional speech to the Russian parliament on March 18, 2014, were broadcast across the globe, especially its Russian-speaking part, and were clearly designed to underline the power of Russia's claims and capabilities.

Educational means were also used to counter those arguments that throw doubt on Russia's status as a Great Power. In April 2015, a program was launched in Russia "Patriotic education of citizens of the Russian Federation for the years 2016–2020." The program authors wrote that there was a need to increase the effectiveness of patriotic education in Russia, because "in the current geopolitical situation of complications and frequent attempts of geopolitical rivals to destabilize the political situation in the country . . . you need to raise the level of readiness of Russian citizens for the protection of national interests" (Jakoreva 2015). The use of didactic courses, newspapers, TV, and even more "old fashioned" media such as ceremonial speeches and parades, all of which were favored by the regime in Soviet times, may reflect a suspicion of new forms of media which authoritarian regimes have struggled to control and which are regarded rather as tools of opposition. Traditional media also seems appropriate to the messages which owe so much to the greatness of Russia's past and which, indeed, reflect some very old aspirations (Service 2014).

CONCLUSION

Since one of the main arguments of Russian foreign policy is that Russia is a Great Power, Russia also needs to prove the correctness of this claim. In 2012, not only Putin's "election" articles but also a wide range of other analyses pointed out how Russia was still suffering from the negative image of Russia abroad. In 2012, the Russian International Affairs Council published a report "Postulates on Russian Foreign Policy 2012–2018." The report pointed out that the task of creating a positive image of Russia abroad had not been resolved: "rudimentary understanding of revanchism, which supposedly is organically inherent in Russian foreign policy, is alive in the world" (RIAC 2012). The report says that Russia is often associated with very negative phenomena like corruption, crime, bureaucracy, and judicial tyranny. All of these factors are seen in international relations-literature as obstacles to gaining Great Power status. As a result, "Russia usually loses awareness-raising and image-building campaigns" (RIAC 2012, 7). The report discusses the question of what makes a country a Great Power. It notes that for Russia soft power elements including efficiency and institutional models in the domestic arena are important factors in international relations in today's world.

However, Putin's third presidential term, defined in his "elections articles" decided to concentrate on the very traditional elements of what makes a Great Power great. Even if he clearly recognizes the Westernizers' claim that strategic partnership and equality with Western countries is important for Russia and that Russia is integrated into the Western economy and the importance of some working models (education system, use of technology, infrastructure) that come from the West, he rejects the idea that Russia would be just one part of that Western world. In Putin's view, Russia is its own civilization with historical roots. He put the main emphasis on the traditional sources of what makes a country a Great Power, arguing it be very much in the statist/Eurasianist foreign policy school's terms but including also a lot of elements from the Slavophile tradition.

In this way Putin also departs from the idea that soft power as it is understood in the Western scholarly work, is based on good governance and ideas/institutions (state system, normative

framework). This is the bit in Western understanding that undermines Russia as a Great Power and results in the degrading of Russian international status. This way the Ukraine conflict has become for Russia a crisis where Russia has to defend its Greatpowerness, its self-perception of what kind of country Russia should be in world politics. The kind of Greatpowerness that is on display fits more with the statist view and in many ways marks a return to traditional (military and territorial) notions of power and influence.

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Chapter Eight

Future Empire

State-Sponsored Eurasian Identity Promotion among Russian Youth

Fabian Linde

Youth policy is not just a sector; it is the empire of the future.[1]

The present chapter is devoted to examining what is being done by the Russian government in the direction of gathering support from young Russians for its work toward establishing a Eurasian Union. True to say, only the Eurasian *Economic* Union has, strictly speaking, been created, coming into force as it did on January 1, 2015. Yet, while initially making the ongoing preparations for it public in 2011, Vladimir Putin revealed that he did not regard the Economic Union as being the end point. "By building the Customs Union and Common Economic Space, we are laying the foundation for a prospective Eurasian economic union," he wrote at the time in his famous *Izvestiia* article. "We plan to go beyond that," he continued, "and set ourselves an ambitious goal of reaching a higher level of integration—a Eurasian Union" (Putin 2011). Although the integration project has on the whole run into some serious obstacles along the way, not least the failure to get Ukraine on board, and the present economic hardships that are suffered by all the states involved, there is little reason not to believe that the ambition to reach a level of integration above and beyond an economic union still stands.

This chapter focuses on youth policy particularly because of the Russian authorities' documented history, which continues into the present, of giving their support to organized youth movements in order to further its own broader political aims. At times, the youth movements that have been called into existence by the Kremlin have been assigned with specific tasks, such as launching cyber campaigns against domestic and foreign targets, organizing public rallies in support of a certain political course or against another civil movement, and participating in questionable voting procedures in the federal and local elections. As expected, there is a growing scholarly literature on these youth movements. See, for example, Laruelle (2011), Mijnssen (2014), and Lassila (2014).

More specifically, the chapter surveys what efforts are being channelled into forging and propagandizing among Russian youth a compound Eurasian identity. The assumption lying at the basis of this choice of topic is that fostering such an identity could play an important part in furthering the Russian government's stated aims at regional integration. When reference is being made to a "Eurasian identity," however, it is unavoidable that various associations arise. It deserves clarification therefore that by Eurasian identity is meant here a shared sense of

identity understood as an attachment and a sense of devotion to the imagined community that is being institutionalized at present in the Eurasian Economic Union. My own understanding of a "Eurasian identity," so far as it relates to Russians, comes close to what Vera Tolz once termed the "the union identity," and for which she provided the following definition: "the Russians defined as an imperial people or as a people with a mission to create a supranational state" (Tolz 2001: 237). The perceptive reader might notice a slight ambiguity here. Yet the starting point for the present discussion is the latter half of the definition, largely compatible with the Russian authorities' expressed intentions for the integration project that is presently underway. As is clear from her ensuing discussion, what Tolz had in mind can for all intents and purposes be regarded as equivalent to a "Eurasian identity," seeing that she also mentions the classical Russian Eurasianists as a source of inspiration for individuals who at the time of writing propounded this "union identity."

> According to those who support the re-establishment of the Union the Russian empire and the USSR were "a unique civilization." All its peoples had one compound identity. Not only the Russians, but all the other nationalities would be unable to survive outside the structure of the USSR, which was "a supranational force that reflected the interests of a multi-ethnic Eurasian community." (Tolz 2001: 239)

The discussion undertaken below has largely been based on an examination of open sources accessible on the Internet; primarily information given out to the general public about the activities of various government agencies that are directly involved in youth policy, such as the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (www.fadm.gov.ru) and the Russian Centre for the Civil and Patriotic Education of Children and Youth (rospatriotcentr.ru). Apart from that, the discourse surrounding the Eurasian (Economic) Union as it comes to expression in Vladimir Putin's public appearances has been monitored, with special attention given to how it was framed during the president's annual visits to the Seliger National Youth Forum.

Lastly, a scrutiny of non-governmental organizations that self-define as Eurasian youth movements has been undertaken. A group called Young Eurasia: The Eurasian Youth Movement turned out to be highly relevant in this context. In many ways, it provides what is otherwise lacking in the Russian government's efforts. It has managed to gather together a number of young, highly educated, and to all appearances dedicated young adults who strive to forge a contemporary Eurasian identity and spread its message throughout society. To this end it organizes various seminars and workshops and has launched a website (eurasian-movement.ru), where it is possible to find information about the movement itself, classical texts belonging to the older Eurasianist tradition, contemporary interpretations of these, and commentary on trending topics.

THE EURASIAN UNION, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND YOUTH POLICY

Before having examined the issue in any greater detail, one could be forgiven for imagining that there existed a concerted effort initiated by the Russian government at fostering a "Eurasian patriotism" that would be part of its campaign to muster support for its project to form a Eurasian Union. Considering that the Russian authorities nowadays tend to invest a significant amount of energy into "soft power" initiatives that are meant to prop up support for

their political and economic activities, it could easily be supposed that it would be considered vital for the realization of the otherwise predominantly economic project. All the more so since the undertaking itself can hardly be considered an issue of minor significance for the present administration. To the contrary, the initiative to form a Eurasian Economic Union arguably represents the most ambitious and consequential international enterprise that has been undertaken by the Russian government since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 (perhaps overshadowed only by the annexation of Crimea and the organized support of pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine). That this would turn out to be the case became clear already in 2011 when Eurasian integration skyrocketed to the top of the foreign policy agenda in connection with the launch of Putin's presidential campaign. Since then, much has happened on the highest political level in regard to regional matters and the ambitious integration project, which at present takes the form of a Eurasian Economic Union, and has been recognized by the Russian president as an "absolute priority" (Valdai 2013). The Russian political leadership has indeed ventured a substantial share of its prestige on bringing the project forward. In certain respects it has even gone further than the other founding members. Most importantly, this concerns the expressed view of the Russian authorities that the Eurasian Union ought to include not only economic and legal institutions, but political institutions as well. An important statement in this regard was made by Sergey Naryshkin, chairman of the State Duma, in an article published in his name on October 4, 2012, a date which was chosen so as to coincide with the first anniversary of Vladimir Putin's article announcing the creation of a Eurasian Union.

It seems that it would be correct to speak today of a two-stage process relating to the formation of a parliamentary body of Eurasian integration. In the short term, this could be a Eurasian Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of delegates from the national parliaments. And only in time, when all the necessary preconditions have been put in place, could the Eurasian Assembly be converted into a full-fledged Eurasian parliament. (Naryshkin 2012)

In view of this intention to further the creation of a *political* union, the label "supranational state" used by Tolz in her definition of the "Eurasian identity" would be generally applicable. Although it is true that Belarus and Kazakhstan have so far successfully thwarted any such attempts, it is not impossible that this will change in the future, depending, of course, on the political situation.

Given that the stakes are so high, it can hardly be considered a far-fetched idea to imagine that a fitting identity construct centered on a sense of belonging to a broad supranational community encompassing the concerned peoples of Eurasia would be a natural part of any efforts to gather legitimacy and gain popular support for this high-profile foreign policy initiative.

It is furthermore well-known that the government has a history of engaging the youth for similar purposes. Indeed, ensuring the active participation of young Russians born into the generation that saw the light of day after the Soviet Union could in this connection be considered particularly important as it would not only contribute toward ensuring the initiative's continuity for the future, but also confer on it an aura of newness, thus making it

harder to argue, as some critics have, that the initiative is powered by a mere nostalgia for the lost grandeur of the Soviet Union.

In fact, the issue of involving the youth has in a certain sense been present from the very start. On March 29, 1994, Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the creation of a Eurasian Union of states in an address symbolically delivered before a young audience, consisting to a large degree of students presumably born in the 1970s, at the Moscow State University. This event is often regarded by those involved as the starting point for the present-day integration efforts.

And yet, an inventory of the identity management initiatives undertaken by the Russian authorities demonstrates the absolute predominance of various actions and initiatives that are meant to foster not a broader regional identity but a patriotic sentiment confined to the Russian state. Here, no stone has been left unturned. There are the ill-famed government sponsored youth movements, such as "Walking together" (*Idushchie vmeste*, now defunct), "Ours" (*Nashi*), and the youth wing of the United Russia party called "Young guard" (*Molodaia gvardiia*), which were important political forces in civil society up until at least a few years ago. There is the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (*Federal'noe agentstvo po delam molodezhi*), better known as *Rosmolodezh*, which takes a broad-spectrum approach to working with young people and where fostering patriotism is an important subset to its many activities. Even more important in this regard is the Russian Centre for the Civil and Patriotic Education of Children and Youth (*Rossiiskii tsentr grazhdanskogo i patrioticheskogo vospitaniia detei i molodezhi*), or *Rospatriottsentr* for short, whose prime task is to inoculate a "patriotic awareness" (*patrioticheskoe soznanie*) among young people, as stated in its mission statement (Rospatriottsentr 2015). For these purposes it has launched several wide-ranging initiatives, among others the program "Russia—My Pride" (*Moia gordost—Rossiia*), and has according to information gathered from its website opened local centers in no less than sixty of Russia's regions for the "patriotic education of children and young people" (Rospatriottsentr 2015). In addition, there is Smena, which is a patriotic children's camp in Anapa, as well as the annual Seliger National Youth Forum, which draws together tens of thousands of young adults from all over Russia.[2] Lastly, there are countless initiatives distributed throughout the entire educational system, too numerous to mention here.[3]

In contrast to the abundance of these government initiatives that are aimed at fostering among minors and young adults patriotism and ensuring their allegiance to the Russian state, there is only scattered evidence that the government is actively seeking support for the Eurasian integration project among youth. And what scant evidence there is testifies to the fact that the level of support which is sought does not exceed what is to be expected for other government initiatives.

It may be that this will come to change in the future, given that the project is still in its infancy and that the Eurasian Economic Union has only recently come into existence. A small indication that increasing efforts might be underway was indeed given by a youth forum called "Eurasia—that's us!" (*Evraziia—eto my!*), organized under the auspices of various government ministries on October 28–31, 2014. In the resolution adopted at the conclusion of the forum by the participants, who identified themselves as "youths and students belonging to

the belt of good neighbourliness (Eurasian Youth)," it was maintained that interaction among themselves was a thing of vital importance and that the forum deserved to become a regular event, since it "promotes the development of cultural and business ties in this historical and geopolitical space" (Rezoliutsiia 2015). In matters regarding identity, the declaration reiterated the classical Eurasianist tenet that "there has developed in the Eurasian region a distinctive historical and cultural community, in the formation of which a crucial role has been played by a synthesis of national traditions, linguistic borrowings, kinship, a common historical memory and a scientific and cultural environment" (Rezoliutsiia 2015). Yet apart from this particular event, which was organized especially for youth and did endorse the notion of a distinct Eurasian identity, similar ones are conspicuous by their absence.

The overall prospect looks quite bleak in fact when judged in light of the recently adopted document entitled "Foundations of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025" (Osnovy 2014). Having been approved by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on November 29, 2014, the document will form the strategic basis for the development of the national youth policies during the pending ten year period. It replaces a similar document which was adopted in 2006, that is, long before the Russian leadership decided to make Eurasian integration a priority. Judging by the brief mention that Eurasian integration receives in the text, however, mobilizing the support of the youth in this connection is not considered an issue of paramount importance. In fact, it is mentioned only once and in passing.

> In order to realise the goals of the state youth policy, the following priorities must be addressed: [. . .] the active involvement of young people in the development of the Eurasian Economic Union, the strengthening of a common humanitarian space within the Commonwealth of Independent States and the attraction of talented foreign youth to the implementation of Russian socio-economic projects. (Osnovy 2014)

While the document does affirm that involving the youth is an expressed wish of the federal government, it does not specify in what way this is to be done. This is likely to be outlined in a coming strategy document. However, the mentioning of efforts to sustain a "common humanitarian space" (*obshchee gumanitarnoe prostranstvo*) within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) might give us a hint. It suggests that the CIS as a whole is regarded by the authorities as the broader cultural sphere to which Russia belongs, and that this sphere is not perceived as limited to those countries which at the time of writing have also joined the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan). In theory at least, Russia regards the CIS as an important platform for cultural interaction and for promoting a sense of cultural affinity among the association's members. As it is stated in the current Foreign Policy Concept, adopted in 2013,

> Russia intends to actively contribute to the development of interaction among CIS Member States in the humanitarian sphere on the ground of preserving and increasing [a] common cultural and civilizational heritage [*kul'turno-tsivilizatsionnoe nasledie*] which is an essential resource for the CIS as a whole and for each of the Commonwealth's Member States in the context of globalization. (Concept 2013)

The above quotation taken from the Foundations of Youth Policy might indicate as well that if a cultural identity was to be launched within the framework of the Eurasian integration project,

then it is quite likely that it would be defined in alignment with the geographical parameters set by the CIS, perhaps so as not to run the risk of alienating potential new candidates coming from the latter association. We would be dealing with a two-tier system, then, rather than with mutually exclusive affiliations. Perhaps it also indicates that a Eurasian identity, should it become a matter of first importance, would be promulgated through the institutional channels attached to the CIS. In fact, there are some indications that some tentative efforts have already been made in this direction. In February 2013, some structural changes were imminent within the already existing CIS Youth Union (*Soiuz molodezhi stran SNG*). As reported by the media at the time, an attempt was made to effectively transform the said union in the direction of Eurasian integration by launching a new organizational structure within it. After having been elected head of the new youth movement called "We are together" (*My vmeste*), not to be confused with another organization of the same name, Andranik Nikogosian told the press:

> The integration processes within the Commonwealth develop all the more rapidly and require the participation of public interest groups in the formation of the new historical realities. The Eurasian Youth Movement is aimed at strengthening the multinational ties that exist between the Commonwealth countries, since our countries are closely interwoven by a common historical and cultural heritage. We must maintain these relations, respect our past, and think about the future together. Since it is young people who should determine this future, the Eurasian Youth Movement is to be formed in all the countries of the Commonwealth and is tasked with creating a new Eurasian youth community. (Argumenty 2013)

Despite these undoubtedly well-intended words, it remains unclear what has been the fate of the Eurasian youth movement that was formed at that time. It is possible that one of the impediments to the movement might have been the confusing situation in which Nikogosian would continue to head the CIS Youth Union even after having been elected president of the new Eurasian youth movement.

In sum, while the Russian administration at least nominally does acknowledge the importance of engaging the youth in the development of the Eurasian (Economic) Union, when existing initiatives are compared to the efforts that are being put into promulgating state patriotism of a more classical brand, the former dwindle in comparison. Most importantly, what is lacking is a broadly based program for Eurasian identity formation among youth that is designed, coordinated, and executed by the Russian authorities.

Given the ostensible importance of this issue for political mobilization, the question concerning the reason why there is such a dearth of concrete measures naturally arises. What is holding the Russian government back? In the hope of being able to shed some light on the reasons why so little has been done in this direction so far, in what follows I would like to offer some reflections on the possible challenges that a Russian youth policy in support of the Eurasian (Economic) Union faces. I will also suggest which challenge that I consider to be the most formidable.

Before going any further, though, it deserves mention that I am not alone in having been taken aback by the lack of state support for actively promoting the Eurasian Union among young Russians. In fact, this issue has attracted the attention of one of the existing non-governmental Eurasian youth movements, which goes under the name of Young Eurasia: The Eurasian Youth Movement (*Molodaia Evraziia: evraziiskoe molodezhnoe dvizhenie*). What is especially interesting about this movement is that it in many ways offers what is otherwise lacking in

public initiatives. In contrast to Aleksandr Dugin's Eurasian Youth Union (*Evraziiskii soiuz molodezhi*), Young Eurasia is more polished in its appeal and on the whole displays a public profile that is less sectarian, relatively speaking. Its stated aim is to promote an up-to-date Eurasianist ideology based on a reinterpretation of the classical Eurasianist heritage of the 1920s and 1930s. The movement lends its support to the Eurasian Economic Union and its members have drawn the attention to the fact that various references to Eurasianism have been made by top politicians involved in its creation.

In August 2014, in response to President Vladimir Putin's visit to the Seliger Youth Forum, Yuri Kofner, the charismatic leader of the Young Eurasia movement, who is also the chairman of the Eurasian Club of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, penned a critique of the government's lack of support for Eurasian youth action. In his critical assessment Kofner (2014) claimed that state support in this field is basically non-existent and went on to identify four deficiencies in the government's overall approach. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Lack of public exposure. There is not enough media coverage to foster among the general public an awareness about the integration project that is underway.
2. Lack of educational resources. In contrast to what is the case with European integration, there are virtually no study programs devoted to Eurasian integration within any institutions of higher learning that could potentially attract interested parties.
3. Lack of popular support. The authorities have not been eager enough to reach out to ordinary citizens. In effect, Eurasian integration remains an elite project, instituted from above and too far removed from the people.
4. Lack of a national idea. Russia lacks an overarching state ideology with the potential to unite all Russians. Naturally, being an ardent proponent of this ideology himself, Kofner puts forward Eurasianism as the most viable option for such a national idea.

While Kofner unquestionably does pinpoint issues of major concern, it seems to me that the deficits identified by him primarily serve to strengthen the case for launching a youth program, rather than to facilitate an understanding of the impediments that exist in creating one in the first place. For this reason, I would like to offer a list of alternative factors that might have exercised an inhibiting influence, starting with the one that I consider to be the least relevant. Having said this, I nevertheless hold Kofner's fourth point to be crucial and shall return to it shortly.

FALTERING RESOLVE?

The first question that should be asked is whether it is possible that the Russian government has done so little simply because it lacks the proper motivation. Although a qualified reply would have to include a thorough examination of Russia's overall involvement in the project, something that cannot be offered here, the question nevertheless deserves asking, especially given the fact that even Vladimir Putin himself has not refrained from demonstrating a certain

degree of hesitancy both in regard to the Eurasian integration project in general and in regard to actively involving the youth in particular. Regarding the first point, during his visit to the Seliger Youth Forum in 2014, he gave the following strangely apologetic reply to a question about the rise of nationalism in Kazakhstan and the role of Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan, in regard to it: "So now we are working to create the Customs Union, the Common Economic Space and the Eurasian Union—which, by the way, was his [Nazarbayev's] idea. I have to admit that he was the one who came up with the idea, not I. And we are helping; we got involved in this effort and are bringing it to a logical close" (Seliger 2014). Although it is true that Vladimir Putin has maintained quite persistently that it was Nazarbayev who originally came up with the idea to form a Eurasian union of states in the first place, what strikes one as somewhat odd in this particular reply is that he appears to take this point one step further, namely to put the initiative squarely on the Kazakhstani authorities and to assign to the Russians merely the role of assistant helper.

When it comes to the second aspect, that of involving the youth, at the 2013 Seliger Youth Forum Putin did highlight the importance of involving the youth in efforts that aim at Eurasian integration. Yet his reply to a question directly addressing the issue of youth involvement was quite ambivalent, since it seemed to suggest that the young people interested in getting involved would basically have to self-organize and would not be able to count on state support:

QUESTION [posed by member of Aleksandr Dugin's Eurasian Youth Union]: What can we, as young people, do to help? The Eurasian Union and other organisations—how can we help, in the humanitarian sector, or elsewhere? What can we do to help you?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: You need to show other young people how promising this idea is. You can either stay confined within your national borders or move forward more efficiently together. You are smart, modern, creative individuals; you yourselves will find arguments in favour of joint development. I am confident that you will do this, since you certainly understand how important this is. (Seliger 2013)

It is possible that the apparent unwillingness to be of assistance displayed in this quotation is based on the assumption that the authorities have already gained the level of support from young people that they consider necessary. At least some politicians seem to think this way. For instance, in connection with the twentieth anniversary of Nursultan Nazarbayev's speech in which he proposed the creation of a Eurasian Union of states, Tair Mansurov, at the time secretary general of the Eurasian Economic Community (now terminated), had the following to say: "We are confidently moving towards the creation of a geopolitical mega-project—the Eurasian Economic Union, which is supported by the general population, including those who were born after the former Soviet countries gained independence. This proves the undeniable success of the Eurasian idea, since it is the youth who have to build our common future and live in the new Eurasia" (Mansurov 2014).

Although it would be wise not to jump to any conclusions based on these statements made by Putin alone, one cannot help being surprised by the lack of enthusiasm and initiative displayed in these instances.

ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM?

The argument has been put forward by some scholars that the Russian government's efforts at integration are exclusively geared to matters of an economic nature and that endorsing a narrative of a common history and shared values is not part of the Kremlin's preferred strategy. In the words of Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, "integration is no longer justified by past-orientated discourses about 'shared values and history' but by economic pragmatism. The long-held perception of Russia's soft power in the post-Soviet states—one of manipulating such discourses and influencing elections—no longer fully captures its approach to the 'shared neighbourhood'" (Dragneva and Wolczuk 2012).

While it may be true that an emphasis on economic pragmatism undoubtedly is a predominant feature of the discourse surrounding the Eurasian integration project, it would be wrong to disregard the issue of identity politics altogether. The fact is that the issue of establishing some form of a shared identity is not entirely absent from the discourse of the top politicians who drive the initiative forward. For many years, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is recognized by the other parties as both the initiator and the "motor" of the project, has been an ardent and outspoken promoter of the idea of Eurasia as a unique cultural space, and has called on others not to disregard the importance of the "formation of a single Eurasian identity based on shared values of cultural and linguistic diversity" (Nazarbaev 2009).

Vladimir Putin as well has touched upon this issue of collective identity in his public appearances. Already in his well-known 2011 *Izvestiia* article in which he announced the launch of the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan and presented his vision of a coming Eurasian Union, did he speak of "the myriad of ties, both of civilisation and culture, which unite our peoples" (Putin 2011). Additionally, at the 2013 Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club he made it clear that the issue of identity was of central concern for the political leadership:

> The future Eurasian Economic Union, which we have declared and which we have discussed extensively as of late, is not just a collection of mutually beneficial agreements. The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new century and in a new world. Eurasian integration is a chance for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent centre for global development, rather than remaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia. (Valdai 2013)

Other top politicians involved in the project have been even more outspoken about the need for consolidating the feeling of having a shared identity, making repeated references to the "Eurasian idea" which they habitually trace back to the current of thought known as Eurasianism. One example might suffice here. In a speech given by Konstantin Kosachev, head of The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, commonly known as *Rossotrudnichestvo*, the so-called Eurasian idea was traced back to classical Russian Eurasianism.

> The Eurasian idea has deep theoretical roots and ardent supporters both here in Russia and in other states of Eurasia. Russian Eurasianism as a political and philosophical concept took shape in the early twentieth century by such eminent theorists as Nicholai S. Troubetzkoy, Petr Nikolaevich Savitsky, Georges Florovsky and others. In our own day, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has become a fervent champion of the Eurasian idea, and in fact already in 1994 came forward as the main inspiration for Eurasian integration in its modern format (Kosachev 2012).

Although most often vague and non-committal, this and similar references could nonetheless easily lead one to believe that the idea of a distinct Eurasian civilization and an accompanying identity construct based on this idea was in the process of being officially adopted. Even if this is not actually the case, Vladimir Putin's outright rejection in the above quotation of the notion that a mere search for mutual benefits stands behind the decision to establish a union deserves to be taken seriously. Noteworthy as well is his reference to an "identity of nations" (*identichnost' narodov*). Based on these and similar observations, I believe it would be safe to say, in reply to Dragneva and Wolczuk, that economic pragmatism does not fully capture Russia's approach to the Eurasian Union and that the issue of identity construction certainly deserves further study.

NATIONALISM?

Based on my examination of the available material, I would venture the opinion, which differs from Yuri Kofner's, that there actually exists a "national idea" within the framework of Russian youth policy, but that it is exactly its existence and not the lack thereof which poses the main challenge to the promotion of any alternative identity. In other words, it is the predominance of a patriotism centered on identification with a single state which in my view quenches all alternative, more embracing, senses of allegiance. Thus, state-centric patriotism, sometimes bordering on crude chauvinism, is being stimulated to the detriment of any attempts to launch anything resembling an inclusive Eurasian identity.

I draw this conclusion based on the assumption that these two, for all intents and purposes, are incompatible. There is a cognitive dissonance, if you will, between them. While the state-centric patriotism is particularistic, at times even xenophobic and self-seeking in its relation to the surrounding world, the "Eurasian patriotism" is by definition inclusive and unavoidably more open-minded. Within the framework of a Eurasian identity Russians might be regarded as in some sense more indispensable than others, given that they are in the majority and undoubtedly have a central role to play, but the emphasis must nevertheless be on multiethnic diversity and cultural pluralism. A Eurasian identity is by definition either multinational or transnational and works toward gathering together all the different peoples affected by the integration. It is therefore incompatible with the state patriotism of a more classical brand which is generously being supported by the Russian government and which privileges the Russian cultural heritage by emphasizing its uniqueness and distinctiveness.

I believe that this conceptual conflict with state patriotism, irrespective of whether the latter is expressed in exclusively civic terms or contains elements of a cultural or even ethnic nationalism as well, represents the main obstacle to the emergence of a truly *Eurasian* youth policy.

As I see it, the only two strategies that might possibly make the introduction of a Eurasian identity compatible with a continued dissemination of Russian state patriotism are:

a. Envisioning the Eurasian (Economic) Union as a loosely bound coalition of nationalistically minded governments. This would imply an antiglobalistic alliance of nation-states based on

the Eurasianist idea of cultural self-determination, where the emphasis is on diversity and mutual benefits rather than on a genuine sense of community. While it would put the member states on an equal footing, and ensure their political independence, there would be no real ground for cohesion and a compound identity. Perhaps this is what Putin was referring to when he characterized the Eurasian union as a "supranational alliance" and "a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space" (Valdai 2013).

b. Advocating Russian neoimperialism, in which case the union would have to be recognized as being entirely asymmetrical in terms of power, with Russians in the center as the "first among equals." This strategy would be in line with the first half of Vera Tolz's definition of the "union identity," quoted above, as "the Russians defined as an imperial people" (Tolz 2001: 237).

While elements of both of these models are indeed present in the Russian political discourse surrounding the Eurasian (Economic) Union, none of them have gained the upper hand. Nonetheless, the use of notions such as "Greater Russia," "historical Russia" and the "Russian world," which are widespread on the Internet and have been employed by Russian officials as well, tends to tilt the discourse in the direction of the latter option.

RUSSOCENTRISM?

Concerning neo-imperialism, it is frequently the case that even representatives of the Russian government do not distinguish clearly enough between genuine integration on an equal footing among the member states and a policy favoring what could to termed a Russian regional hegemony. There are numerous examples that can be cited in support of this assertion. Just to take one, in his reply to the question about Nursultan Nazarbayev at the 2014 Seliger Youth Forum, quoted above, Vladimir Putin went on to say the following:

> Philosophers know where this idea of a Eurasian union [*evraziiskaia ideia*] came from and how it developed, who supported it in Russia. The Kazakhs picked it up proceeding from the understanding that it is good for their economy, it helps them stay within the so-called "greater Russian world" [*bol'shoi russkii mir*], which is part of world civilisation, it is good for the development of their industry, of advanced technologies and so forth. I am convinced that this will continue in the same vein for the mid- and long historical term. (Seliger 2014)

Quite irrespective of whether this statement is an accurate reflection of a consolidated view, or only an unfortunate choice of words, the fact remains that the Russian authorities are in the habit of conveying a very self-centred view when speaking about their near abroad. When this is done in direct connection with the union project, as is the case here, then this can only serve to strengthen the case of those critics who see in it only the latest attempt by the Russians to subjugate their near neighbors, if only economically and symbolically. The indiscretion of President Vladimir Putin's reply is all the more astonishing in view of the fact that the questioner was enquiring about the president's view on the threat to the integration project posed by the noticeable rise of Kazakhi nationalism, which opposes Eurasian integration exactly for the reasons just mentioned.

As was to be expected, this issue of a "Greater Russia" received renewed attention in connection with the Ukrainian crisis. In January 2015, during an annual televised news conference, Belarussian president Alexander Lukashenko felt obliged to make a strong statement in regard to it, declaring that "if there are some clever people here who believe that the Belarusian land is part of the 'Russian World,' as they say nowadays, and practically of Russia. Forget it. We have always been hospitable to everybody. But we oblige each and everyone to respect our independence and sovereignty" (Lukashenko 2015). In light of Lukashenko's strong reaction, coming as it does from one of the founding members of the Eurasian Economic Union and arguably Russia's closest foreign political ally, it is quite clear that the sensitive nature of this issue should not be underestimated.

CONCLUSION

A coordinated and broadly based state-sponsored program aimed at nurturing among young Russians a sense of allegiance to the Eurasian (Economic) Union by means of a suitable identity construct does not exist as yet. Contrary to what could have been assumed, when it comes to promoting among youth a collective identity construct that is broader and more inclusive than the national identity, and at the same time is distinct and differs from what would be applicable to the CIS as a whole, the evidence suggests that the Russian leadership has so far demonstrated a faltering resolve if not an utter lack of interest. In trying to answer the question as to why the government has so far neglected to tap into this potential source of support for its regional integration efforts, it is possible to come up with various explanations and to point to a number of factors which might have prevented this from happening. The leading argument put forward in this article is that existing efforts at fostering a "patriotic awareness" based on a state-centric model of patriotic education constitutes the main impediment. Its continuing preeminence, despite the fact that several years have passed since the Russian president publicly made Eurasian integration into a national priority, makes it possible in fact to question the authorities' deeper commitment to the entire project. Additionally, if the Russian government at some time in the future should wish to promote a genuine and intellectually convincing Eurasian identity among youth that does not alienate non-Russians, it will be unable to do so as long as it does not refrain from making statements that disclose a Russocentric view of the region. The prevalence of Russocentrism in official discourse undoubtedly makes a union based on a sense of genuine togetherness, shared in equal part by all of its members, an impossibility.

NOTES

1. "Molodezhnaia politika ne prosto otrasl'—eto imperiia budushchego." Slogan from the Youth Forum "Russia's Youth," held in Moscow on March 11–13, 2014.

2. For an account of the 2013 Seliger National Youth Forum from the perspective of a participant observer, see Silvan (2014). For a more detailed scholarly analysis of Seliger, see Mijnssen (2014: 133f).

3. For detailed information about the federal program entitled Patriotic Education of the Citizens of the Russian Federation, I would like to refer the reader to the website www.gospatriotprogramma.ru.

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Chapter Nine

Russian Geopolitical Discourse

On Pseudomorphosis, Phantom Pains, and Simulacra

Per-Arne Bodin

In recent years, Russia has regained more and more of its role as a superpower in the world arena. At the same time, Russian leaders and politicians have had to deal with the fact that the area of their country comprises only three-quarters of that of the former Soviet Union. In comparison with the former Russian Empire, the difference in size is even greater. The perception of loss of territory is not only a matter for foreign and security policy, but also one processed by Russian opinion makers and writers. There is an obsession with the empire in today's Russia, that might be likened to the phantom pains of lost body parts. In recent years, a special term has even been coined in this context: "*imperskost*," roughly "imperiality," to express the belief in Russia's inherent imperial strivings.[1] Geopolitics has during the last several years become a particular academic subject with a clear strategic and political agenda, reflecting the intense interest in this theme in the Russian public mind. This obsession with borders and empire will be investigated in this chapter. The material will mainly be the maps and the texts of three well-known imperial thinkers: Aleksandr Dugin, Aleksandr Prokhanov, and Mikhail Iur'ev. These are mappings proceeding in parallel with the mapping of the Russian political establishment (e.g., the Eurasian project of President Putin), but being of special relevance, in my view, due to the unique manner in which they are proceeding in some way independently, while at the same time influenced by what is happening, as much as they also influence the still pragmatic world of contemporary politics.

  The provocative imperial visions of these authors are well-known, but I want to dwell on the similarities between them and the inner mechanisms of their imperial visions. They all draw fantasy maps, which nevertheless are all very pertinent to our understanding of Russian thinking today. I will, however, begin this chapter with a short presentation of these maps and mapping and update them in relation to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia and Russia's annexation of Crimea. The annexation of Crimea is for all a sort of a beginning of a fullfillment of their visions. I will then scrutinize three terms used in their geopolitical visions: pseudomorphosis, phantom pains, and simulacra.

DUGIN

The leader of the so-called Neo-Eurasianism, Aleksandr Dugin, draws a map that shows the political and cultural orientation of Russia toward the East. Dugin partly fetched his ideas from

the movement Eurasianism, which emerged among Russian émigrés in the 1920s. It proclaimed that Russia was neither Europe nor Asia and that it was important to seek a future in close connection with Asia. Dugin further maintains that there is a fundamental contradiction between the United States and Britain on the one hand, and the rest of Europe and Russia on the other, that is, between the Atlantic world and the continental (figure 9.1). Dugin has bluntly declared that Russia is unthinkable without an empire. In his plans for the future, he puts forward the idea of completely redrawing the borders of Europe. Germany would dominate Protestant and Catholic Central and Eastern Europe (Dugin 2000). Germany would also regain the Kaliningrad region. The European map outlined by him shows clear similarities with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939.

Putin has in recent years pursued geopolitically and economically related projects, and maybe even under the influence of Dugin: "the Eurasian Economic Union," including Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan. Plans are to expand it to more and more countries, in particular those, which previously belonged to the Soviet Union. Economic interests and Russian language would here be unifying elements.

During the last several years Dugin has developed an ideology, which he calls "the fourth way." According to him, political ideologies as communism and fascism do not exist anymore, and there are two real political forces in todays world: liberalism (or its continuation in post-liberalism) and the fourth way of Russia. The fourth way is characterized by anti-Americanism, national Bolshevism, geopolitics, social justice, and a total division between East and West (Dugin 2014a).

THE FIFTH EMPIRE AND PROKHANOV

The Russian imperial extremist and best-selling writer Aleksandr Prokhanov has coined the term "fifth Empire," a geographic space that so far includes the former Soviet Union but may be expanded to include an even greater geographic space. The first empire was Kievan Rus', the second was the tsardom of Muscovy, the third the state founded by Peter the Great with its capital in St. Petersburg, and the fourth the Soviet Union. Prokhanov himself expresses this view in his newspaper *Zavtra* (Tomorrow):

…We are witnessing the birth of the Fifth Empire. It is still not visible. Almost no one has noticed its conception (Prokhanov 2006a).

