

A historical perspective on Russia's identity search under Putin.

Linn Kristine Krogstad Kleppe



UiO : University of Oslo

Master Thesis - Peace and Conflict Studies (PECOS)

Department of political science

Oslo, 27th January 2015

Table of contents

<i>Foreword</i>	3
Introduction	4
Chapter I	8
<i>The question of National Identity</i>	8
<i>State/Nation compared with Nationalism</i>	9
Chapter II	14
<i>The 19th century discussion of National Identity.</i>	14
<i>Modernizing under autocracy</i>	19
Chapter IV	23
<i>Soviet Union: patriotism, nationalism, and collective identity:</i>	23
<i>The Gorbachev years: The concept of New Thinking</i>	24
<i>The Yeltsin era</i>	26
Chapter V.	29
<i>Putin's concept of National Identity.</i>	29
Chapter VI	35
<i>Putin's first term in office, 2000-2004</i>	35
<i>Speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany.</i>	37
<i>September 25, 2001.</i>	37
<i>Putin's second term in Office</i>	39
<i>The Presidential Inauguration Ceremony May 7, 2004</i>	40
<i>Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 25 April 2005.</i>	42
<i>Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy,</i>	45
<i>February 10, 2007</i>	45
<i>Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, April 26, 2007</i>	48
<i>Third term in Office</i>	51
<i>Putin's essay: 'Integration of post –Soviet space and alternative to uncontrolled migration,</i>	
<i>Russia: The National Question, 2012</i>	51
<i>Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, 19 September 2013, Novgorod Region</i>	55
<i>Valdai speech, October 24, 2014.</i>	59
Conclusion	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68
<i>PRIMARY SOURCES:</i>	68
<i>SECONDARY SOURCES:</i>	68
<i>SOURCES DIRECTLY FROM A WEB PAGE:</i>	69

Foreword

This master thesis would not have materialized without the extraordinary support from my supervisor Anders Kjølberg who gave me the strength and confidence to pull through a very difficult year. I will forever be grateful for that he believed in me when I did not. I also want to profoundly thank Hilde Henriksen Waage and Magne Rønningen for their exceptional support and understanding during this process, also concerning the practical matters. I would not have managed this without these wonderful people.

Introduction

This master's thesis will compare the concept of Russian national identity during Putin's years in power with that of 19th century Russia. National identity has been a recurrent theme during Putin's presidency after having been given little concern for over a century. Lilia Shevtsova's book *Terregnum, Russia between Past and Future*, discusses the relationship between downturns or problems in the Russian society and the recurrence of the question of national identity. Shevtsova argues:

‘ Russia is an example of a nation that has dwelled on its national identity for centuries, to the point that it has become an elite hobby. Putin returned to the national identity issue in 2012 and again at the Valdai Forum in September 2013- which just goes to show that every time Russian society faces a problem, the Kremlin embarks on a new campaign in the search of a national identity.’¹

Shevtsova goes on explaining the logic behind this recurrence is the authorities idea that a new discussion of “ Who are we?” is much safer and less troublesome than if society focuses on the real issues facing Russia, such issues being corruption among authorities and incompetent and irresponsible governance.²

Examining Russia during the nineteen and twentieth century and the current timeframe 2000-2014, leads me to take a closer look at specific factors that are

¹ Lilia Shevtsova, *Terregnum: Russia between Past and Future*. (Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014), 35.

² *Ibid.*, 36.

part of this link. In my case, I will concentrate my analysis on the three main concepts autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality, which leads to the question of national identity as such, ‘the importance of church and religion’, and ‘Russia’s relationship to the West.’ These questions, which are emphasized in many of Putin’s speeches throughout his presidency, are the same questions that were actively debated during the 19th and 20th century. Furthermore, the relationship and understanding of the West is a central part of Russia’s national identity debate, as it also was during the 19th and 20th century.

The role of identity in society has always been an important matter for any nation. It is what provides answers to who we are and what others are to us. According to Hopf, ‘a state understands others according to the identity it attributes to them, and reproduces its own identity’.³ Therefore, the way a nation is identified by the outside world is evidently the way it will be perceived or recognized as a nation. Consequently, what Russia decides in regards to the national identity question and what it means to be a Russian today will influence how Russia is perceived as a nation. Within this debate of national Identity in Russia today is the discussion of the importance and influence of religion in society. After years of absence of the dominance of religion, Putin is bringing back the attention to the Orthodox Church in means of relating religion to social consciousness, morals and spiritual values. This is where the link between national identity and religion might cross. In regards to autocracy, Putin has shown to emphasize the importance of law and order in society by enforcing obedience to the authorities. In regards to this, Putin often quotes one of his favoured religious philosophers, Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954)

³ Ted Hopf, “The promise of constructivism in international relation theory” *International Security* Vol.23, Issue 1 (1998): 171

whose work from the 19th and 20th century Russia concentrated on statehood, legal consciousness and nationalism.⁴

The importance of the relationship to the West in the Russian national identity debate is discussed in Alfred B. Evans' article 'Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity' from 2008. He explains the occurring question over Russia's identity throughout its history. Evans highlights Russia's relationship with Europe as follows:

'Russia's relationship with Europe has been a key question since the time of Peter the Great in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Since that time it has been apparent that Russia's rulers have faced a dilemma in relation to the more modernised societies of Western Europe: whether to emulate the example of the West in order to advance their country's development or to preserve Russia's separate values and customs at the risk of denying it the capacity to compete with Europe'.⁵

This debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles during the 19th and 20th century has again been a growing concern during Putin's leadership. From the Valdai Discussion Club Report from February 2014 the focus was on National Identity and the Future of Russia. In regards to Identity, many of the questions raised were the same as during the Tsar's period. In order to elaborate on the significance of national Identity, I will use Anthony D. Smith's classical definition of a Nation as 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and

⁴ Unknown author. Irussianity, <https://irussianity.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/mikhail-nesterov-the-thinker-portrait-of-ivan-ilyin-1922.jpg>

⁵ Alfred B. Evans, "Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity". *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, 899-912. 899.

duties for all members.’⁶ that will clarify the Russian debate during the 19th and 20th Century, and the current timeframe 2000-2014.

My research question will try to elucidate the concept of Russian national identity during Putin’s years in power with that of 19th century Russia. I will look at the causality based on Shevtsova’s hypothesis of every time Russia faces a crisis or conflict, it seem to reevaluate the national identity question. Why are especially religion, but also the two other elements in the identity debate of the 19th century such important factors in the Russian national identity question today? And also to what extent the relationship with the West is an element in forming Russia’s national identity under Putin’s leadership? These are questions I will try answering in my thesis by comparing the identity debate in Russia during the 19th and early 20th centuries with the years 2000-2014 using Putin’s speeches as my primary sources.

⁶ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), vii.

Chapter I

The question of National Identity

The question of *identity*, whether of individual form or collective form, has preoccupied humans throughout history. On some level we need to know who we are and how we relate others in order to make sense of an otherwise chaotic world. Nevertheless, the question of *identity* is not a question with a straightforward answer, or a concept with a single theory. It is a concept with many variables and perspectives, and as the world changes so does the concept of *identity*. Anthony D. Smith's book *National Identity* from 1991 looks at the idea of *identity* throughout history. The underlying assumption is that in order to understand nations and nationalism, it is not sufficient only to understand them as an ideology or form of politics, but we must also consider them as cultural phenomena.⁷ Smith formulates his classical definition of the *Nation* as 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.'⁸ In order to make better sense of the classical definition of a *Nation*, Smith's explores various aspects within his definition and clarifies why each of the features alone are too weak to define National Identity in general.

⁷ Smith, *National Identity*, vii.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Among other important aspects in Smith's discussion of *identity* is space and territory. Here, local and regional identity is equally prevalent, especially in pre-modern eras.⁹ Smith argues that localism and regionalism give the impression of being of a more cohesive quality than for instance that of gender differentiation. Nevertheless, space and territory is an important aspect in the making of national identity, in particular regarding the Western notion of it, as we shall see later in Smith's discussion.

Another category Smith touches upon is the socio-economic one. Here too, as the former categories he presents are too weak as a basis for an enduring collective identity, as it lacks emotional appeal and cultural depth.¹⁰ This he claims, is first of all because 'classes like gender divisions, are often territorially dispersed. They are also largely categories of economic interest, and are hence likely to subdivide according to differences in income and skill levels.'¹¹

State/Nation compared with Nationalism

The term 'nationalism', according to Smith, is a fairly modern term¹². What we today associate with the term 'nationalism' has only appeared during the 19th century. Here Smith provides us with the most important usages of the term:

1. a process of formation, or growth, of nations;
2. a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation;
3. a language and symbolism of the nation;
4. a social and a political movement on behalf of the nation;

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 5.