The Fifth Empire is an empire in the making, that was to have had the union treaty between Russia and Belarus as its basis; later Prokhanov also proposed the war against Georgia in 2008 as the first step in the formation of this new empire. In 2010, on a trip to Ukraine, he declared that Russia does not want Crimea but a new empire with Kiev as its capital.[2] This rather undiplomatic statement was mitigated by his proposal that the new empire would be decentralized and in fact have many capitals. During the last several years Prokhanov has reshaped his vision in the vein of Dugin's as the Eurasian empire (figure 9.1).
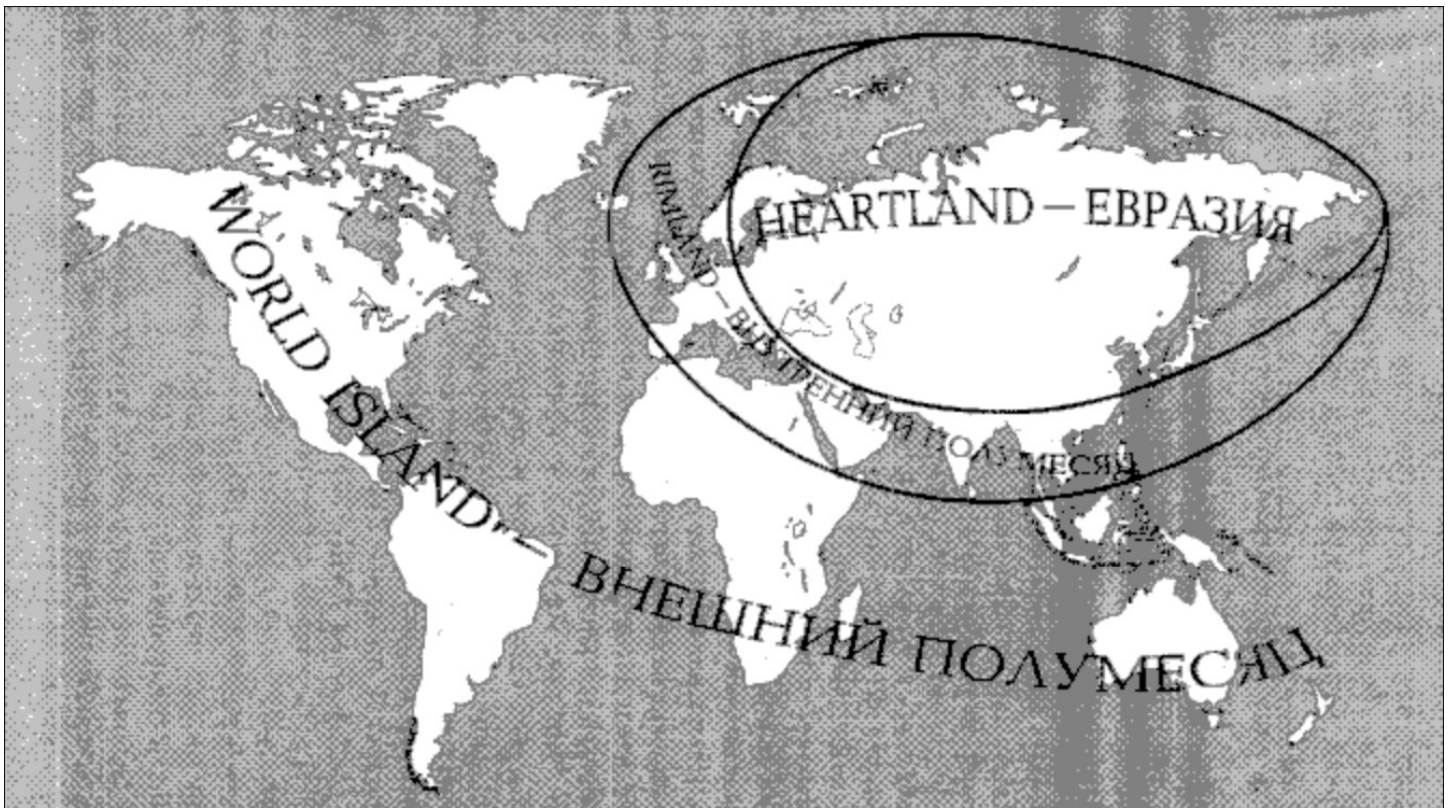
Figure 9.1. Dugin's map used as an illustration to an article by Prokhanov, "Evraziiskaia Imperiia–to real'nost'." *Source:* **Aleksandr Dugin (1997),** *Osnovy geopolitiki* **(Moscow: Arktogeia), p. 415.**

For Prokhanov there is a special attraction in the Empire's huge size covering so many time zones. It requires quite another way of relating to time than in Western Europe, he maintains:

> At a time when meticulous Europe designed Swiss watches and musical machines, the Russian Empire built "Time Zones," "music composed by infinite spaces." We travelled to the Northern Star, drawn by its mystical rays. The Northern Star to Russia—it is the star of Bethlehem, leading the people to the Birth (Prokhanov 2006b).

Almost all of Prokhanov's statements are provocative and sometimes very difficult to take seriously. As can be noted in the quotation above, they lie somewhere on the border between fantasy and reality.

THE THIRD EMPIRE AND IUR'EV

The third example is even more provocative: the former deputy speaker of the Duma, Mikhail Iur'ev, outlined in his book *Tret'ia Imperiia. Rossiia, kotoraia dolzhna byt' (The Third Empire: Russia as it should be),* published in 2007, how the world should look in the year 2053. The book is formed as a story about Russia told by a Brazilian student living in Russia. That is, the mapping is fictionalized. On the world map a total of five world empires (figure 9.2) are outlined with Russia stretching across the whole of Europe. There are many similarities between this project and other imperial projects, but this is the most extreme of them all.

Figure 9.2. The map of Mikhail Iur'ev. *Source:* ComingAnarchy.com, Superstates
http://cominganarchy.com/2007/10/18/superstates/. Accessed July 20, 2015.

"Third" in this case refers both to Russia (with its capital Moscow) as the Third Rome (following the Roman Empire and Byzantium), and to a third empire following the Russian tsarist empire and the Soviet Union. The name of the empire bears, of course, odious associations with the Third Reich as well. In this text, all imperial dreams run amok while Iur'ev takes his revenge on all the countries which, he claims, have exposed Russia's wrongs:

> The founding of the Third Empire. And so in late April the Russian Union flag was hoisted over Canada and all over the territory of Europe, except Switzerland, and also Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, it was as if the three had been forgotten (let's remember that they were not even sent any proposal to surrender), but everyone knew it was only a matter of time. Without declaration of war (as they were not part of NATO), but by an ultimatum, previously parts of the First and Second Russian empires—Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan and Kyrgyzstan were incorporated [. . .] On the ninth of May a grand parade took place, it was the anniversary of the victory over America and the 75th anniversary of the victory over Germany (Iur'ev 2007).

Much like Dugin and Prokhanov, Iur'ev is occupied with the different preliminary stages which would lead to the empire.

A UKRAINE UPDATE

The crises in Ukraine and the Russian annexation of Crimea have become an important topic for all three thinkers in their appearances in the mass media as well as in social media. Dugin

proposed a Russian annexation of Crimea already in connection with the war between Russia and Georgia. In many interviews from the last months of 2014, he tries to encourage Putin to win the war in Novorossia.[3] The division between right and left is unimportant for him as he expresses in an article setting the battle for Novorossiia in the forefront:

> On the pragmatic level, it all means that in the struggle for Novorossiia we must under no circumstances split into leftists and rightists. But it is in Novorossia and especially in vanguard Donetsk that we must actively also develop a Fourth Political Theory that includes Eurasianism, National–Bolshevism, geopolitics, social justice, and Russian patriotism and that goes beyond West-centric dogmas (Dugin 2014a).

Iur'ev maintains, with some right, that he foresaw the Ukraine crisis in his book from 2007. There is a special passage in it on the development in Ukraine, which he refers to in a recent interview. His vision for Ukraine is thus, according to him, on the point of being realized, only with a certain delay:

> And so in late 2007 an uprising began in East and South Ukraine—it simply could not help but begin (Iur'ev 2007).

He outlines in his book a war between Russia and the United States resulting in the partition of Ukraine in two.

In 2014, Prokhanov (2014b: 382) published a new novel, *Krym,* mentioning Crimea as the foundation of the new Fifth Empire in the end of the novel. In an interview he explains his feelings in relation to the Russian annexation of Crimea:

> Crimea is a part of the Russian miracle, and like every miracle, this miracle is sudden. It is impossible to prepare for it. We must accept, embrace, and bow before it. And for this reason, we are all reflections of this Crimean sun. You, and I, and President Putin (Prokhanov 2014a).

The word Crimea is the last word in a novel about different sorts of high–political conspiracies. Thus, all three of our thinkers understand the development in Ukraine as a fullfillment of their visions, and sometimes also as a result of them.

THE SIMILARITIES

These authors thus all are preoccupied by the grandness of imagined geographical space and territory in their utopias. For all of them, perhaps with the exception of Iur'ev, the geographic space has a sacred status. These maps and mappings furthermore mirror different sorts of mock mappings on the Internet, showing strange and absurd geographies. They exist and flourish on the Internet perhaps not so much for their role as political programs but as sensational headlines (as headlines of criminal, scandalous, or pornographic contents) or as jokes. In the case of Dugin, Prokhanov, and Iur'ev they are of the same extreme kind but meant, as it seems, to be taken seriously.

All three stories told by these extremists are highly *eclectic*. They are also in a very special way *self–generating* in that they can be extended or repeated by the authors as long as the number of pages is enough, or the program time is sufficient.

There is a great exaggeration, though, something grotesque about all these maps of a future Russia. It is hard to take any of these visions seriously, even though they may seem daunting in light of actual historical and political realities. They are full of outspoken violence.

There is little difference between the utopias of Dugin, Prokhanov, or Iur'ev and the dystopias of the most famous Russian liberal authors of today: Vladimir Sorokin in his, for example, *The Day of the Oprichnik* or Tat'iana Tolstaia's *The Slynx*. Both the utopias and the dystopias are grotesque, even if the goals of the two groups of authors oppose each other. In one case they are expressing the idea of imperiality, in the other case they express an admonition of the same imperiality. The visions of Dugin, Prokhanov, and Iur'ev are far from a pragmatic political reality and can sometimes be felt as some self–irony. It is difficult to understand the degree of seriousness in them as we have noticed already. For themselves, their maps and their texts still seem to be completely serious. These three persons are given much space in the mass media and they take up considerable room on the Internet.

The texts of both groups can be characterized with the term "stiob" used by the anthropologist Alexei Yurchak on the conditions in late Soviet Union and in contemporary political culture in the West. Stiob is an ironic aesthetic of a very particular kind that thrived in late-Soviet socialism. Stiob "differed from sarcasm, cynicism, derision or any of the more familiar genres of absurd humor" in that it "required such a degree of overidentification with the object, person, or idea at which [it] was directed that it was often impossible to tell whether it was a form of sincere support, subtle ridicule, or a peculiar mixture of the two" (Yurchak 2006: 250).[4] In today's Russia then, there is an obsession with the empire as history, as reality, as nostalgia, as therapy, as future, as nightmare.

Prokhanov and Iur'ev are of the same opinion also in the fact that *lies* are an important tool for promoting Russian interests. Iur'ev maintains in his book from 2007 that the Russians concealed the fact of their participation in the civil war in Ukraine (Prokhanov 2007). Prokhanov maintains in a recent interview: (Prokhanov 2014c), "I don't need any truth. I need the victory of my country." Conspiracy is also an important notion for these authors, as for other populist writers in other countries.

This obsession with maps has more or less its origin in the Soviet time and are continuations of different sorts of Soviet superpower mappings or in any case inspired by them. They are in their extremity also deconstructing themselves, but not for these authors as it seems. This obsession with maps and geographic space has, as can be maintained, a *Soviet background*. In his Moscow diary, Walter Benjamin notices in an entry the importance of maps in the Soviet Union during his visit in the winter of 1926:

December 29. Russia is beginning to take on shape for the man on the street. A major propaganda film, "One sixth of the World" has been announced. On the street in the snow lie maps of the RFSR, piled up there by street vendors who offer them for sale. Meyerhold uses a map in "Daiosh Evropu"—on which the West is a complex system of small Russian peninsulas. The map is almost as close to becoming the center of a new Russian icon cult, as is Lenin's portrait. (Benjamin 1986: 50–51)

The three imperial thinkers aim at giving the Russians the same feeling of a vastness but here in relation to a new future, Russia with quite different borders than it has today.

The maps and the mappings are grotesque and hyperbolic, but in the political situation of today they become at the same time more real and more problematic. I will now proceed to a discussion of three key words: pseudomorphosis, phantom pains, and simulacra.

PSEUDOMORPHOSIS

The poet Dmitrii Prigov termed these mappings in a dispute with Prokhanov (and then in the moderate versions of Putin some ten years ago) *pseudomorphosis*, which is appropriated from geology and from Oswald Spengler:[5]

> Putin claims to be an archaic player in imperial strivings, but I use Spengler's terminology, which has to do with pseudomorphosis. There is an attempt in a certain geographic place to sew an imperial skin without any content. From here, there comes an appeal to the number of territories, to various masses, to centralism (Zavtra.ru 2006).

The idea of Spengler is that an older culture can hamper the development of a new one and that the new culture therefore will be very similar to the old, even if it is declaring its hostility to the old one.

Dugin is himself using the term of Spengler in his writing. In his book *Arkheomodern* (Dugin 2011) he notices that Spengler utilizes this term especially about Russia and the epoch of Peter the Great. He continues Spengler's ideas and finds the phenomenon of pseudomorphosis in all later epochs. Dugin even uses pseudomorphism and arkheomodern in parallel. For him the pseudomorphism means the special situation in Russia of today (or up to 2011 when he wrote this text) where the surface is modern, that is democratic in the Western sense, but where the deep structures are archaic. This situation is full of lies, and like Prokhanov and Iur'ev, he thus defines the society as full of lies. Not as a strategy as they do, but as a fact and a problem. Lies are thus used in different ways in these discourses: on the one hand as a premeditated strategy to improve the case of Russia in world politics, on the other as in Dugin's case here, as a description of his view of the ideas and manners of his political opponents. For Prigov pseudomophosis is a fact, and signifies the end of imperiality, for Dugin it is a challenge and the task is to overcome it and fully return to old form.

In an article by the critic Aleksei Bobrikov on the imperial art of Beliaiev-Gintovt, who is standing near the position of Prokhanov and Dugin, Bobrikov maintains that this art is doubly safe, it unmasks itself, and it is absurd.

> Unlike other stillborn—totalitarian—art, it is doubly safe by virtue of its unmasked demonstrativeness and absurdity led to its final end (Bobrikov 2009).

For both Prigov and Bobrikov this appeal to old forms of totalitarianism are harmless and empty, just repeating old forms. The political situation of today demonstrates that they were wrong.

PHANTOM PAINS

Both the conservative empire-thinkers and their opponents call the consciousness of the lost empire *phantom pains* after a lost empire. An early example of the use of this terminology is in an article by the liberal politician Evgenii Yasin from 2006, mentioning both Dugin and Prokhanov, with the title "Phantom pains of a lost empire." He notices that there is a common opinion in Russia that

We are surrounded by enemies, they weave conspiracies against us. Instead of a policy, we have conspirology (Yasin 2007: 38).

Yasin very aptly connects the idea of phantom pains with the idea of conspiracy, so developed in Russian society both in the past and in the present.

This trope of phantom pains has become important in Russian political discourse during the last years as can be noticed in this short list of headlines from sources with different political preferences. The list will be followed by an indication from what political view they emanate. The list could be made much longer:

- Crimea–phantom pain of Ukraine[6]
- Crimea—phantom pain of USA[7]
- CIS—phantom pain of the break up of the Soviet Union[8]
- Phantom pain of Maidan[9]

Prokhanov (2013) commented in an interview:

One of the postulates of Russian victory and Russian consciousness is the reconstitution of the Russian state that was destroyed in 1991; today Russia drags out an agonizing existence with phantom pains. These phantom pains are becoming tendencies, and the Russian lizard is growing its imperial tail.

The discourse on empire is deconstructing itself. Phantom pains means that the limbs will not return, that is the empire will not return, but this is the opposite of the view of Prokhanov. The comparison between Russia (or the Soviet Union) and a lizard gives an unintended comic atavistic interpretation of Russian geopolitics.

Boris Orlov (2013), the famous sots art artist, has also used the term phantom pains as the name of an exhibition in 2013 in the Tretyakov gallery, and with the same meaning of the pains felt for a lost empire, in this case the lost Soviet Union.

The preoccupation with lost limbs in the trope of phantom pains would also and rather strongly indicate a psychoanalytic interpretation, but I will not dwell on that here. Dugin, however, comments on the problem of phantom pains in a short article on psychology. According to him, psychology will disappear in Russia and will not be needed. The time of individualism from the 1990s is over and the existence of psychologists is itself signs of phantom pains for a lost 1990s. Dugin (2009b) writes:

Psychology, in my opinion, is a profession—an applied, practical profession that is in demand now in Russian society, but this is simply because we haven't realized that period has ended. The period of divorce, the period of "not letting yourself dry up," the period of "being yourself." They're just a phantom pain, these psychologists.

SIMULACRA

The expression phantom pains is central in the political discourse of today's Russia. In the postmodern discourse Jean Baudrillard's *simulacrum* term is also often used, that is a lack of sense of reality in an era of mass-medialization. The first example of this phenomenon mentioned by the French philosopher in his work "Simulacra and Simulations" is precisely

what happens to imperial maps in postmodern times, alluding to a short story by Jorge Borges on a conquistadorian attempt to make a map in the scale 1:1:

> Perhaps only the allegory of the Empire remains. For it is with the same imperialism that present-day simulators try to make the real, all the real, coincide with their simulation models. But it is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction's charm (Baudrillard 1988).

Sergei Medvedev, a Russian professor of social science, already in 1995 wrote about Russian imperial mapping as *simulacra,* directly alluding to the text by Baudrillard, and to the passage of the imperial map in the scale one to one, which I just have quoted. He is quoting Baudrillard and narrates an untruthful story about the construction of a Soviet map on the scale of 1:1 as a gift to Stalin on his seventieth birthday. In this way, he wants to ridicule and undermine the mapping of the Soviet Union, but also the mapping of the leader of the liberal-democratic party Zhirinovskii, whose mapping is of the same kind as Prokhanov's. The difference between reality and map is absolutely blurred:

> Few know that in 1925 the Council of People's Commissars established an Extraordinary Commission for large-scale mapping (CHEKOKUM) under the leadership of the deputy chairman of the PBC at that time Unshlikht. Its task was to prepare for the tenth anniversary edition of the October a map of USSR. At the end of 1949, the 70th anniversary of Stalin, a pale pink map scale of 1:1 was ready. On the night between December 20th and 21st, 1949, the internal forces unfolded the map (Medvedev 1995).

For Medvedev in 1995 these maps were sheer simulacra, today they have a new actuality, and pertain to the political realities of today. What also strikes each who is studying these maps is that they all in some ways are deformed, either reduced or enlarged beyond recognition in absurdity, even to 1:1 as in Borges's or Medvedev's case. According to Baudrillard, and echoed by Medvedev, these maps are primary and the reality secondary, or rather, non–existent.

The Russian born Russia specialist Peter Pomerantsev also uses this notion to explain all the lies of the Russian power in terms of Postmodernism:

> There are the simulacra of communism, you get the simulacra of democracy, simulacra of news. Russia is a country where nothing is what it says. So the police are not police, they are a criminal band who extort bribes; the KGB aren't the KGB, they do something else; news isn't news, journalists aren't journalists, cops aren't cops, bureaucrats aren't bureaucrats, everything is simulacra, everything S equals not-S, so it's the first truly postmodern society. (Pomerantsev 2015)

One of the paradoxes in this case is that simulacra was used by Baudrillard in connection to the American desinformation on the Iraq war and now Pomerantsev uses it to explain among other things the lies of the Russian authorities in the case of the war in Ukraine. Simulacra is a way for Pomerantsev explaining "the lack of a sense of a border" in Russian political discourse. What he is not saying, but still implying in his article, is that Russia as such is a simulacrum, according to him.

The notion of simulacra is also often used by Aleksandr Dugin. He is in fact often using terms and notions from the Postmodernistic discourse. He is terming all ideas and ideologies, which, according to him, are not viable any more "simulacrum," and for him fascism as well as communism are simulacra, as can be noted in this quotation from a published English translation of his texts:

This is why we have the phenomenon of contemporary fascism, which is an excellent illustration of this condition. Every last vestige of fascism that was embodied by political soldiers ran out in 1945. Each and every declared fascist after 1945 is a simulacrum. The liberals' fears taking the form of fascists is a complete parody. They do not differ much from the decomposed and half–dissolved masses. Communism, which has held out longer than fascism created its simulacrum within itself. The late Communists were already pseudo–political soldiers. Today there are no chances for Communism to return to life. The same goes for fascism. Soon, we will see that liberalism has arrived at the same point. At least our liberals, who are not really liberals at all, demonstrate this: give them some money, and they will declare anything and everything. We are dealing with entities, lacking anything. (Dugin 2012, 174)

Simulacra is also used by him in relation to the fall of the Soviet Union, the new states formed were only simulacra:

What we have after the collapse of the Soviet Union is not living thing but a spatial simulacrum, and it is dying (Dugin 2009a)

This is for him the reason for not recognizing the existing new states formed after the fall of the Soviet Union. A critical commentator in his turn summarizes the ideologies and rhetoric of this sort of writer:

The main problem of patriots in Russia is life in a total simulacrum. Everything here is fake: patriotism, imperialism, liberalism, conservatism. (Dzhemal' 2014)

Both the liberals and the imperial thinkers use the same postmodernistic term "simulacrum" to defend their case and use that term to smear each other.

The notion of simulacra has even a broader use in the Russian context. The cultural philosopher Mikhail Epstein noticed in his book on Russian culture written in 1991 that the Russian as well as the Soviet culture had and has a special inclination toward simulacra.[10] He mentions icons as well as Potemkin villages and Soviet propaganda as examples. He sums up his view in another context: "In general all the Russian culture is built on the model of simulacra."[11] All these researchers and thinkers using the term of simulacra seem to want to come to terms with the difference between described reality and experienced reality in Russia of today, that is in principle the question of how to relate to lies produced by the political power, what I mentioned earlier in this article.

CONCLUSION

Dugin's, Prokhanov's, and Iur'ev's maps and mappings are not only absurd and frightening, but also so exaggerated that the ontological status of them can be questioned. They are using the three terms pseudomorphism, phantom pains, and simulacra and at the same time repudiating the reality expressed by these maps. The critics are then using the same terms but as to criticize these three imperial thinkers. Furthermore, the scholars are using the same set of terms to analyze and understand the thought of these imperialists. Dugin, Prokhanov, and Iur'ev are thus operationalizing this set of terms used in the cultural sciences, and turning them to political programs: geopolitics becomes a program for the return of a Russian empire as well as the notion of phanthom pains, and the idea of overcoming simulacra. The researchers study them and use the same notion but in a neutral and analytical way: this is a kind of mirroring between conservative thinkers and scholars that is very special, a kind of short-circuit in the attempts to

understand what is going on in Russia. The lies pertaining to political propaganda and a somewhat belated postmodernism are mixed together. This mixture is complicated even more by the existence of the "stiob" and the fictionalizing of maps and mappings in novels or in semifictional genres. This, I would say, is one of the characteristics of the political and cultural condition in Russia of today.

Furthermore, Dugin, Prokhanov, and Iur'ev are performing a geopolitical clownery with their maps, their narratives, and also their appearances. Still, their maps and their appearances are of a gothic character.[12] They function as Putin's gothic doubles in geopolitics. I use gothic here in the sense of horror culture from the time of Romanticism. They are made to frighten the audience, but with a fright having a terrible tinge of truth as a real horror story. The deaths in Kiev, in Kharkiv, or Donetsk as well as the annexation of Crimea are not simulacra, they are not fictional horror stories, they are a reality. These maps and these mappings can be seen as pleasure (some sort of geopolitical porno), as fun, as admonition, as preparation for a new world order, or the end of the world.

NOTES

1. It is already a very established term as can be seen in the preamble to a conference "Imperial Traces," http://www.imperialtraces.org/index.php?id=30, (accessed on June 9, 2015).

2. "Russia does not want Crimea, but a new empire with the capital in Kiev" (Prokhanov 2010).

3. For example, see Dugin (2014b).

4. For the comparision with contemporary political culture in the West see Boyer and Yurchak (2010).

5. Spengler (1928: 189) defines Pseudomorphosis as: "By the term 'historical pseudomorphosis' I propose to designate those cases in which an older alien Culture lies so massively over the land that a young Culture, born in this land, cannot get its breath and fails not only to achieve pure and specific expression-forms, but even to develop fully its own self-consciousness. All that wells up from the depths of the young soul is cast in the old moulds, young feelings stiffen in senile works and instead of rearing itself up in its own creative power, it can only hate the distant power with a hate that grows to be monstrous."

6. Newsland, http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/1409999/ (accessed on June 9, 2015).

7. LiveJournal, http://pavel-shipilin.livejournal.com/320121.html (accessed on June 9, 2015).

8. Mir 24, http://mir24.tv/news/society/3873805 (accessed on June 9, 2015).

9. INFO OPLOT, http://www.oplot.info/content/fantomnaya-bol-maydana-kogda-evropa-ot-nas-otkazhetsya-i-kogda-novaya-revolyuciya (accessed on June 9, 2015).

10. Mikhail Epstein (1995) *After the Future: the Paradoxes of Postmodernism and contemporary Russian Culture*, Amherst, Univ. Massachusetts Press, 1995.

11. Mikhail Epstein i Valery Savchuk, 'Svetloi pamiati postmoderna posviashchaetsia', http://xz.gif.ru/numbers/64/epshtein-savchuk/ (accessed on June 9, 2015).

12. On the gothic character of modern Russia in general, see Khapaeva and Kéhayan (2012).

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Part IV

POST-SOVIET GEOPOLITICS AND THE MEDIA

Chapter Ten

Digital Conservatism

Framing Patriotism in the Era of Global Journalism

Vlad Strukov[1]

I find it hard to socialise with people who boast about their dislike of the Motherland

Margarita Simonian (*Twitter* post)[2]

Under President Vladimir Putin, state-sponsored patriotism has emerged as a new ideology.[3] In the early period it was an ambiguous concept, lacking popular agency; however, in the aftermath of the political crisis in Ukraine (2014–present) and in the context of confrontation with the West, it has evolved to include loyalty to the state and its geopolitical concerns. The following case illustrates the contradictions of patriotism as a geopolitical phenomenon. In January 2015, Russian security forces (FSB) arrested Svetlana Davydova (b. 1978), a mother of seven children (two of them are adopted),[4] who lives with her husband and family in Viaz'ma, a small provincial town to the west of Moscow. She was accused of state treason: in April 2014 she telephoned the Embassy of Ukraine to inform them about a possible transfer of a military unit from Viaz'ma to Donetsk. Davydova based her presupposition on the observation of the military station located in the vicinity of her home. In the course of the trial, which lasted from January to March 2015, all charges against Davydova were dropped, she was officially pardoned, and eventually was able to claim compensation from the government ('Advokaty soobshchili . . .' 2015). Davydova's case ignited a heated debate about patriotism in social media: about thirty thousand people signed a petition, demanding she should not be prosecuted ('Petitsii v podderzhku . . .' 2015), and Pavel Astakhov, head of the Presidential Committee for the Rights of Children, provided his personal support for Davydova.[5]

The case illustrates confusion around the term *patriotism* and the position of the state whose different branches simultaneously accused and supported the defendant. Davydova's single "unpatriotic" gesture—her communication with the government of the opposing nation—was judged in the context of her "patriotic actions"—the fact that she is a mother of seven children and so, in the context of the "war of sanctions" with the West and from the perspective of the state, she adheres to the government-sponsored campaign to improve the demographic situation by having a lot of her own children and adopting children from orphanages.[6] On one level, common sense and the rights of Davydova's children prevailed, albeit alongside her becoming an object of a smear campaign and hate-speech attacks online. On another, the case illustrates the dominance of conservative values which regulate both political and private behavior of an individual: in blogs and social media Davydova was often framed not as a political activist but

as an "inept and deranged housewife" (boeing 2015) who, therefore, had to be pardoned to fulfil her parental duties.[7]

In addition, Davydova's story exemplifies the role of popular, de-centered agency and digital networks in articulation and dissemination of alternative understandings of patriotism, nationalism, and conservatism, which are in competition with those provided by the state. Davydova's case challenges the existing assumptions of patriotism and also what constitutes "Russia" in the era of global capitalism and digitally networked communication systems (hereafter DNCS). DNCS defines the proliferation of new digitally-enabled communication system (Doorn 2011) which have supplanted "traditional" media such as analogue television during the so-called "post-broadcast era" (Turner and Tay 2009; Strukov 2013; Strukov and Zvereva 2014).[8] Often labelled as "new media," "social media," and "interactive media," DNCS have reshaped the media landscape by transcending national boundaries, media channels, communication platforms, and types of authorship. At the same time DNCS provide a new constellation of geopolitical concerns—from the ways in which the digital realm is structured[9] to security measures against cyber attacks. Hence, in this chapter I consider all media outlets as pertaining to DNCS and providing a crossover between Russian media, the state, and their global extensions where tensions between different understandings of patriotism emerge.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the configurations of patriotism in relation to "traditional values," or "conservatism," promoted by the Russian government.[10] I investigate the concept of patriotism in the era of global journalism by focussing on Russian international state-sponsored media outlet *RT* (previously known as *Russia Today*) and particularly *RT*'s director Margarita Simon'ian (hereafter Simonian) through her actions in DNCS. In literature, there has been much focus on Putin, who, in 2013, was labelled "world conservatism's new leader."[11] However, little is known about the "second-tier agency" through which the discourse of conservatism is maintained and developed.[12] My central contention is that the government delegates the production and development of patriotism, understood as the state brand "Russia," to media companies which, albeit being (partially and in/directly) sponsored by the government, operate as commercial enterprises, relying on income from advertising and competing with other outlets.[13] With the help of these media outlets the government aims to co-opt information flows in DNCS—not by blocking access or regulating meaning production but by altering the structure and directions of such flows.[14] The state brand "Russia" is evoked evasively and intrusively through a myriad of rhetorical devices that include subject, context, genre, format (text, image, video, sound), and so forth. In this chapter, I consider *RT* as well as Simonian's LiveJournal and Twitter accounts,[15] as information aggregators, or nodes in DNCS, in which information is circulated and structured by offering different ways of information organization, storage, and compression. My ultimate purpose is to analyze how Simonian, through her mediated agency, attempts to frame patriotism domestically and internationally. Last but not least, my analysis of personified media charts the geopolitical space of conservative ideology which finds many a supporter in the West,[16] and outlines the role of international broadcasters in the era of DNCS.[17]

Quantitative studies of DNCS are frequently based on evidence collected through key word searches, that is, references to a problem in media that enable keyword search, for example, texts displayed on a website.[18] The references are counted and their number and dynamic are visualized using two-dimensional representations. Such searches are often used as a way to repeat experiments until they produce desired results, or to harvest a catch of samples that validate the initial hypothesis. Moreover, by searching online databases—often collected by other scholars or those with an investment/interest in media circulation—researchers analyze metadata and not actual texts and enunciations. Finally, by working with large collections of data researchers engage with "amplified noise" (e.g., repostings rather than original posts disregarding the purpose of such re-posting) and reduce the validity of results.[19]

To avoid the pitfalls of the key word search approach, I utilise a hybrid methodological approach. It combines elements of "big data analysis"—key word searches—with critical discourse analysis in its post-print, multimedia phase (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Carvalho 2005; Fairclough 2003; Van Dijk 2006; Weiss and Wodak 2003; Wodak and Chilton 2005), which I understand as a system of dynamic socio-cognitive and culturally-grounded interactive moves and strategies, with emphasis on contextualization and re-contextualization as well as working with textual, audio, and visual elements. This is presented below as a three-step procedure whereby particular events are selected on the basis of their statistical relevance, analyzed in relation to the media environment, including the visual apparatus, and cross-checked with cultural context. In addition, when following and analyzing connections in social media and selecting particular individuals for my discussion, I critically engage with the structure of the search engines, problematizing both data and metadata, structure and superstructure. Such hybrid methodology permits data triangulation and enables its macro- and micro-interpretations.

The data was collected in a few steps and using different methods. I used the English-language version of the *RT* website (www.rt.com) and also followed Simonian on LiveJournal and Twitter, monitoring and recording data over two years. For this chapter I narrowed down the period to four months (November 2014–February 2015). The data was analyzed in the broader context of DNCS, generating an integrated, cross-border and cross-platform realm of patriotic sentiment.

NATIONALISM VERSUS GEOPOLITICS: FLUCTUATING PATRIOTISM

In the nineteenth century, nationalism and geopolitics were simultaneously used as a means to substantiate the rise of a modern state. The nationalist discourse emerged as a critique of imperial order and veered toward a construction of a state which would be formed on the basis of a "pure" national identity.[20] In the geopolitical discourse the state would be considered a life organism which would require its own space and processes to evolve. The two discourses diverged as regards the boundaries of the state: for the former, the national and political units ought to be congruent, whereas for the latter, they could remain incongruent so long as the political territory of the state would be protected. This diverging inward/outward dynamic would manifest itself in the desire to protect a nation, that is, a particular social group brought

together through imaginary forms of identification such as myths, language, and so forth, or, conversely, in the desire to protect the state, that is, a political organization which grants different social groups access to resources. Individual subjects would, therefore, have different "objects of attachment, modes of attachment and reasons for attachment" (Muller 2009: 47). In this framework of attachments individuals have to negotiate between their patriotic attachment, on the one hand, and on the other "the constitutional essentials, and, in particular, the fair and democratic procedures that can be presumed to produce legitimate law" (Muller 2009: 58). National patriots see their culture as open and incomplete, that is, as an evolving phenomenon; constitutional patriots see their culture as closed and fixed—the conservative framework—whereby transformations occur only in response to external threats.

The construction of patriotism in a nation-state is a complex procedure. In a country such as Russia which lacks any specific national identity and, in fact, escapes the very categorization of nation (Condee 2009), this process is even more complicated. Serguei Oushakine[21] contends that in the Soviet period Russian ethnicity—or "nationality" in the Soviet framework—existed as a blank spot,[22] "as an indeterminate source of power, framed by ethnic differences of other Soviet nationalities, which were constantly reproduced by the official Soviet policy of indigenization" (2009: 10). Although the Soviet Empire was dissolved in 1991, the imperial approach to identity construction persisted in the post-Soviet period: the constitutive parts of the Russian Federation went through the process of indigenization (this time there was the conspicuous absence of the state as the contractor of indigenization), whilst Russian ethnic identity remained poorly determined in spite of the robust debate during the Yeltsin administration (see, for example, Condee 2009; Popova and Strukov 2001, 2003; Smith 1999; Szporluk 1994; Tsygankov 2013).

Under Putin this tendency was markedly reversed with the Russian ethnic identity gaining the status of a geopolitical category during the political crisis in Ukraine. Whilst aiming to "protect ethnic Russians" in Ukraine and elsewhere, the Russian government inadvertently queries the status of many "non-Russians," or Russia's indigenous ethnic minorities. On the level of the Russian language, the government made a U-turn on the use of the term "russkii," now replacing the more inclusive term "rossisskii," which, in the 1990s and early 2000s warranted a construction of a nation based on differences. Whereas in the beginning the non-nation identification such as "post-Soviet connectedness through the language of family and kinship ties such as 'brotherhood,' 'soldiers' mothers,' or 'Slavs'" (Oushakine 2009: 11) covered the territory of the Russian Federation, under Putin these notions were exported beyond the boundaries of the country. They took the form of the idea of the "Russian world" [Russkii mir] (the soft power tool) as well as of the outright aggression (in Georgia and Ukraine) (the hard power tool). In both instances the idea of connectedness—Russian identity —employs either pan-continental or cross-border rhetoric that makes it rather irrelevant to the people within the country and tangential to those living outside. As a result, in the Putin era, patriotism has been reframed to mean loyalty to the state rather than loyalty to the nation. It is utilized as a form of geopolitical attachment, with the boundaries of the state being in flux due to the perceived external threats such as Ukrainian nationalists, NATO, and so forth.

As the notion of the Russian state expands to include interests beyond its borders, the state emerges as the agent of globalization rather than containment. This allows us to consider Russian anti-Western sanctions not as an isolationist move but rather as a determination to carve out new spaces and means of Russia-led globalization. Domestically, the Russian state interrupts the grass-roots movement toward naturalization of the new "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) and any form of civic activism[23] because the public embraces the outward dynamic of geopolitical attachment. To be precise, for its own purposes the Putin government labels this form of geopolitical attachment as "patriotism"; however, this is different from the patriotism of the nationalist attachment (this is a form of patriotism promoted from above and hinged on Russian current geopolitical interests). The current geopolitical patriotism is rooted in the history of the Soviet state and hence current developments are intrinsically linked to the Soviet project (to the extent that the annexation of Crimea is viewed as a means to correct the "mistakes" of the Soviet-era).[24] As Oushakine points out, in the post-Soviet period identification relied on the shared experience of loss (loss of status, human life, purpose, etc.) (2009: 12). Under Putin, I argue, the sense of loss is constructed as a geopolitical concern and a strategic ambition as is evident in the following examples which summarize the claims made by the Putin government as part of its rhetoric of geopolitical patriotism. A) Russia lost millions of lives during World War II, hence Russia ought to use the memory of World War II as a means to consolidate its powers in the face of new threats such as "Ukrainian ultra-right nationalism." B) Russia lost Crimea as a result of Khrushchev's erroneous administrative action, hence Russia ought to bring the peninsula back into the domain of "motherland" and restore its own geopolitical space. C) Russia lost its hegemonic status, hence Russia ought to stage a confrontation with the West in order to regain its former status of the superpower. As these examples demonstrate, the rhetoric of loss fuels people's attachment to the state, effectively turning people into its agents. (Davydova's case illustrates the tensions between these interpretative systems and types of patriotism.) To reiterate, this type of patriotism accounts for the outward-looking geopolitical losses and ambitions of the state rather than for the more familiar inward-looking losses and aspirations of the nation.

MEDIA GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL JOURNALISM

Central to Putin's geopolitical program is the proliferation of government-sponsored media in DNCS. The state—in the form of direct ownership or through government-controlled companies such as Gazprom—has built a global media system. It includes TV channels, radio stations, and hybrid web-based platforms that broadcast in Russian in the former Soviet republics and are also available via satellite and on the Internet in other countries (e.g., Channel 1, MIR, RTR Planeta, Rossiia 24, and others, each targeting a particular group). Domestically, the Russian government controls the most popular form of media, television; however, the government does not block access to international media, and so through a standard and affordable television/phone/internet package, a typical household has access not only to dozens of domestic TV channels, with most of them offering some critique of the regime, but also to international broadcasters such as the BBC, Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle,

and Euronews.[25] Many more media outlets are available on the internet to Russia's ninety million users (Internet Live Stats 2014).[26] Internationally, the Russian government employs Russian language outlets listed above and a multilingual cross-platform news company *RT*, a major international media outlet competing with the BBC, CNN International, Al Jazeera, and others. In 2014, the Russian government doubled its investment in *RT* to launch a service in French in addition to its services in English, Spanish, and Arabic. These reflect the geopolitical concerns of the government whereby France, through Marine Le Pen, the president of the *National Front*, the third-largest political party in France, and Hungary, through Viktor Mihály Orbán, the prime minister and the president of the national conservative ruling party *Fidesz*, provide Putin with a stronghold of conservatism in the heart of Europe.