5. a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular.

Smith defines the term *nationalism* here as such, ‘referring to one or more of the last three usages: a language and symbolism, a sociopolitical movement and an ideology of the nation. To expand a little further of the various meanings of nationalism and its connection to the notion of national identity, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes the perception as such:

(1) ‘the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination.’¹³

These two phenomena lead to the question of national identity or the concept of a nation, which is usually interpreted in terms of ethnicity, common origin, and similar cultural connection. The Encyclopedia clarifies further: ‘and while an individual’s membership in a nation is often regarded as involuntary, it is sometimes regarded as voluntary.’¹⁴ The second phenomenon leads to questions about ‘whether self-determination must be understood as involving having full statehood with complete authority over domestic and international affairs, or whether something less is required.’¹⁵

Therefore, traditionally we distinguish nations from states, taking into consideration that a nation often consists of a cultural or ethnic community, and a state is usually distinct as a political entity, including a high level of sovereignty.¹⁶ In short, the notion of nationalism is closely linked to national identity by how strongly members of a given nation feel and care about their

¹³ “Nationalism”: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. First published Thu. Nov 29, 2001; substantive revision Tue Jun 1, 2010. 1.

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nationalism/> (accessed December 6, 2014).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

national identity, and how much effort they are willing to put into action to achieve or sustain some sort of political sovereignty.¹⁷

So after examining a few of the problems and shortcomings within Smith's categories, Smith's classical definition of a nation seems to fit better as a strong collective identity. To repeat his definition, 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' it is evident that he emphasizes the importance of common culture which in itself includes various traditions and customs. But perhaps the most interesting and also prevailing ideas about National Identity is what Smith refers to as the two major divides in history; The Western conception of the nation and then the non-Western model, where the latter is an ethnic conception of the nation, and distinctive by its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture.¹⁸ These two divides Smith explains, do however overlap on many concepts. But before clarifying the overlaps between the two concepts of national identity, I will first go into more detail on the different characteristics of the two conceptions. Smith argues that 'national identity' requires a sense of political community even just a vague one.¹⁹ He adds:

'A Political community in turn implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong.'²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸ Smith, *National Identity*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

This, Smith argues, is very much the basis of a Western understanding of the nation. However, this Western conception has both dominated and influenced our idea of the element we call the ‘nation’.²¹ Smith explains:

‘A new kind of policy – the rational state—and a new kind of community—the territorial nation—first emerged in the West, in close conjunction with each other. They left their imprint on subsequent non-Western conceptions, even when the latter diverged from their norms.’²²

This is the model referred to as the non-Western model or ‘ethnic conception of the nation.’ The difference between the two models is the non-Western model’s strong focus on a community of birth and native culture. To emphasize this difference, Smith explains that from the Western concept of a nation, an individual needs to belong to a nation, but can choose which nation he or she belongs to. However, the non-Western idea or ethnic concept of a national identity is not so lenient. In this case a member belongs exclusively to his or her community of birth, regardless of migration. So here Smith concludes: ‘A nation in other words, was first and foremost a community of common descent.’²³ Nevertheless, having pointed out the differences between the two concepts, it is also important to consider the overlap between the two notions. According to Smith this overlap of vital elements exists due to the dominance or supremacy of the West in the modern world. Although in a different form under the non-Western concept, one can recognize similarities between the two.²⁴ So under Smith’s classical definition of National Identity, both the Western and the non-Western concept seem to fit.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

However, this definition is not conclusive, but as Smith argues: ‘Such a provisional working definition reveals the complex and abstract nature of national identity’.²⁵

²⁵ *Ibid.*,14.

Chapter II

The 19th century discussion of National Identity.

The discussion of these two various conceptions of a nation have been an ongoing debate during Russia's history and can be recognized in the Russian debate over Identity. Within this debate there are two terms often used to elucidate the difference between these conceptions. The Russian language provides us with the distinction as *Russkii* and *Rossiskii*, where the former describes the ethnic Russians and the latter the non-ethnic Russians. During the tsarist empire there were little doubt that the *Russkii* was considered the imperial race despite the fact it was a multi-ethnic and expansionist empire.²⁶

The question of '*Who are we?*' is neither a new question nor is it a question left to history. It is an ongoing question Russian political leaders and intellectuals have been asking themselves since the time of Peter the Great in the late 1600s and early 1700s without getting a clear answer.²⁷ However, there is one element that has been and continues to be constant when the question of identity is being raised: namely, the West as the principal 'Other'. The West has always been the point of reference in defining Russia's identity. Every time Russia faces a fundamental challenge, especially after some sort of defeat, the heated discussion of whether to follow the West or to preserve the unique Russian values and

²⁶ Mark Galeotti, Bowen, Andrew, "Putin's Empire of the Mind: How Russia's president morphed from realist to ideologue—and what he'll do next." *Foreign Policy*, April 21, 2014.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/04/21/putin_s_empire_of_the_mind_russia_geopolitics (Accessed November19, 2014).

²⁷ Evans, Jr., "Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity," 899.

customs rise to the surface.²⁸ But the answer has left Russia divided. The ambivalent reaction towards how to respond has left Russia with both feelings of attraction and distaste towards the West.²⁹

In his book ‘*Russia and the Idea of Europe*’ Iver B. Neumann discusses the Russian conception of the nation in an historical setting and its changing views on what ‘The Other’ has meant for Russia during the 19th and 20th century. This helps elucidate the current situation in Russia in regards to national identity, and Russia’s ambivalent relationship with the West today.

In the beginning of the 19th century, Western Europe was often viewed as a place to look for ideas or directions in order to improve the Russian political order. Two important figures on opposite sides of the debate of Russia’s identity question and where Russia belonged in the world were the conservative historian and poet Nikolay Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766-1826) and liberal reformist Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskiy (1772-1839) Neumann explains:

‘Thus, while Speranskiy and others look to Europe for ideas to improve the Russian political order, Karamzin argues that they are actually weakening Russia, since it is dangerous to tamper with ancient political structures.’³⁰ Russia, he points out, ‘has been in existence for thousands of years, and not as a savage horde, but as a great state.’³¹

So from Karamzin’s statement Neumann explains Karamzin’s isolationist view, Russia should distance herself from the Europeans and their institutions. He further believed that the ‘Russian form of government is simply not compatible with

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 15.

³¹ *Ibid.*

European ideas about *Rechtsstaat* of the kind peddled by Speranskiy. It is, in fact morally superior to it.³²

Historically, the Westernizing school of thought in Russia since Peter the Great saw the West as something to base Russia's development on. However, what they aspired to borrow from the West depended on what set of values were of importance to them in relation to the West. Therefore, some westernizers admired the west solely for its superiority in technology and economic development, while other Westernizers regarded the Western values of constitutional freedoms and political equality as something Russia should aspire to.³³ The Westernizers, who only looked to the West for the purpose of modernizing and strengthening Russia's economy, were generally more fearful and skeptical of Western political and cultural values. Hence, for this group of Westernizers, the Western ideas were only to be used in order to strengthen Russia's power in periods where Russia had to overcome economical and technological backwardness or defeat from wars. The more liberal Westernizers on the other hand, saw the West with the model of social and democratic ideas and values as something that would benefit and modernize Russia, and something that would bring Europe and Russia closer together.

During the 1830s political change took place. The concept of "Slavophilism" became an endeared word for the romantic nationalists, while Westernizers looked to Europe for political and economic models, the Slavophiles looked to Russian history and culture for inspiration.³⁴ The Romantic nationalists also believed that Russia needed to be protected from the *Otherness* of the European influence. One Romantic nationalist at the time was Aleksey Khomyakov (1804-1860) whose historical writing explains how before the Florence Church meeting, (1439)

³² *Ibid.*, 16.

³³ Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and continuity in National Identity*. Second edition (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. United Kingdom, 2010) 5.