Just like other international media operating in the post-broadcast era, *RT* faces the challenge of maintaining national attachment in the context of global media flows. To phrase it theoretically, how can international media be patriotic in the era of global journalism? And more specifically, could media be impartial if it were to remain patriotic? In his theory of patriotism for journalism, Stephen A. Ward notes that "patriotism seems to be out of place in a world where journalism needs to consider issues from a global perspective" (2010: 42). That would be true if we were to consider patriotism as a unidimensional form of attachment. Ward wishes to distinguish between extreme patriotism, which leads to nationalism, and moderate patriotism, whereby their country is one of many objects of loyalty for its citizens, and this loyalty is subject to ongoing scrutiny. Stephen Nathanson believes moderate patriotism consists of a) attachment to one's country and desire for their country to prosper, b) support for a morally constrained pursuit of national goals, and c) critical and conditional support of one's country's actions (1993: 37–55). Ward re-labels Nathanson's moderate patriotism "democratic patriotism" since the latter provides "a political interpretation of 'love of country'" and "it emphasises rational principle and ethical ideal" (2010: 45–46). Thus, Ward makes a return to the rational choice theory which maintains all human actions are fundamentally rational in nature and that people calculate benefits of their actions before acting. In the late 1950s, George Homans pioneered rational choice theory in sociology and established the framework of exchange theory which was grounded in behaviorist psychology. However, since Homans the rational choice theory has been challenged on many occasions (see, for example, Scott 1999), and it is now widely recognized that people act both rationally and irrationally, and that patriotism belongs to the second group of "irrational," affective, and emotive actions. In fact, patriotism accounts for actions that often contradict the benefits of rational calculation.[27] Furthermore, Ward's democratic patriotism reduces the actions of social groups and organizations to the sentiment and actions of individuals: Wards juxtaposes the attachment of an individual to the imperative of public scrutiny of the individual's attachment, thus conceiving the individual as being outside, or disenfranchised from the public. Finally, while querying global journalism ethics, Ward fails to provide a conclusive argument about the relationship between patriotism and global awareness. Ward's appeal to cosmopolitanism results in ethical obscurantism whereby the boundaries between "partial patriotism" and "partial cosmopolitanism" are blurred (2010: 55). Ultimately, journalists can either adopt a patriotic

stance, which of course can be critical of the actions of their country, or they can adopt a global perspective, according to which journalists must strive to construct and protect a global public sphere.[28] Or, as I will argue below, journalists can utilize the contradictions between the patriotic and global perspectives in order to appeal to and manipulate their audiences to gain a geopolitical advantage.[29]

BEYOND PUTIN: OTHER "PATRIOTIC" PLAYERS

In his analysis of contemporary Russia, Richard Sakwa (2014) identifies contradictions between the demands of the state and the demands of the political regime personified in Putin who relentlessly increases the level of authoritarianism in order to manage competing demands at home. Daniel Treisman (2011) demonstrates how in Russia, "a competitive autocracy," Putin's high ratings are closely linked to public perceptions of economic performance. There is a discernible correlation between the downturns in Russian economy and the increased levels of Putin's authoritarianism. This reveals even greater contradictions between the government, the state, economic elites, and ordinary citizens. The authors of the volume entitled *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon* (2013), edited by Helena Goscilo, identify Putin as a figure that transcends politics and egresses as the country's major cultural construct. While recognizing the role of media and cultural elites in constructing and disseminating this image of Putin, the book does not adopt any lens other than that centering on Putin, and as a result the study does not address the contradictions which had led to the creation of the brand "Putin." Just like Theodore Gerber in his analysis of nationalism and xenophobia in Russia (2014), I wonder if it is possible to think *beyond* Putin and explore deep-seated contradictions that manifest themselves not only in the oppositional movement but also in the incongruences and discontinuities of discourse. My central contention is that the Putin regime depends on and benefits from delegating the process of production and development of the state brand "Russia" to other actors who intensify and complicate the polemic to advance their own interests. In this framework contemporary Russia emerges as a multidirectional ideological system where different actors compete for the recognition of their particular type of government-endorsed relationship to the state presented as patriotism. In their actions these agents of power display rational patterns of behavior and less-deliberate, spontaneous forms of practice which contribute to the construction of political sentiment. Like Andrea Herepath (2014), I maintain that the political action is an interplay and a variance through time which leads to political strategizing and strategy-as-practice. Thus, in the analysis of the discourse of patriotism, my attention turns to "the second-tier" agency exemplified in the figure of Simonian and her political strategy-as-practice in DNCS.

A few months after the official launch of *RT* in 2005, Simonian, aged twenty-five, became its editor-in-chief, with a particular responsibility to recruit Western journalists. In December 2013, Simonian was appointed the editor-in-chief of the newly established news agency *Rossiya Segodnya* which incorporates the former RIA Novosti news service, the international radio service Voice of Russia, and *RT*. Before her meteor rise in Moscow, in the early 2000s Simonian gained journalistic experience while working at state-owned regional television

stations in Krasnodar and Rostov-na-Donu. Her career exemplifies a hybridization of individual agency and government effort to consolidate power; in fact, Simonian attracted the attention of no less Putin himself thanks to her coverage of the terrorist attacks in Beslan. She benefited from her Western-oriented education, too: she went to a school specialising in foreign languages, spent some time in New Hampshire, learning about the American way of life, and took a course in journalism taught by Vladimir Posner, a famous Russian-American journalist. She adopted a decidedly pro-government stance in her journalistic work: in addition to her coverage of the Beslan siege, she became renowned thanks to her "objective" representation of events in South Ossetia in 2008 and her participation in the dialogue between Russia and Armenia aimed at building economic partnership.[30] Her contribution was recognized by the president of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan who awarded her a medal of distinction.

These events indicate Simonian's personal achievement designate gradual co-option into the ruling elite. In fact, she was one of five hundred people—"Russia's future talent"—selected by President Medvedev nationwide in 2009: these individuals would assume leading positions in governance, media, research, business, and so on. Whilst managing a large media company, Simonian continues her work as a journalist: for example, in 2011 she authored and anchored an analytical program called "What is going on?" on a private network REN-TV.[31] Simonian represents an elite group of successful individuals who, under Putin, built their networks of media enterprises, businesses, and creative industries. Her experience confirms Russia still provides opportunities for upward social mobility which, however, ought to be aligned with the interests of the state. The individual and the state agents share the benefits of such an allegiance as both contribute to the generation of a recognizable identity, both domestically and internationally. To reiterate my previous contention, Simonian became the editor-in-chief in 2005 when Runet had emerged as an entire system of DNCS (Strukov 2009) and Simonian—like, for example, Anton Nosik, one of the fathers of Runet (Strukov 2010)—has been responsible for its restructuring and reconfiguring through various forms of agency. In the highly politicized environment of DNCS they perform their patriotic agency by several means including restructuring information flows to chart geopolitical interests of the state.

PATRIOTIC OTHERING

The rhetoric concerning the integration of Crimea into the Russian Federation has depended on the process of othering of Ukraine and Ukrainians, during which the population of Crimea emerged resembling the self and easier to identify with.[32] However, the Federal self was hardly homogenous and, as I pointed above, the shift from "rossiiskii" to "russkii" identity queried the status of many "non-Russians" in the Federation. Simonian is one of those "non-Russian Russians," or "self-other" subjectivities: born into an Armenian family, she grew up in Krasnodar in the late-socialist period, identifying herself as Armenian.[33] (As I mentioned above, her Armenian identity helped her to advance her career via association with the Armenian leadership which was part of Putin's geopolitical ambition to expand the Eurasian Economic Union.) In her LiveJournal post (2013.11.05; 4,900 comments)[34] Simonian explains

her family history: her great-grandmother escaped Armenian genocide by migrating to Crimea; her grandmother was born in Sochi and learned Russian when she was eighteen; her father came from Armenian diaspora based in the Urals; Simonian was born in Krasnodar into a family that never spoke Armenian; and she once visited Armenia on a business trip with Putin. In this brief account of her family history Simonian defends her right to be a Russian citizen by evoking the circumstances of her birth and emphasizing her disconnectedness from her ethnic homeland, Armenia (*the Romantic patriotic stance*). She reiterates the logic of Soviet multinationalism whereby mundane social mobility and cross-ethnic integration contradicted the rhetorical indigenization of Soviet peoples (*the modernist patriotic stance*). Simonian constructs the geopolitical role of Russia as a protector of people and ascertains the validity of Putin's sites of geopolitical interest, Sochi and Crimea. Finally, she calls on the highest authority—she alludes to her proximity to the president, a "guarantor of Russian stability"—in her defence of her right to speak on behalf of the Russian people (*the postmodernist patriotic stance*).[35] Thus, she maintains her privileged position of the "internal other" (Condee 2009) whilst distancing herself from the unprivileged majority: her other post (2013.11.03; 8,252 comments and re-tweets) in which, I paraphrase politely, she suggested "all ethnic Russians should go to hell,"[36] provoked an outcry in Russian blogosphere whereby users challenged Simonian's assumptions about identity and government politics. The most common reaction to her post was a rejection of Simonian both as Armenian and as Russian: bloggers wistfully determined her as a member of the "Putin nation,"[37] meaning the regime demanded loyalty irrespective of individuals' background while remaining deaf to the concerns of Russian people. Both Simonian's and Davydova's cases illustrate that national identity is a fluid, uncharted category (*the postmodernist stance*) and that individuals have to sustain it through their affirmative action and allegiance to the state as a shared geopolitical concern.[38]

Simonian's self-othering is evident not only in her ethnicity but also gender. Being one of the president's five hundred also meant that Simonian was part of a small cohort of women—just 13.8 percent ('Kreml' obnarodoval . . .' 2009). There are, of course, other women in Russian media who had become successful without the Kremlin's support. For example, Renata Litvinova (b. 1967) is an actress, scriptwriter, director, television presenter, and fashion designer who had a significant impact on Russian media culture in the early 2000s. Galina Timchenko (b. 1962) was editor-in-chief of the most influential online media outlet Lenta.ru before the billionaire owner, Alexandr Mamut, replaced her with a male editor, loyal to the Kremlin, in March 2014. Since the transfer, Timchenko has launched an oppositional web-based media aggregator in Latvia, called Meduza, which publishes news both in Russian and English. In fact, it appears women have been in the center of the government's conservative politics since Pussy Riot's 2012 performance in the Moscow cathedral, with some advocating the liberal stance and others like Valentina Matvienko (b. 1949 in western Ukraine), chairman of the Federation Council since 2011 and Russia's highest ranking female politician, and Elena Mizulina (b. 1954),[39] Chairman of the Duma Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, both promoting conservative values. Davydova's case illustrates the view of the current government on gender and political activity: by ascribing to the normative heterosexual

reproductive behavior, Davydova secured public and government support in circumstances far more unstable and dangerous than those which had affected the members of Pussy Riot. By contrast, Simonian effectively manipulates her self-image as a woman to adhere to the patriotic agenda of the state. Simonian is known primarily for her role as the director of *RT* but she additionally frames herself as a practicing journalist, writer, and restaurateur. In 2010, she published a novel, ironically entitled *To Moscow!*, which tells the story of a successful female journalist moving from southern Russia to the capital. In this autobiographic account, Simonian emphasises the role of men in the construction of her career and media persona. Together with her husband Tigran Keosaian, Simonian owns a restaurant in Sochi; the location—Sochi is the Russian political capital in the south and Putin's favorite town—is indicative of Simonian's geopolitical ambitions.[40] The choice of activity and location is not only a marker of taste (Bourdieu 1984) but also of ideological difference: in an earlier Twitter post (2012.05.06), Simonian was condescending about the cliental of a different establishment—a chain of French cafes called Jean-Jacque,[41] known as a place where Moscow liberals spend their free time—when she blamed the Jean-Jacque crowd for unprovoked violence (2012.05.06; 46 re-tweets[42]).[43] To secure her position of the other, Simonian frequently retreats from the political to the domestic arena by claiming her career was an outcome of an erroneous, non-rational decision: in a show on TV-Rain she announced, "I was born to be a cook and became a journalist by accident" (2011). Simonian alludes to the dominant patriarchal order symbolized by the division of public and domestic spaces. She also ironically and authoritatively makes use of Lenin's famous remark about every cook being able to govern the state (Lenin uses a derogative term for a female cook—kuharka'). In other words, she wishes to be both a Simonian and a Davydova, by streamlining public identities through media use in DNCS.

Simonian has repeatedly employed this withdrawal into the arena of conservative values and normative behavior as a means to win over her opponents. In 2013, she utilized her maternity leave as a reason for the discontinuation of her program on NTV. However, according to Kseniia Sobchak (b. 1981), Simonian's opponent representing the liberal web-based network TV-Rain, the program had been closed down due to low ratings. The Twitter polemic between Simonian and Sobchak about the closure of Simonian's NTV program exemplifies the debate about perceived media differences (analogue versus digital), Russian national identity (patriotic and cosmopolitan, respectively), values (conservative and liberal), and gender (normative: Simonian is married with two children, and non-traditional: Sobchak is a defender of LGBTQ rights, married but has no children). The program in question, entitled *Iron Ladies*, featured Simonian and Tina Kandelaki as its anchors (on YouTube, different episodes have gathered between 12,500 and 548,000 views). The title of the program alludes to the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who is a much respected figure in Russian culture due to her conservative stance including the introduction of Section 28, the analogue of the Russian law against homosexual propaganda (introduced in the UK in 1988 and subsequently repealed in 2001).

Irons Ladies was a series of shows where Simonian and Kandelaki interrogated Russian politicians, for example, Mikhail Prokhorov, Russian oligarch and candidate for presidency,

and Ramzan Kadyrov, head of the Chechen Republic. The interviewees were always men, hence the political debate was gendered: on the one hand, the program structure and visual cues, with Simonian visibly pregnant, emphasized traditional gender roles, and on the other, it challenged men's authority. For example, in the episode with Kadyrov, Kandelaki wears a turban[44] as a show of respect for Kadyrov's religion; she also wears a man's suit playing with gender stereotypes.[45] It was also an opportunity for Simonian and Kandelaki to query the patriotic attachment of their liberal opponents such as Prokhorov by examining his financial interests abroad and querying his sexual orientation (Prokhorov remains single which has caused a lot of speculation about his sexuality in the pre-election period). Simonian and Kandelaki ascertained their conservative patriotism from the position of gender and ethnicity: Kandelaki (b. 1975) is of Georgian background and had lived in Tiflis until her move to Moscow in the late 1990s, which exemplifies continuing cross-border social mobility in the post-Soviet period.[46] It is from this perspective of patriotic othering Simonian offers political recipes for Russian citizens, for example, she believes Russia's future depends on greater assimilation/ussification of ethnic minorities and increased birth rate among Russian (russkiie) women like Davydova (2013.11.05).[47]

RUSSIAN PATRIOTISM AND GLOBAL JOURNALISM

Simonian's posts on *LiveJournal* are oriented toward Russian speakers and center on domestic agenda and her personal interests which is due to the nature of the medium: *LiveJournal* remains one of the most influential arenas in Russian blogosphere (Alexanyan 2009; Rozhkov 2014). By contrast, her activity on Twitter has a manifest outward looking orientation—she tweets both in Russian and English—and her posts have a more professional tone in comparison with LiveJournal which is perhaps a result of collective editorial efforts as her tweets often aim to promote publications on the *RT* website. The following tweets exemplify the difference in the agenda. The first tweet is in Russian: "Read about how Leonov became part of Hollywood canon and about other fantastic facts concerning the first spacewalk" (sixty-one re-tweets and comments). The second tweet is in English: "The first spacewalk in history of humankind: facts you probably didn't know—from cosmonaut Leonov himself" (twenty-four re-tweets and comments).[48] Both of the tweets relate to a news story celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the first spacewalk ("The silence struck me . . ." 2015). The English tweet emphasises the personal element by inviting the user to listen to Leonov's interviews and consider his achievement from the perspective of human heroism. The Russian tweet announces the *RT* publication by evoking the competitive context of the Cold War and emphasizing the recognition of Leonov's accomplishment in the United States. The latter tweet is mindful of the Soviet competitive edge during the Space Race and also anxious about the validation of the achievement in the American popular discourse, that is, the self emerges only in opposition to and through recognition by the other whereby the sense of patriotism depends on the global recognition of the event. To reiterate, Leonov's actions require to be situated in the geopolitical framework of international competition in order to create a sense of patriotic attachment in the user. Soviet colonization of space reenforces contemporary Russian

geopolitical discourse which, in the context of the first anniversary of the annexation of Crimea, is posited as a moral imperative to expand the territory of the state.[49] Finally, the difference in the tweets reveals the tensions between the patriotic and cosmopolitan perspectives in global journalism (domestic achievement versus human endeavour).

In her English-language posts Simonian aims to reveal the discrepancies in Western policy and media representations. For example, she contrasts the data about NATO's actual expansion (available in the public domain from the US State Department website) with U.S. media claims about Russian being a global threat (2015.03.06). Or, she criticizes obvious mistakes and faux pas such as when CNN International showed a map with Ukraine appearing as a part of Russia (2015.03.18).[50] Or, she re-tweets explicitly abusive comments made by Western journalists and Internet users. This practice is in synch with *RT* objective of discrediting Western media and undermining government policy: rather than arguing for greater media freedom and more liberal regimes for global citizens, *RT* and Simonian via Twitter identify the limits and loopholes in Western democratic discourse in order to use those as a means to defend Russian conservative policy. As I demonstrated elsewhere (Strukov 2014), *RT* takes an unconventional and often provocative stance in its representation of events, often challenging Western political correctness. The purpose of *RT* is not to clarify information or investigate existing social processes and political problems but to point out and criticize Western representations of these problems and processes. The result is a creation of an unstable and contradictory worldview where users are bombarded with conflicting messages making them question the very notion of truth. Therefore, the purpose of such journalism is not to construct and protect a global public sphere but to carve out its own space of dominance and manipulate its audiences to gain a geopolitical advantage. It is through global contradictions that *RT* constructs its patriotic agenda whereby patriotism rests on the public's anti-Western sentiment.

Similarly, Simonian uses her Russian-language tweets to draw the users' attention to events and representations not covered in mainstream media. For example, in February 2015 she re-tweetted the news about the Ukrainian official delegation providing a U.S. senator with disinformation about the war in eastern Ukraine (Gray 2015). The news originally appeared in BuzzFeed, an American web-based news media company specializing in DIY, animal-related topics, and business. The company expanded into "serious journalism" in 2011; however, its main focus remains on entertainment-oriented content. When re-tweeting the news bite to the Russian-speaking audience, Simonian failed to comment on the nature of the media outlet and context in which BuzzFeed published the news, confusing the users and imposing on them a conservative interpretation of the event: what was perhaps due to miscommunication and misunderstanding—at least according to the U.S. officials—was interpreted by Simonian as an outright act of conspiracy.[51] This and similar posts are used to verify existing assumptions about the role of Western powers in this particular conflict whereby the purpose of Simonian's Twitter activity—and by extension of *RT*—is not to investigate the truth but to create the information flow that suits particular ideological and geopolitical agenda: in this case, Western conspiracy against the Russian Federation. *RT* emerges not only as a news agency but also as an information aggregator which aims to produce meaning by altering the structure and

directions of information flows. In this process, the state brand "Russia" is evoked as an authority of fairness in the "unfair" Western world. This is also evident in tweets in which Simonian criticises Western media; for example, in February 2015 she posted about the BBC interview with a Maidan activist who had admitted to shooting at Ukrainian security forces. Simonian uses this as an opportunity to promote the *RT* 2014 documentary which provided similar findings ('Pervoe video snaiperov . . .' 2014). The trajectory of the tweets suggests that, according to Simonian, in its coverage of the protest events in Kiev, *RT* was more proactive and professional than the BBC. However, what escapes in this information flow is the discussion of why the protestors had to use weapons in the first place. In addition, the tweets affirm the established framework of patriotic behavior—the loyalty to the state rather than the nation—which is acted out by utilizing the events in Ukraine whereby Russian geopolitical discourse merges with the notion of patriotism produced by second-tier agency in the context of global journalism.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of second-tier agency in constructing state-sponsored patriotism, has revealed that, instead of attempting to reconcile, through a public dialogue, the conflict between patriotism and global citizenship, Simonian employs it as a means to weaponize her geopolitical discourse: she contests Western media and governments by identifying bias within their national polity. Her rhetoric blurs the boundaries between patriotism and national belonging whereby her rhetorical position is always that of the other who questions the principles of Western democracy and individual freedom by evoking exclusionary practices of citizenship in the Russian Federation. As is evident from her activities in DNCS, Simonian's ethical-political decision is to steer away from the universalist principles of global solidarity and to promote nationalist discourse within which citizens manifest their identity vis-à-vis the state rather than the *demos* (and, ultimately, by excluding the state from the *demos*). This validates my earlier assertion that the Putin regime depends on and benefits from delegating the process of production and development of the state brand "Russia" to other actors who intensify and complicate the polemic to advance their own interests. In this framework contemporary Russia emerges as a multidirectional ideological system where different actors compete for the recognition of their particular type of government-endorsed relationship to the state presented as patriotism.

  DNCS provide Simonian with multiple opportunities to construct nationalist discourse for different publics. To account for her actions—as an example of second-tier agency—I propose to consider them not only as enunciations of culture (cultural nationalism) but also as enunciations of the state's position on the global stage (geopolitical patriotism). In post-Crimean Russia, geopolitical patriotism feeds on cultural nationalism to produce and impose its own version of conservative patriotism in Russia and beyond. As regards the structure of the second-tier agency, my analysis has shown that while aiming to promote a particular worldview (deliberative agency), Simonian also co-opts, adopts, reappropriates, and reconfigures existing information flows (manipulative agency) whereby her role as the media

producer is also complicated by her role as the information aggregator (structural agency). These activities reveal a new ideological system in which, on one level, global digital media domains are required to articulate and defend geopolitical interests, on another, grassroots activity is required to aggregate and redirect information flows. As a result, multiple notions of patriotism are in circulation in the Russian Federation and include those articulated by the government, ruling elite, second-tier agents such as Simonian, Kandelaki, and Sobchak, and individual citizens such as Davydova. All of them utilize their performative actions, including those of ideological othering, as a means to query the ethics of journalism and to challenge what constitutes "Russia" culturally and geopolitically in the era of global capitalism and DNCS.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Nancy Condee, Stephen Hutchings, Saara Ratilainen, and Robert A. Saunders for their helpful comments on the first draft of this chapter.

2. [Mne trudno obshchatsia s lud'mi, gordiashchimisia svoei neliubov'u k rodine.]

3. For example, Morris 2012.

4. This is a significant fact for the government in the context of the Dima Yakovlev Law which suspends the activity of politically active non-profit organizations benefiting from financial support from U.S. citizens, and it also bans U.S. citizens from adopting children from Russia.

5. In Western media coverage, the latter fact—the intervention of the Russian state—was entirely ignored; see, for example, the article in *The Guardian* (2015).

6. As a result of these actions, in 2012 Russia for the first time since the dissolution of the USSR saw positive natural population growth.

7. Davydova's heterosexual identity and normative behavior played an important part: by contrast, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (b. 1989), a feminist artist, member of Pussy Riot, and supporter of LGTBQ rights, was imprisoned in spite of having a young child.

8. The following is an indicative list of publications that consider Russian media from the perspective of the broadcast era: Beumers et al. (2008); Burrett 2010; Goggin and McLelland (2010); Hutchings and Rulyova (2009); Koltsova (2006); Mickiewicz (2008); Oates)2006, 2013); Rosenholm et al. (2010); Rutten et al. (2013); Zvereva (2012).

9. Examples include the Russian government decision to introduce Cyrillic domains on the Internet in 2009 and to disable storage of personal data of Russian nationals on foreign servers in 2014. On the geopolitics of cyberspace see, for example, Deibert (2010) and ProQuest (2009).

10. The conservative turn has legislative underpinnings: the laws on adoption, on the use of Russian language, homosexual "propaganda," and so forth; see Chebankova (2015) and Persson (2014).

11. See, for example, publications in the British *The Spectator* (2014).

12. On different types of second-tier agency, see Aras and Crowther (2012); Harding (2012); Herepath (2014); Maiguashca and Marchetti (2013); Salwen and Garrison (1991); Takhar (2013).

13. In this regard Russian media system is radically different from that of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

14. To paraphrase, without changing the hardware they attempt to change the software; unlike in China and Turkey, they do not wish to block access but rather impact the ways in which information is retrieved by users, for example, by redirecting it to government-sponsored websites.

15. Simonian opened her LiveJournal and Twitter accounts in July 2009 (http://m-simonyan.livejournal.com/; https://twitter.com/m_simonyan); in February 2015 her LiveJournal Social Capital was 23 whilst on Twitter she had 17,000 tweets and over 280,000 followers. On LiveJournal she identified her interests as "Russia Today, Olympics, Russia, Sochi, food, books, cooking, literature, news, politics, and television."

16. In March 2015 Petersburg hosted the International Russian Conservative Forum which included 150 representatives of European far right parties. The event was organized by the Rodina (motherland) party, known for its criticism of the West's support for the Ukrainian government.

17. The process of personification and privatization of media coincides with the process of internationalization.

18. In relation to Russian studies, see the following examples of such keyword-based studies Etkind and Uffelmann (2013); Nikiporets-Takigawa (2013).

19. For the most up-to-date critique of this method see Svensson and Goldberg (2015).

20. I do not have the space to review all theories of nationalism, imperialism, and geopolitics—this is a diverse and complex field of enquiry—instead here I analyze a particular narrative discussed in literature.

21. His argument is based on Martin (2001) and Hirsch (2005).

22. This is in contrast to "nationality," that is ethnical conflicts of the late Soviet period which brought the USSR down, see, for example, Hughes and Sasse (2002).

23. For example, in May 2015 the government introduced a law which allows authorities the right to prosecute and ban non-governmental organizations if considered "undesirable," or a threat to national security.

24. In spring 2015, the government established that the transfer of Crimea to the Soviet Ukrainian Republic in 1954 was in violation of the constitution and international law ('Genprokuratura . . .' 2015).

25. Through direct franchising, international television formats of popular shows such as *Big Brother* have been adopted by all Russian networks and so audiences are directly exposed to Western values through these programs.

26. http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/. Underprivileged citizens, unable to afford a subscription to the Internet or cable television at home, can utilize public libraries, post offices, schools, etc., to access information online. Numerous studies have demonstrated collaborative and indirect use of Internet is common (e.g., Morris 2012).

27. One such "irrationality" is the annexation of Crimea: various polls have demonstrated that whilst many Russian knew of the economic challenges associated with incorporation of Crimea in the Russian Federation they still welcomed the decision.

28. The question of moral responsibility of journalists is outside the scope of this chapter.

29. Similar debates take place in popular geopolitics, see, for example, Sharp et al. (1996); and Dittmer (2010); however, my concern here is not to rehearse the debates about different forms of nationalism (e.g., Billig [1995] and his articulation of "banal nationalism" in the pre-digital era), or to discuss the interrelation between different branches of geopolitical discourse (this will be the subject matter of my forthcoming volume on the interdisciplinarity of popular geopolitics) but rather to analyze the media trajectory in the changing forms of patriotism in the global context of DNCS.

30. Armenia became a full member of the Eurasian Economic Union in January 2015.

31. This fact complicates our understanding of the Russian media system and the presence of the state, which, through its second-tier agency, influences media discourses originating in outlets that are not closely associated with the state.

32. That was done through the support of the "legitimate" President Yanukovich, the discourse about the ultra-nationalism in western Ukraine, and so forth (see, for example, Fredheim et al. [2014]; Young [2015]).

33. Simonian wrote about her "unprivileged" upbringing in her LiveJournal post (2012.02.08).

34. The post was made on the occasion of the Day of National Union (4 November).

35. These three refer to different stages in the development of patriotic sentiment with the last providing a mixture of values which are deliberately kept in flux.

36. ['Ves' vash Russkii narod na lavashe vertela].

37. See Petr Didenko's blog as an example of the discussion. Alternatively, Ivan Motorhead defines Simonian as belonging to the "chimera of the KGB-nation" [nekoi khimericheskoi chekistskoi natsii. A nam nuzhna demokraticheskaia Rossiia, daby izbavitsia ot mnogonatsional'nykh chekistskikh parazitov'] (2015.01.04).

38. In fact, in April 2015 Putin announced the establishment of a new government agency that would deal with issues of national identity.

39. No correlation between the age of the individuals and their values has been found.

40. She regularly publishes her cooking recipes in *Russian Pioneer* journal, published since 2008, which is known for its patriotic stance and also features articles by Putin.

41. The cafes belong to Dmitrii Borisov, the creator of *Proekt-OGI* which determined alternative cultures of the 1990s. These have been liberally oriented establishments unlike those owned by Simonian and similar restaurateurs.

42. Such a small number of re-tweets indicates an opposition to this uncritical opinion.

43. [preduprezhdali vas, chto vse eto prekrasnodushie iz zhan-zhaka zakonchitsia fanatskoi reznei].

44. Wearing a turban rather than a headscarf is an extra indication of her performance of gender travesty; in addition, the practice suggests the interpretation of cultural differences in the realm of fashion and glamour rather than in the realm of politics per se.

45. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCDFlsg26Mc (17.03.2015).

46. Elvira Nabiullina, a Tatar-born Russian economist and head of the Central Bank of Russia, would be another example of a member of this Putin-nation.

47. [U russkikh dlia sokhranenia Rodiny v ee nyneshnem vide net drugogo puti, krome kak rozhat' i bol'she assimilirovat'].

48. [Kak Leonov popal v gollibudskui klassiku i drygie fantasticheskie fakty pro pervyi vekhod v kosmos]. https://twitter.com/M_Simonyan/status/578871117898735616.

49. Timur Bekmambetov (born and educated in Kazakhstan and with a successful career of film maker and producer both in Russia and Hollywood) is due to release Iurii Bykov's patriotic film *Fist Time* [Vrimia pervykh] about Leonov's spacewalk in 2016 (Condee 2015).

50. Arguably such "errors" are part of the CNN propagandistic memory agenda, for example, its policy of linking Russia and the USSR by using the term "Soviet"to describe contemporary Russia. Screengrabs of such instances, covering the period between 2012 and 2014, are available on request.

51. On conspiracy theories as a Russian public diplomacy tool, see Yablokov (2015).

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Chapter Eleven

The Invisible Battlefieldin the Belarusian Media Space

Fighting "Russkii Mir" from Within?

Ryhor Nizhnikau

In March 2015, the president of Belarus, Mr. Lukashenka, invited the opposition media to attend his annual "meet the press" event, where by the end of the seven-hour long Q&A session he insisted that "his opponents" should speak up and ask difficult questions. Instead, he was surprisingly supported by the editor of "Narodnaia Volia"—a long-time ardent Lukashenka critic and influential opposition figure. Not a single controversial issue was raised to question Mr. Lukashenka and his policies in the year of the presidential elections in Belarus, during which he lamented against Russia and its policies in the "Near Abroad."

For Belarus's divided society, this consensus would not have been possible in 2013. Then, Belarus—a primary ally of Russia and a part of its geopolitical projects—was assumed to be an indispensable part of "russkii mir" (the "Russian World") that was opposed by the independent media, which represented an alternative nation-building and geopolitical vision. The government's practical geopolitics had sought and defended the status of Russia's ally, which had been actively used by Lukashenka in his dealings with Moscow and which was fixed in the official ideology of the Belarusian state alongside the ideas of Slavic unity and Belarus as the "spiritual leader" of Eastern Slavic civilization (Bekus 2008). The Belarusian traditional media were used to promote and reinforce these ideas. However, the annexation of Crimea and Russia's involvement in the war in Donbass altered the existing domestic status quo.

The most recent initiatives and government actions undertaken since the annexation of Crimea, also present in the media sector, serve as an illustration of the thinking behind "the closest ally of Russia" and its careful geopolitical repositioning. The Ukrainian crisis and the role of Russia in it altered Belarusian (virtual) reality, highlighting the ongoing societal struggle between internal discourses, pro-Russian and pro-European ideas and forces. Now Lukashenka, who is "the only ally of Russia" and "a simple Russian man," is trying to carefully put some distance between Belarus and Russia and its "russkii mir," while a significant part of the population support it due to the outreach of the Russian media and its status in Lukashenka's official ideology.

This chapter underlines the importance of the "internal discourse of identity" for the (re-)construction of geopolitical identity and the role of the media in this process in a divided

society. As the case of Belarus shows, the government is attempting, using state and non-state media, and especially new media, which resonates among the population that do not trust the government or directly oppose it, to reconstruct a geopolitical identity and foster a more unifying national identity of Belarus. In this regard, the role of web portals such as tut.by, which is the most used online web source, is of particular interest.

The focus on the internal discourse(s) of identity of its citizens is crucial for understanding the country's geopolitical positioning (Newman 2000, 303). The geopolitical discourse of any country can vary over time depending on how both the internal identities of the population and the global positioning change (Tuathail 1996). The two are related inasmuch as the imagined national identities of the individuals influence the way in which the political elites view the role of the state in regional and global affairs (Sharp 2000, 333).

The issue of building a more unifying narrative in Belarus is complicated by the accessibility and outreach of Russian media, in particular state TV channels, which facilitate the delivery and diffusion of Russia's message. Thus, due to the inability of the Belarusian state to directly challenge the Russian message on Ukraine and the distrust of state media felt among a significant section of the public, the state-supportive "independent" new media, such as the portal tut.by, are providing the government with an opportunity to fill the credibility void among independents that has been created by the state's inaction and inability to directly challenge pro-Kremlin narratives. Besides challenging these narratives, "neutral" new media do not only stand in for the government, but also help in bridging different nation-building narratives.

These changes can be well traced: first, in the development of narratives about "russkii mir" and the Ukrainian conflict in the Belarusian state media; second, the discussion on the Belarus unifying nation-building rhetoric and the necessity to launch the credible and consistent nation-building projects has been acknowledged by the state and advocated in the state media. In this regard, the convergence of the positions of the state and non-state media highlights the possibility of bridging nation-building narratives in light of Putin's Ukrainian gamble. Finally, the state has used the most popular "independent" new media to foster support for its changing geopolitical and political narratives among the population, who trust neither the state nor the opposition media and use the Internet as their primary source of information. Hence, new media are used not to democratize or fortify the regime, but for nation-building and geopolitical purposes.

This chapter employs media analysis of the most popular new media (tut.by, naviny.by, nn.by, as well as websites of the key state media) and the speeches of key state officials to trace the tendencies in the media sector, the policies of the state and its changing discourse, and the role of new media in presenting a new geopolitical narrative in Belarus.

NEW MEDIA, DOMESTIC NARRATIVES, AND GEOPOLITICS

The main theoretical discussion on the media focuses on their possible role in societal transformation and development. On the one hand, since Jürgen Habermas (1962), who argued that the traditional media had helped democratize Europe, providing space for discussion and

uniting politically engaged citizens, the media have been seen as a potential democratizing force. On the other hand, many critics have claimed that the media could also help bring aspiring tyrants the necessary extra votes, as radio did, providing support for the Nazis in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s (Adena et al. 2014). Similarly, the role of the new media has been discussed along similar lines of helping to democratize or fortify authoritarian regimes.

The Arab Spring and the events at Bolotnaya Square in 2011 enhanced the debate on the role of the new media and their consequences for domestic political processes and the formation of geopolitical narratives. As has been argued, the new media can have a profound impact on people's ability to spread ideas and undertake collective action (Diamond and Plattner 2012). Tuomas Yla-Anttila (2005) has pointed out that social movements play a central role in the very formation of national public spheres and may help to generate a broader societal consensus on the issues. Vegh (2003) distinguishes between types of online activism and divides them into three categories: awareness/advocacy, organization/mobilization, and action/reaction. In the case of awareness and advocacy, the new media allow a social movement to bypass the traditional media gatekeepers (Harlow 2012).

However, the outcomes have raised issues about the necessary conditions for, and potential limitations of, online-organized collective action, in particular the issue of trust. Lack of trust may lead to the rapid disengagement of supporters, as they may not be deeply dedicated (Harlow 2012). At the same time, lack of trust also lends itself to alienation and manipulation against democratic participation (Toepfl 2013).

Additionally, a lack of real interaction is highlighted, which is not strong enough to successfully mobilize or sustain a social movement, as real relationships are considered more valuable and effective (Harlow 2012). While environmental views on Internet freedom assume that little political change happens without the dissemination and adoption of ideas and opinions in the public sphere, public opinion depends on both media and conversation. Access to information is far less important, politically, than access to conversation (Shirky 2011).

On the other hand, in authoritarian regimes the media may function as a reactionary force to stabilize the regimes. The importance of the media in setting public opinion and control of society in authoritarian states is well-known. There are, broadly speaking, two arguments against the idea that social media will make a difference in national politics. The first is that the tools themselves are ineffective, and the second is that they do as much harm to democratization as good, because repressive governments are becoming better at using these tools to suppress dissent (Shirky 2011). Recent studies of the media under authoritarianism (Stockmann and Gallagher 2011) argue that there is significant variation in the ability of authoritarian states to restrict access to information. Belarus with its preemptive authoritarianism (Silitski 2005) pursued institutional and political changes that have cemented leaders' political power.

The new media are thought to address two gaps existing within society: first, between consumers of new and traditional media as their source of information. The former creates sharper attitudes toward the news as the Internet opens up the possibility that ineffective and

corrupt political institutions may not be the only possibilities to express the public will (Smyth and Oates 2015).

Second, the emergence of a hegemonic state narrative requires that consumers accept a certain distance between the ideals as expressed by their government and the reality of everyday life (Smyth and Oates 2015). As in Belarus, the state narrative deviates significantly from the private experience of the citizens. The new media as uncontrolled sources of information might balance their private experience with the state narrative, challenging the regime and its narrative and polarizing society (Oates 2013).

This brings us back to the above-mentioned revolutions, which were most useful for the most authoritarian of the former Soviet republics to discover and patch over their own vulnerabilities (Morozov 2011, XV). The more the regime perceives new media as a threat, the more likely those regimes are to limit their room for maneuver. In many other countries such politicization may only stifle the nascent Internet movement, which could have been far more successful if its advocacy were limited to pursuing social rather than political ends (Morozov 2011, 26).

Furthermore, both traditional and new media can play a role informing the "geopolitical" narratives. First, according to Sharp, it is through institutions such as the media that people are drawn into the political process as subjects of various political discourses (Sharp 2000, 333). Second, similar to what Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1992, 194) argue, "geopolitics is not a discrete and relatively contained activity confined only to a small group of 'wise men' who speak in the language of classical geopolitics." As Sharp (2000, 333) notes, in order to make their arguments sensible and assure support, intellectuals of statecraft must refer to concepts and values that have resonance for the population at large.

As the case of the new media in Belarus shows, the new media can play a more nuanced role, either by supporting the authoritarian regime or by standing in for the government with independents for geopolitical and/or nation-building purposes. This role of the new media allows the government to create a bridge to other "internal discourses of identity." In the Belarusian case, when Belarus's society is divided as to their political and geopolitical preferences and the geopolitical and domestic conditions do not allow the government to openly present a coherent and clear message, the new media can play a balancing or bridging role within society.