³⁴ Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 29.

national Russian traits had coexisted peacefully with European influences, but slowly came into disagreement with the European mainstream:

‘the enmity only broke out as a reaction to the insane and deep Russophobia of Sweden, the Hanse, and the Baltic nobility, and even more because of the hostile intrigues of Polish magnates and Catholic priests.’³⁵

Khomyakov goes on describing how this brought Russian nationalism to the point of xenophobia, and the human spirit (*dukh chelovecheskiy*) was lowered to a very narrow area. As a result, he argued, this had to inflame a reaction on the other extreme.³⁶ Neumann clarifies that this overreaction of Europeanism was to Khomyakov ‘dominated by worthless cultural trends.’³⁷ They were to him trends of rationalism, materialism and egoism. Furthermore, according to Khomyakov, Europe’s spiritual outlook was superficial and unquestionably inferior to the Orthodoxy of Russia, which was indeed the only true Christendom.³⁸

Under Nicholas I (1825-1855) three concepts became the core for the Russian identity: *Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality*. Influenced by the Minister of Education Sergey Uvarov, (1786-1855) these three concepts became the Official Nationality and the dominant ideological doctrine during the rule under Nicholas I. This doctrine was defined through historical, traditionalist, religious, and authoritarian arguments of the romantic age.³⁹ Uvarov emphasized that Europe was spreading destructive ideas, and because of that, it was important to establish a strong foundation for Russia that was purely Russian. This led to the necessity in finding a distinctiveness that only belonged to Russia, which to Uvarov was vital in order to save the fragments of Russian nationality.⁴⁰ The two major

³⁵ *Ibid* 33. (Khomyakov, 1900: 154)

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: A historical Survey* (New York: Oxford University press, 2005), 165.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

intellectual transformations in Russia at the time was the change from the Age of Reason to Idealism and Romanticism and then the disintegration of the new world view.⁴¹ For the government, this was rather a blessing or relief as religion, metaphysics, art and poetry were of a lesser threat for the autocratic ruler than a genuine interest of society in politics would have been.

Nevertheless, after the defeat of the Crimean War, Russia saw the need for modernization in order to strengthen its position in the world. This meant looking westward for ideas. Tsar Alexander II, who succeeded Nicholas I in 1855, was a man of liberal ideas and influenced by the leading intellectual Westernizers such as Piotr Chaadayev (1794-1856), Alexandr I. Herzen (1812-1870) and Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848), who all believed in adopting Western technology and the Western style of liberal government. Tsar Alexander II saw no other alternative than to reform Russia in order to become part of the modern world. He therefore initiated reforms in the government, education, the judiciary, and the military.⁴² Therefore a swift pro-Western wave occurred as the Tsar feared, in the wake of the defeat, lagging behind following the Crimean War. But as Alexander III ascended to the throne following his father's assassination in 1881, the pro-Western wave quickly disappeared, and the Official Nationality with its emphasis on Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality was revived.⁴³ This is an example of the two views of the West during Russia's history. It is a continuous and ambiguous relationship; one that fluctuates between aversion and attraction depending on what factors can strengthen Russia as a great power at the given time in history.

As history has proven, after a defeat Russia sees the need for modernization and a need for Western ideas. Soon however, a reaction set in and Western ideas are

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Russia_\(1855–92\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Russia_(1855–92)) (accessed November 2, 2014)

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia (accessed November 2, 2014)

seen as a danger to Russia's identity. This fluctuation between aversion and attraction is a result of a function of a West as Russia's 'Other' throughout history both as an ideal and as a threat.

Modernizing under autocracy

One central figure from the 19th century (whom Putin is constantly focusing on in regards to the Russian National Identity,) is Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954). Ilyin studied at Moscow State University completing his thesis *The philosophy of Hegel as a doctrine of the concreteness of God and humanity* in 1916.⁴⁴ He developed into a steadfast anti-communist, and therefore expelled from Russia in 1922. Ilyin continued his life in Berlin where he contacted the exiled anti-communist movement, The White Army, and later became the unofficial ideologist of the White Army in exile.⁴⁵ Ilyin's work covered a great variety of disciplines such as: 'law, politics, the ethics of violence, the nature of the Russian nation, and the tasks incumbent on Russian émigrés.'⁴⁶

Furthermore, Ilyin believed religious and spiritual matters to be more important than material ones. Seen in this light, he could be seen as a religious philosopher more than anything else.⁴⁷ In his eyes, in order to 'save' Russia one must revive the correct spirit, or as concluded in *Irussianality*: 'including a love of God, a love of Russia, respect for the law, a sense of duty and honour, and devotion to the state and the common weal rather than personal and party interests.'⁴⁸ Although Ivan Ilyin was a complex philosopher and thinker, there are three subject matters that stand out

⁴⁴ <https://irussianality.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/mikhail-nesterov-the-thinker-portrait-of-ivan-ilyin-1922.jpg> (accessed December 22, 2014)

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*,2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

through his works: *gosudarstvennost'* (statehood); *pravosoznanie* (legal consciousness); and *natsionalizm* (nationalism).⁴⁹

Ilyin believed in a strong state, where the interest of the state must be first priority over anything else. This is seen as a contrast to the Communist ideology where loyalty to the party is first priority.⁵⁰ Ilyin's belief in a strong state can be elucidated in his own words: 'Russian state power will be strong, or it won't exist at all.'⁵¹ He also strongly approved of a unitary state ruled in an autocratic manner, but as he states it should be carried out with 'creative spirit... a dictatorial-aristocratic-democracy.'⁵²

As Ilyin also was a lawyer, he had a strong sense of the importance of law. He believed that Imperial Russia had an undeveloped 'legal consciousness' by which he meant society's sense of what is wrong and what is right, and its sense of whether or not to obey the law.⁵³ In short, to sum up Ilyin's philosophical convictions, in broad terms it consisted of the belief in autocracy, law and order and lastly, nationalism. The love of country was a vital part of his philosophy, and Russians in his opinion, should prioritize Russian interests before anything else. Again, this contrasted with the internationalist philosophy of the communists. In regards to nationalism Ilyin believed in non-interference of other nations meaning every nation had the right to develop in its own way. In addition he declared: 'Western Europe, which doesn't know Russia, has not the slightest basis for imposing any political form whatsoever on us.'⁵⁴

However, Ilyin did not approve of every nation's right to self-determination, with the result that he regarded the independence of Ukraine as an 'evil' and a disgrace. Exactly because of the multi-ethnic composition of Russia, the attempt to

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

assimilate of minorities was ill advised and indeed ethnic group culture was to be encouraged and welcomed as strength in diversity. This makes Ilyin a complex thinker, as there was a lot of contradicting elements in his work. Such as not seeking to assimilate minorities but at the same time striving for a strong centralized state and his opposition to federalism. Nevertheless, Ilyin's main focus can be seen as a belief in autocracy, law and order, religion and love of nation.⁵⁵ To understand the importance of Ilyin's ideas and philosophical work for Russia today, Putin succeeded in getting Ilyin's remains re-buried on Russian soil in 2009, and personally sanctified it.⁵⁶

The heated debate of the opposition between Westernizers and Slavophiles during the 19th and 20th century became a very important barometer for which direction Russia chose to explore. How Russians understood their own historical roots during this period often determined whether they turned to the West or the East in regards to National Identity. Was it a Great Russian Power or a European Power? This question, with its inconsistency still persists today, and although Russia as a state is easily recognized on a map, defining Russia as a nation is a more intricate and elusive challenge, and it always has been throughout history.⁵⁷ Russia's struggle to define its identity is perhaps almost as old as Russia herself and also as ambiguous. For that reason, Russia's historical search for identity mirrors any other identity quest. If you lose your distinctiveness collectively or individually, you will always strive to remake or regain it. This is what Russia has been struggling over for centuries, and the pursuit of a Russian identity continues with

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ David Brooks, "Putin can't Stop," New York Times, March 3, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/brooks-putin-can't-stop> (accessed November 4, 2014)

⁵⁷ Donald Winchester, "Russia's Identity Crisis", Vision, Current Events and Politics. (2008): 1. <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx?id=5814> (accessed October 18, 2014).

some of the familiar debates over West or East, as well as new issues surfacing as a result of our present time and history.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter IV

Soviet Union: patriotism, nationalism, and collective identity:

During the Soviet era in Russian history, the question of identity was a dilemma in various ways, mainly because identity in this period was related to what Marxism defined as social classes both internally and on the global level. Smith argues:

‘ the difficulty with treating social class, as a basis for an enduring collective identity is its limited emotional appeal and lack of cultural depth. Whether we define ‘class’, with Marx, as a relationship to the means of production or, with Weber, as an aggregate of those with identical life-changes in the market, there are clear limits to any attempt to use class as a basis for a sense of identity and community.’⁵⁹

And this was something that came to a test during World War II. Indeed, the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) is a good example of what Smith points out as a weakness in treating social class as a basis for identity. Although communism dominated as an ideology at the time, Stalin understood that during times of national conflict or war, the nation needed something more than communist ideology in order to stand together as a strong nation. Therefore he appealed to nationalism and eased the restrictions on religion during the war as a tool to strengthen Russian patriotism. Again, when it comes to a nation’s question of identity during crisis or conflict, cultural depth, and emotional appeal proves to be factors of importance. Religion is a core of Russian culture, and proved its significance during World War II. Stalin used religion and nationalist sentiment to

⁵⁹ Smith, *National Identity*, 5.

a maximum during World War II by mobilizing ethnic- Russian awareness. He did this in various ways, such as a focus on Russian folklore, language and education, again along with the notion of ancient Rus and Russian heroes that were on the agenda. Thus, during World War II, the ethnic notion of national identity, the *Russkii* briefly prevailed. However, as Riasanovsky argues: ‘ any serious resort to nationalism, tradition, non-Marxist history, or religion had a manipulative, but not substantive value.’ This was indeed proven to be true during the Khrushchev years (1955-1964) where religious persecution picked up and the Orthodox Church experienced one of its weakest periods in Russian history.⁶⁰ During this period, the absence of religion was replaced by the notion of the ‘Ideal’ Soviet Man/Woman. This ideal super-human was the figure that everyone should aspire to become. As a good Soviet Man/Woman you should be selfless, healthy, intellectual, and eagerly spread the socialist revolution.⁶¹ Religion continued to keep a low profile until the fall of the Soviet Union, when it once again regained its strength and was one of the institutions that gained considerably from the collapse of Communism.