The new media, which are not directly affiliated with any political force, may fill the existing information and legitimacy gap in society, when both state and opposition sources are discredited, to present a more "neutral" and trustworthy narrative. They may substitute a more balanced narrative for the official narrative or stand in for the government, presenting arguments that the official discourse cannot reproduce for geopolitical reasons. Finally, the new media that represent the alternative narratives can support the government in the face of the common threat and attempt to bridge the official and alternative nation-building narratives for a more unifying and coherent project.

BELARUS'S DIVIDED SOCIETY: "RUSSKII MIR" VS. "OUTPOST OF THE EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT"

In Belarus, as shown by Bekus (2008), one could possibly talk of two principal geopolitical imaginations concerning national unity and national identity: the Russia-oriented "official nationalism" and the "Belarusian nationalism," which looks toward the West. The principle that unites both visions of national identity is the country's independence. This division and how the sense of commitment to the "national unity" and "national identity" of post-Soviet Belarus has dominated the priorities and policies of its political elite, has been well-represented in the narratives of the Belarusian media during the Ukrainian crisis. The obsession of the media with the threats—real and/or imaginary—coming from across the border to the independence and unity of Belarus represent two main geopolitical discourses whose difference lies in locating the source of the threat (the West or Russia).

Since 1994, Lukashenka has developed a tailor-made "official nationalism" based on the idea of the national exclusiveness of Belarus, its national sovereignty, and its unique socioeconomic model (Lukyanov 2006), coupled with the ideas of its closeness to Russia, Slavic unity, and Orthodox values (Bekus 2008, 279). In certain aspects, this ideology has resonated with Moscow's later policies in the post-Soviet space, which have been reinforced by the idea of the "russkii mir" ("Russian World"). The "russkii mir" was based on the assumption of cultural and spiritual unity among the Slavic Orthodox nations. Arguing that it is a heterogeneous assemblage of both mutually antagonistic and complementary narratives about the unity of the Slavic peoples, Suslov (2012) shows that its durability lies not in its conceptual coherence but rather its emotional appeal to Slavic peoples in the former Soviet Union.

Belarusian official ideology has also emphasized extensively that its core values are the Slavic and Orthodox values, alongside the Soviet legacy and traditions. This blending of ideas has been instrumental in consolidating power domestically by highlighting the ideas of Belarusian tradition, mentality, and collectivist values as a counterbalance to the Western values of democracy and the market economy. Yet, in light of the Ukrainian events and existing domestic divisions, the existing lack of coherent and uniting nation building has become a threat to national sovereignty. As Alyaksandr Lukashenka surprisingly admitted in 2014, despite all his efforts "Belarus failed to produce a national idea" (Tut.by 2014) and there was a strong need for "the idea that will unite the whole of society" and distinguish Belarusian people from others (BelTA 2014).

The divisions in Belarusian society are well-illustrated by the opinion polls, in which some 40 percent of the population support the Russian vector and 40 percent the EU vector (NISEPI 2014). The support for both vectors is equally strong and consistent in Belarusian society, although the trend for EU support is growing (NISEPI 2014). Moreover, this division extends to trust/distrust in Lukashenka, the government, and the developmental model of the country (Shraiban 2014).

In light of the Ukrainian events, Belarusian society has found itself in a controversial position: first, these events spurred support for Russia and integration with it to 60 percent,

while the majority (67.8%) found the annexation of Crimea legitimate. At the same time, only 28.4 percent supported the pro-Russian movements in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions; while 39.9 percentopposed it (Vardamacki 2014). In October 2014, 60 percent considered the Ukrainian military action in Donbass to be a crime, 54 percent disagreed that militants in Eastern Ukraine were terrorists, while 50.9 percent thought that the Ukrainian government was fascist. Compared to the data from June 2014, numbers had hardly changed. Also, while 30 percent advocated the opposite position, some 20 percent remained undecided (Iaroshevich 2014).

Yet, despite their differences, the official and alternative visions are united by their emphasis on preserving the independence of the country and the opposition to the Russian policies in the Near Abroad. Finally, they see the Belarusian language and culture as potentially uniting values.

NEW MEDIA, LUKASHENKA, AND "RUSSKII MIR" IN BELARUS

The internal divisions within society are well-extrapolated by the media situation in Belarus and the place of new media in the information landscape. Both politicians and the media are storytellers, and in order for their stories to be accepted by their audience, they have to resonate with meta-level hegemonic cultural values. The values that flow between sectors of hegemonic culture are those which facilitate the narration of events and processes in an acceptable or meaningful way in the context of national self-identification. These narratives and beliefs are drawn upon to define and explain new situations and their importance to individuals in the community (Sharp 2000, 334).

Yet, the internal ideational divisions have pointed to the problems of accommodating the difference in light of the external threat. "Russkii mir" as a transnational social movement with a growing presence online makes the domestic divisions in Belarus particularly dangerous. At the same time, the possibility of the government to control the content of traditional media and new media is limited to negating what, as the head of the Belteleradiocompany put it, is "Russian propaganda" (Nasha Niva 2015).

As has been argued, the Belarusian new media represent the alternative narratives balancing or standing in for the official narrative or presenting themselves as politically independent. In the new geopolitical reality, they have rallied for Lukashenka against the "russkii mir" and its narrative in circumstances where the traditional media and, in particular Russian TV channels, are continuing to spread their message in Belarus. By doing that, the new media are playing a supportive role to the government and its pro-independence stance.

The media have a crucial function in Belarus, the state, which has been run by the firm hand of Lukashenka for twenty years. State-controlled TV is the main source of information for the population and it leads its shows with the president of the country inspecting pig farms, meeting the Catholic pope, and giving advice to Belarusian sportsmen on a daily basis in the name of defending national sovereignty. The newspaper of the Presidential Administration "Sovetskaia Belorussiia" prints more than three hundred thousand copies, while key opposition media sources—Nasha Niva or Narodnaia Volia—are only marginally present. Yet,

Belarus lives in the Russian media space, where most of the TV channels are Russian, and the most popular newspaper is still Russian, "Komsomol'skaya Pravda in Belarus."

The situation with the media exemplifies well the political and geopolitical division in society. Lukashenka's electorate was more likely to follow the traditional media, share a Russia-oriented post-Soviet state ideology and consequently, have a geopolitical orientation toward Russia. In this regard, the trust in the president and the traditional media are correlated and interdependent (Artemenko 2013). For them, the Ukrainian events were understood to a large extent through Russian interpretation due to the balancing position of the state media and widespread outreach of the Russian TV channels in Belarus.

According to the head of Lukashenka's largest daily, Pavel Yakubovych, "Russian programmes are the most popular in the country." Besides spreading Russian propaganda on "russkii mir" and on Ukraine and its "junta," these TV programs criticize the rise of nationalism in Belarus, the policies of Lukashenka on Ukraine and the Belarusian language, and urge the Russian government to give away Russian passports to Belarusians and actively attract Belarusian youth with Russian educational programs (Gushtyn 2015).

Yet, the government admits that there is nothing they can do, as "banning TV is pointless as you can watch everything online" (Nasha Niva 2015). Already by 2015, the Internet was used by more than five million people in Belarus and the number of daily users has grown from 72.70 percent to 82.73 percent of the whole Internet audience. Unlike five years ago, when most of them were youth from the Minsk region, making up 45 percent of the online news audience, 80 percent of the users are now working-age people between nineteen and fifty-five years old (Darashkevich 2015). Not surprisingly, the most popular websites are non-state sources and news outlets (Sokolova 2011) such as tut.by, a Belarusian web portal with an audience of 3.5 million. At the same time, opposition forces mostly use new media to communicate and convey 86 percent of their messages through them, while the traditional media (opposition newspapers) represent only 9 percent (BISS 2012).

More than half of the population do not trust the state media or the president. Most of them comprise the section of the population (55–60 percent) that are regular Internet users (BISS 2012). For them, the new media are their main source of information, and in this regard, they are divided between the ones that follow the pro-opposition outlets—and in this respect, they are either pro-Europe or anti-Russian—or they equally distrust opposition outlets and instead prefer more "neutral" new media, which are not directly affiliated with any political force. The level of trust in the state and non-state media flunctuates at around 35–45 percent, while the level of distrust of both stays firmly on the level of 50–53 percent. In 2014, the level of trust in state media had increased by 15 percent. However, by March 2015, sociological reports have shown that trust in state media was again decreasing, due to their coverage of the Ukrainian events, and was on a par with the trust in non-state media at 38 percent (NISEPI 2015). Among the non-state media, the most popular are new media.

The co-existence of official and alternative discourses creates separate public spheres with their own media sources. The latter do not have access to the state resources necessary for

nation-building, but the former could neither defeat the discourses nor take the alternative symbols without co-opting them.

BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND "RUSSKII MIR": LUKASHENKA AND MEDIA BALANCING

The division of Belarusian society over geopolitical orientations, values, the events in Ukraine, and the role of Russia have put Lukashenka in the difficult situation of trying to balance domestically between his supporters, most of whom are Russia-oriented, his opponents, from whom he is looking for partial support or at least neutrality outside his traditional support base, as his ratings dropped in 2014.

"This russkii mir supposedly, which they are squeezing through here,"[1] as Lukashenka put it, is quite resonant in Belarus. Some 15 percent of Belarus's population are ethnically Russian. Belarus is far more russified than Ukraine: the main language is Russian and the official culture underlines its ties with Russia. Echoing public sentiment, Lukashenko recently said that he saw his country as "the most pro-Russian province" and even agreed that Crimea was a part of Russia (Guardian 2014). However, as is claimed in Russia's "patriotic" circles, all of Lukashenka's achievements and integration efforts are not sufficient. Only Russia can save Belarus from the Ukrainian scenario, but Minsk should seize its independence and join "russkii mir" for all that (Birov 2015). Experts agree that after Crimea, the Anschluss of Belarus would not be a problem at all, as Moshes put it.

Lukashenka's administration has been scared by the developments in Ukraine and their consequences for Belarus. In particular, in his address to the Parliament, Lukashenka expressed his concern at Russia's actions, in particular the aspect of its protection of Russian-speakers in the Near Abroad (Birov 2015). "Ukraine frightened people here. They see that Russia can just come and take what they want if they don't like what's happened" (Guardian 2014). Lukashenko maintains that the Russians are the Belarusians' best friends, but warned: "No matter who comes to Belarusian land, I will fight. Even if it is Putin." As Lukashenka admitted, he's not entirely sure that no "green men" would appear in Belarus (Birov 2015), but "if tomorrow Putin comes here, it is not known on which side Russians will fight. But I know! That is why it does not frighten us with Putin . . ." (Lukashenka 2015).

As a result, Lukashenka's narrative balances between pro-Putin, pro-Ukraine, anti-Russian, and pro-Russian positions, which his media cautiously reproduces, carefully describing Ukrainian events in as neutral a way as possible. However, in the new media environment this has had two particular outcomes: the opposition new media have rallied in support of him due to his new language and cultural policies and his position on Ukraine, while the new media that represent independents have actively promoted Lukashenka's position, and his changing geopolitical and nation-building narratives.

LUKASHENKA AND OPPOSITION MEDIA: BRIDGING NARRATIVES

The opposition new media are the main source of information for more than 30 percent of the population. Overall, they are used by five million Belarusians according to the minister of Information (Korolevich 2014). They have been sceptical toward Lukashenka and his policies. Yet, one of the outcomes of the Ukrainian events has been the emergence of a more unifying narrative which unites the official narrative, which admits the importance of Belarusian language and culture and the alternative narratives, which identifies the bigger threat in Moscow, and which unites behind Lukashenka's pro-independence stance.

The annexation of Crimea and the Russia-supported separatism in Eastern Ukraine frightened the Belarusian leadership in the light of its dependence on Russia, the resonance of Russia's discourse in Belarus, and the incomplete nation-building project. Lukashenka's first reaction was to start to pay attention to Belarusian language and culture. On the Day of the Republic, he addressed the people in Belarusian and repeatly maintained that it was unacceptable to "forget the Belarusian language [. . .] which makes us the state" (Shraiban 2014). His government started to lament that losing the Belarusian language would be a disaster; according to Deputy Prime Minister Tozik, "it is outrageous that most people study Belarusian history and geography in Russian" (Vanina 2014). As a result, it was decreed that primary schools would increase the number of tuition hours for the Belarusian language. Moreover, Russian newspaper *Vzgliad* cried out that, since 2015 and for the first time under Lukashenka, spending on national culture and language had been significantly increased, while TV programs in Belarusian were set to increase by 25 percent (Rumol 2014).

Finally, the main traditional media probed the resonance within their support base of more "nationalistic" and unifying narratives. *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* published an article by a member of the Council of the Republic, which looked into the Belarusian national idea as a unique outcome. Not openly challenging the role of Russia, it stated that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the bedrock of the Belarusian nation, a citadel of European culture and values, a combination of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant values and a bridge between cultures, while saying that Russia had "colossal responsibility" for the Ukrainian events (Marzaljuk 2014).

During 2014, instead of the long-culminated national ideology, the elements of Lukashenka's strategy that led to distancing the regime from Russia and reinvigorating Belarusian identity, were reinforced. These moves were positively met by the opposition media. The intentions of the regime were supported and advertised, as the increase of nationalism in Belarus and the distancing from Russia was their aim (Lukashenka 2014). The new media supported new policies toward Belarusian culture, language, and cultural events as well as the government in their policies of distancing the country from Russia. Criticizing the regime and Lukashenka would be anti-Belarusian and would play into the hands of the Kremlin. For anti-Lukashenka media and activists, any policies toward independence and mild Belarusization were to be supported (Rudkouski 2014).

STANDING IN FOR THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVE ONLINE: THE CASE OF TUT.BY

The most popular new media in Belarus is tut.by. Tut.by is the face of the Belarusian Internet. Its audience comprises 45 percent of all Internet users and is the main source of news for this audience (BISS 2012). Its news page has 3,780,365 unique customers monthly and between 334,000 and 522,000 daily (Tut.by 2015b). Tut.by is owned and directed by Yuri Zisser, who presents his portal as "neutral." Zisser was a member of the disbanded Public Consultative Council at the Presidential Administration. His influence was compared with that of Pavel Yakubovych, the editor-in-chief of *Sovetskaia Belorusiia*, while his media became the main source of information (Ont.by 2014).

Unlike the opposition new media, Tut.by was never blocked and was favorably treated by the state. Zisser supports state regulation of Internet media (Zisser 2009) and Internet laws in Belarus, which have been used to ban other sources. At the same time, tut.by has positioned itself as independent and pro-Belarusian, not pro-Lukashenkan. However, the opposition new media critized Zisser for being part of the Lukashenka propaganda ring (e.g., charter97.org). Yet, Zisser and tut.by became one of the key elements online that were allowed to control the message directed at the online audience and independents.

For example, while the traditional media carefully reproduced the Russian perspective on the events in Ukraine, Zisser on tut.by on February 4, 2014 supported and advocated the change of power in Kiev, pointing to the corruption and lawlessness of the state and urging respect for the popular pro-European choice before the actual change of power occurred (Zisser 2014b). On March 13, 2014, he wrote in favor of the new government and, importantly, categorically rejected the claims that were spread by the Russian media that Ukraine was run by a "fascist junta." Furthermore, Zisser reiterated that "today every person or country that is worried about the danger of fascism in Ukraine, should support the new Ukrainian government" (Zisser 2014a). The website discussed the issues of counteractions to the Russian propaganda, and necessary measures for cooperation with other neighboring countries on different issues and geopolitical threats (Tut.by 2015a). Besides that, tut.by became an important tool in promoting Belarusian cultural events and language online.

From early on, this position on Ukrainian and Russian propaganda converged with the later statements of Lukashenka on Ukraine, its geopolitical orientation, and Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict, standing in for the government online. And importantly, the government was able to retranslate its message and position among independents, which do not trust the government or opposition media and are potential targets of online Russian propaganda.

CONCLUSION

In the last few years the role and importance of new media in Belarus has significantly changed. With the increase in Internet users, distrust in the state and its media and its activization of Russian propaganda, the importance of the narratives provided by the new media has become crucial. The media in Belarus were traditionally divided between pro-government traditional media and opposition media, which reached out to the opponents of the regime.

However, the events in Ukraine, the outreach of Russia's narrative, and the existence of a large audience in Belarus beyond the government's outreach, made the government actively utilize new media such as tut.by to encourage the distancing of the regime from Russia and to reinvigorate a unifying Belarusian identity.

In this regard, the new media had a two-fold role: first, new media that were politically against the regime were used as allies in attempts to generate a more unifying nation-building project. The regime's attitudes to Russia's policies toward Ukraine and their repositioning on Belarusian language and culture, created an opening for the creation of a bridging narrative between Lukashenka and the opposition new media. Second, the regime cultivated the independent audience—which equally distrusted Lukashenka's traditional media and opposition new media—through the politically "independent" web portal tut.by, which stood in for the government, and retranslated its geopolitical and political narratives on Ukraine, the Kremlin, and nation building.

The regime tried to adapt to the changing external circumstances but understood the limitations of its strategies. It resulted in the regime's attempt to balance its position domestically between the section of the electorate which supports "russkii mir," while at the same time trying to distance itself from it, and the protest-oriented electorate and independents, among whom it sought to build a support base. The regime started taking its first steps toward the alternative nation-building narratives that would potentially allow a more coherent and unifying nation-building project to emerge. At the same time, the references to Russia and belonging to the "Russian world" are still retranslated in the traditional media but are carefully monitored and when necessary, prevented.

NOTE

1. *"Etot russkii mir iakoby, kotoryi oni tut propikhivaiut."*

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Chapter Twelve

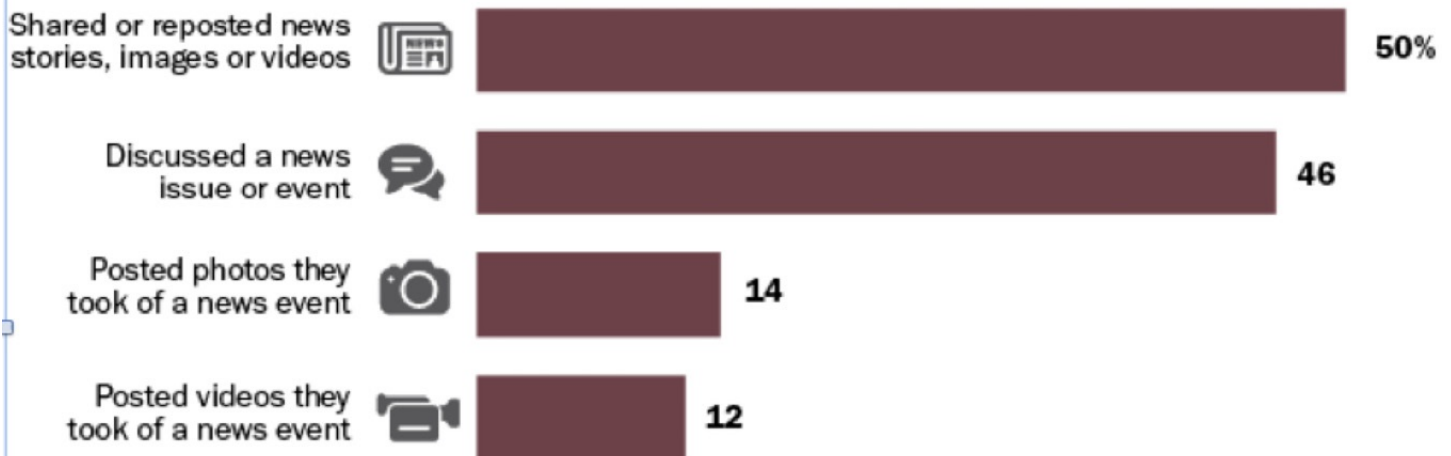# Constructing the Enemy-Otherin Social Media

Facebook as a Particular "Battlefield" During the Ukrainian Crisis

Alla Marchenko and Sergiy Kurbatov

The potential of social media as a platform for news has been widely discussed in the last five years (e.g., Kwak et al., 2010; Rotman et al., 2011). According to the most recent results of the Pew Research Center's project (Anderson and Caumont, 2014), Facebook leads the way in news among other social media (a so-called news powerhouse): 64 percent of U.S. adults use this site, and half of those users get their news there—amounting to 30 percent of the general population. Facebook as a social network has a certain potential for grassroots activism and global protest (Neumayer and Raff, 2008). On the one hand, this may mean the gradual substitution of the source of news, at least in some Western countries. On the other hand, social media produce and reproduce the "spiral of silence" that was known before the era of the Internet (Noelle-Noemann, 1974)—it prevents fruitful discussion, but imposes the view which is supported by the majority and results in hidden self-restrictions and "self-censorship" of the minority (Hampton et al., 2014). Facebook could contribute a lot to the continuation of the long history of propaganda, which has endured since ancient times, in cultivating "a form of germ warfare" (Taylor, 2003). Thus, we presume that using social media as the only source of information is a biased practice. Referring once again to the Pew Research Center, and its Project on Excellence in Journalism, social networks may be considered as an additional way to receive news, not a replacement platform (see Figure 12.1).

Nevertheless, the role of social networks becomes crucial during some critical periods of history (Hofheinz, 2005). Here we could mention the "Twitter revolution" in Moldova (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu 2009; Lysenko and Desouza 2012), the "Arab Spring"(Howard et al., 2011; Eltantawy and Wiest 2011; Bruns Highfield and Burgess 2013) and, for sure, events that happened in Ukraine. Some scholars say that the main feature that distinguishes the Ukrainian events from other revolutions and military tensions is that Ukraine has one dominant religion and nation (unlike in the former Yugoslavia, for instance), it has a symbolic location as a geographical gate between the West and the East, and there is the existence of a powerful and militarily strong neighbor (embodied in Russia). At the same time, some aspects of the Euromaidan protests unite it with the Arab Spring, for example, a combination of economic instabilities, unemployment, and political weakness (Campante and Chor, 2012; Dagaev et al., 2014).

Percent of social networking site users who have...

Shared or reposted news stories, images or videos	50%
Discussed a news issue or event	46
Posted photos they took of a news event	14
Posted videos they took of a news event	12

Note: This question was asked of social networking site users who also get news online.
Source: Pew Research Center, phone survey Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 12.1. Percentage of social networking site users who have activities related to news (Mitchell and Rosenstiel, 2012)

In the case of Ukraine, Facebook has become the most powerful platform for sharing information since the beginning of the Euromaidan protests in late November 2013 due to its interactive character, easy ability to create thematic networks, and absence of any kind of control from the state authorities. Moreover, a Facebook post by a journalist named Mustafa Nayyem on November 21 is considered to be the starting point of Euromaidan as a whole. The power of Facebook could be observed in citations of Facebook statuses as the source of information by the "traditional" news agencies and websites (such as Inter, 1+1, Ukrainska Pravda, etc.), the quantity of users, and the sharing of information which can be considered news. Dickinson points to two main functions of social media during Ukraine's Euromaidan: as a tactical instrument and as an appeal to action (2014: 83–85). It has been empirically proven that the mass media can affect participation in violence (Yaganizawa-Drott, 2014), so it would seem extremely important to unveil the warlike messages conveyed in news, especially during periods with high social tensions (some authors call this period "timelessness"—*bezvremen'e*," in Russian (Gerasimov et al., 2014: 15).

We have focused on the topic of constructing the enemy-other (Murer, 2009) as a demonstrative one in the information warfare (Schwartau, 1994; Libicki, 1995) conducted in Ukraine where, for example, the majority of Russian and the majority of Ukrainian media are

opposed to each other in the analysis of Euromaidan and consequent events in the context of a certain propagandistic battle, where "propaganda is surely what the 'enemy' says and does because whereas 'they' tell lies, 'we' engage in the truth" (Taylor, 2003).There is, however, a big gap between analyzing the processes of creation and the diffusion of such enemies in Ukrainian social media. This chapter aims to answer a number of questions: Were enemies constructed in the media from the beginning of March (at least) and, if so, what were they like? What is the specific mechanism whereby "enemies" are constructed in information messages through social media? Who or what is expected to be the enemy and why? Which characteristics are connected with these constructions? What consequences can we derive from that?

METHODOLOGY

Initially, we chose the "Euromaidan" community on Facebook[1] as the most powerful information tool during the Euromaidan protests. The web page of this community, created by journalists and civil activists, became the fastest growing web page in the Ukrainian segment of the social network. Since its beginning from November 21 to December 1, 2013, it has gained more than 102,000 subscribers (Kaplyuk, 2013), reaching its peak of nearly 305,000 subscribers with the pace of Euromaidan. However, this community has since lost its message intensity (see Figure 12.2)[2] and we assumed that it would be misleading to derive our conclusions from it.

The requirements for balanced and unbiased information in the political news of Russia were ignored for many years (Kratasjuk, 2006: 43), which led to the appearance of a "political battlefield" (Gorham et al., 2014: 34) and the beginnings of "warfare" against "the West" (Darczewska, 2014). This warfare was triggered by the Crimean operation, so that "the victim of the aggression—as was the case with Crimea—does not resist it" (6). Darczewska, 2014: In point of fact, the Crimean annexation and extremely dramatic events in Eastern Ukraine gave rise to another wave of interest in discussions in social media. Thus, Facebook became a particular "battlefield" in the information warfare between Russia and Ukraine where Ukraine started its information resistance and its own interpretation of the events which took place on its territory[3].
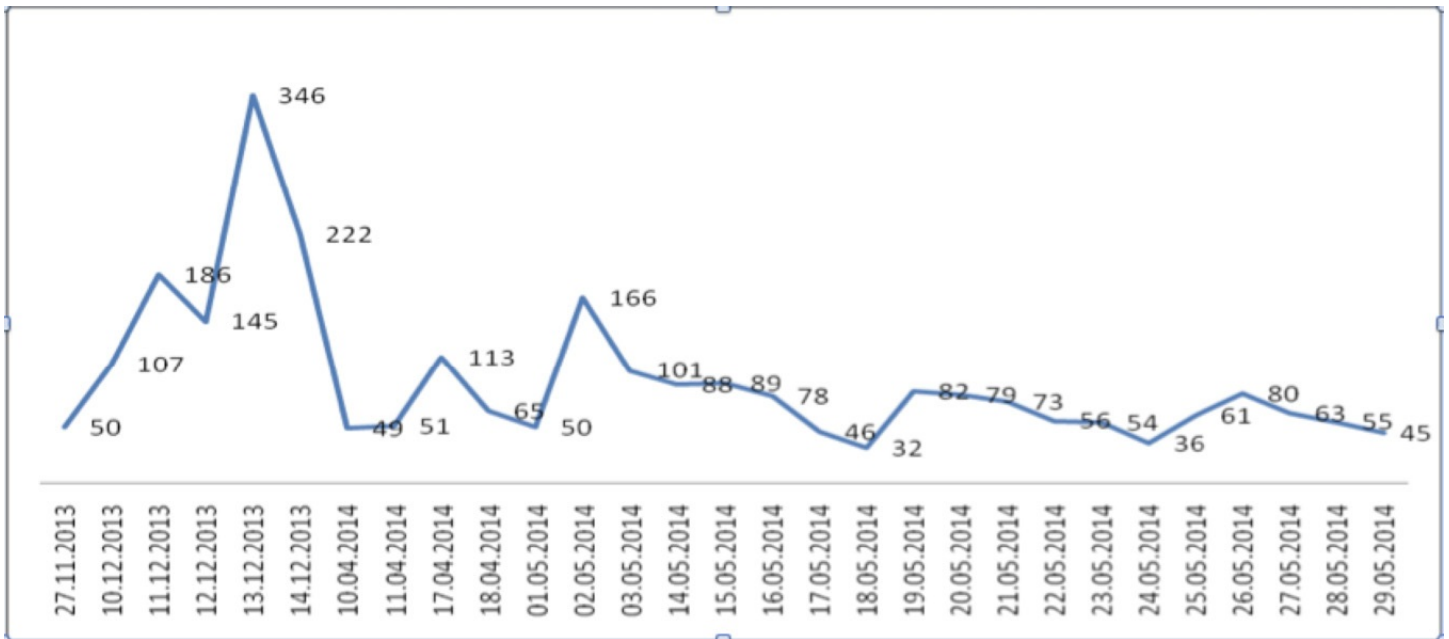
Figure 12.2. Dynamics of quantity of messages in the "Euromaidan" community (Brik, 2014).

This wave of interest was sped up by the impossibility for the majority of Facebook users to witness the events (unlike in Euromaidan protests for media users from Ukraine). Such a limitation became a prerequisite for many rumors, contradictory news items, etc. Here, we may see the emergence of so-called newsmakers of conflict time, who shortly became very popular in 2014. In this chapter, we will concentrate on three of them:

1. Semen Semenchenko, the "Donbass" battalion commander who has positioned himself as an independent military[4] (wearing a balaklava to hide his face till September 2014) and relaying the news information straight "from the field,"[5]
2. Dmitry Tymchuk, leader of a non-governmental organization called the "Centre for military and political studies" and the project "Information resistance,"[6] who has positioned himself as an independent analyst gathering information from different "internal" sources,[7] and
3. Arsen Avakov, a minister of Internal Affairs who became the most popular blogger in Ukraine's blogosphere right after Euromaidan.[8]

Additionally, we decided to use their messages posted within the period March–August 2014, namely the Post-Maidan period, which may also be called the period of Crimean annexation and the start of the "Anti-Terrorist Operation" (the official name of the military actions in Eastern Ukraine). In the case of Tymchuk, we took all the news reports which he posted as "Summary of the day" or "Summary of the period," and in the cases of Semenchenko and Avakov we analyzed all the text messages in their blogs (see Appendix 1). We emphasize that we analyzed only the text messages which prevailed in all three cases (in such a way that we

excluded, for example, photographs or video content), in an attempt to perceive the dominant discourses of "enemies" within the scope of the period.

We saw "enemy" in the perspectives offered by Schmitt and Girard, who have emphasized that a situation of threat to life causes a growing negation to others who can be a source of this danger (Schmitt, 2007) and implied the possibility of religion and politics to converge so that violence of the political could be supposed to be the same as violence of the sacred (Girard, 1979). Such understanding of the enemy is fostered by moral panic with its essential elements of concern, hostility, and consensus about a potential or real threat (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2007).

Content analysis and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001) were chosen as the most relevant methods for these three cases. By "enemy" we meant the negative emotional coloring of "Otherness," often placed in binary opposition (Alexander et al., 2006) with the necessary connotation of "danger" (Gudkov, 2004). We outlined several dimensions of constructing the enemy (hereafter we will use the term without quotation marks), implying that such a construction was inseparable from at least two processes: ongoing military operations in Ukraine (with real enemies) and the media construction of Ukraine as a satellite of the United States inimical to Russia in the Russian media:[9]

1. sphere of reference (e.g., economics, politics, culture);
2. internal (Ukrainian) vs. external (out of Ukraine) enemy;
3. abstract vs. specific enemy;
4. individuals vs. organizations.

Pilot research on the blogs has proved the possibility of using the categories which we grouped in Appendix 2. We marked "Yanukovych," "Party of Regions," "Pro-Russians," and "Betrayers/Betrayals" as those signifying the internal nature of the constructed enemy, while "Putin," "Kremlin," "Russia/Russians" signified the external nature. Some of the categories ("separatists," "terrorists," "extremists," "hitmen" (boeviki),[10] and "bandits") did not signify whether the constructed enemy could be external or internal, so we did not refer them to either of two categories (see the two last columns in Appendix 1). Furthermore, we defined the constructed enemy as specific if it concerned certain people or organizations, otherwise it was treated as abstract. Also, we have in mind Philip Taylor's statements that 1) "although much modern propaganda appeals to reason, it is more usually felt to play on emotion," and 2) "because the cult of war is much older than the cult of peace, propaganda designed to get people to fight is a much older process than the relatively underdeveloped form of propaganda designed to get people to fight for peace" (Taylor, 2003).

We also analyzed characteristics connected with the "enemy" through the lenses of negative emotional coloring and linkages to other objects mentioned in texts. In our critical discourse analysis we elaborated the framework based on propaganda methods (Cole, 1998) and distinguished those five that would suit our research:

1. enemy "demonization," meaning the positioning of the enemy as immoral, merciless, emphasizing his deficiency, absolute evil;
2. enemy "simplification," using binary oppositions and simple explanations;
3. enemy "accusation," transferring blame and responsibility for any harm;
4. enemy "mystification," using generalizations without substantiation (e.g., experts say . . .), reference to symbols, transfer of symbolic meanings while using analogies;
5. enemy "derogation," using negative slogans, direct inducement to (re)action or expectation of such action from some other force.

Our driving hypothesis was the assumption that the image of enemy was repeatedly constructed in the Facebook messages throughout the analyzed period, turning from internal enemy (personified by former President Viktor Yanukovych and his team) to external enemy (personified by the Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia, as a whole). To be sure, we understood that such discourses not only constructed reality, but were also products of historical contexts. The annexation of Crimea, which happened along with the consequent Russian intervention,[11] confirmed the participation of Russia in the military actions in Donbas (both in weapons and human supply) and, as expected, led to negative evaluations of the aggressor. Therefore, we expected to receive a combination of abstract (Russia) and specific (Putin) visions of enemy, which could be the explanatory mechanism for some decline of tolerance toward Russia and Russians.[12] In other words, we implied the expansion of the volume of the concept "enemy" in the new media not only to certain subjects of aggression, but to the whole nation which was supposed to be the most welcomed one, according to all the available polls throughout the history of independent Ukraine (e.g., in annual sociological monitoring surveys of the Institute of Sociology (Vorona and Shulga, 2013) or Kyiv International Institute of Sociology).[13]

Another hypothesis touched on the ways such a construction is formed—we assumed that the construction of both internal and external enemy lay within the discourse of its "demonization." We expected to find a rather coherent picture with a pronounced dominant discourse in all three platforms, as the analyzed period has become the most challenging one in the history of independent Ukraine. Ironically, in October 2014 Ukraine celebrated its liberation from fascism during World War II—a period of seventy years of peace on its territory, although military actions had already been unleashed in Donbas.[14]

At the same time, we assumed a correlation between the blogger's profession and the rhetoric. Thus, we expected to find more aggressive characteristics in Semenchenko's blog in comparison to Tymchuk's post due to their positioned images (military man vs. analyst), while the posts of Avakov (as a minister of the newly elected government) could be the most abstract, not referring to anything or anyone special in the process of enemy construction.

Also, we expected to find the accumulation of negation with time (in such a way that the proportion of posts with the enemy construction had to be larger in July and August, in comparison to other periods, and their style had to become harsher). Such hypotheses and assumptions were derived from some contemplation on the ongoing information warfare and

real-time war[15] in Ukraine and were tested with the help of outlined methods within the selected Facebook messages. The period referring to July 2014 was marked by the "Malaysian Airlines" aircraft catastrophe, following the shooting down of the aircraft from the territory which was controlled by the hitmen.[16]

FINDINGS

In Tymchuk's case the blog always begins with a special invitation, "Brothers and Sisters!", which creates a feeling of close relationship and intimacy with the reader (here we can draw some parallels with religious service and, what is more striking, with Stalin's speech at the beginning of the "Great Patriotic War"[17]). This may be interpreted in the vein of nationalism where the community is presented as the family grounded on "blood ties." All the analyzed messages have a similar structure—all the news is divided into "bad" and "good," always finishing with "good." We admit the desire of the blog author to balance the quantity of both good and bad news and the presence of a special conclusion in the form of a wish for Ukraine. All of these routines seem to be well thought through and psychologically oriented to the comfort of the reader.

Tymchuk's blog messages are long (seven hundred words, on average), while Semenchenko's posts are well-shaped for the format of Facebook status. Moreover, Semenchenko's blog messages are relatively short and specific (sometimes consisting of only three words, for example, "Wish us luck!"), and vividly position the author as a military man, as mentioned above. His posts often finish with the slogan "Glory to Ukraine!", especially when these posts deal with hope, or "Heroes do not die!" when posts are about tragedy (such as the death of people from the battalion). Both blogs are written in Russian (though Tymchuk's posts have been translated into English, Ukrainian, Polish, and (sometimes) other languages since the spring).

Avakov's blog messages are different in size, although all of them refer to a special informative purpose. This means that it is hard to find not a news-break, but a mere expression of emotion, and this is fully explained by the different position Avakov occupies in the system of Ukraine's authorities. His blogs are also originally written in Russian and do not have any particular structure (the effect of non-expectancy and closeness to "everyday life"). Avakov positions himself as a person who periodically visits the territory of ATO (the "anti-terrorist operation" mentioned above). Thus, we can make at least two linkages among the blogs: military (Semenchenko) vs. ex-military (Tymchuk) vs. civilian (Avakov); the blog of political authority (Avakov) and the blogs of new Ukrainian activists who nonetheless later became politicians following the elections to the Ukrainian Parliament in 2014 due to their blogging activities (Semenchenko and Tymchuk). Also, according to the public biographies of all three bloggers on Wikipedia,[18] Tymchyk and Avakov were born in the territory of the former USSR outside Ukraine (respectively, Chita in Russia and Baku in Azerbajan); Avakov is Armenian by nationality. The biography of Semenchenko is the most confusing as his "true" surname is Grishin (which corresponds with his nationality—Russian), but he changed it to a pseudonym which ends like a typical Ukrainian surname—"Semenchenko."

Unexpectedly for us, the references to Yanukovych and his team (namely, the Party of Regions of Ukraine) were almost totally absent. There were some posts dealing with specific people (e.g., Dobkin and Kernes in Kharkiv, mentioned only by Avakov, or Tsarev, mentioned only by Tymchuk) and a couple of recollections about Yanukovych (see Appendix 2), but by and large, they were minor. What may be said about the construction of internal enemies is that, all in all, they were mentioned about ten times less frequently (!) than external enemies.[19]

Moreover, we see that the most balanced blog in this respect belongs to Semenchenko, while the least balanced belongs to Tymchuk. He mentioned "betrayers" more than the other two bloggers (especially in comparison to Avakov, who avoided this theme), with the concept of "betrayal" referring mainly to the March period when the conflict in Donbas had not yet been unleashed, so all debates were concentrated on Crimea. Nevertheless, on the basis of content analysis we rejected our first hypothesis and posited that the image of the "enemy" was constructed in the Facebook messages throughout the whole of the analyzed period, with the external danger (personified by the Russian president Vladimir Putin and Russia as a whole) more prevalent than the internal danger. In Tymchuk's blog this prevalence is the most vivid: almost one-third of any negative emotional references are to Russia and Russians. However, the most popular attribute in all the blogs did not signify any territorial belonging, but implied the rudeness of the methods employed—we mean the category "terrorists/terroristic," usage of which was very highly developed throughout the period. For instance, in March 2014 any references to "terrorism" could be embarrassing and scant, while in August they became a kind of routine in the media. Looking back at the course of events during the period, we assume that these references were connected with the general progress of the military actions and some extraordinary dramatic events, such as the mentioned crash of the Malaysian aircraft on July 17, 2014, and the Ilovaysk tragedy which happened in late August 2014.[20] The forthcoming parliamentary elections were announced by the president of Ukraine in late August, as well.