The Gorbachev years: The concept of New Thinking

During the years of Mikhail Gorbachev, a new westernizing wave began, as a response to economic decline and as a strong need to modernize. However, as we shall see, his ambitious goal to incorporate Russia within the Western world ended in failure.

After Mikhail Gorbachev was appointed general secretary in 1985, a new kind of relationship with the West was developed. Although Gorbachev without doubt was a socialist, his interpretation of Russia’s socialist identity was radically

⁶⁰ Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities*, 220.

⁶¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Soviet_man (accessed November 2, 2014)

different from previous leaders. He saw Russia's identity as distinct but yet in harmony with the Western idea of democracy.⁶² Gorbachev did not perceive the West as inherently evil, but instead recognized the West as something to aspire to regarding reform and modernization.⁶³ From this belief, Gorbachev worked with proposing strategies for modernization for both technology and the economy. His ideas were received positively but the results did not materialize. Therefore, Gorbachev went further with his radical ideas also for political change, including also political change. But as Gorbachev warned, *perestroika* meaning reconstruction/rebuilding, could only be successful together with 'New Thinking' or as Tsygankov states: 'radical transformation of the traditional outlook on world affairs.'⁶⁴

Although Gorbachev was the advocate and innovator for 'New Thinking' he certainly did not believe in changing the Soviet system into a replica of the West. He truly believed in the viability of the Soviet Union, but in order to sustain it and strengthen it, in Gorbachev's opinion, it needed to be renewed in a fundamental way.⁶⁵ Gorbachev had an ambivalent relationship with the West, where he had ambitious ideas regarding integration, but at the same time held a resistant view concerning any form of a replica of a Western model of government.

In contrast to Stalin, Gorbachev did not see the world as a zero-sum game, containing imperialism for any cost, but rather a mutual responsibility for both to cooperate. However, his 'New Thinking' strategy was opposed from both sides of the spectrum, the conservatives and the liberals. Where the conservative rejected it by arguing that the West had nothing to offer Soviet Russia, as the West lacked moral authority; and the Slavophiles or religious nationalists argued that Western Christianity should not corrupt their Orthodox religion. Furthermore, as

⁶² Tsygankov. *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 31.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Tsygankov explains: ‘conservatives recommended that the Soviet Union stay firm and preserve its own historical and cultural tradition.’⁶⁶ From the liberal opposition however, they criticized Gorbachev for being ‘too slow and inconsistent in his policies’.⁶⁷

The Yeltsin era

When Gorbachev was removed, and the Soviet Union collapsed, a new Russia emerged. This new emerging Russia had experienced that liberal ideas cannot succeed without the backup of power, being everything from influential elites, the general public, or developed states abroad. It needs its campaigners to work on retaining both sufficient domestic and foreign support from their effort.⁶⁸

Therefore, what was to become the new Russian political project could not just be the material leftovers inherited from the Soviet Union, but in addition as Jacob Godzimirski (2008:15) adds, ‘political “software” that would be applied to transform Russia’.⁶⁹

As the Russian intellectual Igor Chubais wrote in 1998: ‘a new system of values cannot simply be thought up by someone or artificially constructed... He continued referring to Russians: ‘We must search for a common Russian idea by analyzing our history and our culture.’⁷⁰

As this was a time where Russia was under a so-called pro-Western wave, this new political software was heavily influenced and inspired by a Western vision. As this project was introduced in 1991, the political elite had to come up with

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Jacob M. Godzimirski, “Putin and Post-Soviet Identity: Building Blocks and Buzz Words,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol.55, no.5, (September/October 2008):14-27. (Accessed October 15, 2014)

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Winchester, “Russia’s Identity Crisis,” 4.

solid answers to fundamental questions in order to win support of the Russian voters for their various proposals.⁷¹ Important questions such as what Russia was at the time, should become, what periods from history the new Russian state should reject or identify with were debated.⁷² Other questions such as foreign policy, defense and security, economic and social problems and how they would define the world around them were also of high importance.

The 90s were the years when redefining Russia's national identity was in the centre of attention for the elite as well as the Russian society. However, as we have seen, identity needs to be based on certain factors or concepts as Smith has elaborated in his definition, and these concepts includes a common historical memory as well as culture. Therefore, one cannot simply think up a new national identity, it needs to have a strong foundation from history.

What influenced the answers to these questions at the time was Russia's pro western vision. After years of domestic economic decline from 1985-1992, Russia saw the need to modernize. And seeing the steadily growing economy and political rise of the Western neighbouring countries, it was only natural to look westward for inspiration. But in addition to the West's strong economy and political rise, there was something more that pulled the new Russian leaders Westward. This had to do with the new leader's vision of Russia as an organic part of Western civilization. They believed that the Bolsheviks and the Soviet system had stolen the true Western identity.⁷³ According to the Westernizers, Russia had acted against its own interests and national identity, and now had a new opportunity to develop into a "normal" Western state.⁷⁴ President Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev believed there were no alternatives to the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 57.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

pro-Western development. Kozyrev further argued that the Soviet Union was not solely a “normal” or “underdeveloped” country, but it was a “wrongfully developed” one.⁷⁵ This way of thinking was not new; it had evolved from Russia’s long tradition of Westernist thinking during part of the 19th century. But the western inspired economic shock therapy and elements of liberal western thinking did not quite fit into this new Russian system. The new constitution was drafted in the fall of 1993, and left nearly all power in the hands of the president. The bottom line was that the Constitution placed the president above society. Lilia Shevtsova explains: ‘ The system that the Constitution enshrines leans toward state control over society and toward a reproduction of personalized power.’⁷⁶ She argues that this leaves the Constitution as the main guarantor and instrument for keeping the Russian authoritarian system alive.⁷⁷ Shevtsova explains that as long as Yeltsin’s Constitution is in power, there will be no change towards honest elections, but instead, obstructions to reform.⁷⁸ This can be understood as survival of autocracy from the 1800s. It is also observed through Putin’s later emphasis on the so-called traditional values from this period, where these “values” justify complete domination of the state, the state authorities and the utter subservience of the individual to the state.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Shevtsova, *Interregnum: Russia between Past and Future*, 22.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

Chapter V.

Putin's concept of National Identity.

After discussing the historical development of Russian discussion about national identity we will now go on to discuss Putin's use of this concept in his political agenda. Godzimirski (2008:15) argues, that Putin underlines the Russian Identity, which is understood as the 'specific historical path of development' that resulted in a unique type of both national and political culture. Therefore, according to Godzimirski, 'the application of an identity approach to the interpretation of political processes in Russia could seem justified.'⁸⁰

We will now discuss how national identity as defined by Anthony Smith can be related to Putin's thinking about national Identity, particularly regarding the Western conception versus the non-Western conception.

In Putin's early period his use of the concept was mainly influenced by a so-called Western wave, and his idea of a new Russian Identity borrowed heavily on Western ideas of National Identity. Later however, we see a shift in Putin's concept of National Identity. This shift in attitude from Putin's side can be explained by the differences in values and interests between the West and Russia. In particular, regarding the disagreements over Chechnya Russia was somewhat confused over the flow of criticism from the West as the final result evidently favoured Western interests.⁸¹ This is where the differences in values play a big role. From the Russian point of view, the West should be pleased that a nation was willing to diligently fight corruption and crime, and thereafter cultivating a better

⁸⁰ Godzimirski, "Putin and Post-Soviet Identity: Building Blocks and Buzz Words," 15.