At the same time, as we stated before, we expected to find more negatively colored characteristics in Semenchenko's blog in comparison to Tymchuk's posts, while the posts of Avakov could be the most abstract. But our data gave us a completely different picture. All three bloggers used foul language (the leader for the latter is Tymchuk)—this kind of linguistic tool seems to be constructed as publicly acceptable for describing and analyzing the situation in Eastern Ukraine.[21]

Furthermore, we assumed the accumulation of negation with time (in such a way that the proportion of posts with the enemy construction had to be larger in July and August, in comparison to other periods, and their style had to be harsher).

We see that the largest relative number of messages for each of the bloggers depended on different months, either July (Avakov, Tymchuk) or May (Semenchenko). This generally correlates with the general number of messages within the selected period. We also see that Avakov's messages were initially intended for various information purposes, so that special messages in our sample (construction of the enemy) consisted of less than a half of all messages. At the same time, Tymchuk seems to be the one most focused on the topic of war and

its accompanying enemies—this focus is also revealed in the oversaturation of his language with different stamps (e.g., *"Donbass terrorists are Russian criminals and hitmen"*).

Furthermore, Avakov and Semenchenko frequently used the word "separatist"—also a word from Ukraine's "new vocabulary,"[22] which took second place in terms of popularity after "terrorist" in the enemy characteristics. If we were to derive a portrait of a constructed enemy for each of the bloggers in accordance with their wording preferences, it would be "terroristic and separatist" for Semenchenko, "terroristic, Russian, separatist and connected with Putin" for Avakov, and "Russian, terroristic and connected with Putin" for Tymchuk. In this case, Semenchenko seems to be the least specific, tending toward unclear generalizations or "avoiding the poles." It is worth admitting that, in this case, the word "pro-Russian" to describe local people who like Russia was practically omitted.

All in all, the results of content analysis disproved our initial assumptions and showed that our interpretations of findings would be richer if we concentrated on some hidden power relations. Consequently, the next section will seek to shed light on the results of the critical discourse analysis.

According to Fairclough's (2001) scheme, it is important to differentiate three levels of critical discourse analysis: text level, discursive practice, and sociocultural context.

The text level of the analysis implies the main topics covered in blogs. We acknowledge that nearly all of Tymchuk's posts, more than half of Semenchenko's posts, and about one-third of Avakov's posts were focused on the sequence of political events in Ukraine, mainly on the events in its eastern part. All of the analyzed posts pretended to be informative, either in the form of analytical summary (Tymchuk), "hot news" (Tymchuk), or as a sign of the new minister's transparency (Avakov). It is a bit surprising that all the posts that deal with the enemy construction belong to the political sphere, but taking into account the context of inter- and intrapolitical tensions connected with Ukraine, this would seem quite obvious.

The time of narration which we outlined as dominant, is the so-called past-in-the-present, where all the past events are given from the position of the current moment, at the same time being limited to the time of "Yanukovych's regime." This is also quite relevant to the format of news where the future is anticipated very vaguely.

Discursive practice, as mentioned above, was aimed at defining the main discourse(s) of the enemy (either "demonization," "simplification," "accusation," "mystification," or "derogation") and the linguistic means of their realization. We have distinguished at least three linguistic means particular to the analyzed blogs.

First, we admit the existence of rhetorical questions. On the one hand, they can be seen in many of Tymchuk's messages, for example, *"Does it only seem like it to me, or are Donbas extremists indeed idiots?"* or *"The question is what to do with him (Putin)—either isolate or euthanize him away from sin?"* Such questions seem to be self-evident and manipulative in seeking their answers due to their ideological restrictions. On the other hand, rhetorical questions also characterize Avakov's blog, but in this case they may be divided into two blocks: 1) those expressing searching, uncertainty without any already distinguished answers: *"How to preserve management and balance in the territories free from the hitmen*?"[23] 2)

self-evident and ideologically coloured questions similar to those in Tymchuk's blog: *"How many more facts are needed to confirm the fact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine? The answer is simple—no more.*" Such questions could be interpreted as a counter-reaction to the media-propaganda in Russia where the majority of the media rejected the idea of Russia's aggression and paid attention to the dark sides of "Post-Maidan Ukraine."

Second, we differentiate the usage of analogies. Some analogies refer mainly to history, namely the history of World War II. Thus, Tymchuk mentions Hitler while referring to Putin no fewer than five times, for example "*Obviously, Russia has to rewrite its history immediately —Hitler cannot be the negative personality for it as nowadays the Russian* Fuehrer *copies his rhetoric and actions.*" Semenchenko and Avakov, on the contrary, avoid direct references to Hitler and fascism (Semenchenko mentioned "Russian fascism" once, and Avakov referred to Nazism once).The fascism theme was started by Russia long before even Maidan started, as "fascists" was the name given to all the anti-systemic elements in the Soviet Union. Later, starting with Putin in 2001, the "fascist" theme also re-emerged, with, for example, the Baltic states being labeled "fascist" as they were integrated in the EU and NATO in 2004 (Grigas and Van Helpen, 2014). Other analogies are built upon Biblical metaphors and are not connected with the memory of World War II—in this respect the most demonstrative is the blog of Semenchenko. Here are some vivid examples: *"Sodom and Gomorrah," "elderly brother Cain."* We interpret this as a tool to attract a wider audience to a military blog. There is also a specific type of metaphor aimed at creating negative connotations, for example with the Russian flag ("three-coloured zombies," "Colorado beetles" mentioned by Semenchenko) or analogies of the enemy with negative objects, for example "captured riffraff" (Semenchenko) or "Ukrainephobe-parasites" (Tymchuk).

Third, we point to the obscene vocabulary. It is present in all three blogs—referring to the enemy outlined and to the general perception of the situation by a blogger. The most abundantly rich in obscene words is the blog of Tymchuk (the least aggressive example is "moronic politics"). Avakov used no obscene words until July, but then put them into his rhetoric. We regard this linguistic tool as a means of attracting the attention of the average reader and expressing emotional solidarity with him, reading bad news in the blogs. Some obscene words, such as "separasts"[24] (Semenchenko), are artificially created. Obscene rhetoric aimed at the constructed enemy may also be interpreted as an instrument of enemy derogation, the depreciation of their achievements. The explanations of such linguistic shifts may be interpreted in the vein of psychological mechanisms: both defense from the unpleasant situation and preparation for the worse—in fact, simplifying the explanations for the understanding of everyone, irrespective of their level of education, and depreciating the enemy.

As for the *sociocultural context*, we should keep in mind that all the posts were written during the most problematic and highly stressful period in the history of independent Ukraine. The term "war" was widely used by Tymchuk from the beginning of the period of the analysis (twenty times), used to some extent by Avakov (nine times), and used least of all in Semenchenko's blog (four times), which could be relatively compared. Such legitimization of the term could be explained by the necessity of the mentioned linguistic instruments. In the

beginning of March, Crimea was annexed by Russia,[25] while the whole period of the analysis, as mentioned at the start, was marked by the ongoing antiterrorist operation.

At the same time, we emphasize that there were some historical parallels in the blogs, and those parallels dealt with the concept of World War II. Tymchuk, in particular, appealed to the concepts of "Hitler" (referring to Putin) and "Third Reich" (referring to Kremlin politics as a whole), while Semenchenko articulated the existence of parallels between the "contemporary war and World War II." This can be interpreted as a response to Russian propaganda as well as using emotional triggers connected with World War II. Moreover, in Tymchuk's blog we were able to observe a different interpretation of events connected with World War II— appealing to the memory of the Great Patriotic War (which is closer to the Russian interpretation of events) and the "deeds of ancestors" who "fought Nazism." All in all, speaking about the wider historical context of blog messages, we assumed that it was really scant—less than 5 percent of messages referenced a wider historical framework (Marchenko, 2014). However, even if we take into account the specificity of the blogosphere which deals with contemporaneity, we can assume that the tendency to treat current events in the analyzed blogs is decisive for the contemporary history of Ukraine and its true independence.

Facebook as a new media provides the possibility to analyze the reactions of readers toward its posts. Basically, such reactions might be rendered visible through three readers' choices: "like," "share," and "comment," but the most demonstrative is the quantity of "likes" (which could be interpreted as a positive reaction). It is interesting to see that the most popular messages within the analyzed period were:

1. for Avakov—a message containing obscene words regarding Putin's humanitarian aid (dated August 13 and which gathered more than 15,200 "likes"), his attitude to the process of negotiation, also with obscene words (dated July 19, more than 18,500 "likes"), and a message intended to add to the positive image of the prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk as the one who cares for Ukrainian snipers (dated July 27, gathering 16,190 "likes")
2. for Semenchenko—two messages concerning explanations of the tragedy of Ukrainian troops near Ilovaysk where many soldiers were killed (the first one, dated August 29, gathered more than 22,500 "likes," and the second one, dated August 31, gathered more than 14,250 "likes")
3. for Tymchuk—a message dated July 28 with more than 9,000 "likes" about new sanctions toward Russia and the role of Putin in the military actions in Ukraine.

Such popularity and the outlined peculiarities of the blogs shows that each of them has played a special role during the information "warfare"—ranging from the official position of the state (Avakov), with spicy words of an "insider" (Semenchenko), and to the exaggeration of negativism toward Putin and Russia (Tymchuk). Moreover, the audience's reactions corresponded to these roles. All in all, the mentioned text features linguistic instruments and sociocultural context points to the main discourses of the constructed enemy: enemy accusation

(rhetorical questions) and enemy derogation (analogies, metaphors, obscene vocabulary). Along with such a concentrated construction of the enemy, the only distinguished strategy to cope with or to fight with it is to get it away from Ukraine, either physically or mentally. Such a strategy could be interpreted in terms of a counter reaction to the Russian propaganda in the media.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we interpret the processes of enemy construction as an imminent feature of the blogs during the whole period of analysis, initially marked by the formal end of Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea by Russia and, consequently, the Russian "hybrid war," meaning both information warfare and help with military equipment in the conflict in Donbas. In such an unprecedented situation in Ukraine, its social bloggers became the media makers. We discovered that the most ideologically biased blog belonged to Tymchuk, which contradicted our initial expectations as it was the blog of an independent analyst. In the last two months of the analyzed period (beginning from July 2014) all three blogs became more radical, which could be explained by the rapid worsening of the situation in Eastern Ukraine and the open invasion of Russian troops.

Moreover, the negative "othering" and its connotation with danger (what in our case we called the enemy) was initially constructed as the external danger, namely Putin and Russia, as our figures showed. References to external enemies are very scant. We cite the consequent substitution of the word "Putin" by "Russia" in Tymchuk's blog, as well as similar gradual tendencies in the two other blogs. Such consistency of the constructed enemy is also envisaged in the other blogs. The repeated construction of the external enemy could be interpreted as a protective "shield" against the reflections on the problems in Ukraine, which are of an internal or mixed (both external and internal) nature. Such words play with the terms "Russia" and "Russians"—substituting "Putin and his team," as well as "regime," creates the prerequisites for a growing discontent toward Russia and everything connected with Russia. In such a way, we may see the "development" of an enemy construction from the specific "Putin" to the relatively abstract and geopolitically essentialized concept of "Russia."

The absence of a comparative historical analysis of the events in the mentioned blogs simplifies the vision of the complex social and political situation in Ukraine to a binary opposition: "external invasion"-"internal unified opposition" and its perception by the audience of blog messages (either on Facebook or in the "traditional" media which referred to them). In a short-term perspective this could lead to the rise of a national identity and common feeling against the enemy (which we in fact observed in 2014), and in a longer-term perspective to the possible disillusion and growing internal tensions which were not articulated from the beginning.

The main discourses of the constructed enemy in all three blogs were outlined as enemy accusation (rhetorical questions) and enemy derogation (analogies, metaphors, obscene vocabulary), while enemy demonization was found in the parallels to Hitler characteristic only of Tymchuk's blog.

Such findings lend support to the idea that Facebook blogs are a part of the "information warfare" that is going on in and outside Ukraine, the sui generis counter reaction to Russian propaganda. We are aware of representing the discourses of the enemy in the limited mainstream of "new media" (and only its one side, though it is supposed to be dominant), but even this gives us a point for considering Facebook as a special "battlefield," aimed not at discovery, but at blaming and derogating the already discovered external enemy. The question of its dynamics in the public discourse remains rhetorical due to the multilayered information field and leaves scope for further research.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. General Overview of Messages

	Period of analysis	*General quantity of messages*	*Quantity of messages with the connotation of "enemy"*
Avakov's blog	March 2014	32	9
	April 2014	21	11
	May 2014	26	14
	June 2014	20	6
	July 2014	36	16
	August 2014	22	8
	Total	157	64
Semenchenko's blog	March 2014	22	2
	April 2014	11	7
	May 2014	29	21
	June 2014	25	14
	July 2014	25	16
	August 2014	36	16
	Total	148	74
Tymchuk's blog	March 2014	17	16
	April 2014	7	6
	May 2014	10	10
	June 2014	18	18
	July 2014	21	21
	August 2014	17	17
	Total	90	89
	Sum total	395	227

Appendix 2. Categories Related to the Constructed Enemy

	Period of analysis	*Yanukovych*	*Party of Regions Team of Yanukovych*	*Putin, Putin's*	*Kremlin*	*Russia*	*Russian*	*Pro-Russian*
Avakov's blog	March 2014	0	0	0	1	1	5	0
	April 2014	3	0	2	0	2	2	2
	May 2014	0	1	2	0	6	8	0
	June 2014	0	0	2	0	5	1	0
	July 2014	0	0	8	0	9	2	0
	August 2014	1	1	9	1	3	1	0
	Total	4	2	23	2	26	19	2
Semenchenko's blog	March 2014	1	0	0	0	3	4	1

	April 2014	1	0	5	0	0	2	0
	May 2014	2	1	5	0	11	5	0
	June 2014	0	1	1	0	2	2	0
	July 2014	0	0	0	1	2	2	0
	August 2014	0	1	1	1	0	7	0
	Total	4	3	12	2	18	22	1
Tymchuk's blog	March 2014	6	0	43	23	47	73	1
	April 2014	3	0	9	5	18	23	2
	May 2014	4	2	26	7	21	16	7
	June 2014	3	3	45	17	74	47	3
	July 2014	0	0	56	29	89	95	9
	August 2014	1	1	69	24	50	86	6
	Total	11	6	205	82	252	267	27
	Sum of total	19	11	240	86	296	308	30

NOTES

1. The Facebook community "Euromaidan"—retrieved on https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan

2. Messages referring to the periods of April 2014 and July 2014 were not technically accessible in the community.

3. The well-known example of a Russian media propagandist is Dmitri Kiselev. On this issue there are many media responses, for instance, "Russian propaganda over Crimea and the Ukraine: how does it work?" which can be retrieved on http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/17/crimea-crisis-russia-propaganda-media. A special counter reaction named "Stop Fake" aiming to shed light on the Russian propaganda appeared in 2014 and can be retrieved on http://www.stopfake.org/en/tag/russian-propaganda/.

4. However, he joined one of the political parties ("Samopomich") and became a people's deputy of Ukraine in the elections to the Ukraine Parliament on October 26, 2014.

5. On October 15, 2014, Semen Semenchenko had five thousand friends on Facebook and 185, 062 followers. His web page on Facebook is https://www.facebook.com/dostali.hvatit.

6. "Information Resistance" http://sprotyv.info—a project which was launched after the Russian annexation of Crimea and which aims "to counteract external threats to the informational space of Ukraine in the main areas of military, economic, and energy, as well as the sphere of informational security" (according to the site information).

7. On October 15, 2014, Dmitry Tymchuk had 4,935 friends on Facebook and 221, 309 followers. His web page on Facebook is https://www.facebook.com/dmitry.tymchuk.

8. According to the Watcher's rating of Facebook users http://watcher.com.ua/facebook-reiting/, Avakov's blog is the most popular one in Ukraine's segment of Facebook. His web page on Facebook is https://www.facebook.com/arsen.avakov.1.

9. Among different stories and plots circulated we could mention at least two impressive stories which were invented by the Russian media propaganda: a story about a boy crucified by the pro-Ukrainian soldiers and a story about having two slaves as the dream of every Ukrainian, which were analyzed by the mentioned web resource "Stop Fake" and put in the "Top 5 Russian fake reports of 2014"—Retrieved on http://uatoday.tv/geopolitics/top-5-russian-fake-reports-of-2014–400310.html.

10. Although the term "hitmen" itself does not bear a specific "external" meaning, it was initially used in social media as a tool to contrast non-professional internal volunteers with the professional international force, often associated with Chechnya, the Russian Federation. In our research we decided to emphasize the ambiguous interpretation of the term in different periods of armed conflict and not to classify it into either of the two categories.

11. For instance, some evidence of Russian intervention in the Eastern Ukraine is presented here: http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/ukrainian-evidence-russian-involvement-east-n86076.

12. According to the press release of Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and "Levada-Centre" research conducted in September 2014 on representative samples for Ukraine and Russia, see "How the attitudes changed: Ukraine and Russia"

available at http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=404&page=1.

13. For instance, comparative data on this are available at http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=236&page=1.

14. The president of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, even instituted a special medal for this occasion —http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/poroshenko-institutes-medal-to-mark-70th-anniversary-of-ukraines-liberation-from-fascist-invaders-369779.html.

15. The significant escalation of hostilities in Ukraine has taken the total death toll in the country to at least 5,086 —http://www.un.org.ua/en/information-centre/news/1942.

16. MH17 Malaysia plane crash in Ukraine: What we know—http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28357880.

17. Available as a radio version on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tr3ldvaW4e8, but it also exists in a printed version in the newspaper "Pravda" dated July 3, 1941.

18. Wikipedia page of Dmitry Tymchuk https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmytro_Tymchuk, Wikipedia page of Arsen Avakov —https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsen_Avakov, Wikipedia page of Semen Semenchenko —https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semen_Semenchenko.

19. Generally, we differentiated 930 mentions referring to the "external enemy" and 82 mentions of the "internal enemy." However, 773 mentions of enemy could not be qualified as characteristics of either internal or external agency, so these figures demonstrate the possibilities for multilayered interpretations besides the dimension of territory.

20. Ukrainian Military "Fighting Russian Tank Battalion" Near Donetsk—http://www.newsweek.com/poroshenko-slams-russia-fighting-continues-near-major-ukrainian-city-267819

21. On the linguistic violence in online debates see Chapter 15. by Mikhail Suslov.

22. By "new vocabulary" we mean a vocabulary which was not typical of public discourse in Ukraine before the mentioned set of events.

23. Here and subsequently, all the translations have been done by the authors of this article from the Russian language.

24. The semantics of "separasts" implies a reference to the term "separatists" (those willing to separate) and the obscene word "pederast" used for stigmatizing homosexuals.

25. Ukraine: Putin signs Crimea annexation—http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26686949.

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Part V

POPULAR GEOPOLITICS

Chapter Thirteen
The ImaginedGeolinguistics of Ukraine

Dirk Uffelmann

The transnational communities of the virtual space call into question the borders of sovereign nation-states. The phenomena of the globalization and delocalization of Internet communities are especially relevant for the Russian Internet (Runet). When describing language communities, it therefore becomes plausible to do this in terms of virtual linguistics (Uffelmann 2014: 266–84), in contrast to the traditional and recently relaunched geopolitical discourse that was revivified—among other countries—in Russia.

Recent Russian space-related discourses talk about alleged geological formations (Eurasia), mythological macro-regions (like Scythia), canonical territory (of an autocephalous Orthodox Church), or fantastic river redirections (of the Dnipro River). I will argue in this chapter that these discourses have an analogue in the counterintuitive and—in the light of cyberlinguistics—archaistic concept of geolinguistics, which presupposes a stable link between mobile human speakers and immobile soil. I propose to address this assumption as "imagined geolinguistics." Geolinguistics, as I define it, is part of geopolitics, with which it shares the moment of deliberate or implicit simplification with the help of maps.

In the second edition of his *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* from 2014, Klaus Dodds acknowledges: "[. . .] maps play an important role in the making of geopolitics, which exceeds their practical value in terms of locating places and helping users navigate more generally" (Dodds 2007: 103). The contribution of maps to geopolitics lies exactly in their simplifying capacity. As Dodds argues right at the beginning of his introduction: "[. . .] geopolitics provide ways of looking at the world that often embrace a simplified view of geography. Maps, tables, and photographs can play their part in simplification" (Dodds 2007: 5).[1]

In recent geopolitical research, however, maps have often been hastily identified with outdated methodology ("Cold War geopolitics was always too simplistic a cartography" ([Tuathail, Dalby, and Stephanson 1998: 1]), and therefore have been less studied than other visual media. There are, however, important remediations (Bolter and Grusin 1999) of maps in electronic and digital media. In this chapter I argue that maps have been enjoying a revival in the post-Soviet space, especially since 2014 and in particular with regard to Ukraine. I intend to demonstrate that one of the central persuasive techniques is the simplification, often binarization, and drawing of seemingly clear borderlines on maps.

Asya Pereltsvaig, in her contribution to the "Languages of the World" website of June 25, 2014, has made a similar move when deconstructing maps used by Western media in order to correlate the Maidan protest movement with ethnolinguistics (Pereltsvaig 2014). What I plan to

do in this chapter is to investigate maps with binary correlations between geopolitics and geolinguistics, with regard to Russian and Ukrainian online sources.

When addressing simplifying maps I derive my research ethos from critical geopolitics as defined by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby: "Critical geopolitics bears witness to the irredeemable plurality of space and the multiplicity of possible political constructions of space" (Tuathail and Dalby 1998: 3). The researchers' claim can be directly projected onto geolinguistics. My critical geolinguistics approach aims at complicating linguistic maps used in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and at deconstructing the imagined binary geolinguistics of Ukraine. This approach inscribes into the deconstructive paradigm in cartography as proposed by John B. Harley and others (MacEachren 1995: 10). I discard Jeremy Black's accusation that "deconstructionists make the same mistake as the cartographers they criticize by contrasting acceptable and unacceptable map-making" (Black 1997: 26).[2] What I attempt to demonstrate explicitly and performatively in this chapter is, quite the opposite, a kind of negative dialectics (in the sense of Theodor W. Adorno) in deconstructing maps—an approach that refrains from offering a "correct" counter-map or positive conclusion.

I start with a critique of binary models in classical geolinguistic thought, formulating a general concern with drawing borders between allegedly discrete linguistic spaces. I then provide a brief overview of linguistic research on the complex overlappings and the situational dependence of language use in Ukraine. I continue with an investigation of geolinguistic arguments and maps available on the Russian and Ukrainian Internet against the backdrop of Russian politicians' visions of expansionist geostrategy and the military conflict in Ukraine in 2014.[3] I round off by confronting the incisive aesthetics of such geostrategic mapping with the negative dialectics that I detect in Yuri Solomko's map art.

IMAGINED GEOLINGUISTICS

The concept of geolinguistics emerged in earnest in the 1970s with William Mackey's study *Three Concepts of Geolinguistics* (Mackey 1973) and Roland Breton's book *Géographie des langues* (Breton 1983; Breton and Schiffman 1991). According to Breton, geolinguistics focuses on "language as existing *in space*" (Breton and Schiffman 1991: xviii).[4] Its main means of representation is the map (Breton and Schiffman 1991: 88). Breton equates geolinguistics with "ethnolinguistic geography" (Breton and Schiffman 1991: xv): "It [geolinguistics] aims to delimit *ethnic* dimensions of language diffusion [. . .]. This leads naturally to an *ethnolinguistic* approach, focussed on correlations and/or discontinuities between language and ethnicity" (Breton and Schiffman 1991: xvi).[5] Even if Breton claims to include diachronic aspects and the state-orchestrated processes of "consolidation, standardization, and codification, in short, *language development*," (Breton and Schiffman 1991: xvii)[6] the equation of geolinguistics and ethnolinguistics suggests an automatic link between (just one) language and (just one) ethnic identity. This produces a rather centripetal than centrifugal perspective. Because of the "lack of congruity between ethnic nationality and mother tongue" in Ukraine (Breton and Schiffman 1991: 49), Breton must, however, concede the necessity to distinguish between "'ethnic speakers and non-ethnic speakers" (Breton and Schiffman 1991:

45) and to take into account what he calls the "bilingual margin" produced by processes of linguistic Russianization and Ukrainization (Breton and Schiffman 1991: 50). Breton's approach ignores multiple situational linguistic habits and instead denounces Ukrainians with Russian as their mother tongue as "deculturated" (Breton and Schiffman 1991: 49). As it turns out, geolinguistics has from its very start struggled with Ukraine's inconclusive bi- or even trilingualism. Instead of providing a sustainable counter representation of Ukraine's sociolinguistic situation, I stress the moment of imagination behind the imaging inherent in diagrams and maps, as it can be deduced from Breton's proposal of centrifugal "margins" in Ukraine's geolinguistics.

As is commonly known, every map is a (geometrical) projection with ineluctable selection (Monmonier 1991: 1). Cartographic selection goes hand in hand with cultural evaluations that trigger arbitrary, or, as Edward Said continued to call it later, imagined geography (Said 2003: 71): "[. . .] this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary" (Said 2003: 54).[7] This possible arbitrariness, however, is concealed when the constructed binary of "our" and "their" space is naturalized and essentialized.

As John Agnew has demonstrated, binarization, naturalization, and essentialization form the foundation of "modern geopolitical imagination," which operates with binary oppositions (Agnew 1998: 26–30). Although postmodernism has for decades pressed for the deconstruction of these tropes of modernity (Zamiatin 2004: 104), simplificatory devices in cartography return in times of political turmoil, territorial conflicts (Schlögel 2003: 84; Monmonier 1991: 90), and in military propaganda,[8] as we have seen with regard to Ukraine in 2014. I argue that geopolitical cartographic simplification is true not only for the notorious binaries of East versus West, democracy versus despotism, etc. (Huntington 1996), but also for alleged linguistic fault lines.

Astonishingly, language is not very present in textbooks and anthologies on geopolitics. For example the index to Dittmer/Sharp's anthology *Geopolitics: An Introductory Reader* (Dittmer and Sharp 2014) contains no entry "language." And yet, my thesis is that language *is* an argument in geopolitical discourse.

Those who instrumentalize linguistic binaries for the sake of geopolitics rely—mostly unconsciously—on the old Herderian ideology of "pure" national languages (Bilaniuk 2009: 338–39), on the bijective identification of exactly one national identity of a speaker with exactly one mother tongue: "The basic unit of ethnos was believed to correspond to natural language units" (Bilaniuk 2005: 21). In her seminal 2005 monograph *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine*, Laada Bilaniuk demonstrated the ubiquity of the assumption of desirable purity and the necessity of "correction" for all factual impurities (such as Surzhyk). In 2009, she summarized: "In Ukraine, linguistic practices are measured against idealized Ukrainian and Russian languages that are seen as manifestations of national identity, 'culturedness,' and a 'high cultural level'" (Bilaniuk 2009: 339).

RESEARCH OVERVIEW OF THE COMPLEXITY OF UKRAINE'S BI- AND TRILINGUALISM

In the following short overview of sociolinguistic findings about the multiple "impurities" of Ukrainian-Russian bilinguality in pre-2014 Ukraine, I do not strive for originality—and I will not make quantitative claims, let alone draw quantifying maps myself. What I am going to do is to summarize the *qualitative* findings of relevant research, leaving aside the historical process which led to the "post-colonial linguistic status quo in Ukraine" (Masenko 2009: 122).[9]

There can be hardly be any doubt about the fact that Ukraine faces a neo-colonial reality, targeted by Russian commercial imperialism—not only by means of gas but also by means of technical infrastructure, the offerings of the entertainment industry, the Internet business, etc. This commercial neo-colonialism goes hand in hand with the continuous status difference between a "large" and a "small language" (Taranenko 2007: 138).

Postcolonialism was adopted in Ukrainian studies significantly earlier than in Russian or Polish studies (Pavlyshyn 1992: 41–55) and enjoys a broad consensus across both cultural and literary studies and in the public discourse.[10] Postcolonial terminology has, however, been only occasionally applied to bilingualism (Moser 2009: 316–35; Wanner 2014: 427–39), and rather beyond sociolinguistics, for example, by the political commentator Mykola Riabchuk, who diagnosed Russian-Ukrainian diglossia as such as being postcolonial: "The insights of postcolonial studies can [. . .] be applied to the Ukrainian situation, with the basic restriction that the difference between the ruling and the subjugated group had a cultural and linguistic, not a racist character" (Riabchak 2005: 75).[11] Riabchuk's understanding is that Russian and Soviet-Russian hegemony suppressed Ukrainian culture and language. Postcolonial vocabulary is thus proposed as reformulating historical anticolonial terms such as "linhvotsid" [linguocide], which presented contemporary bilinguality as a legacy of murderous colonialism (Gasimov 2010: 408–09).

What postcolonial categories such as hybridity (Bilaniuk 2005: 103) are in fact better at describing, however, are complex overlappings, such as the prevailing non-congruence of ethnicity and "language of convenience" (Arel and Khmelko 1996: 81–82), or even mother tongue, as recently emphasized by Asya Pereltsvaig: "[. . .] a significant number of ethnic Russians speak Ukrainian as their mother tongue and an even larger number of ethnic Ukrainians speak Russian natively" (Pereltsvaig 2014; Masenko 2009: 108). A bijective relationship between ethnicity and mother tongue is inapplicable to Ukraine. Valerii Khmel'ko and Svetlana Oksamitnaia deduced from a meta analysis of surveys that widespread Ukrainian-Russian biethnicity correlates to the statistical finding that "Russian-speaking ethnic Ukrainians account for a third of the population of Ukraine" (Khmel'ko and Oksamitnaia 2009). Volodymyr Kulyk makes an even stronger theoretical claim when he entirely leaves aside ethnicity, just distinguishing between a speaker's linguistic preference and his actual language usage: "Many Ukrainian citizens speak another language than that with which they identify" (Kulyk 2010: 391). These disparities also extend to normative support for more use of Ukrainian, which can diverge from the person's own linguistic practice. Kulyk speaks of the

"discrepancy between the perceived social importance of Ukrainian and the comfort of continued reliance on Russian" (Kulyk 2013: 22).

The post-Soviet period saw certain tendencies toward Ukrainization characteristic of postcolonial neo-nationalism. "Vigilante action" (Laitin 1998: 142) against the public use of Russian and denunciations of "mankurts" (a term usually applied to Russian-speaking ethnic Kazakhs [Laitin 1998: 141]) had few targets, since more and more Ukrainian politicians have tried to speak Ukrainian in parliament or in interviews since the end of the Soviet Union (Bilaniuk 2009: 344–45).

Thus, Ukrainian slowly gained some ground from Russian (Wanner 2014: 431–32), but the situation remains contradictory (Taranenko 2007: 137). The alleged clear cut in Ukraine between a Ukrainophone West (and North) and a Russophone East (and South) is complicated by an urban-rural divide: rural areas would see more use of Ukrainian, whereas big cities were more strongly Sovietized and thus linguistically Russianized during Soviet times (Masenko 2009: 123–24; Bilaniuk 2005: 40–55). This is particularly true of downtown Kyiv, where the colonial predominance of Russian did not vanish quickly (Laitin 1998: 149). Up to the present day, compared to the inhabitants of other big Ukrainian cities, Kyivians are more likely to be bilingual and to accommodate to their interlocutor according to social situation (Masenko 2009: 130).

Thus, even if the Ukrainian term *dvomovnist'* (bilinguality) has long had negative connotations (Taranenko 2007: 128), we are facing a situationally specific Ukrainian-Russian diglossia across broad swathes of Ukraine. This diglossia is characterized by conflicting behavioral patterns, such as the aforementioned flexible accommodation of a bilingual speaker to a (contextual) norm, on the one hand, and a speaker's insistence on his/her language even if the interlocutor speaks the other language. Such "nonaccommodating bilingual conversations [. . .] have become common in Kyiv" (Bilaniuk 2009: 342) and need not be evaluated in Laitin's terms as a linguistic "war of position" (Laitin 1998: 145–46).

In present-day Ukraine, one would struggle to find any societal sector with clear monolinguality, be it education, academia, or the media. If one looks at universities, Russian is still more widely used in natural sciences and informatics but less common in the humanities (Gaudio 2010: 227–29). The vast majority of Ukrainian media, such as the press and the book market, radio, TV, and cinema, still mostly publish or broadcast, respectively, in Russian (Besters-Dilger 2009: 243–86). But Russian monolinguality is hardly seen here either: Ukrainian state law inserts compulsory Ukrainian niches, such as ads and conditions of subscription, into sectors usually dominated by Russian (Nedashkivska 2010b: 363–65). The rather chaotic mix of languages on Ukrainian TV and radio (Besters-Dilger 2009: 256) performatively promotes the non-accommodation and coexistence of both languages (Nedashkivska 2010b: 360) as a normality.

Nor can the distribution of multiple linguistic habits (Uffelmann 2011: 172–83) be projected along the—rather theoretical—dividing line between off- and online communication. In 2011, Alla Nedashkivska observed peculiar internal shifts in the Ukrainian Internet: even if the first page of a website is in Ukrainian, this does not preclude the subpages from being exclusively

in Russian (Nedashkivska 2010a: 421–24). Ukrainian as a "'marked' language" (Nedashkivska 2010a: 428) is used online mainly for the purposes of politics and education, but is marginalized in all other sectors by Russian, which, as the Canadian-Ukrainian scholar points out, "in Ukrainian cyberspace [. . .] is the common, regular and 'real' language of communication" (Nedashkivska 2010a: 428).

Since shifts between Russian and Ukrainian are obviously common in one city, in one medium, and even in one person, one cannot assume that these shifts occur between "pure Ukrainian" and "pure Russian." The notorious pronunciation of the Russian letter "r" as "h" by speakers from Ukraine is only the most easily audible of Ukrainian's influences on Russian. The opposite contact direction produces the "mixed language" Surzhyk, which, according to the research consensus, has a Ukrainian basis but Russian elements at all linguistic levels. It is not uncommon for the Russian share to become so big that some researchers, such as Salvatore Del Gaudio, argue for a triglossic model (Gaudio 2010: 258–61) Ukrainian—Russian—Surzhyk. In this triadic scheme, Surzhyk remains the "very low variety," but it also has its "absolute speakers" (Gaudio 2010: 257) for whom it is the most "natural code," (Hentschel and Taranenko 2015: 273) and can therefore be legitimately called a third mother tongue in Ukraine.[12] What has been said about situational shifts and accommodations also pertains to the triglossic model: Del Gaudio reports how speakers contextualize the puristic restrictions on Surzhyk very sharply, shifting from classroom Ukrainian or classroom Russian to Surzhyk once they have crossed the threshold into the school corridor (Gaudio 2010: 263). A very specific variety is the rather poor Ukrainian spoken by many Russophone politicians in a public context, which is based on Russian grammar with Ukrainian lexical items, something that Alexander Krouglov polemically calls "'reverse' Surzhyk" (Krouglov 2002: 229).

The various dimensions of bi- and trilinguality mentioned above form an enormously complex picture of language *practices* in contemporary Ukraine. If there is one research consensus in empirical sociolinguistics, it is the complexity of the linguistic situation in Ukraine (Nedashkivska 2010b: 351–52). But is complexity identical with conflictuality?

Back in 1998, Laitin used a very agonistic rhetoric: "In Ukraine, especially in Kiev, the two languages are fighting a border war through code mixing, code switching, mixed conversations, and changing functional domains for use" (1998: 144). One might believe that this was still relevant in 2014, when superficially looking at Ukrainian language politics after the Euromaidan. President Ianukovych was still on the run when the Ukrainian parliament Rada revoked (on February 23, 2014) a procedurally problematic but, as Volodymyr Kulyk acknowledges, practically constructive law from the Ianukovych era (from August 10, 2012), which had granted Russian the status of a regional language (Kulyk 2014: 227–8, z35). What does not fit into the conflictual picture, however, is the fact that this revocation triggered protests even among Ukrainian patriots. These protests reached their creative peak in a flashmob by inhabitants of the Galician city of L'viv, who vowed to speak Russian exclusively for twenty-four hours in support of the legitimate interest of Eastern Ukrainians to use Russian in official contexts (Kulyk 2014: 229), while in Donets'k in the Donbas region the reverse language shift to Ukrainian was applied.

BINARIZING COMPLEXITY

What the participants of the L'viv and Donets'k flashmobs—and the empirical sociolinguists quoted above—implicitly or explicitly polemicize with is the Herderian assumption of a bijective nexus between territory and language (and as a consequence also of nationality and state belonging). One could argue that their critique implicitly targets ethnolinguistic essentialisms and geolinguistic binarisms that can be found on both sides of the Ukrainian-Russian ideological faultline, and that are represented cartographically with clear-cut borders (see below) that drastically reduce the aforementioned complexities of Ukraine's bi- or trilingual sociolinguistic situation. And indeed, if a cartographer were to include them all in cartographic representation, she would have to draw many different maps with manifold gradual transitions, instead of one single map with binarily opposed, allegedly homogeneous geolinguistic territories.

So far, however, binarisms *are* actually widespread in linguistics as well: sociolinguists face a very broad normative discourse on purity, one that is both subcutaneous and conservatively academic: "Everyone's language is, to some degree, mixed, but powerful agents such as government officials, educators, and activists perpetuate the belief in a 'pure' language as a standard against which everyone is to be judged" (Bilaniuk 2005: 2).

Apart from normatively oriented linguists, who still adhere to Herderian ethnolinguistics, it is mostly "political actors striving for power" who are interested in presenting conflicting—and thus binary—pictures of the language situation in Ukraine (Kulyk 2009: 49). Larysa Masenko correlates regional politics and linguistic binarisms: "The analysis of the level of conflict between the Ukrainian-speaking and the Russian-speaking communities in Ukraine proves that its high degree primarily characterizes the relationships between the regional political elites" (Masenko 2009: 116).

I am not sure if Masenko's complementary statement is true as well: "Instead, in general there is basically no confrontation between the Ukrainian-speaking and the Russian-speaking *population* of Ukraine" (Masenko 2009: 116).[13] It is indisputable, however, that the *(geo)political* discourse operates with binarisms and essentialisms, among others by means of cartographic representation. Paying tribute to the diverse textual and visual threads of this discourse, I proceed from the Russian discourse on the geolinguistics of Ukraine, through the role maps available online in 2014 play in this, to a Ukrainian artist's reaction to such maps.

THE GEOPOLITICAL DISCOURSE ON RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

When it comes to Russian, it is rare for the term *geolingvistika* to be used explicitly in the context of hegemonic and expansive geopolitics. In my view, however, the existing examples are telling in terms of the Russian geopolitical discourse. Their relevance is underscored by the fact that my first example, an article by Leonid Radzikhovskii from 2008, appeared in the official state newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta*. In his article Radzikhovskii sings a hymn to the Russian language and the space it "covers": "The Russian language is the main national asset of Russia [. . .] the space of the Russian language is our main national asset" (Radzikhovskii

2008). The author substantiates this spatial dimension as the sphere to which Russian culture and literature should be exported peacefully, but nor is political dominance alien to his concept: "Who dominates is the one whose *language* dominates" (Radzikhovskii 2008).[14] From this Radzikhovskii turns toward post-Soviet geopolitics: "The CIS (and partially the Baltic countries) are the natural zone of influence of the Russian language. It is the main strategic, *historical* obligation of Russia and Russian politics to maintain this influence" (Radzikhovskii 2008).[15] In her enthusiastic reply to Radzikhovskii's article, Liudmila Beneva-Kolegova understands that other nations or languages must be eliminated: "Geolinguistics is not just an important topic, it is a question of the survival of a big nation and the elimination of a small one" (Beneva-Kolegova 2008).

Against the backdrop of this 2008 dialogue on geolinguistics and expansion, it seems worth investigating not only the "geolinguistic implications" of Russkiy Mir in analogy to the Francophone movement (Rogers 1987), but also its geostrategic instrumentalization. Researchers have pointed to the potential of Russophonia to be used as a geopolitical weapon by the state organization *Russkii Mir* (Gorham 2014: 156–64; Uffelmann 2014).[16] What does *Russkii Mir*'s website have to say about the linguistic situation in Ukraine since February 2014, and how is this linked to the official geostrategy of the Russian government?

The first relevant entry is Elena Smirnitskaia's direct reaction to the Ukrainian Rada's decision on February 24, 2014, to abolish the law granting Russian the status of a regional language in Ukraine (Smirnitskaia 2014). The ongoing Russian military incursion into Eastern Ukraine enters *Russkii Mir*'s linguistic discourse on June 8, 2014, when Boris Serov deplores that the "Russian(-speaking) World" has shrunk since the end of the Soviet Union, and presents the dominance of the Russian language in Crimea as an expansive counter-model for a "Russian World from Crimea to Donbass" (Serov 2014).

On September 17, Elena Volkova argued that South-Eastern Ukraine is free from Ukrainian anyway, and suggests that the rest can be neglected: "According to data provided by Google, it is evident that the Ukrainian language is no less exotic in South-Eastern Ukraine than Hindi, for example" (Volkova 2014). The same author refers to statistics as a means of geolinguistics:

The illustrations show that the Russian language is seven times more popular than Ukrainian on the territory of our neighboring state. According to data from other studies, 92% of people choose Russian on ATMs. More than 90% of enquiries on the internet from Ukrainian territory are made in Russian. 82% of the actually read journals are in Russian. (Volkova 2014)

RUSSIAN VERSUS UKRAINIAN WIKIPEDIA

Moving on from textual statements to the visual medium of maps that are available online on the Ukrainian and Russian Internet, I focus first on maps from the competing Wikipedia sites "Rosiis'ka mova v Ukraini" and "Russkii iazyk na Ukraine" (meaning "Russian Language in Ukraine" in Ukrainian and Russian, respectively). I will refrain from interpreting the texts or discussion sections of the respective articles or the colonial implications of prepositions ("v Ukraini" vs. "na Ukraine"), and instead zoom in exclusively on the pictures used by these Wikipedia articles, especially their choropleth maps and their language of colors and flatness.

Again, my main focus is on the maps' particular capacity for simplification (Robinson 1967: 50), which contrasts with the rather ambiguous picture of the complexity of Ukraine's language situation that the polylogue in the discussion sections of the Wikipedia articles produces.[17] Since identifying the original authors of maps that are posted on the Internet and re-posted many times by ever new senders in ever new contexts is often extremely difficult (Monmonier 1995: 298), I am solely interested in the persuasive rhetoric (Monmonier 1995: 1–3) inherent in the diverse modes of simplification as applied by the maps themselves. What cartography theorist Mark Denil demands from professional map making can aptly serve as a guideline in map reading as well: "Since any map can, at best, present only one version of a distortion of the truth ([. . .]), it is one task in map making to determine just what truth will be preserved; *whose* truth will be preserved; what can usefully or innocuously be distorted; in what manner; and what inconvenient or irrelevant data will be left out" (Denil 2003).[18]

The first map included on the Ukrainian Wikipedia webpage "Rosiis'ka mova v Ukraini"[19] (figure 13.1) suggests an overwhelming predominance of Ukrainian across almost the entire country, even if this actually refers only to the native languages of elected deputies in regional councils.

Найпоширеніша рідна мова у міських, селищних та сільських радах
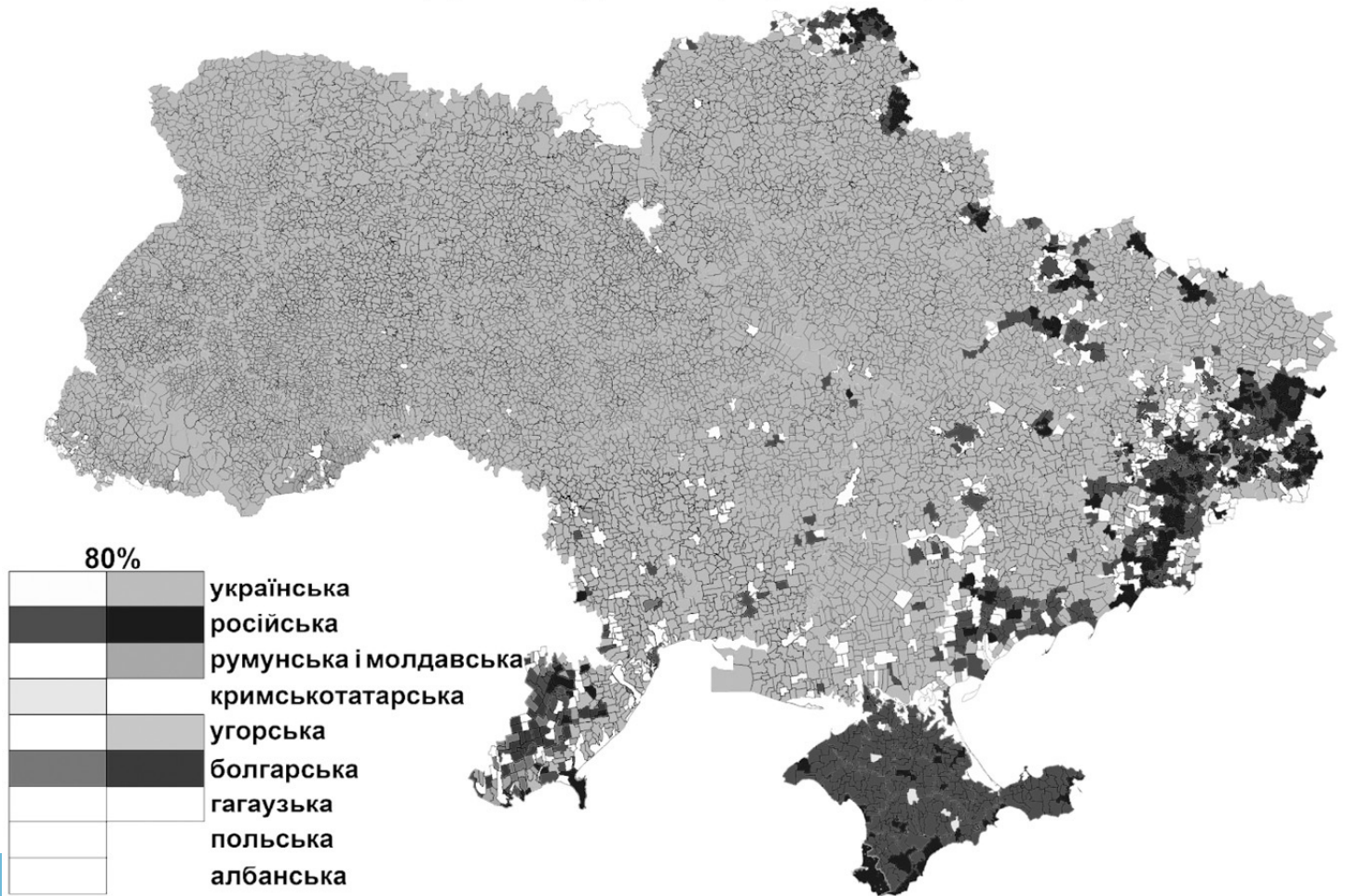за результатами Всеукраїнського перепису населення 2001 року

80%

- українська
- російська
- румунська і молдавська
- кримськотатарська
- угорська
- болгарська
- гагаузька
- польська
- албанська

With the prevalence of blue, the cartographer wants the user to believe that the state's entire territory is dominated by the Ukrainian language, while only Crimea and some minor scattered areas, mostly in the Donets'k and Lugans'k regions, are Russian-speaking. The opposite distribution can be seen in the caricature (figure 13.2) that follows this map in the Ukrainian Wikipedia article, pinpointing Russian linguistic expansionism.

Figure 13.2. Ukrainian Wikipedia caricature on relations of Russian and Ukrainian language in Ukraine. Source: http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Російська_мова_в_Україні, accessed September 26, 2014. Public domain.

The Russian Wikipedia article "Russkii iazyk na Ukraine,"[20] which is significantly longer than the Ukrainian equivalent, chooses a quite different color aesthetics for its first map, again with blue dominant, but this time used to denote regions in which native Russian speakers prevailed in 2001 (with grey used for regions where there are only smaller numbers of native Russian speakers). As a side observation, I add that the Ukrainian state colors of blue and

yellow are present in the map, but the yellow has been removed from Ukrainian state territory, thus at least estranging the usual Ukrainian esthetics (figure 13.3).
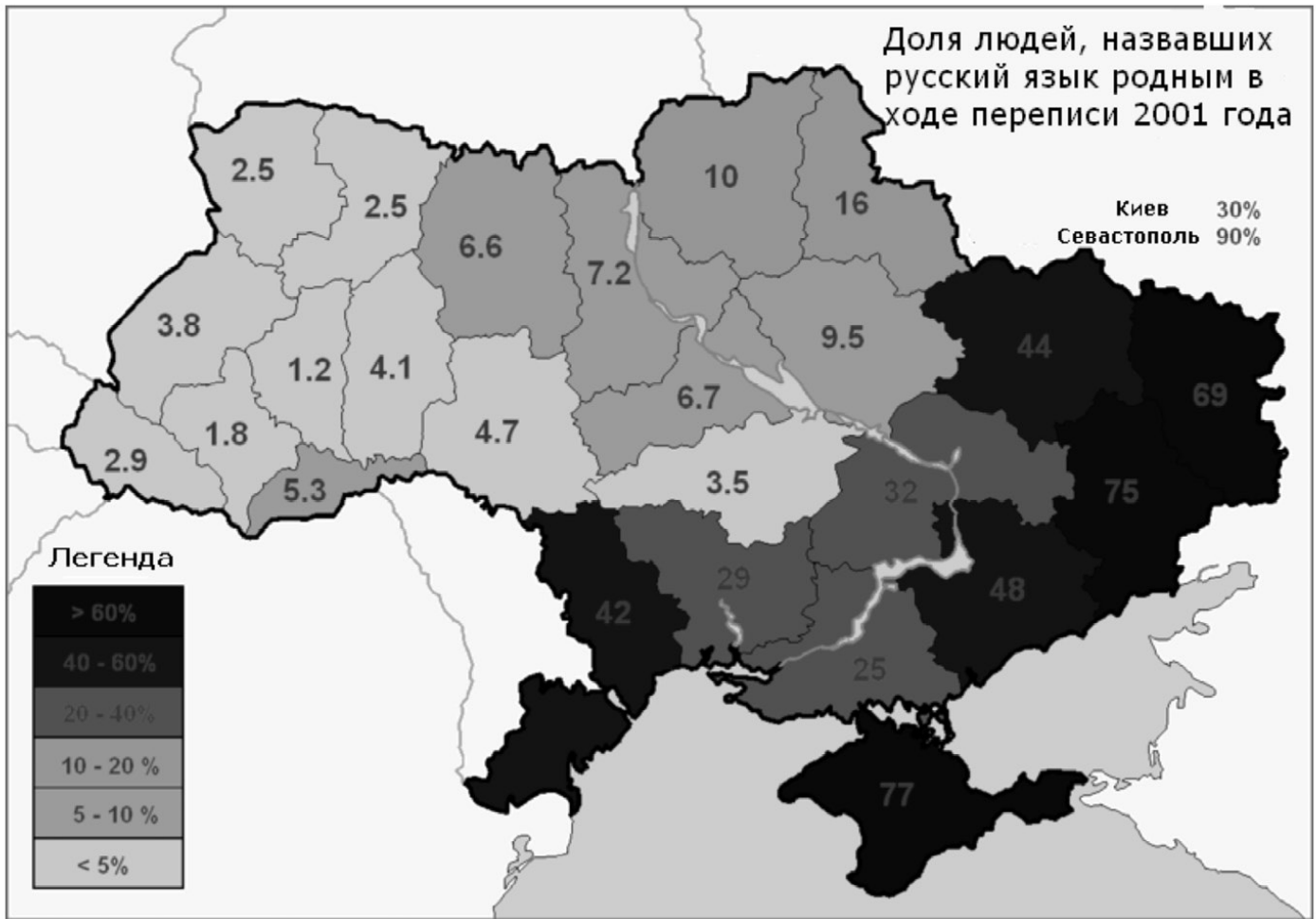

Figure 13.3. Russian Wikipedia map: Russian language in Ukraine. Source: http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Російська_мова_в_Україні, accessed September 26, 2014. Public domain.

Instead of the caricature that follows the first map in the Ukrainian version, the Russian Wikipedia presents a photo of a rally held in favor of schools retaining Russian (figure 13.4).

Figure 13.4. Russian Wikipedia photograph: Rally in favor of schools retaining Russian. Source: http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Русский_язык_на_Украине, accessed September 26, 2014. Public domain.

Toward the end of the article, a picture is used to "demonstrate" that Ukrainians would use Russian even when writing on a Ukrainian form, suggesting that Ukrainian language use is a fiction that is contrary to (Russian-dominated) linguistic reality (figure 13.5).
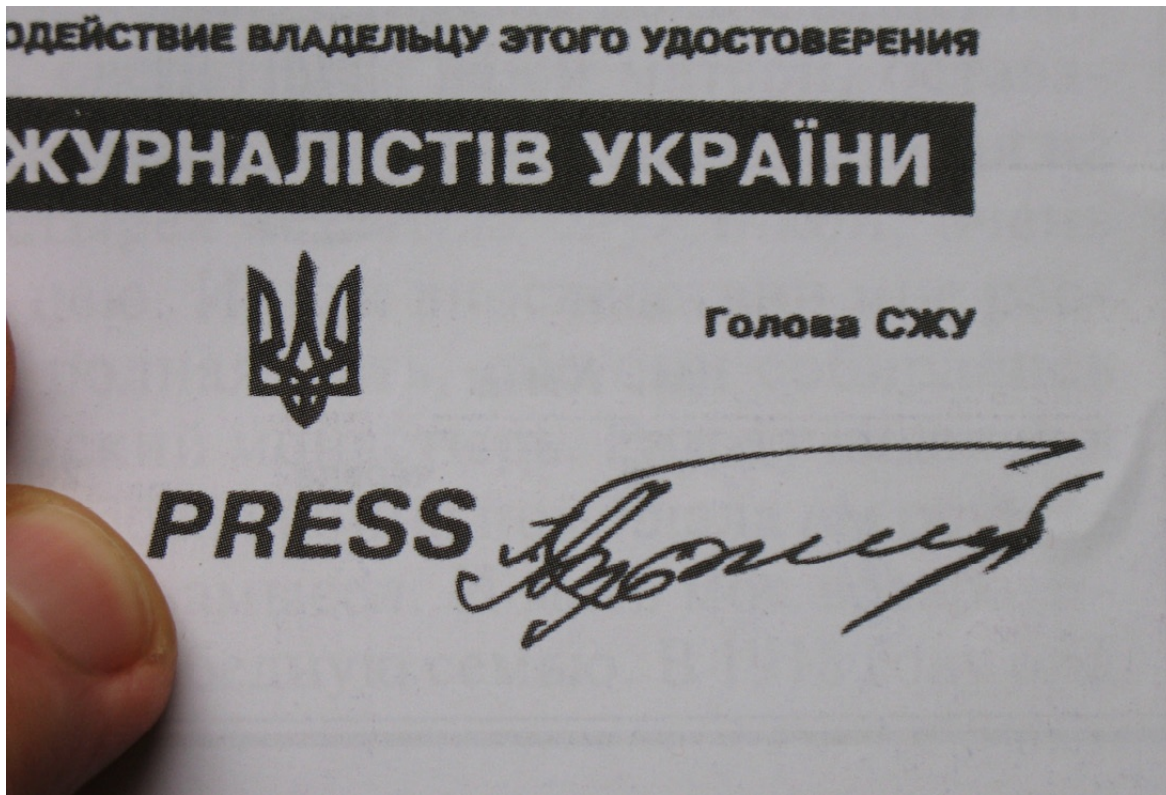
Figure 13.5. Russian Wikipedia photograph: Ukrainian press card with Russian signature. *Source:* **http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Русский_язык_на_Украине, accessed September 26, 2014. Public domain.**

The geolinguistic maps with which the respective Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedia articles open, and which guide readers in a certain ideological direction from the very start and use other visual elements to influence them further, both operate with clear-cut color divides between Russian and Ukrainian speakers, underplaying both the linguistic reality of Surzhyk and the occasional nature of language use (written/spoken, digital/analogue, urban/rural).

UKRAINIAN TERRITORIES WITH RUSSIAN FLAGS

In order to stress the geopolitical implications of geolinguistic maps, I now turn to a very short article published on *Severpost* on May 8, 2014, "Russkii iazyk na Ukraine mozhet poluchit' status mestnogo" (Russian Language in Ukraine May Be Given Status of Local Language). The article essentially comments only on an accompanying map reflecting a survey on the desired regional status of Russian in Ukraine. It does so, however, by attaching the flag of the Russian Federation to those regions of Ukraine where the majority of respondents supported regional status inside Ukraine (figure 13.6).[21]

Figure 13.6. Flagging the regional status of Russian in Ukraine (2014). Source: http://severpost.ru/read/7355/, accessed October 24, 2014. No copyright information provided.

In this map, we have obviously come close to the geopolitical question of how the integrity of Ukraine's state territory is subcutaneously called into question with the help of geolinguistic maps.

The map presented by *Severpost* deploys a cartographic device (marking ethnolinguistic territories with state flags) that earlier played a role in the Internet debate about Ukraine's geopolitics and geolinguistics. Here is an example of a map from 2012 that also refers to the regional status of the Russian language in Ukraine (figure 13.7).

Figure 13.7. Flagging the regional status of Russian in Ukraine (2012). Source: http://lb.ua/news/2012/09/14/170564_russkiy_yazik_priznan_regionalnim.html, accessed August 15, 2014. No copyright information provided.

Already back then, in September 2012, the anonymous author of the *lb.ua* article that accompanies the map spoke about a "partition of Ukraine according to the linguistic principle," and drew far-ranging separatist conclusions from the map meant to illustrate the legal status of Russian in regions of Ukraine: "If you mark the regions of Ukraine that today grant Russian the status of regional language, you will clearly see that they form the territory of the announced [in Severodonets'k in 2004] but not accomplished South-Eastern Ukrainian Autonomous Republic."[22]

But attaching foreign state symbols to parts of Ukraine is not restricted to separatist aspirations: in July 2014 the Ukrainian news portal *Argument* accused those politicians from Eastern Ukraine who repeatedly point to the alleged linguistic divide of detracting attention from the country's real problems—the state of the economy and corruption. For the sake of drastic illustration, *Argument* inverted the aforementioned cartographic device by depicting a hand with the Russian flag on the cuff and the Russian eagle on the cufflink, pouring red paint and the letters "USSR" from a can that is ascribed to the Party of the Regions, which is mostly connected with the East of Ukraine and suspected of pro-Russian separatism, over the South-East of Ukraine (figure 13.8). On this semi-cartographic, semi-caricaturist image,

contemporary Russian geolinguistics and expansionist geopolitics are reconnected to the Soviet colonial legacy.

Figure 13.8. Pouring the letters "USSR" over the South-East of Ukraine. Source: http://argumentua.com/stati/zakon-o-yazyke-umelo-poseyan-razdor-v-ukraine, accessed August 15, 2014. ©

MAPPING EXPANSION

But can Soviet colonialism and geopolitics be legitimately linked together? As is well-known, geopolitics had traditionally been associated with the expansionism of the Third Reich (Dodds 2007: 26–31) and was therefore a taboo in the Soviet Union (Kolossov and Turovsky 2002: 143) until the notion was rehabilitated in the 1990s. This rehabilitation was propagated in particular by Vladimir Zhirinovskii and Aleksandr Dugin. In his 1993 book *Poslednii brosok na iug* (*The Last Rush to the South*), Zhirinovskii propagated his utopian vision of "Russia heading for the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea" (Zhirinovskii 1993: 63). This desired expansion implied that, in the long run, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey had to become part of Russia (Zhirinovskii 1993: 72), and Ukraine had to be reduced in size and become part of the Russian state: "Within Russia there will be a small Lithuanian state. And if

somebody very much wants to live in a small inclusive Ukraine—let there be a small Ukrainian republic" (Zhirinovskii 1993: 126).[23]

In 1997, Aleksandr Dugin, in his alleged textbook *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* (*Fundamentals of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia*), continued Zhirinovskii's line, when he claimed that the "imperative" of the Eurasian "heartland's," that is, Russia's "planetary mission," was "actively offensive geopolitics or expansion" as far as the Indian Ocean (Dugin 1997: 341–342). In Dugin's view, Ukrainian sovereignty, an "anomaly," per se "is identical with a monstrous attack on the geopolitical security of Russia, equivalent to an invasion into its territory." He therefore calls for Ukraine's partition: "The further existence of a united Ukraine is unacceptable. This territory must be divided into several belts, [. . .]" (Dugin 1997: 348, 79), with Crimea, Eastern, and even Central Ukraine under Moscow's direct control (Dugin 1997: 380–81).

As it turned out, in 2014, Zhirinovskii's and Dugin's geostrategic visions, still marginal in the 1990s, lost their phantasmagoric quality and seem to have gained actual political relevance. Proof of this is the fact that, in the geopolitical debate of 2014, the "plan Zhirinovskogo" crystallized in the following map that went viral online (figure 13.9).

After the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Eastern Ukraine, the question is no longer whether Zhirinovskii's and Dugin's expansionism with regard to Ukraine has become mainstream in the Russian Federation—it has. The question is rather whether the Putin administration, in the 2010s, has not already outbid the geopoliticians' visions from the 1990s, and whether the annexation of Crimea is only the first step to the overt amputation of (in a certain sense) Russian-speaking territories from the Ukrainian state?

Even if the idea of dividing Ukraine is ascribed to Zhirinovskii here, he is not the actual cartographer of this digital map. But in 2014 we also learned that an argument in the geopolitical debate can even arise purely if someone says that somebody else had or saw a map.[24] For example, Serhii Pashyns'kyi claimed in August 2014 that state leaders saw a map with a Ukrainian annexation scenario on Vladimir Putin's table as early as April 2013 (Pashyns'kyi and Leshchenko 2014).[25] Such maps, allegedly seen by someone, serve as an indicator of a third party's geostrategic action plans, even if the self-appointed witness is unable to actually display the map in question.

The same applies to the rumor that, in 2012, President Putin invited Poland to carve Ukraine up between them. This rumor was spread by the former Polish minister of foreign affairs and speaker of the Polish parliament Radosław Sikorski on October 19, 2014 (Ben Judah 2014), and was subsequently refuted hastily by many of the political leaders allegedly involved, with even Sikorski himself eventually putting it down to a flaw in his memory.

If, in 2012, Putin actually made such a proposal and already had the relevant map, the "Zhirinovskii plan," which leaves a rump Ukraine and envisages a multidivision of Ukrainian territories, would already have given way to a binary (Russian-Polish) division plan encompassing the total erasure of any Ukrainian state from the map of Eastern Europe. This theory reminds Ben Judah of the Russian-Prussian-Habsburg geostrategy of the late eighteenth century, which led to the erasure of a Polish state: "[. . .] Russia has attempted to involve Poland in the invasion of Ukraine, just as if it were a post-modern re-run of the historic partitions of Poland" (Ben Judah 2014).

INSTEAD OF A NON-BINARY COUNTER-MAP AND A CONCLUSION: MAPPING AMPUTATION AS ART

As Ben Judah's connection to the partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century shows, geopolitics draws on historical memory. Historical associations are also central to map art that reacts to geopolitical maps, as in the works by Yuri Solomko[26] that were displayed at the exhibition "Nova Ukrains'ka Mriia. Rol' mystetstva u period kryzi" at Kyiv's Mystets'kyi Arsenal from July 11 to August 3, 2014. As in many of his earlier works, Solomko again blends anthropomorphic personifications on the Ukrainian map. The geopolitical imagination of dividing Ukraine or at least cutting off parts of Ukraine's state territory, as represented by

the "Zhirinovskii map," become palpable in Solomko's personification of the state territory with a rather contemporary (judging by the haircut) female nude whose legs have been amputated (figure 13.10).

Figure 13.10. Mapping amputation as art: map artist Yuri Solomko. Photograph: Dirk Uffelmann. Reproduced with the permission of the artist. More works of art based on maps of Ukraine can be found at http://yurisolomko.com/.

Yuri Solomko's artistic imagination can be read as an attempt to make the spectator aware of the dominant category imposed on maps of Ukraine in 2014, be these linguistic, military, or state border maps: the category of division or amputation. His map art reinstalls an anthropomorphic and thus humanistic perspective that simplifying and thus holistic geopolitical instrumentalizations of geolinguistic maps expel. It renders intuitively accessible the incisive violence of binaristic geopolitical mapping that I have tried to deconstruct in this article.

NOTES

1. For the simplifying function of geopolitical images, see Breton and Schiffman 1991: 49, with regard to Ukraine Zamiatin 2004: 45.

2. This criticism ignores Harley's rejection of the very possibility of a map's neutrality (Zamiatin 2004: 120).

3. This focus on Russian geopolitics does not preclude the diagnosis that "the other side"—be it the EU, NATO, or the United States—in its contrary geopolitical imaginations operates with simplifying devices as well. These, however, must remain beyond the scope of this article.

4. Emphasis in the original.

5. Emphasis in the original.

6. Emphasis in the original.

7. Emphasis in the original.

8. "The propagandist moulds the map's message by emphasizing supporting features, suppressing contradictory information, and choosing provocative, dramatic symbols" (Monmonier 1991: 87).

9. Shorter or longer historical overviews can be found in the majority of the relevant sociolinguistic publications (Bilaniuk 2005: 71–101; Kulyk 2009: 15–55).

10. For a furious critique of the postcolonial approach to Ukrainian culture from an historian's anti-constructivist point of view see Velychenko 2004: 391–404).

11. For the purpose of this article I must leave aside other languages spoken in Ukraine, such as Yiddish or Belarusian.

12. Emphasis added—D.U.

13. Emphasis in the original.

14. Emphasis in the original.

15. See also chapter 15 "The 'Russian World' Concept in Online Debate during the Ukrainian Crisis" by Mikhail Suslov in this book.

16. For example, the thread "Vo izbezhanie konfliktov" (For the sake of preventing conflict) of the discussion section of the Russian article "Obsuzhdenie: Russkii iazyk na Ukraine," Wikipedia, accessed July 10, 2015, https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Обсуждение:Русский_язык_на_Украине.

17. Emphasis in the original.

18. "Rosiis'ka mova v Ukraini," Wikipedia, accessed September 26, 2014, http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Російська_мова_в_Україні.

19. "Russkii iazyk na Ukraine," Wikipedia, accessed September 26, 2014, http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Русский_язык_на-Украине.

20. For flagging as a routine of banal nationalism see Billig 1995: 93–127.

21. http://lb.ua/news/2012/09/14/170564_russkiy_yazik_priznan_regionalnim.html, accessed August 15, 2014.

22. There seems to be a deliberate vagueness in the formulation: does the phrase "within Russia" (vnutri Rossii) that opens the first sentence also pertain to the topic of the second sentence—to Ukraine?

23. Cf. Steven Casey's and Jonathan Wright's insistence on the relevance of "leaders' 'mental maps'" (Casey and Wright 2008: xii).

24. For theories that the Russian government and military had prepared plans to annex parts of Ukraine before 2014, Malek 2014: 98–115.

25. Yuri Solomko was born in Crimea in 1962 and resides in Kyiv. One of the maps shown at Mystets'kyi Arsenal features the face of Borysthenes denoting the Dnipro River, which can be dated back to Herodotus (*Histories*, IV.53), projected over the map of Ukraine. (http://artarsenal.in.ua/event137.html)

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Chapter Fourteen

Euromaidan and the Geopolitical Struggle for Influence on Ukraine via New Media

Greg Simons

In the last decades geopolitics has been experiencing a revival of interest, both as a political pursuit and as an academic interest (Hepple 1986). The end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union were two events that significantly changed the global geopolitical landscape. This created a situation where the one remaining superpower was able to further increase its influence in territory that had once been the preserve of its Cold War rival. This situation caused a growing resentment in the new Russia, which asserted itself in accordance with the traditional means of classical hard power geopolitics in the 2008 Georgian-Russian War. Another conflict emanating from geopolitical competition has emerged in Ukraine with the events of Euromaidan from late 2013, the overthrow of President Yanukovich of Ukraine and the ensuing violence that followed. However, this time, geopolitics has been waged according to the rules of the new information age.

Therefore, it is critical to understand and address the issue of how information, and especially new media, connects with geopolitics and conflict. The nature of, and relationships between the mass media, information, and the public have changed. "First and foremost, public relations practitioners need to realise that managing the media is no longer an option. The media is now anyone with a cell phone, a lap top, a digital camera, or a tape recorder. With the advent of Wikipedia, You Tube, and, of course, blogs, the concept of the media as a gatekeeper or content provider is laughable" (Duhé 2007, xiv). A situation is created where it is difficult to control what people think, owing to the nature of the information environment, it is possible though to influence what people think about.

One of the ways to control what people think about is to create relationships based on shared values and norms, and through the use of emotion. The emotions that most affect social mobilization and political behavior are fear and enthusiasm, which are linked to the motivations of avoidance and approach (Castells 2012, 13–14). The focus of this chapter is to understand and analyze the use of new media assets in the Ukraine conflict, with attention paid to the events of the Euromaidan and the violence that followed in Ukraine and how this was characterized by selected pro-Euromaidan and anti-Euromaidan platforms that publish material in the English language. The research question for this paper is related to the method of influence using web 2.0 technology in a geopolitical conflict. Do the opposing sides use clashing sets of emotionally based norms and values in order to win the public over? If so, what are those competing sets of norms and values?

Concepts and theories that are used in this chapter are defined, such as the concepts of persuasion and influence. The theory of geopolitics and web 2.0 communication and how the two relate to each other is tackled next. Following this, the case studies, of pro-Euromaidan and anti-Euromaidan new media platforms engaged in political mobilization and shaping perception and influencing different publics are then introduced. Each is put in a background context of the politics that shaped the communication style and content of these different web 2.0 platforms.

THEORY AND METHOD

Geopolitics and Information

Geopolitics is an elusive term to define precisely. However, in a conventional (read traditional) academic sense it involves the study of the geography of international politics, with a focus on the relationship between the physical environment (territory, locations, resources, and so forth) and the conduct of foreign policy.

A weak and divided state in a geopolitically significant area, which is the object of potential influence by competing powers, is a recipe for a rapid escalation of tension that can quickly get out of hand. Such a situation hints at the potential presence of the element of emotion in the geopolitical equation. Pain raises and discusses the development of an emotional geopolitics of fear. With regards to analysis she sees "the need to reconceptualise the relationship between emotions and global issues in a way that challenges the hierarchical, procedural scaling of emotions that characterises much work on the war on/of terror" (Pain 2009, 15). This is specifically related to the terrorism issue, but there is other work on the use of communicated emotion in political words and deeds.

The information sphere is of gaining importance to the realm of geopolitics. Owing to the nature of the global information sphere, gaining total command of it is unlikely. However, there are possibilities to control it. The definition of control of the global information sphere is "the ability to use the infosphere for the furtherance of strategic objectives, and the ability to prevent the enemy from doing the same (in an effective manner)" (Lonsdale 1999, 143). With the coming and development of the Information Age the nature of geopolitics has evolved and created a new environment. Five aspects have been identified as being of critical importance to modern geopolitics.

- *Technological*—focus on the diffusion of information technologies and the associated trend of diminishing operating costs;
- *Economic*—a focus on the knowledge economy and the consequent impact upon the competitiveness of modern societies;
- *Occupational*—the increasing number of jobs being allocated within the information sector;
- *Spatial* (information flows)—worldwide information networks, which is reshaping the meaning and influence of geographic borders and time;

- *Cultural*—the role of intermediaries in the process of creating and spreading, together with the trend of information volume growth, which results in problems of social reality interpretation (Maliukevicius 2006, 125).

Of the different aspects listed above, spatial and cultural are the two most pertinent to the subject of geopolitics. These aspects potentially facilitate greater connectivity or division, intensifying collaboration or conflict between the diverse communities present in the global information space. Hence, similarities or differences can be emphasized and exaggerated in communications for the purpose of achieving specific political and/or social goals. Whereas classical geopolitics was influenced by geographical determinism, geopolitics in the current age is influenced by informational determinism, which transcends the original constraints of time and space. This in turn influences the nature of conflicts, shifting from a reliance on the use of military force to ones that involve the exploitation of information.

Andrei Manoilo created categories for a series of different tools that can be employed against a geopolitical adversary. Firstly, the use of *latent information management*, which involves an opponent's internal, economic, and cultural processes. The goal is to create an information environment that would influence the decision making to the benefit of the manipulator. A second means is *information-psychological aggression based on economic, political, and diplomatic pressure*. For example, this could involve the use of some form of economic blockade in conjunction with an informational attack upon an opponent. A third variant is an *information war based on economic blockade and threat of use of force* (Maliukevicius 2006, 131). These categorizations demonstrate the power of information and its use within the field of geopolitics. Information can be measured not only in terms of quantity, but also quality. If information is measured by quality and without taking into account its quality, it becomes somewhat meaningless and out of context.

Thus, the façade of a grassroots and spontaneous popular uprising is in fact a highly organised event with a great deal of foreign input. Sussman also notes that although these events were characterized as being "revolutions," they were in fact "little more than intra-elite power transfers" (Sussman 2010, 140), he also notes that key words are "the artillery of propaganda" (Sussman 2010, 157). Keywords frame and restrict how an event is communicated and perceived, and consequently the opinions and actions of people that stem from this projected belief. As far back as 1998, it was observed that "brand names and the ability to bestow an international seal of approval will become more important" (Keohane and Nye 1998, 89). The ultimate signal of successful regime change is when the new regime is branded a "democracy."

From Sussman's description of the Colour Revolutions, the role of free information is a critical aspect. The originators of the message had a clear set of political and geopolitical goals and objectives, therefore the desire to make it as freely available as possible in order to maximize the audience and those that can be persuaded and influenced. It also fits with Manoilo's classification of latent information management of a geopolitical opponent's information sphere and the wider global information space (in order to cultivate favorable

public opinion through perception management). Mathew Fraser speaks of *geopolitics 2.0*, he notes three significant shifts: 1) States to individuals; 2) real world to virtual world mobilization and power; 3) old media to new media. He also notes that states have reacted to these changes by either censoring and/or deploying web platforms to achieve their goals and assert their influence (Fraser 2009).

WEB 2.0

Significant differences exist in communication strategies executed that are based in traditional media (newspapers, TV, and radio) and those that are run in new media (Cunningham 2010, 110). The failure to appreciate the differences and adapt can put a communicator at a significant disadvantage. The term Web 2.0 is a very specific one, which dates back to possibly as early as 2004 by some accounts, which occupies a segment of cyberspace. It is a highly interactive form of many to many communications.

> The social web, often referred to as Web 2.0, is made up of a second generation set of software applications, enabling users to collaborate, work, and share online. It is characterised by popular web applications such as You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, and myriad others. (Richter 2012, 107)

As noted above, the communication in new media is a dialogic form, which is based upon a many-to-many message flow. Simultaneously, the sending and receiving of information takes place. This differs from the traditional media sphere where monologic communication takes place based upon one-to-many communication flows, where one individual or group sends a message to many different people. Traditional media content creates consumers, whereas in the new media the audience are prosumers (both consumers and producers of content) (Cunningham 2010, 111). In terms of political activity and activism in the Internet age, Castells notes a number of critical aspects.

> First, social movements in the Information Age are essentially mobilised around cultural values. [. . .] In this context, communication of values, mobilisation around meaning, become fundamental. Cultural movements (in the sense of movements aimed at defending or proposing specific ways of life and meaning) are built around communication systems— essentially the Internet and the media—because they are the main way in which these movements can reach out to those who would adhere to their values, and from there to affect the consciousness of society as a whole. (Castells 2003, 140)

Aspects such as expressed values and cultural identification of the group or network are an important foundation for establishing it. These also form the basis for appealing to a broader audience, especially when involving lobbying and influence activities. A certain appeal and angle needs to be presented to the desired target audience(s). Answers need to be provided to the questions—who are we and what are our values. Social movements have other factors to consider as well.

> The second feature characterising social movements in the network society is that they have to fill a gap left by the crisis of vertically integrated organisations inherited from the industrial era. [. . .] loose coalitions, semi-spontaneous mobilisations, and ad hoc movements of the neo-anarchist brand substitute for permanent, structured, formal organisations. Emotional movements, often triggered by a media event, or by a major crisis, seem often to be more important sources of social change that the day-to-day routine of dutiful NGOs. (Castells 2003, 140–141)

"The processes of conflictive social change in the Information Age revolve around the struggles to transform the categories of our existence, by building interactive networks as forms of organisation and mobilisation" (Castells 2003, 143). This exerts an impact upon messages that enter the new media sphere, the original meaning of messages can be entirely transformed. "A discrete media conversation taking place within a complex communication environment will continually evolve, be subsumed by, or converge with other discrete media conversations, and overall take on a life of its own—a life that the message originator cannot predict" (Cunningham 2010, 111). These network communities are built through engagement, which is achieved through dialogic forms of communication; the new media sphere can provide the means of creating and then sustaining these movements.