⁸¹ Bobo-Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*. The Royal Institute of International Affairs. (Chatham House papers, Blackwell Publishing,2008), 107.

business environment. However, from the Western perspective, the main concentrations were on individual human rights abuses, restrictions on religious activity and media freedoms.⁸² So where Russia justified the means to an end, the West emphasized the importance of the means rather than the end result. In Russia's eyes this was not only seen as a provocation of interference in Russia's internal affairs, but also double standards and hypocrisy from the Western nations.⁸³ This created a greater division between the West and Russia, and as Bobo Lo explains in his book *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*: 'This divergence of view feeds an ingrained suspicion that there is a kind of glass ceiling, whereby Russia is allowed to look at and occasionally taste the fruits of the West, but in a partial and conditional way only.'⁸⁴

Unfortunately, this suspicion continued to grow during Putin's second term in office, which resulted in a new shift of attention towards national identity looking at what Russia is, and what its values are.

Although Putin, with his ambiguous relationship to the West, did talk about cooperating and even adapting certain Western reforms and models, he has been quite clear throughout his presidency that Russia will transform and mold democracy in a way that will fit in with Russian values, morals and historic identity. According to Alfred B. Evans (2008:900):

'Putin's attitude toward the West is deeply ambivalent, and the conflicting tendencies in his assessment of Russia's relationship with the West are reflected in the internal tension within the system of values that he has adopted.'⁸⁵

But as Evans argues, 'Putin has been able to reshape reality to fit his values and goals, with considerable success so far; and he seeks to ensure that the orientation for policy that he has chosen will continue to guide Russia's political leaders in future decades.'⁸⁶

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

⁸⁵ Evans, "Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity", 900.

Therefore, in Putin's presidency, Russia's relationship with the West is left quite ambiguously where Putin sees the necessity to integrate economically with the West as it can contribute to modernize Russia's economy. But at the same time, under no circumstances he wants any interference from the West on how Russia will implement democratic values. As Putin himself remarked: 'the fundamental principles of democracy and the institutions of democracy should be adapted to the realities of Russian life, to our tradition and history.'⁸⁷

Although his concept 'sovereign democracy' is unclear, protecting Russia's sovereignty is without a doubt important for Putin. This has been more distinct after 2005, something that was noticeable in Putin's speeches. As foreign governments continuously criticized and distanced themselves from Russia and labelled its political practices 'undemocratic', Putin reacted against any foreign interventions or evaluations of Russia's national institutions. It was up to Russia itself to define its own form of democracy based on Russia's own values, leading a development of a sort of a state ideology. In regards to having a state ideology, Putin had expressed before his first term as President that Russia should not have a state ideology. Nevertheless, by 2006, a leading figure of the presidential administration, Vladimir Surkov declared that the Russian society needed an ideology.⁸⁸

One of the most frequent and continuous subject matters in Putin's statements regarding Russian society is the acute need for unity of values among all sectors of the population in Russia.⁸⁹ Since the beginning of his presidency in 2000 he has stressed the importance of *soglasie*, the meaning of agreement or harmony in society. His first presidential address to the Russian Parliament in July 2000 Putin

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 901.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 902.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 900.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 904.

stressed that ‘ a consensus on goals should come from the unique cultural traditions and shared historical memory of the Russian nation.’⁹⁰ Although Putin’s opinion of the importance of fundamental values and the *soglasie* in society has not changed since the beginning of his presidency, his concern about non-interference in his nation’s internal affairs has gained emphasis among the elites in Russian politics over the years.⁹¹

The end of the 90s was indeed a period of crisis for Russia. Even though the financial crisis of 1998 was not as grave as it could have turned out, Russian society nevertheless struggled with large societal cleavages, and a collective lack of self-confidence. Much of Russia’s lack of confidence can be related to four areas specifically as Lo explains: ‘(1) the search for a post-soviet identity and sense of purpose; (2) a dysfunctional political system; (3) rampant corruption; and (4) the handling of concrete policy priorities.’⁹²

These four areas as Lo pointed out as the main factors of weakness in post-Soviet Russia, marked the Yeltsin years as successive and high profile policy failures.⁹³ The question of identity had become an open page, which created opportunities as well as bewilderment. Unfortunately, the multiplicity of competing views on the future of Russia’s national identity could hardly lead to consensus. The Yeltsin administration was convinced of a close relationship with the West was the right way to go, as they understood the only way of prospering was through Western political and economic support.⁹⁴ In addition, the Yeltsin administration focused on presenting Russia as a cooperative and strategic partner of the West as well as a valuable member of the international community by sharing Western values and

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, (Putin,2000b)

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 905.

⁹² Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, 10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*,13.

interests.⁹⁵ In Yeltsin's eyes, this way of redefining Russia would secure its status and influence as a great power. His idea was that the fear that had compromised international respect in the past would now be replaced by an attitude of like-mindedness and positive contributions in resolving global problems.⁹⁶

However, the problem during the 90s was the widening gap between expectations and realities. This resulted in that other powers most prominently the United States, would not grant Moscow the status it felt it deserved. This resulted in an angry response from the Yeltsin administration with feelings of being marginalized from international decision-making, and assured the West it would not accept being ignored from taking part in important international matters. Yet, Russia's dependence on assistance from the West and its incapacity to influence progress, made such arguments unreasonable. For the Yeltsin administration this resulted in a reputation of having an outdated view towards the rest of the world, while domestically the administration was accused of incompetence and impotence. Hence, when Putin entered the presidency, he faced the puzzle and challenge of how to unify Russia's identity question.

Therefore, his approach to the question of Identity and self-perception became more an issue of Russia's place in the post-Cold War international environment rather than societal development, as Russia needed to gain collective self-confidence in regards to its foreign relations. Surprisingly enough, and with bleak odds, Putin managed in a short period of time to establish a more 'orderly' and confident foreign policy, and a cooperative and more stable political climate. So what Putin achieved in the beginning of his presidency was re-establishing more coherence and adding a much-needed boost to the collective self-confidence in Russia as a nation.⁹⁷ Be as it may, Putin's main challenge was as Lo phrases it:

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

‘how to transform the discussion of identity into a unifying force in society, while ensuring a plausible concordance between self-perceptions and uncomfortable realities.’⁹⁸

Nevertheless, compared to the Yeltsin era dominated by corruption and policy failures, Putin’s first term in office was marked by pragmatism and as Lo adds: ‘... ‘Russian foreign policy, formerly notable for its ‘surprises’ and shock values, has become almost ‘boringly normal’.’⁹⁹

During the 21st Century, a new search for an Identity or a debate over “ *Who are we?* ” has resurfaced. And as Lilia Shevtsova argues in her book ‘*Interregnum*’ it is less threatening to the regime with a new public discussion about national identity, than if society started criticizing the government for corruption and incompetence.¹⁰⁰ This way of thinking is indeed similar to the thoughts of the Russian authorities during the 19th century.

I will now analyze the development of Putin’s views on the aspects of a concept national identity, and how this change over time linking his views on National identity also to its use in earlier Russian history.

I will elucidate this by analyzing a collection of his speeches throughout his presidency. I will select a few speeches from his first period on the subjects above, and compare them with a few speeches in his later terms in office, to shed light on the changes in his rhetoric, starting with Putin’s Inauguration speech from May 7, 2000.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Shevtsova, *Interregnum: Russia between Past and Future*, 36.

Chapter VI

Putin's first term in office, 2000-2004

The Presidential Inauguration Ceremony May 7, 2000.