METHODOLOGY

A research project that interviewed protestors in Kyiv found that 49 percent of respondents learned about the protests from Facebook, 35 percent from VKontakte, and 51 percent from different and diverse Internet news sites.[1] Facebook was the favorite form of social media, which has been confirmed in subsequent discussions with Ukrainian friends and acquaintances. There are many different platforms in social media that engage on both sides of the debate in the current Ukraine crisis. This necessitated a selection of the total number to narrow down the massive information flow on the subject. Individuals were present on Facebook, which were engaged in the informational war in Ukraine, such as Graham Phillips[2] and Alexander Mercouris.[3] However, individuals were discounted and groups or news aggregates were targeted instead. The underlying reason is that these groups are more likely to fit a role within the frame of transnational advocacy.

 A number of social media platforms, for and against Euromaidan, were chosen from an extensive search of different sites. These sites were chosen on the basis of their organizational aims and objectives (please see these below), which were aimed at international audiences and especially in the instances where they positioned themselves as a source for mainstream media. Two sites from each camp (for and against Euromaidan) were chosen, all of them had a presence on the social media platform (as well as elsewhere in some instances), the material posted on the Facebook sites was analyzed for references to values and norms, and rhetoric and the storyline was critically evaluated. The relatively low number of websites chosen is intended to permit a qualitative study to understand possible indications of the role of social media in the Ukraine crisis and how this fits into the bigger perspective of persuasion and influence in this geopolitical conflict. More detail is provided below on the particular pages chosen and their self-declared goals and objectives.

PRO-EUROMAIDAN

The Ukraine Media Crisis Centre (http://uacrisis.org/) publishes material in five different languages (English, French, German, Russian, and Ukrainian) and in addition to the website has a presence in different social media platforms—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Google

Plus. On their Facebook page[4] they state that "we provide the international community with objective information about events in Ukraine and threats to national security." They describe their mission as being "to provide the international community with objective information about events in Ukraine and threats to national security, particularly in the military, political, economic, energy and humanitarian spheres. During this crisis period, the Centre, on a 24/7 basis, will provide support to all the media who cover events in Ukraine."

Stop Fake is a site[5] that publishes material in English and Russian. It has a social media presence on YouTube, VKontakte, Google Plus, Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook.[6] They describe their role (in Russian) as "working journalists who consider the wrong and extremely dangerous spread of false information concerning the events in Ukraine as a whole and in Crimea in particular. Our task is reasoned refutation of various kinds of fakes and deception in all forms of media."

ANTI-EUROMAIDAN

The Facebook group Repression in Ukraine[7] is a public group with some 289 members. It situates itself as "a news aggregator for collecting information of all incidents of repression in Ukraine committed by the fascists junta in power in Kiev supported by Western regime-backed Banderite-Orangist groups." They describe their mission as being to "have a central source for distributing data to all interested parties. Help anti-fascist activists, journalists, scholars and all interested parties in their work for spreading the truth about what is happening in Ukraine."

The Anti-Maidan + say no to Fascism Community on Facebook (which can be found by following this link[8] has some 799 "likes," information in Russian can be found at VKontakte with a link provided on their page.[9] A mission statement is provided concerning their purpose —"our community's mission is to share trustworthy information on the situation in Ukraine and highlight Russia's, EU and US positions relating to this issue." A rather long description is provided, but the positioning is clear—"anti" means "against" AND "instead of." We are not just against the #Maidan as a political manipulation which was paid and staged by some #Ukrainian oligarchs and some #US-politicians and processed as the greatest tragedy of #Ukraine taking away lives and prosperity of so many people. We stand for the opposite." There are a number of different pages on Facebook that have similar names and objectives as this group, which are given links from this page.

WEB 2.0 AND THE INFORMATION WAR ABOUT UKRAINE

Background

The particular spark that is associated with the protests, which quickly developed into a revolution, occurred on November 21, 2013, when President Viktor Yanukovich suspended preparation for signing an Association Agreement and Free Trade Agreement with the European Union.[10] The primary narratives that come from Western governments and mass media depict events around Euromaidan and the seizure of political power in Kiev as of being a spontaneous local grassroots action by democratically-minded forces opposing the corrupt

and authoritarian pro-Russian regime of President Yanukovich.[11] A norm and value-based catchphrase was used by those protesting—"Ukraine is Europe."[12]

The events in Ukraine have been characterised as a crisis, and not a revolution or war, which is important in trying to distance public perception of something that occurs "naturally" rather than being contrived. By focusing attention on events as they unfolded in Kiev, and especially in Maidan (Independence Square) the information content was well-suited to an entertainment-like news format for the international public and Kiev's Independence Square was developed into an iconic event (together with the symbolism, values, and norms expressed by this act).

Social media play an important role in civic mobilization and shaping perceptions of the conflict and events in Ukraine. The crisis in Ukraine is certainly seen in the crisis of information where different actors and interests seek to manage information and perception in order to project a "desired" perception of events and people that is often wrapped in a specific set of competing values and norms that shape the framing and narratives used.

Pro-Euromaidan

Protests were projected as a "natural" and spontaneous reaction to the excesses of corruption and nepotism of the Yanukovich regime and as an expression of the desire and will of the Ukrainian people. The political crisis from the anti-Yanukovich forces was characterized as being non-violent, spontaneous and democratic in nature (to enjoy the same basic rights as enjoyed in Western countries). The violent overthrow of Yanukovich was seen as being justified within the frame of democratic means being unlikely (the excuse that the elections would be rigged) and it was the popular will of the Ukrainian people. The presence of radical elements in the ranks of the protests was downplayed.

The supposed point of "no return" came when Yanukovich turned down the EU association agreement in exchange for the more lucrative offer from Russia. This was used to project the image of Ukraine being deviated from the popular desire for a Western civilizational trajectory and being kept in the Russian orbit. Hence, the label of Yanukovich as being simultaneously under Russian influence and initiating Russian influence and therefore being out of touch with the will of the Ukrainian people.

Crowds increasingly gathered in Kyiv protesting against the decision and increasingly against Yanukovich. Protests began peacefully enough, but gradually degenerated into violence, which was blamed on the police and the political leadership of the country. The reaction of Western governments and organizations was to criticize the Ukrainian government on a number of fronts and to praise the activists for their bravery. Secretary-General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, stated that "first of all, I strongly condemn the excessive use of police forces we have witnessed in Kyiv. I would expect all NATO partners, including Ukraine, to live up to fundamental democratic principles including freedom of assembly and freedom of expression."[13] The police response to the protests was predictable and probably calculated into the timeline of the growing revolution. By the protestors being there, the organizers could count on an eventual response from police, which then could be used to "justify" increasingly violent protests, which then developed into revolution when the conditions became "right."

Ukrainian Crisis Media Centre takes a professional approach to content format and presentation. Material on their Facebook page appears in English, Russian, and Ukrainian. However, in spite of the claim that they provide "objective" information on the current events in Ukraine, the nature of the content demonstrates a clear and distinct bias in the selection of content. Information that appears clearly contains an anti-Russian bias and that supports the tenants of the Euromaidan narrative. For example, on October 23, 2014, shared a link that quoted the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister that she had no doubt in Russia's involvement in the Malaysian Airlines MH-17 crash.[14] However, there was no substantial proof to back up the claims made. Further, the caption of the posting was not substantiated by the interview on Bloomberg TV and is somewhat misleading.

In addition to supporting the role of reinforcing the script of Russia as the "bad guy" in the conflict, undermining and destabilizing the situation and acting contrary to international standards and norms, a counterpropaganda function is observed. One posting (also October 23, 2014—"Wake Up Europe" by George Soros) even went as far as to claim that Russia is not only a threat to the very existence of Ukraine, but Europe as a whole. This technique is meant to project the threat and give a personal perception thereby creating an atmosphere of empathy based upon the idea of a common threat. Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized the Ukrainian military for using outlawed munitions in the conflict. A post on October 23, 2014, refuted the claims.

> The report, published by the Human Right Watch on October 20 states that the Ukrainian government forces used cluster munitions in populated areas in Donetsk. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission spokesman Michael Bociurkiw said that their 100 monitors saw no such evidence. Ukrainian officials have also denied the use of such weapons in the area. Making such bold statements is fraught with serious consequences for any international organization. . . .[15]

The text and visuals set out to try and cast seeds of doubt upon the veracity of the claim by HRW. OSCE monitors are used as "evidence," but there is no indication that they were in a position to see whether banned munitions were used or not, it is implied, but not overtly stated. In general, there is little use of derogatory labels of the other side in the conflict. On August 23, 2014 a post appeared that compared Putin and Stalin, and on July 20 a post referred to a group of "Russian militants" as a "terrorist group." There have been substantial improvements in the quality of the English language text used over time. The earlier postings were amateurish and clumsy compared to the more contemporary posts.

Stop Fake has a function that is focused upon "debunking" or countering news from Russian information sources. The site encourages visitors to nominate possible fake stories that they can expose. The Facebook page has material that is only in Russian, there are less postings here than on the Ukrainian Crisis Media Centre. One of the source targets of Stop Fake is the news portal www.ukraina.ru. For example, on October 20, 2014 the posting concerning the Reuters investigation into the Maidan sniper massacre (from October 13, 2014) that was picked up and published by Ukrainia.ru.[16] The main point of the posting was the original material was embellished to suit the political agenda of the Russian state. It is stressed that the Reuters article found no one was blamed for being guilty of the act, but merely found "flaws" in the investigation.

Another posting on October 19, 2014, concerned a manipulated photo being carried by Ukrainian nationalists to include a photo of Hitler on a banner beside Ukrainian Insurgent Army leaders, which was circulated on the social networking site VKontakte.[17] This fake and counterfake story demonstrates the importance of the battle of values and norms within the context of political and armed conflicts.

However, Stop Fake goes beyond the scope of the conflict in Ukraine in attacking information that appears in Russia's information space. A posting titled "Channel One Falsely Interpreted Jen Psaki's Words in Order to Accuse the USA in Financing the Revolution in Hong Kong" appeared on October 19, 2014. There was an attempt to justify adding such information on the basis that "at first sight the revolution in Hong Kong and financing of non-governmental organizations by the USA do not concern Ukraine. But with the help of the Kremlin voicer—the Channel One—Moscow tells that the USA finances all the revolutions, including those in Hong Kong and Ukraine."[18]

Both of the social media sites studied and analyzed here displayed a reasonably professional journalistic standard in terms of the format and presentation of material, and generally the absence of derogatory or hate speech. However, there was a clear case of material bias; information presented supported the pro-Euromaidan message and there was nothing to contradict it. So in spite of the promise of "objective" information and coverage there was a clear subjective element. There are many examples given of Russian news fakes, yet no such equivalents from Western or Ukrainian media sources. At times, there was misleading material, such as the "interpretation" of what the Australian foreign minister said concerning the MH-17 disaster.

Anti-Euromaidan

The expressed values and beliefs in this category differed greatly from the pro-Euromaidan groups. One of the first points that need to be raised is that the events of Euromaidan were characterized as being Western organized and sponsored, and not as a spontaneous grassroots form of political protest. Protestors were viewed as being provocative and violent in nature, which contrasts with the non-violent emphasis in Western mass media. The eventual violent overthrow of Yanukovich was denounced as being undemocratic, arguing even if he is corrupt he was the democratically elected head of state. Emphasis was placed upon the radical elements of the anti-Yanukovich forces, such as the extreme right wing organizations as Right Sector and Svobodo. This led to the rise of fascism and a fascist coup, bringing in the political symbolism of the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) and the fight against Nazism.

Blame for the crisis situation is clearly and solely laid at the feet of Yanukovich and his government by Western political circles; the increasingly violent protestors are absolved of any wrong doing. However, there were some media events that projected the worst and damaging complicity of the United States in supporting regime change in Ukraine. The most obvious example was the recorded phone conversation between Nuland and the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt.[19] In the recording, which was broadcast on YouTube, Nuland and Pyatt discuss who should be included in the new government to be and who should

be excluded. For example, Arseniy Yatsenyuk was approved and Vitali Klitschko (leader of the party UDAR) was not. A number of articles have appeared in non-mainstream and non-corporate media that refer to the events and result of Euromaidan as an exercise in nothing less than regime change. The primary argument being, whatever his personal flaw, Yanukovich was the duly elected leader of Ukraine and he was overthrown by non-democratic means that was supported by the United States and the West at large.[20] This is in keeping with the characterization of the United States as a Powerful Broker. The specific form of power that is utilized is the coercive typology.

One of the "early" controversies that emerged, and only did so thanks to an intercepted phone call between the EU foreign affairs chief, Catherine Ashton and the Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet, concerned the story behind the Kiev snipers. This was assumed and blamed on Yanukovich. However, the leaked phone call[21] told another story, and indicated that it may in fact be snipers employed by someone within the Euromaidan movement that employed them.[22] The story was carried in some mainstream Western media, such as the Guardian, simply because this was too big a story and potentially damaging to just ignore. Social media contain numerous groups that take an anti-Euromaidan stance, and their approaches are wide and varied.

The group *Repression in Ukraine* I solely found on Facebook, uses English as its primary language (some video material is in Russian with English subtitles). They position themselves as communicating to an international audience (hence English language) and as having a counter propaganda function. There is no reference to objectivity in their description, as everyone is permitted to post on their page (although the right to delete posts is reserved). Postings appear on a very regular basis on the site. A political agenda is set with references to being a repository for the truth against fascism and the Western-backed authorities in Kyiv. The themes of the information and material is varied and includes atrocity stories, the Kyiv regime's links to fascism and Nazism, volunteers fighting for the separatists in Eastern Ukraine (especially foreign volunteers), and many others.

Specific stories surveyed on the Facebook page tend to support the key anti-Euromaidan frames and narratives. On October 28, 2014, a post was titled "West turns Eastern Ukraine into a new Gaza." This is meant to undermine the West as a benevolent actor in world politics by comparing the result of their actions with the more known and covered recent events in Gaza. "Voting to divide" was a caption in a post from October 27, 2014. The post counters the democracy narrative by saying that this is a façade that is being used to justify and bring legitimacy to the government that was brought to political power through a coup. A post on October 22, 2014 concerned an article referring to the use of cluster weapons by the Ukrainian military, stories concerning Ukraine's economic situation, and "failed state" ranking appeared on the twenieth and seventeenth of October 2014 respectively. Putin's criticism of human rights violations in Ukraine by the authorities appeared on October 14, a media report that was critical of a human rights report by the United Nations on October 13. A story depicting the United States as a police state was posted on October 10. These stories depict Ukraine as a

country ruled by an extremist government that is supported by Western political and economic interests in order to serve a geopolitical agenda.

Anti-Maidan + say no to Fascism Community was the other anti-Euromaidan page that was analyzed. It also appears on Facebook. The stated mission is to share trusted information concerning the positions of Russia, the United States, and the European Union on Ukraine and the unfolding events there. Material is mostly in English. Links are shared on the page, with many graphic pictures and content relating to atrocities in the current time and in the past (namely associated with the Holocaust).

On October 28, 2014, a post was published that posed the header "inconvenient questions to the Maidan supporters." A total of twenty-eight points were presented that were intended to provoke reflection on the question of who is to blame for the current and unfolding situation in Ukraine. They were intended to make the reader begin to question the underlying motives and agenda of domestic and foreign supporters of the Euromaidan movement. Another post on the same day questioned why so much information concerning the downed airliner, MH-17, was still not made publicly available at this stage. The implication being that "inconvenient" information was being suppressed in order to maintain the pro-Euromadian narrative. There are various references and stories on the undemocratic nature of the regime in Kyiv. Posts concerning the comments of U.S. and European sources that support the general anti-Euromaidan narrative are used, such as a post from October 26 from a French diplomat who was quoted as saying the West should not arm Ukraine as Putin has already won. The site does not present the "other" side of the story (EU and U.S. perspectives) given the nature of the stories that appear, and the source of many of the articles (from Russian state media).

These two social media projects both act in accordance with supporting the anti-Euromaidan perspective. The stories serve to cast significant doubt upon the fundamental foundations of the pro-Euromaidan legitimacy, questioning the legality of the coup, stressing the violent nature of the new regime and the fact that there has been no significant change (changing the faces of power but not the nature of it), the unconstructive and dangerous actions of the West in the regime change and subsequent anti-terrorist operation (ATO), and the constructive role of Russia in comparison.

ANALYSIS

From November 27, 2013, some twenty interviewers were present at Kyiv protest sites carrying out interviews amongst those participating. Five preliminary findings were announced in January 2014, some of which contradicted news media reports. 1) Protestors are older than expected. 2) Protestors are more diverse than expected. 3) Social media are important, but not only as a provider of information about the existence of protests. 4) Social networks—both within and outside of social media—seem to be highly influential in bringing people out into the streets. 5) Social media and Internet news sites seem to have been successfully used as key framing devices for protest themes."[23]

Mainstream media have been using material and identified emerging news stories from social media sources, such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. There is a rush to be the first to

publish breaking stories, where social media (many mainstream media have a simultaneous presence in social media, too). It is only in the aftermath that some kind of reflection may occur and more "sober" journalism emerges, such as seen in the Maidan sniper story. Reuters has also begun to introduce new information and possibilities into the exact cause of the shooting down of MH-17. On October 27, 2014, an article opened with the sentence "Dutch prosecutors investigating the crash of Malaysian Airlines MH 17 believe the aircraft might have been shot down from the air but that a ground-to-air missile is more likely."[24]

There have been cases of mainstream mass media using social media content, such as the Guardian that published a data blog of some thirteen thousand Instagram photos taken over a 144 hour period of the violence in Kyiv during February 2014.[25] Although this chapter focuses upon social media, it should not be seen as being remote from the mainstream media environment. Social media can exert an influence not only in the new media sphere, but the traditional mass media information sphere, too.

The current situation in the information environment in and about Ukraine validates the observation by Duhé that managing the media is no longer an option owing to portal information and communication technologies potentially allowing a large pool of people to collect and disseminate information. Therefore, this becomes an exercise in not controlling what people think precise, but rather what they think about. Information and communication is not only about "informing" publics, but also influencing opinion, perception and social mobilization. The "best" mechanism for achieving this is through eliciting strong emotional impulses that cause fear or enthusiasm—motivating feelings of avoidance or approach. Power is found in the ability of the message to influence and persuade their audience. This is aided if the messenger can get the audience to become actively involved and form a relationship, transforming them from a consumer to a prosumer. It adds a greater sense of perceived legitimacy and trust, because the interaction is based upon freedom of choice, the interaction is symbolic (especially in terms of norms and values expressed), and it is a process of self-persuasion.

Web 2.0 allows advocacy networks to transform the practice of national sovereignty. The transnational advocacy networks examined here display the common traits highlighted by Keck and Sikkink (1998)—the central role of values or principled ideas, the belief in individuals being able to make a difference and the creative use of information. Their role and significance is boosted in the environment of informational uncertainty that characterizes the current conflict. Web 2.0 has also transformed geopolitics from its constraints of geographical space and time to the informational dimensions that have been outlined by Maliukevicius (2006). The aspects of occupational, spatial, and cultural are particularly apparent in the Ukraine crisis in the social media platforms studied. Much greater attention and priority has been dedicated to those working in the information sector, either professionally or non-professionally; transnational advocacy groups have "blossomed" in the information war. The information flowing through worldwide information networks has reshaped the perception, influence, and meaning of geographic borders and time. Messages are sent instantaneously to networks that can and often do, span the globe. Communities that are remote in terms of geographical

proximity and time are closely connected by shared values and norms via "virtual" networks. This connects to the point concerning cultural aspects, those groups or communities are connected to each other emotionally via shared values and norms, which influences how they perceive and process worldly events.

This was particularly evident in the two groupings that were assigned pro-Euromaidan and anti-Euromaidan. These groups had central values and principles that supported their version of events and clashed with the key understandings and narratives of the "other." Those belonging to the group came from diverse geographical locations, but were emotionally united by their shared worldview. Those actively engaging in the respective groups (prosumers) were mostly in agreement with the worldview and politics expressed by the social media platform. When disagreement and divergence emerged, there was a terse exchange of accusations and counteraccusations. For example, referring to the perceived other as a CIA paid troll or a Kremlin paid troll.[26] One of the problems that are faced by Ukrainians caught in the current situation is the dilemma of being forced between different poor alternatives. In a conversation with a Ukrainian friend from Kyiv, he expressed this problem well. Stating that the Euromaidan brand has been "brandjacked" (co-opted) by extremist elements, however, he is not prepared to state this publicly because this would have the effect of validating one of the key narratives expressed by Russia.[27]

An interesting concept that was raised in the traditional geopolitics context is that of the shatterbelt (Kelly 1986). This is the idea that of strategically important areas where weak states that experience internal division become important to the interests of rival major powers. The different symbolic and substantive actions by the United States and Russia in the Ukraine crisis seem to indicate that this country has become a shatterbelt in the geopolitical competition between the countries and their allies. Both international groupings are using the exploitation of the emotional geopolitics of fear, as outlined by Pain (2009), which seeks to influence the development of the Ukraine issue—Russia concerning the issue of the United States as a threat to global security and stability and the United States that Russia is a civilizational threat (to the West) and does not behave according to "accepted" international norms, values, and practices.

CONCLUSION

Two questions were posed in the introduction of this chapter. Do the opposing sides use clashing sets of emotionally based norms and values in order to win the publics over? If so, what are those competing sets of norms and values? However, before the competition for influence and persuasion is undertaken to shape perception and opinion, there needs to be a competition for credibility of the messengers in order to win over the publics at the expense of their opponent. This necessitates communication platforms that are competing for influence to not only promote their intangibles (such as reputation, credibility, and legitimacy), but to simultaneously attack the intangible assets of their opponent(s). This is in keeping with the observations made by Lonsdale (1999). The ultimate aim is to be able to exploit the information space fully, whilst preventing the opponent from doing the same.

As noted by Castells (2012) and Pain (2009), emotion is a key aspect to gaining attention, influencing, and mobilizing publics. The manner in which this is done within the context of this study puts forward the idea of a clash of political ideologies, each vision vying for the being seen as the "best" option for organizing society. The pro-Euromaidan platforms stressed the "spontaneous," grassroots, and democratic nature of the movement that overthrew Yanukovich, who was characterized as being someone that was a puppet of Russia and not acting in accordance with the interests of the Ukrainian people. Their (Ukraine's) civilizational choice is a Western model, and not an Eastern (read Russian) one. Anti-Euromaidan social media platforms characterized the events of February 2014 as being a foreign back and anti-constitutional coup, and that the "democratic" forces were in fact riddled with extremist (fascist and neo-Nazi) elements. These are emotional appeals that are designed to appeal to certain values—on the one hand attraction through enthusiasm by the pro-Euromaidan set based upon being just like us (Westerners). On the other hand, the anti-Euromaidan platforms tend to use the emotion of aversion through fear (against the spectre of Nazism). Information in the different segments of the information sphere tended to support the political views and agenda of the site in question.

When information is provided free of charge and without any form of restriction to accessing it, this cancels out the motivation of financial profit as being the primary reason for communication. The fact that it is freely available also rules out any strategic use of the information, which leaves the most likely reason for these particularly social media platforms to communicate being the cultivation of influence. The nature of the geopolitical information environment on Ukraine seems to follow the changes outlined by Fraser (2009)—from state to individual actors, real world to virtual world mobilization and power, and old media to new media. This does not mean that traditional media and real-world environments have become totally irrelevant, their ability to dominate has been curtailed though.

As the leading foreign actors actively involved in the Ukraine crisis, the United States, the EU, and Russia, all try to project themselves as being honest brokers. However, their actions betray their rhetoric and tend to indicate that they are in fact powerful brokers. Sussman (2010) gave a very sobering account of the U.S. use of information and revolution to aid foreign policy objectives, especially in the field of regime change. There are similarities with Ukraine, such as the intra-elite power transfers and the "artillery of propaganda." According to Manoilo's categorizations of informational tools used in geopolitical conflicts (latent information management, information-psychological aggression, and information war) are present in the Ukraine crisis by the foreign actors—use of propaganda and information manipulation, pressuring governments, support of threat or actual use of military force, and economic sanctions.

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Chapter Fifteen

The "Russian World" Concept in Online Debate during the Ukrainian Crisis

Mikhail Suslov

This chapter discusses the formation of today's Russian geopolitical identities in the online debates about the Ukrainian crisis, with particular focus on the concept of the "Russian World." Today, the ideological content of the "Russian World" has little to do with its initial design as a specific vision of the Russian-speaking diaspora, defined as a cultural and linguistic community (Gradirovskii 1999, Shchedrovitskii 2000, 2001, 2005 [1999]), and as a valuable medium for the flow of ideas, technologies, and capitals from the rest of the world into Russia. The concept was institutionalized in the 2000s as the official policy toward Russian "compatriots abroad" (Morozov 2009, Saari 2014, Laruelle 2015), being tightly embedded in the state-sponsored modernization project of a mildly liberal stance.

Since the enthronization of Patriarch Kirill (Gundiaev) as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2009 and especially since the tumultuous fall and winter of 2011, and the reelection of Vladimir Putin as Russia's president in 2012, the official narrative has gradually turned toward political conservatism, cultural fundamentalism, and international isolationism, paradoxically combined with expansionism. In this intellectual climate, the "Russian World" concept speedily lost its universalistic, inclusive, non-confrontational thrust toward hybridity and net-centered deterritorialization. Instead, accreted together with the twin-concept of "Holy Rus" (Suslov 2014), ardently advertised by Patriarch Kirill, the "Russian World" became less associated with dispersed people—bearers of "Russianness"—and more with territories and historical legacies. Thus, it began to signify an ethnically and religiously united landmass, comprised of Russia proper, Belarus, Ukraine, and, depending on the geopolitical appetites of ideologues, parts of other post-Soviet republics. Articulated in this particular way and legitimized by President Putin (Putin 2014), the "Russian World" has come to signify the essentialistic vision of so-called "Russian civilization."

However, on the popular level the "Russian World" concept can now ideologically legitimize different, often diametrically opposed, political strivings and emotions, ranging from leftist anticapitalist rhetoric to ultranationalist sentiment, and all the way through Soviet nostalgia and religious Orthodox visions. More than that, the Kremlin apparently lacks the power and/or the will to fully control the meaning of the "Russian World" in online discussions, so that it can easily be squatted (and is being squatted) by anti-government Internet users. Contrary to common opinion, it is indeed possible to support "the Russian World" and to be an inveterate enemy of the present Russian regime.

That being said, the present chapter focuses on how different interpretations of the "Russian World" concept are being created, negotiated, and articulated in the Russian-language social media. Focusing on the "popular geopolitics" (Sharp 2000, Dittmer 2010), this research argues that the digital platform for debating geopolitics challenges its canonical—and to be sure still very useful—tripartite analytical division (Tuathail 1999) into "formal" (ideologies and theories), "practical" (political decision making) and "popular" (grassroots' imagery). The communicative affordances of the digital environment close these three levels together by providing ample opportunities for sharing, commenting, and debating geopolitical knowledge.

This has two consequential corollaries. On the one hand, the growing connectivity between "elitist" and "profane" forms of geopolitical knowledge gives rulers a perfect instrument for manipulating popular opinion because, while debating geopolitical issues, they use hegemonic language and thereby not only *speak* about geopolitics, but also actively *perform* it (Roesen and Zvereva 2014). For example, debates over the Internet meme "Crimea is ours" have made millions of users not just supporters or opponents of the annexation, but its "participators" in the sense that people were trained to perceive Crimea as "ours" by endlessly debating its "ourness" during the online flame wars (Suslov 2014). On the other hand, the very communicative logic of new media fosters civic activism, plurality of opinion, and resistance to hegemonic discourse (Khondker 2011, Wall and El Zahed 2011), which in its turn imposes limitations on how geopolitics is conceptualized and performed on the "elite" level. This analytical angle differentiates this research from studies of the propaganda campaigns on Ukraine (Fedor 2015) by conceptually framing online debates as autonomous reasoning and emotionally sensing subjects, and not just puppets parroting propagandistic clichés.

Studying "digital geopolitics" entails a few methodological qualifications, and offers some new avenues of thinking about the traditional agenda of "critical geopolitics' (Tuathail 1996, Agnew 2003), such as the commensurability of representational and non-representational aspects of analyzing human relations to space and power. Martin Müller, helpfully introducing Judith Butler's concept of performativity to the field (Müller 2009), shows how narrating geopolitics could at the same time be an illocutionary speech-act. This observation becomes even more relevant in relation to "digital geopolitics" because of the specific status of online utterances. From this viewpoint, social networks are a historically unique machine for performing identities by means of tightly connecting a person's (geo)political reasoning with the practices of constructing the Self (e.g., on Facebook, Vkontakte, or Livejournal).

The chapter teases out the ideological consequences of the digitalization of geopolitical polemics, arguing that, in spite of the attempts of the Russian elite to articulate the meaning of the "Russian World," it operates as a "floating signifier" in social media, opening up horizons for different interpretations. At the same time, the "Russian World" is *performed* rather than *debated,* thereby becoming deeply and emotionally connected with users' identity.

The primary sources for this research were provided by the Integrum Social Media service, which I used to monitor the most popular Russian-language internet networking platforms (vk.com, twitter.com, livejournal.com, and facebook.com) for the period between January 1 and May 1, 2015, focusing on a few randomly chosen chronological reference points: January

3, January 13, January 31, February 26, March 3, March 15, April 9, and April 15. This forms the database of approximately four thousand posts (ca. seven hundred posts per day) which mention the "Russian World" in different contexts. As an important qualification, only posts originating from Russia were taken into account, which means that the large bulk of documents on the "Russian World"—whose territorial provenience was automatically identified (by the Integrum monitoring service) as Ukraine—Crimea included—was deliberately excluded from the present analysis.[1]

THE "RUSSIAN WORLD": BRUTALIZATION OF THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

The "Russian World" has been a latecomer to online debate; discussions concerning the concept in previous decades left almost no impression at grassroots level. Sporadically quoted by "common" users, the term fully belonged to the expert community. Things rapidly changed between February 5 and 8, 2014, that is, long before the aggravation of the Ukrainian crisis on February 18and the replacement of political power in Crimea (February 23–27). Paradoxically, the impetus came from the camp of the opponents of the "Russian World," who appropriated and recycled it to sarcastically debunk Russia's aggressive plans in Ukraine. For example, one user reposted the following passage written in a mocking tone: "these days bloodcurdling moans are sounding here and there . . . [you hear that] Russia should begin to stamp its feet and rattle its nuclear sabre, and in all possible ways actively engage in the Ukrainian scandal. Otherwise, you see, the Russian world is perishing before your eyes" (S. 06.02.2014). A similarly negative comment was made soon thereafter, which said: "Are you still 'raving about freedom and democracy?' The RuSSian [capital letters hint at the SS squads] world is already coming crawling to you, [bringing you] GULAG. . . . In hoc signo vinces" (S.R. 08.02.2014).

   Unexpectedly (but logically), this sarcastic instrumentalization of the concept for online polemics unintentionally brought about a surge in mentions of the term in the online communicative context. Ironic comments on the pro-Kremlin geopolitical clichés ignited the counter attack from the Russian "patriotically" inclined users.[2] Figure 15.1 represents the screenshot from the discussion thread, consisting of some two hundred comments below an op-ed piece on the necessity of working out an ideology for Russia. The first user critically assesses any "top-down" attempts to formulate an ideology, suggesting instead that an ideology should organically grow from the grassroots, and hesitantly muses: "perhaps, there is such a trend . . . [it is] the reunification of the Russian World." In response, the second user parallels the "Russian World" to Nazi Germany's "Third Reich" project. He obscenely paraphrases the epigraph to Alexander Radishchev's *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow,* referring to the "Russian World" as something monstrous, aggressive, and threatening to any normalcy in the civilized world, much in line with Radishchev's intention to castigate the monstrosity of absolutist rule in Russia. The first user reacts by affirmatively speaking about the existence of the "Russian World" and even claims that his adversary also "belongs to the Russian World" because he writes in Russian.

Figure 15.1. Screenshot of a discussion. Source: http://domestic-lynx.livejournal.com/115106.html. Access date 1 June 2015.

This vignette exposes the mechanism of the viral spread of the term in the Runet for the purpose of linguistic violence. Schematically, it could be shown as follows: 1) expert opinion vaguely mentioning the "Russian World" as a possible project for Russia's future development, 2) vigorous denunciation of the "Russian World," which nevertheless presupposes its "reality" as something worthy of being denounced, 3) vigorous defense of the "Russian World," whose "reality" is now out of the question. This new communicative context provided such a nutrient medium for the concept, that its usage instantaneously surpassed the number of its mentions in the "expert" press. Figure 15.2 shows that circulation of the "Russian World" surged in early February, and energetically spiked in July 2014 with forth-three thousand hits as compared to three thousand in the press. The mechanism and chronology of the viral spread of the "Russian World" as an Internet meme makes me skeptical about the version of the direct Kremlin manipulation of online debates.
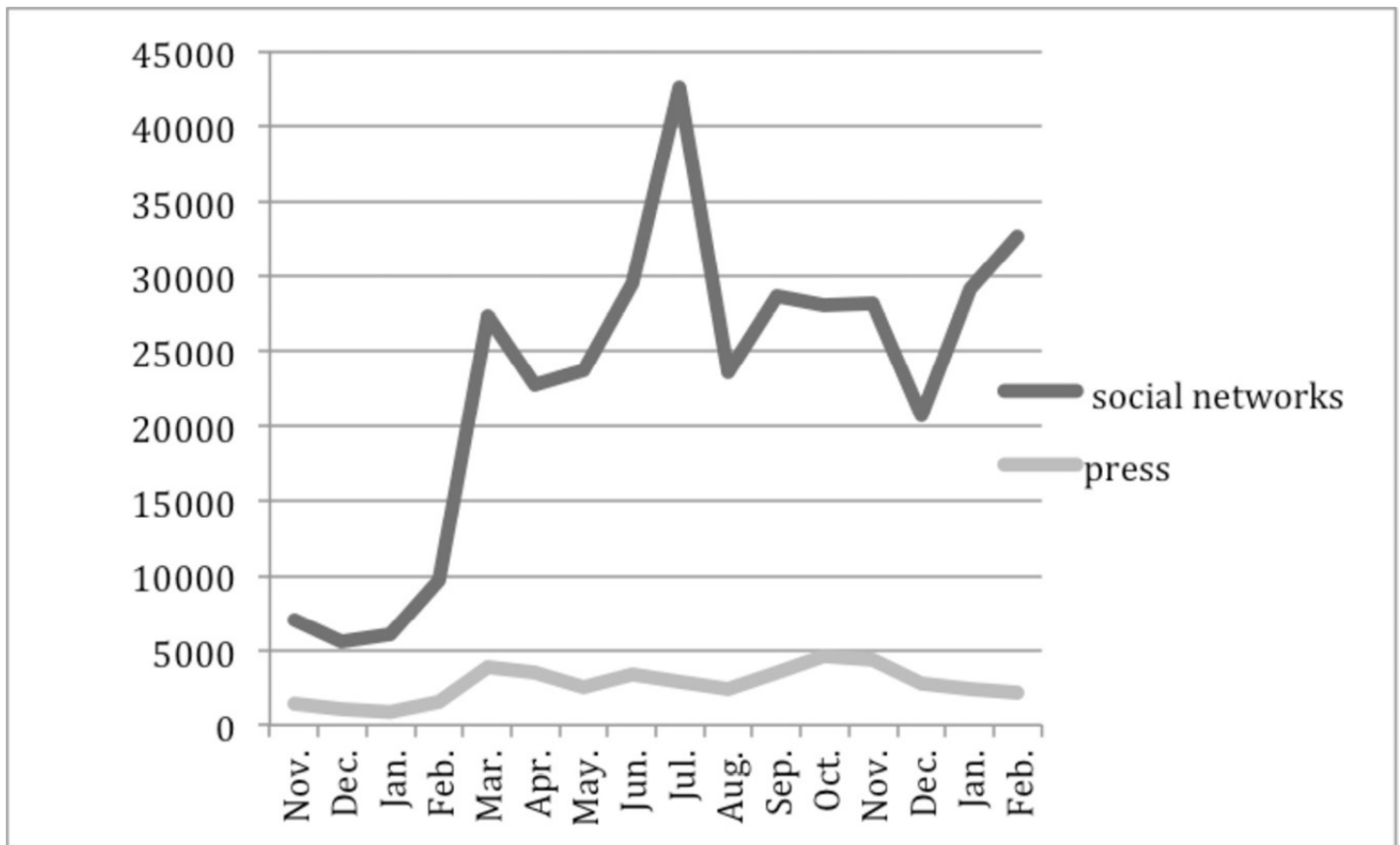
Figure 15.2. Absolute numbers of mentions of the "Russian World" in social networks as compared to the press. November 2013 to January 2015. Source: Integrum Profi (www.integrum.com) and Yandex Blog Search (https://blogs.yandex.ru). Graph created 17 April 2015.

The geopolitical debates on Ukraine rapidly degenerated into a "brutalized" form of struggle for recognition (Honneth 2012), when users lapsed into the Hegelian "master and slave" paradox: in trying to injure an interlocutor as much as possible, they deprive her of recognition, but by so doing they destroy the ground for self-recognition (Brink 2007). This has made online discourses iterative, often graphically visualized (e.g., through the extensive use of "demotivators") and often simply redundant: a large part of the flame wars about Ukraine could well be waged without a discursive component at all—it is enough to display one's user picture featuring symbols of Russian or Ukrainian statehood. By "flagging" their geopolitical affinity (Billig 1995), users do not enter into a constructive political dialogue which could expose and question their ideological beliefs, but the "conversation" of sorts nevertheless continues in the form of performative demarcation between "us" and "them."

The brutalization of the struggle for recognition during the Ukrainian crisis gradually ousted the "Russian World" concept from the sphere of (geo)political deliberation, and washed away its ideological component. Figure 15.3 shows the depoliticization of the online polemics, representing one discussion board dated May 2015 (cf. Figure 15.1). Here an opponent of the "Russian World" asserts that people are fleeing when the "Russian World" is "coming." The discussion, however, does not happen because the interlocutor chooses not to engage in the ideological deliberations. Instead, he has copy-pasted a single phrase "Ukraine is shit"

repeated many times in one post, and then posted a demotivator featuring Ukraine as "country 404," that is, as a non-existent, failed state. Hence, on the one hand, the insult is iterated to the extent that it even stops being an insult and turns into a childish kind of name-calling. On the other hand, the user delegates his/her voice to a demotivator, created by someone else. This exchange of rejoinders also seems disconnected; if it were not a few days' discussion consisting of more than two hundred comments, it would give the impression of people talking to themselves in a communicative vacuum. Taken together, these polemical strategies manifest the irrevocable breakdown of a dialogue, in which the "Russian World" loses its ideological meaning and becomes a sign through which people assert their identification with a particular political "brand."