Putin's first inauguration speech bears signs of the transition of the identity struggle Russia went through in the 90s under the presidency of Yeltsin. Putin's words: *'I understand that I have taken on a great responsibility, and I know that in Russia the head of state has always been and will always be the person who is responsible for everything in the country. The first President of Russia, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsyn, recalled this today, as he leaves Kremlin, with words that many will remember. He repeated today in this hall: 'Take care of Russia.' This is precisely what I see as the primary responsibility of the President.'*¹⁰¹ With these opening words Putin creates a first image of how he intends to lead the country. His choices of words are clean, clear and without fuss, which supports the undertone that he will be a strong leader. Nevertheless, Putin's emphasis on continuing Russia's democratic means of leadership at this time is not ignored in his opening speech: *'today truly is a historic day; I want to draw attention to this once more. Really, for the first time in Russia's history, power is being transferred in the most democratic and simplest way, by the will of the people, legally and peacefully.'*¹⁰² Putin's oratory style does not appeal to sentimentality or emotions, but rather directly to the people in a manner of clear eloquence. His emphasis on Russia's way to a free society with democratic means is combined with the

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http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text//speeches/2000/05/07/0002_type82912type12786_128852.shtml (Accessed October 5, 2014)

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

importance of Russia's history, the creators of the Russian state: '*We must guard what we have gained, we must protect and promote democracy, we must make sure that the authorities elected by the people serve the people's interest, protect Russian citizens everywhere-both inside and outside the country- and serve the public. This is a principled, staunch position I have defended and will continue to defend.*' Putin accented the importance of democracy in his first inauguration speech altogether four times from '*power is being transferred in the most **democratic and simplest way***' then later '*we have proved that Russia is becoming a modern **democratic state***. He goes on with '*the construction of a **democratic state** is far from complete, but many things have been achieved.*' And lastly Putin stressed '*we must protect and promote **democracy.***'¹⁰³ It is therefore obvious that Putin pleaded to the citizen of Russia as a leader who would work for them and lead them using democratic means. Although he underlines democracy as the future of Russia, he does not neglect how important it is for Russia as a nation to be both powerful and mighty. Putin makes this clear as he states: '*we must not forget anything, we must know our history, know it the way it was and learn its lessons; we must always remember the people who created the Russian state, defended its honor and made it great, powerful and mighty state.*'¹⁰⁴ Despite the fact that Putin's first words to the nation stresses democracy more than power, greatness and might, it is nevertheless something that trumps and overshadows the meaning of building a truly democratic nation, even in the beginning of his presidency. Putin's first term in office can perhaps be seen in the light of a continuation or leftover from the Yeltsin era, although weaker in regards to aspiring to Western liberal values and its political system. It was however as mentioned, a result and a reaction to the fear of lagging behind in modernization, which for Putin surpassed embracing all Western liberal values. But as we shall see later, Putin did appeal to the West when he saw the need to do so following the

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

terror attacks September 11th 2001. At this time, the European countries were actively working together with the United States against international terrorism. Putin had his own problems concerning terrorism in the aftermath of the second Chechen War from 1999. So because of his problems on the home front, Putin sees the necessity and convenience of appearing as an internationalist in regards to the question of international security.

Speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany.

September 25, 2001.

Regarding this speech held in Germany by President Putin, it is worth mentioning Putin's background in Dresden, former East Germany, as a young KGB officer, which provided him with knowledge of German political, economic and cultural life as well as language skills. Putin has therefore naturally had a closer relationship with Germany than with many other Western nations. And taking the date into consideration, about two weeks after the terror attacks in the United States (11-09-01') this positive and open outlook in regards to European cooperation must also be seen in this context. Putin states: *' Yes, the assertion of democratic principles in international relations, the ability to find a correct decision and readiness for compromise are a difficult thing. But then, it was Europeans who were the first to understand how important it is to look for consensus over and above national egoism. We agree with that! All these are good ideas. However, the quality of decisions that are taken, their efficiency and, ultimately, European and international security in general depend on the extent to which we succeed today in translating these obvious principles into practical politics'.*¹⁰⁵ At this point Putin's words reflect a positive relationship towards the

¹⁰⁵ President of Russia, Official Web Portal. "Speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany," September 25, (2001) : 3.

West, but only as a response to a time in need of mutual cooperation.

Consequently, Putin's first term in office has some fragments of attraction towards the West regarding modernization and boosting the economy if nothing else. From the same speech Putin continues: *'It was a political choice of the people of Russia that enabled the leaders of the USSR to take decisions that eventually led to the razing of the Berlin Wall. It was that choice that infinitely broadened the boundaries of European humanism and that enables us today to say that no one will ever be able to return Russia back to the past.'*¹⁰⁶ Putin's emphasis here on 'European humanism' as something positive, is perhaps a little confusing and odd in particular regarding Europe. It is a bit of a paradox then, that this same European humanism that Putin states will never return Russia back to the past, is perhaps the same European humanism that angered the Putin administration regarding disagreements over Chechnya, and also made him go back to the past for the more traditional Russian values in regards to Russian National Identity. In broad terms Western Europe is known for the less traditional instruments of power, resorting to economic and moral means of persuasion rather than force or the threat of force perhaps more associated with the United States.¹⁰⁷ This European 'softness' with its concentration on individual humans rights abuses and freedom of media elucidated the different values between Russia and Western Europe. Hence, these differences in values explain Europeans stronger focus on means rather than ends and Russia's strong focus on ends rather than means.¹⁰⁸

http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2001/09/25/001_type82914_138535.shtml
(Accessed October 5, 2014)

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, 105.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

Putin's second term in Office

The importance of religion as the moral backbone of society suddenly became one of the most important values for Putin as he saw the West more as the immoral 'Other' with its liberal democratic values. The echo of the National Doctrine Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality from the late 1800s became significantly more prominent in Putin's speeches from 2007, mostly as a result of the strained relationship with the West as discussed earlier.

From early 2005, the political leadership of Russia also more explicitly expressed this resentment towards the West.¹⁰⁹ By 2007, Putin continued to articulate his discontent with the West more candidly and frequently than before. According to Evans there are various reasons for this growing resentment:

' In the first place, Russian leaders apparently resented Western criticism of the practices of that regime, which had intensified as it became increasingly clear that the changes brought by Putin were moving toward a more authoritarian concentration of power.'¹¹⁰

Furthermore, as Russia's economy had experienced a continuous growth since the late 90s, (primarily due to the rising price of oil which Russia exported in large quantities) Russia now felt that its power position in the world as a nation had improved considerably, and therefore Russia could afford to take a more assertive stand in regards to the West.¹¹¹ Another important factor has been the EU, where Russia sees EU as a partner for its economic needs, but where the European Union has a strong focus on exporting its liberal values, which, from the Russian perspective has been an irritating factor. This has added to a growing tension

¹⁰⁹ Evans, "Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity", 900.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* (Shlapentokh 2007)

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

between Russia and the West.¹¹² And this growing tension resulted in a much stronger ‘non-interference’ policy towards what Putin believed was Russia’s internal affairs, which is noticeable approaching the end of his second term in office.¹¹³

The Presidential Inauguration Ceremony May 7, 2004

Putin’s second inauguration speech has less emphasis on building a democratic nation, though he still mentions it. This speech lays its stress on building a patriotic nation, as well as being a significant player in the international arena. Obviously, after a time of the second Chechen War and the Moscow theatre hostage crisis (23-26 October 2002) Putin’s words reflected the situation by appealing for a united nation: *‘It was we who achieved high economic growth rates, we who overcame difficult ideological confrontation and are now gradually forging a truly united nation.’*¹¹⁴ This can be compared to Yeltsin’s last years as President, where many of the Westernist views had been replaced with statist views meaning the government no longer believed in the West’s willingness or ability to integrate Russia, and therefore the role of the state was now to preserve security and to work with a less dramatic economic reform than suggested earlier. In addition, statist had a very different view on Russia’s relationship with the outside world, and the Westernist model of Russia’s identity was replaced by a model with a much more distant relationship with the West.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, this speech still underlines the importance of developing democracy although in the shadow of patriotism. Putin only mentions **Democracy** once in his second

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 906.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 905.

¹¹⁴

http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/05/07/1255_type82912type127286_64132.shtml (accessed October 5, 2014)

¹¹⁵ Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, 64.

inauguration speech, but he does illuminate more on what he means by a democratic Russia here: ‘ *Only free people in a free country can be genuinely successful. This is the foundation for both economic growth and political stability in Russia.*’¹¹⁶ Putin continues with promises of strengthening personal freedom of the people as well as building a multiparty system. So having observed both inauguration speeches from 2000 and 2004, not much changed in his language and objectives on how he wanted to lead Russia, or what political path Russia would take. He did however call on the importance of a strong patriotic nation and encouraged and reminded the citizens of Russia of the importance of a strong patriotic nation with his words: ‘ *But the people of Russia demonstrated their best qualities as patriots and citizens during these critical moments, coming together in the struggle to ensure the country’s territorial integrity and keep our land united, creating a foundation for Russia’s economic growth through their labor and determined efforts.*’¹¹⁷ Here Putin uses patriotism as a mobilizing factor, and compared to his first inauguration speech, patriotism plays a bigger role than building a democratic Russia. Putin does have nationalist sentiments throughout his second inauguration speech, but with a subtler theme than in his later term. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy expands Smith’s definition of nationalism by adding ‘ the attitude the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and the actions that members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (sustain) self-determination.’¹¹⁸

Patriotism can be used to define the same sentiments but with a positive undertone and a mobilizing effect in society, and referring to standing united during difficult times such as the Chechen War and the Moscow theatre hostage crisis as mentioned earlier. Putin’s two first inauguration speeches are in many ways Putin’s first official “faces”. One face where he shows his nation he is a

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ “Nationalism”: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (accessed December6, 2014).

strong patriotic leader who believes in the dictatorship of law and order, and another face where he shows he is a leader who believes in democratic means of leadership and making Russia an important part of the international arena.

Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 25 April 2005.

This speech sheds light on the many contradictions regarding the promotion of democracy in Russia, and Putin's objectives on values connected with democracy. Putin states: *'I consider the development in Russia as a free and democratic state to be our main ideological goal. We use these words fairly frequently, but rarely care to reveal how the deeper meaning of such values as freedom and democracy, justice and legality is translated into life.'*¹¹⁹

Although Putin mentions a 'main ideological goal' here, the question and debate over whether or not Russia should adapt a state ideology was still under consideration in 2005. Before becoming President of Russia, Putin had expressed resistance to a state ideology for Russia.¹²⁰ However, the question of implementing a state ideology continued to be somewhat ambiguous during his first years as President. Vladislav Surkov introduced the proposed concept of 'Sovereign Democracy' as the heart of the so-called Putin-Ideology in 2006, yet Putin expressed some reservations for the concept at the time, and again distanced himself further from Surkov's state- ideology proposition in September 2007.¹²¹ Be as it may, Putin's statements from 2005 still emphasizes the importance of building a democratic Russia, although exactly what kind of democracy, is left out

¹¹⁹ Official Website of the President of Russia:
<http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/7863/print> (accessed October 5, 2014)

¹²⁰ Evans, "Putin's Legacy and Russia's Identity", 900.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

of the equation: ‘ *Above all else Russia was, is and will, of course, be a major European power. Achieved through much suffering by European culture, the ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy have for many centuries been our society’s determining values. For three centuries, we—together with the other European nations—passed hand in hand through reforms of Enlightenment, the difficulties of emerging parliamentarism, municipal and judiciary branches, and the establishment of similar legal systems. Step by step, we moved together toward recognizing and extending human rights, toward universal and equal suffrage, toward understanding the need to look after the weak and impoverished, toward women’s emancipation, and other social gains.*¹²² In retrospect, it is easy to observe the ambiguity in Putin’s words regarding the West, democratic values, and the ideals of freedom and human rights issues. He seems to appeal to them when Russia is in need of Western support, but at the same time Putin has been reluctant to enforce these liberal political values. He has shown both aversion and attraction towards them throughout his leadership, but during the beginning of his second term in presidency, still feels a part of something European. But although he states here that ‘ *Russia was, is and will, of course, be a major European power*’, this has not always been the case. If we go back to various times during Russia’s history, the relations between Western Europe and Russia was at its strongest during a Westernizing period, usually when Russia needed to modernize or strengthen its technology basis after a war or crisis. And although at times other liberal Western values has closed the gap between Russia and the West, for example during the Yeltsin era, Russia has never really become European in either in body or spirit. However, the West has through the centuries been the significant ‘Other’ Russia has compared herself to, aspired to, distanced herself to and competed with. Putin continues: ‘ *The creation of an effective legal and political*

¹²² Official Website of the President of Russia:
<http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/7863/print> (accessed October 5,2014).

*system is an essential condition for developing democracy in our country. But developing democratic procedures should not come at the cost of law and order, the stability that we worked so hard to achieve, or the continued pursuit of our chosen economic course.*¹²³ From the beginning of Putin's presidency establishing law and order has been one of Putin's most important objectives. Again, Putin's heavy emphasis on law and order can be compared with or shed light on by Ivan Ilyin's thinking from the early 20th century where his main three concepts of a successful society could be summed up of '*gosudarstvennost*' (statehood); '*pravosoznanie*' (legal consciousness); and '*natsionalizm*' (nationalism) And as Ilyin states:

' The single true path to any reform is a gradual education in legal consciousness...in its idea the state can be reduced to self-government of the people. However, the sole and objective end of the state is so high and requires from the citizenry such mature legal consciousness that historically the people turn out to be incapable of self government...Political philosophy must uncover the root of this divergence; state power must find the path to healing it.'¹²⁴

For Putin, Ilyin's words reflect much of his own perspective regarding the significance of law and order, and also his view that stability is of greater importance than democratic procedures. Therefore Putin views the means or process to form law and order of a lesser importance as long as the end result is law and order. This is indeed very different from the Western concept of thinking, as the means to an end is as important as the end itself.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁴ Author unknown. "Putin's philosopher, *Irussianality*," (accessed December 22, 2014).

<http://irrusianity.wordpress.com/2014/12/22/putins-philosopher>

**Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy,
February 10, 2007**

Since Munich Security Conference (MCS) first took place in 1963, it has changed considerably over time much as a response to a new world order with new significant nations as participants towards the end of the Cold War, including the Russian Federation and other Eastern European nations.¹²⁵ It is a diverse group of representatives, all from presidents, military leaders, human rights activists, environmentalists and other leaders such as CEO's representing global civil society.¹²⁶

At this conference Putin expresses his discontent for liberal Western values and world domination. This resentment for the West escalated as a response to on-going criticism from the West regarding Russia moving towards a more authoritarian concentration of power, and also Russia's engagement in Chechnya, where the criticism from the West was based on human rights violation on that regard.

This speech by Putin in 2007 clearly indicates a negative shift in his attitude towards the West and its institutions, in particular the United States that he sees as a dominant unipolar power, threatening the democratic value system. Putin states:

'However, what is a unipolar world? However one might embellish the term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making. It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys

¹²⁵ "History of Munich Security Conference."

<http://www.securityconference.de/en/about/history/> (Accessed December 5, 2014).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

itself from within. And this certainly has nothing to do with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority. Incidentally, Russia—we—are constantly taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.'¹²⁷

With these words Putin acknowledges that he sees the global hegemon of the United States, playing the leading role in most international affairs of importance, and in particular in relation to Russia. And to elucidate this, one can take a look at Putin's foreign policy priorities such as international terrorism, geopolitical developments in Europe, (NATO enlargement) the strategic disarmament agenda, WTO agreement, CSI affairs, the global financial environment and the international energy market. In all this, the United States has been the main international actor.¹²⁸ Although Putin worked with great perseverance during his first term to expand political and economic relation with Western Europe, he was also aware of Washington's role as the decisive actor in almost everything related to Russian interests. Nevertheless, regardless of how pragmatic Putin was in his first term in considering Russia's foreign policy, there was always a feeling of resentment towards the United States. There was much talk about Putin's unconcerned attitude towards the United States during his first term in office. However, during that period the United States worked deliberately on a strategy to minimize Russia's profile in American foreign policy.¹²⁹ Hence, Putin's indifferent attitude during this period can be understood. At this Munich conference on the other hand, it is clear that Putin's attitude towards Western Europe and the United States has developed a bitter undertone and his former

¹²⁷ "President of Russia, official Web Portal," http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_... (Accessed October 5, 2014)

¹²⁸ Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, 103.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

pragmatic approach to international matters is succeeded by a more emotional mannerism, much related to his resentment towards Western values in general, that seemed to peak after feeling neglected by the West concerning many international matters. In regards to the role of multilateral diplomacy Putin had this to say: ‘ *The need for principles such as openness, transparency and predictability in politics is uncontested and the use of force should be a really exceptional measure, comparable to using the death penalty in the judicial systems of certain states. However, today we are witnessing the opposite tendency, namely a situation in which countries that forbid the death penalty even for murderers and other dangerous criminals are airily participating in military operations that are difficult to consider legitimate. And as a matter of fact, these conflicts are killing people—hundreds and thousands of civilians!*’¹³⁰

It is clear that Putin is referring to Western nations and international organization’s interference with other nation’s internal conflicts. He implicitly comments on the West as hypocritical in regards to their NATO actions and criticism of what Putin regards as Russia’s internal matters. Putin states: ‘ *The Adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was signed in 1999. It took into account a new geopolitical reality, namely the elimination of the Warsaw bloc. Seven years have passed and only four states have ratified this document, including the Russian Federation. NATO countries openly declared that they will not ratify this treaty, including the provisions on flank restrictions (on deploying a certain number of armed forces in the flank zones), until Russia removed its military bases from Georgia and Moldova. Our army is leaving Georgia, even according to an accelerated schedule. We resolved the problems we had with our Georgian colleagues, as everybody knows. There are still 1,500 servicemen in*

¹³⁰ “President of Russia, official Web Portal,” http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_... (Accessed October 5, 2014)

Moldova that are carrying out peacekeeping operations and protecting warehouses with ammunition left over from Soviet times... But what is happening at the same time? Simultaneously the so-called flexible frontline American bases with up to five thousand men in each. It turns out that NATO has put frontline forces on our borders, and we continue to strictly fulfill the treaty obligations and do not react to these actions at all.’¹³¹