Alexey

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Alina

Русский мир. Гиви угрожает жителям Донецка.

Люди бегут, спасаются от русского мира. А российский террорист спрашивает у украинцев, почему они не хотят идти убивать украинцев.

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Alexey

Нация которая забывает о своём прошлом, и не имеет буду

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Thus, contrary to the theorization of "webs of hate" in Adi Kuntsman's study of online debates about the Gaza war (Kuntsman 2010), this kind of polemics lacks emotional authenticity, becoming merely an exchange of symbolic markers or "reminders" of hatred. A reader of this particular discussion thread gaspingly observes that, out of all two hundred-odd comments, 70 simply repeat the multiple "Ukraine is shit" statement, and similar numbers relate to equally mechanically copied counterobscenities. This means that it is not even possible to apply the term "trolling" to describe this kind of polemics,[3] because trolling is possible when the intention of debates, at least initially, is to rationally discuss an issue: to understand and to be understood (Hopkinson 2013), whereas the present cyberwars around the "Russian World" represent the next, "post-trolling" stage, on which the bare logic of a "brutalized" struggle for recognition is fully exposed. The lack of a language barrier and insufficient capabilities to moderate all discussions make the interpenetration of pro- and anti-"Russian World" debaters into each other's discussion boards almost seamless and renders the rhetoric of ostracizing "trolls" meaningless. The question, thus, appears to be how is articulation of the "Russian World" possible in this antagonistic context?

GRAMMAR OF THE "RUSSIAN WORLD": CROUCHING, HIDDEN, OR BETRAYED?

With a few exceptions, the master-narrative in online debates—used by supporters and opponents alike—consists in essentialization of the "Russian World" concept. The brutalization of the online polemics is destroying the environment in which the mental grid of the "Russian World" could be questioned and exposed as a social construct. As a result, this concept is generally viewed as a natural body, which exists a priori and beyond the sphere of ideology, and as such it is not a matter of deliberation. The subtle "grammatical" watershed between supporters and opponents of the "Russian World" consists in the claim that it either "exists" (supporters), or "moves" (opponents).

If we look closer at Figure 15.1 again, a pro-Russian user is literally saying that "events in the world are developing exceptionally favorably for Russia and the Russian world," thereby negating the possibility of even questioning the "existence" of the "Russian World," which is postulated by passing as a natural and self-evident phenomenon.[4] His opponent, by contrast, stresses the aspect of the motion: the "Russian World" "is crouching" and "is striving to unite with the neighboring territories." Importantly, the image of a "crawling Russian World" also implicitly legitimizes it as "naturally" existent, but its verbal form provides for a chance to actively resist its motion: if the "Russian World" is moving, you can stop its move. This language uses such wording as "the Russian World has come, or ". . . will come." The Internet users, for example, may comment on the information about the bombardment of a kindergarten, destruction of a children's playground by tanks (Figure 15.4) or a complete blackout in a town

in Donbass with the words "Here came the Russian World" (club74908776 31.01.2015; N.N. 31.01.2015). The homonymy of the word "mir" which means both "world" and "peace" in Russian, leaves much scope for language games as well as for Orwellian allusions: "war is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength." Thus, for many online debaters "russkii mir" signifies "war."

Детишки, выходите на площадку играть,
тут русский мир пришел!

View translation

Figure 15.4. Demotivator "Kiddies, go out on the playground. The Russian world has come here!" Source: http://twitter.com/sonja-dudry (account suspended). Accessed 1 Junde, 2015.

In contrast to the language of "movement," the logic of the aprioristic "existence" of the "Russian World" implies that all you can do is either to accept it or destroy it. Hence, the pro-Russian "party" widely uses the image of the "precarious Russian World," which is severely endangered, and requires defense and support. The master-narrative about the "splitting" (*raskalyvat'*) of the "Russian World" and "setting brothers against each other" (mestnie_oz 15.03.2015) implicitly constructs the irredentist version of a "Greater Russia," according to which Ukraine is but a part of Russia, not an independent political subject. Characteristically, this "splitting of the Russian World" rhetorical device was utilized by Patriarch Kirill, especially in the spring of 2014 (Kirill 2014b).

Other common tropes in online flame wars are "to defend the Russian World" and "to save the Russian World" from fascism, Nazism, NATO, the West and Western values, and so on (S.T. 13.01.2015; club87551163 9.04.2015). Ultimately, "to save the Russian World" boils down to "Putin, commit troops [into Ukraine]," that is, to militarily support "Novorossia" (territories in the Donbass region, controlled by the pro-Russian fighters). The "Putin, commit troops" catchphrase exposes the logic of disempowerment in geopolitical deliberation, when users, actively campaigning for some geopolitical cause, simultaneously surrender their agency to someone or something else.

The sense of vulnerability that ensues introduces the problematic of "betrayal," connecting the geopolitical reasoning with the intense emotionality around the trope of "treason," styled after the Stalin-era mass repressions (Hutchings and Szostek 2015) and echoing late imperial scandals and "moral panics" (Fuller 2006). Rhetorical structures supporting the a prioristic existence of the "Russian World" imply that users cannot debate its normative (political and ethical) basis but can only belong to it or betray it: thus, dissidence becomes treason. In its initial design by Petr Shchedrovitskii, belonging to the "Russian World" was a question of culture and language, so it depended on the individual's free choice and agency. Today, the "Russian World" has become a part of people's identity, so the disapproval of this concept equals the denial of their own "identity," the worst possible betrayal, whose repercussions border on the dehumanization of the "perpetrators." For example, reproaching an interlocutor for pro-Ukrainian sympathies, a user calls her "a bitch grown up on the Western ideology who has no roots. . . . The Earth does not need those animals [like you] in the disguise of a human. . . . [We should stop] destroying the Russian World by those venal creatures [as you]" (S.B. 01.02.2015). The logic of the "betrayal" allows the pro-government majority to estrange opponents of the regime both ethnically (as essentially non-Russian, often meaning: disguised Jews), and ethically (as morally corrupt).

Following this logic, if someone assumes a Ukrainian identity, this comes to signify the "treason" against the "Russian World." As one of the users pens, "*khokhol* [derogative for a Ukrainian] is a diagnosis. Those people become *khokhols* who are zombified Russians, not even knowing the [Ukrainian] language, but who want to renounce their Russian roots. [They are] Judas and bastards" (I.L. 15.04.2015). As a parallel rhetorical device to "betrayal," negativism toward the "Russian World" is often interpreted in religious terms as "possession" and/or mental disorder. One of the posts says, 'the Province [*Okraina,* i.e., Ukraine] has gone

completely mad. But this will pass by, and there will be repentance and regret for the betrayal of the Russian World" (D.P. 24.03.2015).

This creates a perspective in which the "Russian World" has a strong moral core, signifying a community of those "faithful" to their ancestral roots, history and culture. The ethical vision of the "Russian World" resonates with a slew of religious imagery about Russia as *Katekhon*, the last bastion of the true faith in the world, which prevents this world from going straight to hell (cf. Russian Orthodoxy is *Pravoslavie*, meaning the "true faith" as opposed to the Western apostates). Notably, the idea of being true to one's historical roots as a moral imperative has run all through the public speeches of Patriarch Kirill since late 2014. Thus, chairing the 18th Session of the All-Russian People's Assembly in November 2014, he labeled the pro-Ukrainian side of the conflict as "traitors" to their own historical roots and civilizational principles (Kirill 2014a).

The reading of the "Russian World" as *Katechon* is not predominant but still very visible in social media. Informed with religious connotations, the "Russian World" in this case represents the fortress of Orthodoxy (in one post, even the Biblical "thousand-year reign of Christ" (D.S. 13.01.2015)), standing guard in the way of the antichrist who is striving to rule this world (A.D. 15.04.2015). The corollary is that the geopolitical struggle of the "Russian World" with the "West" turns into a fight between good and evil: "if the Russian World disappears, absolute evil will win" (M.A. 29.03.2015; I.S. 28.03.2015). The "West" in this mental map serves as a projection of the global antichrist setting out to destroy "[Eastern] Orthodoxy and the Russian World in particular" (V.B. 15.04.2015).

BIO- AND GEOPOLITICS OF THE "RUSSIAN WORLD"

The logic of the a prioristic existence of the "Russian World" implies the naturalization of this ideological construct as an organic and living body. So, the "Russian World" concept reemerges in the context of biopolitics, being paralleled to a living organism, threatened by "being killed" and "dismembered," whereas the community of the "Russian World" is represented as a "kinship," all too often "forgotten" (B.B. 29.03.2015), and as a "gene pool," which in our context is commonly "endangered" and exposed to "genocide" (Aleksandr 31.01.2015; M.K. 09.04.2015; I.B. 31.01.2015; cf. Dugin 2015). Following this vision, the rhetoric of vulnerability transforms the "Russian World" into an object of "moral panic" (Krinsky 2013), which accompanies the securitization of hegemonic values with the construction of "victims" (e.g., Russians of the Donbass region) and "villains" (e.g., Ukrainian nationalists). The paradox of "moral panic" is grasped in this very term: it starts as a "moral" problem, that is, as a question of ethical choice, and ends as "panic," that is, a biological reaction to a perceived threat. So the panic about the vulnerability of the "Russian World" immediately descends from the level of moral reasoning (as, for example, Patriarch Kirill does) to the level of biological threat and biological "othering" of the enemy. One of the remarks in the online polemics points to the "fact" that "Ukraino-Yids" (*khokhlozhidy*) have an extra chromosome from their Turkic and Mongolian ancestors; thus, they "have to be exterminated as a threat to the Russian World" (A.I. 15.03.2015).

In the context of moral panic, the public controversy about abortion connects the themes of the biological vitality of the "Russian World" with the defense of traditional family values and the idea that pro-choice activists "betray" the "Russian World" (e.g. Iu.B. 09.04.2015), similarly to the way in which a law against domestic violence aims at "tearing the Russian World apart" by adopting alien values marked by Western-style tolerance and liberalism (A.R. 25.03.2015). The biologization of the "Russian World" is closing the horizon for political discussion in Russia and extending hegemonic discourse about the securitization of Russia's identity well into the private sphere (Makarychev and Medvedev 2015). The biologization of the "Russian World" has a rhetorical projection onto the military confrontation in Donbass, whose master-narrative (from both sides of the barricade) connects the "Russian World" with "war," "death," "killing," "dismembering" and "blood." Tested in the Russian pro-government media (Osipian 2015), the association of the pro-Ukrainian troops with *karateli*—members of the SS punitive squads during the Great Patriotic War—adds to the image of the "Russian World" as being physically executed by its enemies (V.B. 31.01.2015).

The "Russian World" is pictured as struggling for survival in the hostile environment (V.P. 24.03.2015). Users state that "Washington [DC] and NATO" are trying to destroy the "Russian World" (e.g., M.M. 15.04.2015). In so doing they are subscribing to the hegemonic geopolitical discourse about Russia's eternal fight with the West in general (A.S. 13.01.2015) or specifically with the United States (E.U. 13.01.2015), "Anglo-Saxons" (V.K. 13.01.2015), or "Europe." One of the users posted his poem entitled "The Russian World" with the following home-made verses:

How much Europe hates everything Russian!
What an inveterate hatred, [with which]
During the [historical] turning moments
It is ready to trample on the Russian spirit . . .

Having blamed the West in its reincarnation of fascism, the author calls for the unification of the "Russian World" in order to fight back against its enemies (S.Z. 09.04.2015). The strategy of discursively asserting the "Russian World" boils down to picturing the enemy and its aggressive warfare as being against "us," so that common rhetoric is to say that the West has already started the Third World War against "us," the "Russian World" (A.Ia. 09.04.2015); for example, "they" have been laboriously intoxicating it with "destructive" ideas and values.

Internet users adorn their statements about the "Russian World" with contrived genealogies, which root this concept deep in the "one thousand years" of Russian and East European history (K.M. 24.03.2015). As one of them argues, "the Russian World has always existed . . . the Russian Empire was formed from it . . ." (S.I. 13.01.2015). Reconnecting this narrative with geopolitics, users claim that the West has always tried to "destroy" "the Russian World" or, more specifically, "the British Empire many times encroached on the Russian world" (V.Ts. 27.03.2015). On the same note, the war with Nazi Germany—the greatest reservoir for today's historical mythology in Russia—is also interpreted as the struggle of the West against the "Russian World" (S.Z. 15.04.2015), or in other words: "our grandfathers fought, our fathers fought and now it is our turn to . . . stand up for the Russian world" (L.L. 31.01.2015).

So, the master-narrative about the "Russian World" is framed by a geopolitical "style of thinking," which has been cultivated in Russia in the past two decades (Suslov 2013). Following geopolitical logic, the "Russian World" has come to signify an imperial extension of Russia as a "great power." By this tour de force opponents of the Kremlin are impelled to argue that Russia is not a "great power," thereby forgetting to question the very fundament of the "Russian World" as a hegemonic construct. The ironic debunking of the "Russian World" is reduced almost exclusively to the attempt to show Russia's miserable living conditions, uneducated boorish population, moral degradation, and so on—as something prejudicing the main thesis: Russia is the great power. For example, a picture featuring ostensibly a (pro-) Russian military man[5] on a children's playground in Donetsk became popular on social networks and was hashtagged the "Russian World" in order to highlight the solder's vulgarity and criminal countenance, and to juxtapose it to the strivings of the pro-Russian activists to represent the "Russian World" as the standard of high culture and artistic perfection, set by Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Tchaikovsky (Figure 15.5). However, in so doing, the opponents of the "Russian World" are speaking the same geopolitical language as its defenders. Similarly constructed posts attach the "Russian World" hashtag to such news as "policemen in Pskov have murdered a woman and drowned her corpse in a bog" (Lesik 27.03.2015), or "two workers from the meat-packing factory have raped a pig" (V.P. 27.03.2015), and so forth. The strategy of opposing the "Russian World" comes down to the statement that the "Russian World" does exist and is menacingly approaching Ukraine, which is not part of it and which should be safeguarded from its advances.

8. Поляна сказок в Донецке. Одно из самых красивых и благоустроенных мест, созданных специально для детей, можете посмотреть мой фоторепортаж двухлетней давности - http://pauluskp.livejournal.com/273007.html Но бандитам из ДНР на красоту, благоустройство и детей попросту насрать.

Сказки, кстати, русские - но "русский мир" такой русский...

Figure 15.5. Demotivator "This is the playground [thematically devoted to] fairytales in Donetsk. . . . By the way, these are Russian fairytales, but this is what the 'Russian world" is." Source: pauluskp.livejournal.com/657079.html. Accessed 1 June 2015.

NATIONALIST OPPOSITION AND THE "RUSSIAN WORLD"

As a viral meme, the "Russian World" has given users the terminology to conceptualize Russia's borders and its place in the international arena, but at the same time it has radically opened up possibilities for conflicting interpretations. As shown in previous paragraphs, online debaters do not have much to say about the "Russian World" apart from the fact that it "exists" or "moves," that it "struggles" for survival against its external geopolitical enemy, and is vulnerable to attacks from the "fifth column." When users theorize the "Russian World" as a geopolitical entity (i.e., when they answer the question "What is the 'Russian World?'"), their ideological repertoire is reduced to two barely commensurable positions: either it is the reminiscence of the multicultural universalistic Soviet Union, or a project of a particularistic Russian ethno-nationalism.

Reproducing the whole gamut of biological, geopolitical, and anti-Western metaphors and moral panics that surround the concept of the "Russian World," one of the users pens:

. . . .[this is] the tactics of Brzezinski. To kill the Russian world. [If not] Gorbachev's surrender of the USSR to America . . . the Russian world would have been saved. . . . But Russia does not consist of only Russians. The Baltic countries are setting up a howl because there are territories which they claim. And the same with Poland. And if you dig further [there are territorial claims] of China for lands up to the Urals. But precisely due to different nations [*narodnosti*] Russia exists as a huge country. . . . For America this is like a carrot before a donkey (A.Sh. 27.03.2015).

The emotional and intellectual gist of this otherwise illogical passage consists in the sense of Russia's territorial insecurity and the vision of the Soviet international empire as a radical remedy. A clearer statement from the social network says that "it is time to broaden up the Russian World to [the borders] of the Soviet world" (R.Kh. 09.04.2015). This imagination partially restores the ideological underpinnings of the project of the "Soviet nation," based on political loyalty and ideological unanimity rather than on ethnic or confessional homogeneity. One of the users accurately enlists parts of the Soviet Union, claiming that the Slavic peoples are only one part of the "Russian World," which spreads from Japan to Germany and includes "Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Middle Asia, the Baltic countries and Caucasus" (A.O. 13.01.2015).

Ethnic tolerance sustains a different, confessional vision of the "Russian World" as a political and cultural entity of different peoples forged together by the Orthodox Church (N.S. 31.01.2015). Opposing this interpretation, another debater argues that the "Russian World" has many religions: "Why should I hate Muslims? I served [in the Army] with them. They are good guys, they swear in Russian" (M.R. 13.01.2015). Another user puts it, "I am not an Orthodox believer, but this does not prevent me from being a patriot, a supporter of an Empire and a big Russian World. I see no obstacle to co-existence between socialism and Orthodoxy, even monarchy" (S.L. 24.03.2015).

As a concept of yet unfixed meaning, the "Russian World," together with its sibling construct —"Novorossia"—may well be used to designate the anti-capitalist striving for greater social justice and "true" democracy, more often than not associated with the Soviet past. For the grassroots, this concept has opened up the vent for their dearest hopes—however wild this mishmash may seem—featuring the late Soviet world of their memories and visions (Laruelle 2015). However, compared to the Soviet project, the "Russian World" project is ideologically "thin" and vague, and its basic values are indeterminate, so the ultimate and constitutive articulation of this concept is the conflict in Ukraine; the "Russian World" is defined through the prism of the military struggle with the "Kiev junta" and the "West" looming behind it. Let us look at how this version of "internationalism" is being debated. A Buriat explained his support of the 'Russian World': "I was born in Russia and this means that our people (Buriats, Yakuts, Kalmyks) have to defend the Russian World" (A.B. 01.03.2015). The following more extended *credo* highlights this tautology: you belong to the "Russian World" if you fight for the "Russian World":

If a Kalmyk, an Udmurt, a Muskovite, a Chukchi man, a Daghestani, a Karelian, a [person from] Volga [region], a Chechen, and many others stand up for Russia and its prosperity, in my eyes they are part of . . . the multinational Russian World!!! Even if they have different faiths!!! . . . You may well pray to the sun, but the important thing is that you are ready to fight for our native land (R.F. 01.03.2015).

This ideologically frames a new geopolitical context in which there is no place for tolerance, but which is not utterly xenophobic either: non-Russians are not welcomed to the "Russian World" not because they have different ethnicity, but because and as long as they are not loyal to the hegemony of the Russian language and culture and willing to accept Russia's "basic

values" (whatever this might mean). And vice versa: a Korean taxi driver in Donetsk who "is ready to die and kill for Russia and the Russian world" is one of "us" (DNR 01.03.2015).

However, the tautological definition of the "Russian World," as well as the imprecision of what the "native land" is (given that the present borders of the Russian Federation are historically unprecedented), is unsatisfactory. At the same time, the ideological affordances of the "Russian World" clearly privilege "Russians" as the backbone nation of this geopolitical entity, and this creates possibilities for more nationalistic deviations in interpreting this term. The "Russian World" has been articulated by many users as a *carte-blanche* for Russo-centric nationalism. Considering the choice of words—the "Russian World" uses the ethnic *russkii,* not civic *rossiiskii* as its qualifier—this nationalist interpretation is equally legitimate and could not appear as a complete surprise to ideologues and policy makers: neo-imperial universalism in this case ironically serves for smuggling ethno-nationalism (Morozov 2009). As was explicated in one of the [vk.com](vk.com) posts, today the (civic) term *rossiianin* has completely lost its meaning, so now it is more correct to speak of a "citizen" of the Russian [*russkii*] world (D.I. 25.03.2015). This term "citizen" or a "dweller" (*zhitel'*) of the "Russian World" is an attempt to compromise between nationalist and civic readings of Russia's identity: on the one hand, it asserts the ethnic name *russkii,* but on the other hand, it refers to anyone, regardless of her ethnicity, who lives on the territory of the "Russian World" and supports its values.

Cultivated by the Russian political elite for "external" use and self-legitimization, the "Russian World" concept is being squatted by the anti-Kremlin radical right and nationalist opposition for exactly the opposite purpose of de-legitimizing the ruling regime. More than that, Russian nationalism, split into "imperial," "liberal," and "democratic" branches (Pain 2014), has discovered in the "Russian World" a common ideological ground for rapprochement on the one hand, and a common dividing line with the liberals (i.e., anti-Westernism) on the other hand. Aleksander Dugin (2015) grasps this development as the formation of the "broad patriotic front."

A typical linguistic device in this respect is that the "Russian World" might well be a good idea but you have to start constructing it inside Russia first, and then export it abroad, not vice versa. This kind of statement is often accompanied by demotivators showing masses of transparently "non-Russian" faces or thousands of praying Muslims on the streets of Moscow. Nationally concerned users ironically hashtag these demotivators as 'the Russian World' when they want to express their migrantophobia, tightly linking it with irritation against the regime, perceived as insufficiently supportive of ethnic Russians. Such disquietude is transparent, among other things, in the tweet about a bus driver in Moscow who talks with his colleague in the Tajik language: "here comes the Russian World"—was the angry comment (swk222 28.03.2015), or in a [vk.com](vk.com) post about the user's girlfriend, whose tablet computer was recently stolen "by two Buriats. What should we call this? This is f . . . king Russian World" (S.M. 15.02.2015).

Similarly, pro-Russian fighters in Donbass are often pictured as non-Russians, for example, Chechens, in order to posit the question, is the "Russian World," which is being militarily

implemented in Ukraine, as "Russian" as it claims to be? A popular line of reasoning is saying that the Russians from Crimea had been waiting for the "Russian World," and when it "came," it turned out to be the world of "Dagestani military men" (G-Best 31.01.2015) or "Chechen warlords" (M.A. 31.01.2015), or semi-Russian "mongrels" (V.S. 01.03.2015). One of the Internet memes features a group photo of the pro-Russian fighters in Donbass bearing nicknames—derivatives from their ethnic background: "Givi" (i.e., a Georgian), "Abkhaz" (Abkhazian), "Mongol," and "Motorola." The inscription says "Russian is not a nationality but a state of spirit." Arguably designed to glorify the universality of the "Russian World," it now has an ironic tinge, highlighting the pathetic position of Russians in the "Russian World" (N.M. 27.03.2015).

The atmosphere of radicalized nationalism fosters anti-Kremlin and specifically anti-Putin sentiments. "How are you going to build up the Russian world, if all [nationally oriented] Russians [*Rusy,* in original] are sitting in prisons?"—asks one of the users (A.P. 01.02.2015), reproaching his interlocutor for reading "quilted" [*vatnyi*] discussion boards, "quilted" being the popular anti-Russian meme, which associates Russians with debased semi-criminals wearing quilted jackets [*vatniki*]. Interestingly, in this context an oppositional nationalist agrees in terms of taste with the pro-Ukrainian activists rather than with the pro-Putin majority, dubbed "quilted jackets." Or, as one of the popular tweets, featuring an anti-Semitic caricature of a stereotyped "Jew" says, "the Russian world according to Putin is the world where everyone thrives but Russians" (A.B. 24.12.2014).

The idea underlying this kind of discourse was "hijacked" from the Kremlin's rhetoric about "double standards" vis-à-vis the West, and fine-tuned to sensibilize users to the inconsistency of the official argument about Russian "resistance" in Ukraine and repression of Russian activists inside Russia (Bacon 2015). Thus, the common standpoint for criticizing the regime is the trope "Putin is ditching (*slivaet*) Novorossia" (A.A. 03.01.2015), which helps nationalists to retarget the heavy weaponry of accusations of treason and the "fifth column" rhetoric against the Russian political elite, which has recently renovated its arsenal to attack liberals using exactly the same accusations. Accusations against President Putin wind up to the idea that today's Russian leadership is the only real enemy of the "Russian World": "these are neither the Russian power, nor the Russian leaders; by contrast, they are avid Russophobes, traitors, enemies of Russia. . . ." (A.P. 28.03.2015). Online debates about Putin as a "betrayer" of the "Russian World," who once promised support for pro-Russian fighters in "Novorossia" and later adopted a more wait-and-see attitude, have added fuel to the dissociation of the ruling regime with the idea of the "Russian World."

The "patriotic front," envisaged by Dugin, can also accommodate leftists on the basis of the populist antioligarchic rhetoric. As one of the debaters states, Putin, in backing up oligarchs, and persecuting people who stand up for justice, is "the main enemy of the Russian World" (A.A. 03.01.2015). The connection of the "Russian World" with anticapitalist resistance is so stable that it is common to read online admonitions for people to choose between the "Russian World" and "oligarchs" as two absolutely mutually exclusive terms. Consequently, gauging the "Russian World's" promises of social justice and actual accomplishments, online debaters

sarcastically comment that there is no need to shout about the "Russian World" from the rooftops if oligarchs reigned in Donbas in the past, as they do even today (D.S. 01.03.2015).

In some cases, nationalistic and anticapitalist intellectual energies, encapsulated in the "Russian World" concept, are cast in terms of flagrant anti-Semitism. Thus, the "Russian World," is the world free from "Jewish power" cum financial oligarchy. As one user expressed her desire, "this should be the Russian world without Yids and oligarchs" (A.A. 13.01.2015), or in a different version "without Yids and *Zaury* [meaning: Caucasians]" (D.F. 03.01.2015). Anti-Semitism lurks behind many posts of the pro-gov stance as well, in which Jews are viewed as the real masters of the "Banderovites" and of the "Kiev junta" (S.M. 15.02.2015). By extension, anti-Semitism can also bolster antiregime criticism, addressed at the fact that "Russian World" rhetoric is merely sheltering the real power of the Jews in Russia.

CONCLUSION

The conservative turn in the official Russian ideology, coupled with the flaring conflict in Ukraine, has dislocated the initial meaning of the "Russian World" concept. Designed as a project to boost Russia's modernization, today it implies a purely geopolitical reading, which harks back to the epoch of "high imperialism" of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, and as such it reinforces mental frames inimical to the idea of modernity and modernization. As Aleksander Dugin openly admits, the idea of the "Russian World" is based on a model of identity, which could not be institutionalized in the context of the "Western criteria of Modernity" (Dugin 2015). Indeed, Dugin has shrewdly grasped the dynamics of the official narrative which is now even *two* steps backward compared to the postmodern logic: it is no longer fixated on sovereignty (already a Cold War era concept (Morozov 2009))—the "Russian World" undermines Modernity's concept of sovereignty and offers more archaic sources of legitimization.

So is there a tension between the official articulation of the term and its usage in online polemics? The "Russian World" concept is ideologically unstable, and could easily be "abducted" and/or ironically reshaped by anti-Kremlin forces. However, the rapid brutalization of online debate has washed away its ideological meaning. The "Russian World" has become naturalized as an organic, primordial body, and as such could be commensurable with virtually any ideological position, a vitriolic anti-Russian one included. The essentialization of the "Russian World" concept is playing into the hands of the hegemonic reading of "Russianness" to such an extent, that, to paraphrase Nietzsche, even the most caustic sarcasm of this concept "will kiss us as it bites."

NOTES

1. For ethical reasons of non-infringement of users' privacy, all references have been coded (only initials and date appear in the text); the author keeps the key to the code in his personal archive.

2. It is commonly accepted that the Runet is heavily infected with paid pro-government bloggers. For the design of the present study this fact is irrelevant because I do not intend to uncover hidden (and venal) motives of the online debaters but to map the

cultural frames of these debates. From this viewpoint, if Kremlin hirelings manage to attract considerable public attention to their posts, this means that they speak the language which resonates with the majority of the online users. The importance of the paid commenters demonstrates exactly the increased connectivity between the "formal, "practical" and "popular" levels of geopolitical discourse, mentioned. In passing early in the chapter 1, it is worth noting that the fear that the interlocutor has been paid for her comments has itself become one of the most important topics, revealing the mechanisms of the brutalization of social conflict, which is the question addressed by the present paragraph.

3. It is even less possible to suspect a paid commenter here, because they receive their remuneration for original retorts, not for seventy identical ones.

4. Cf. with "nominalization" in Aleksei Yurchak's (2014) study of the authoritative late Soviet language.

5. If not fabricated, the stripe on his uniform refers to the Russian military intelligence.

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About the Contributors

Saara Ratilainen is a postdoctoral researcher at the Universities of Tampere and Helsinki (Finland). Specializing in Russian contemporary culture and media, her research covers such topics as class and gender, consumer culture, lifestyle media, and online amateur productions in post-Soviet Russia. Her recent publications include: Old Title, New Traditions: Ideals of Womanhood in *Krest'ianka* and Tourists from the East: Perception of Russian Consumers in the Finnish Press. Her current research project focuses on digital networks and travellers' communities in contemporary Russian online culture.

Birgit Beumers is professor of Film Studies at the University of Aberystwyth, Wales (UK). Born in Aachen (Germany), she completed her D.Phil at St Antony's College Oxford in 1991 and has subsequently taught in the Russian Department at Bristol University. She specializes on Russian culture and has published widely on cinema and theater. Her most recent publications include *A History of Russian Cinema* and, with Mark Lipovetsky, *Performing Violence*. She has edited, most recently, *Directory of World Cinema: Russia* and *Directory of World Cinema: Russia 2*, *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, *Russia's New Fin de Siècle*, and *Cinema in Central Asia: Rewriting Cultural Histories*. She is currently editing a directory of Central Asian cinema and completing a book on early Soviet animation. She is editor of the online quarterly *KinoKultura* and of the scholarly journal *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*.

Galina Zvereva is professor in Cultural Studies and head of the Department for History and Theory of Culture at the Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow). She has published in the field of modern history and historiography as well as of cultural studies and Russian studies.

Andrei Tsygankov is professor at the Departments of Political Science and International Relations at San Francisco State University. He has taught Russian/post-Soviet, comparative, and international politics since August 2000. A Russian native, Tsygankov is a graduate of Moscow State University (Candidate of Sciences, 1991) and the University of Southern California (PhD, 2000). Tsygankov is a contributor to both Western and Russian academia; in the West he published *National Identity and Foreign Economic Policy in the Post-Soviet World*, *Russia's Perception of American Ideas after the Cold War*, *Anti-Russian Lobby and American Foreign Policy*, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin*, and *The Strong State in Russia* as well as many journal articles.

Marlene Laruelle is research professor of International Affairs, The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES), Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University (2011–), director of the Central Asia Program, IERES (2012–). Her

particular focus of interest is post-Soviet political, social, and cultural developments. She authored a number of books and papers, the most recent are: *Eurasianism and the European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship*; *Between Europe and Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*; *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North*. She may be contacted at laruelle@gwu.edu

Sirke Mäkinen works as Research Fellow in International Relations at the University of Tampere, Finland, and teaches in the master's degree program in Russian and European Studies. She holds a doctorate in Social Sciences (Political Science, 2008) from the same university. Sirke Mäkinen has previously worked as university lecturer in Political Science at the University of Tampere, and as researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. She has also visited the University of Kent at Canterbury and the University of Glasgow as a visiting research fellow. Among her recent publications are: "Russia—a leading or fading power? Geopolitical metanarratives on Russia's place and role in the post-Soviet space," "Discursive and Material Practices of Space and Modernization in Post-Soviet Russia: An Introduction," "Geopolitics Teaching and Worldviews: Making the Future Generation in Russia," and "Surkovian Narrative on the Future of Russia: Making Russia a World Leader."

Hanna Smith is a researcher at the University of Helsinki, Aleksanteri Institute and the Finnish Centre of Excellence on Russian Studies. She is an expert on the foreign security and domestic politics of Russia and the former Soviet Union. Her research interests include also regional cooperation, Nordic cooperation, and international institutions. She has degrees from Sweden and Great Britain in Russian language, history, and politics as well as international relations, and has been a visiting researcher at the University of Birmingham, and at the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She has published numerous articles on Russian foreign policy and is a frequent commentator on Russian affairs in the media.

Fabian Linde is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, who specializes in Russian intellectual history. He received his PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Stockholm University in 2011. His doctoral thesis, entitled *The Spirit of Revolt: Nikolai Berdiaev's Existential Gnosticism*, was a re-examination of Gnostic themes in the thought of Nikolai Berdiaev. Following his postgraduate studies, he moved to Moscow where he was employed as a lecturer in Swedish at the Russian State University for the Humanities. At present, he is leading a project financially supported by the Swedish Research Council, which examines varieties of civilizational discourse within the Russian political sphere. The research project focuses primarily on constructions of a Russian civilizational identity disseminated by the Russian government and on how they relate to the initiative to create a Eurasian (Economic) Union.

Per-Arne Bodin is professor of Slavic Languages at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Stockholm University. He defended his dissertation on the poetry of Pasternak at Stockholm University in 1976. He has written extensively on Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian literatures. One special interest is the relation between Russian culture and Russian Orthodox

tradition. His most recent books are *Eternity and Time: Studies in Russian Literature and the Orthodox Tradition* and *Language, Canonization and Holy Foolishness: Studies in Post-Soviet Russian Culture and the Orthodox Tradition*. He has written several collections of essays in Swedish on Russian culture, literature, and church history. He has also translated poetry from Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian. For the moment he is working on two projects: Russian culture and linguistic violence and Russian cultural mythologemes in a post-Soviet world. He is member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and doctor honoris causa at Uppsala University.

Vlad Strukov (associate professor in Film and Digital Culture, University of Leeds) focuses on visual aspects of contemporary culture in a number of theoretical settings including globalization theory, theories of empire, and nationhood, and theories of agency and mediation. He has published on film, animation, social media, art, online gaming, transnational television, celebrity culture, focusing on Russia in the twenty-first century. He is the principal editor of an international journal *Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*. His most recent publications include the following volumes: *From Central to Digital: Television in Russia* and *New Media in New Europe-Asia*. [v.strukov@leeds.ac.uk].

Ryhor Nizhnikau is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Government and Politics, University of Tartu and a doctoral fellow at the Centre for EU-Russia Studies (CEURUS). He has a master's degree in Politics and International Studies from Uppsala University and a degree in International Relations from Belarusian State University and was an IRSES seconded researcher under the EU-PREACC project during this research.. His research interests include European Neighbourhood Policy, Russia's foreign policy, post-Soviet hybrid regimes, and institutional reforms.

Alla Marchenko has a candidate dissertation (equivalent to a PhD in Sociology) from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine) and is currently an associate professor in the Department of Methodology and Methods of Sociological Research at the Faculty of Sociology there. She is also an associate researcher of the Laboratory of Comparative Social Research (Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation). Her main research interests include comparative research, civic engagement, and historical sociology. She has published numerous articles on these subjects. Diversification of The "Late Soviet": Attitudes to Mikhail Gorbachev in The Mirrors of History Textbooks. Comparisons of Civic Engagement in Europe: Evidence from European Values Study Alla Marchenko. Euromaidan and Moral Issues in Ukraine: Unveiling the Ambiguous Relationship.

Sergiy Kurbatov, PhD, is head of the Department of Leadership and Institutional Development at the Institute of Higher Education, National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine and an affiliated researcher at the Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, University of Uppsala, Sweden as well as a Junior Fulbright alumnus (2003–2004, Brown University). Among his main research interests are the transformation of university education in the context of globalization, internationalization, quality assurance in education, and university rankings. He

served as a national expert at the Bologna Evaluation Project (University of Twente, Netherlands, 2009) and since 2014 has been a member of the IREG Audit Team. Also, Kurbatov is actively involved in the process of analyzing the problem of political and social transformations in Ukraine. His current publications include the book P*henomenon of University in the Context of Temporal and Spatial Challenges*, and the papers "The Mission of Contemporary University Through the Lenses of Time and Space" Before Massification: Access to University Education in Soviet Ukraine in the 1950s–1980s; "Music of the Revolution: For Whom the Bell Tolls" (together with Alla Marchenko).

Dirk Uffelmann (uffelmann@<u>uni-passau.de</u>) studied Russian, Polish, Czech, and German literature at the Universities of Tübingen, Vienna, Warsaw, and Constance. He obtained his PhD from the University of Constance in 1999 and defended his second thesis (Habilitation) at the University of Bremen in 2005 before teaching as lecturer in Russian at the University of Edinburgh. He also was a visiting professor at the University of Bergen, Norway, Western Michigan University, and University of Puget Sound, and visiting fellow at the University of Cambridge and the University of Munich.

  At present, he is professor of Slavic Literatures and Cultures at the University of Passau and research fellow of the joint Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies of the Universities of Munich and Regensburg. From 2011 to 2014 he served as vice president for Academic and Student Affairs. His research interests are Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Central Asian literature, philosophy, religion, migration, masculinity, and Internet studies. He is co-editor of the journal *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* as well as of the book series *Postcolonial Perspectives on Eastern Europe* and *Polonistik im Kontext*.

Greg Simons holds a doctoral degree from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand for the thesis dealing with the changes of the Russian mass media system since 2000, and how journalists and mass media react to sensitive issues (such as terrorism and crises). He is currently employed at Crismart (Crisis Management Research and Training) in the Swedish National Defence College and at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies (Uppsala University). In addition to this he also occasionally teaches PR at Turiba Business College in Riga. Dr. Simons is also on the OSCE's roster of experts.

Mikhail Suslov, PhD in history, is a Marie Curie postdoctoral researcher at the Uppsala Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University. His academic interests include Russian intellectual history, geopolitical ideologies and utopias, and religious (Orthodox) political theorization. His most recent publications are: "Holy Rus": The Geopolitical Imagination in the Contemporary Russian Orthodox Church. "Crimea Is Ours!" Russian popular geopolitics in the new media age.

Mark Bassin is Baltic Sea professor of the History of Ideas, in the Center for Baltic and East European Studies at Södertörn University in Stockholm. His research focuses on problems of space, ideology, and identity in Russia and Germany. He is the author of *The Gumilev Mystique: Biopolitics, Eurasianism and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia*

and *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East 1840-1865*. He has also co-edited the collections *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities Space, Place and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History* and *География и Идентичность в Постсоветской России*. Bassin is currently directing the research project *The Vision of Eurasia*, financed by the Baltic Sea Foundation in Stockholm (2013–2016).