Putin’s words indicate a clear shift in attitude towards the West, and much of this negative shift that occurred was based on and justified by Putin on how the West was acting and reacting regarding Russia’s national security, and the meddling in Russia’s internal affairs. From this point on, Russia distanced itself from the West more than ever before during Putin’s presidency. Russia was also in a position where it could be more independent economically due to a steady economic growth since the late 90s. Russia was therefore in a strong position to isolate itself further from the West, and also take a more assertive position internationally.¹³²

Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, April 26, 2007

In this speech Putin emphasizes the importance of the unity of the people in regards to morality and spirituality. These words appeared more frequently during his second term in office. His first term in office can be compared with the more Westernized times during Russia’s history, where, as mentioned, Western ideas and technology were instruments to modernize and strengthen Russia. However, his second term bears similarities to the late 1800s where Slavophilism and Official Nationality was once again revived. This can be seen as the two dimensions of the West, where at various times during history Russia either has a

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³² Evans, “Putin’s Legacy and Russia’s Identity”, 900.

feeling attraction or aversion regarding the West or ‘*The Other*’.¹³³ This change was quite clear from Putin’s first term to his second term in office. Putin states: ‘*The spiritual unity of the people and the moral values that unite us are just as important a factor for development as political and economical stability. It is simply my conviction that a society can set and achieve ambitious national goals only if it has a common system of moral guidelines. We will be able to achieve our goals only if we maintain respect for our native language, for our unique cultural values, for the memory of our forebears and each page of our country’s history.*’¹³⁴

Putin encourages religion as a moral guideline for society, and in regards to the Official Nationality of the late 1800s. This doctrine of *Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality* that became the core for the Russian Identity first under Nicholas I, Putin brought back to life during his second term in office. Furthermore, the focus on National Identity is brought back into focus and through Smith’s definition ‘a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members’

can be recognized in many of Putin’s speeches, in particular regarding historical memories, historic territory and public culture. And referring to *the spiritual unity of the people*, the significance of religion is becoming more of a crucial factor in regards to Russia’s identity. These factors as Putin states should be unique in forming a Russian Identity that in his opinion should be distinctive and different from the West. Putin continues to justify the need for a new focus on Russia’s traditional values: ‘*The protracted economic crisis the country has gone through*

¹³³ Ibid, 899.

¹³⁴ Vladimir Putin, “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly”, President of Russia official Website: http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2007/04/26/1209_type7002982912_125670.shtml (Accessed October 5, 2014)

*has had severe consequences for our country's intelligentsia, for the situation in the arts and literature, for our people's culture and creativity. To be honest, these difficulties have all led to the disappearance of many of our spiritual and moral tradition.*¹³⁵

His words again underline religion that can be seen as of the greatest relevance in preserving the unique Russian culture through spiritual values and moral tradition. Putin's emphasis on Russian exceptionalism in regards to defining a Russian identity can now be seen through his emphasis on Russia's contrasts with the West and not its similarities, as his first term indicated. Putin emphasizes the need for creating a unique Russian Identity, where the West once again is the important 'Other' however, this time Russia will become what Neumann discusses, a Russia who should distance herself from Europe and its institutions, where the Russian form of government is simply not compatible with the Western form of government, but instead morally superior to it. This is the form of National Identity that is surfacing during Putin's second term as President, where focus on religion as the moral support in society is one important factor, and the West is simply the inferior 'Other' and not to be used for forming the new idea of a Russian national Identity.

However, Putin's imperialist emphasis on Russia's identity differs from both the tsarist era and the Soviet period. Expansionism was the driving force during these periods, pushing Russia's borders as far as possible and regardless of being a multiethnic empire, would still emphasize the superiority of the ethnic Russian race.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3

¹³⁶ Galeotti, Bowen, S Andrew. "Putin's Empire of the Mind", 3. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/04/21/putin_s_empire_of_the_mind_russia_geopolitics (accessed November 19, 2014)

Putin's imperium on the other hand, is a bit of a hybrid. Although Putin sees the ethnic Russians as the backbone of the multinational Russian population, Russian society is characterized by racism and hostility towards other ethnicities. Furthermore, Putin has showed no interest in exporting any of his political philosophy to non-Russians. Nevertheless, what brings Putin back to the thinkers of 19th century Russia is his belief in Russia as something unique and exceptional, and not only in its ethnic identity, but also very much through its culture and history closely connected to the Eastern Orthodoxy.

Third term in Office

Putin's essay: 'Integration of post –Soviet space and alternative to uncontrolled migration, Russia: The National Question, 2012

This essay by Putin was written in response to the challenge posed by rising immigration occurring in Russia, and he focuses his attention on the importance for unity in culture as well as keeping society's morals together by religion. Putin continues to explore the question of Russia's national Identity by discussing the historical perspectives on what influences the Russian Identity, such as the differences between the *Russki* and *Rossiski*. Where the former indicates ethnically Russian and the latter is any ethnicity born within Russia. Smith's definition of national identity as 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members,'¹³⁷ can clarify Putin's explanation on national identity, where he raises the questions concerning migration and Russia's multi-ethnic state, values and religion, and a shared cultural code. Putin explains:

¹³⁷ Smith, *National Identity*, 7.

*Russian people are nation forming on the basis of Russia's existence. The great mission of Russian's is to unite and bind our civilization. Language, culture and "universal kind-heartedness", according to Fyodor Dostoevsky, are what bring together, Russian Armenians, Russian Azerbaijanis, Russian Germans, Russian Tatars... Bring them together to form a type of state –civilization that does not have "ethnic persons" and where differentiation between "us and them" is determined by a common culture and shared values.*¹³⁸

Here Putin underlines the importance of binding Russia together with a common culture and shared values within a multi-ethnic state. By doing so, Putin places the West as something outside this common culture and shared values. The West is "The Other" in a sense that it has a different set of values that are not compatible with the Russian values. Putin continues:

*'This civilizational identity is based on the preservation of a Russian cultural dominance, which flows not from ethnic Russians, but all carriers of this identity regardless of nationality.'*¹³⁹ This preservation of culture is related to the

Slavophile periods in Russia's history during the 19th Century. The West is no longer a place to look for solutions concerning the future of a strong Russian nation. Instead, Putin concentrates many of his arguments for a national identity around the 'Official Nationality' from the 19th Century, first created by the Minister of Education, Sergei Uvarov (1786-1855) under tsar Nicholas I with its attention on Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality. Putin explains:

'It is this special quality of Russian statehood that was outlined in Ivan Ilyin's work: "Not to eliminate, not to suppress, not to enslave other people's blood, not to stifle the life of different tribes and religions-but to give everyone breath and the Great Russia...to honor all, to reconcile all, to allow everyone to pray in their own

¹³⁸ Vladimir Putin, "Integration of post-Soviet space and alternative to uncontrolled migration, Russia: 'The National Question.'" (2012): 6 <http://rt/politics/official-word/migration-national-question-putin-439/> (accessed November 2, 2014)

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

*way, to work in their own way, and to engage the best in public and cultural development.”*¹⁴⁰

Interestingly, Putin underlines the importance of freedom of religion through Ivan Ilyin's work, as mentioned earlier a religious and political thinker from the 19th and 20th Century (1883-1954) who escaped from the Bolsheviks and died an émigré in Switzerland in 1954. While in exile, Ilyin advocated for ethnic-religious neo-traditionalism during talks about the unique “Russian soul”.¹⁴¹ Here, Putin uses Ilyin's philosophy to show inclusiveness of various religions and customs, but at the same time build a multi-cultural Russia under a so-called ‘cultural code and shared values’. Putin states: *The confidence that we can ensure a harmonious development of a multicultural community is based on our culture, history and type of identity.*¹⁴²

So here, Putin draws the attention back to his idea of national exceptionalism. And although it might seem contradictory with Ilyin's words that express such inclusiveness and individual freedoms, Ilyin was a complex figure, and also understood as a ‘liberal’ character at times. Nevertheless, he plays a significant symbolic role in Putin's regime's intellectual project, with focus on the reconciliation of Imperial and Soviet Russia.¹⁴³ But what really underlined Ilyin's work and philosophy was his focus on the importance of statehood, legal consciousness and nationalism, bound together with the significance of religion, as spiritual matters were of greater importance than material ones.¹⁴⁴ Putin has selected his own version of national exceptionalism by selecting in particular three distinguished 19th and 20th-century intellectuals: Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁴¹ Andrew Stuttaford, “The rebirth of Ivan Ilyin.” National review online. <http://www.nationalreview.com/node/376109/print> (accessed December 9, 2014)

¹⁴² Putin, ‘Integration of post-Soviet space and alternative to uncontrolled migration, Russia: ‘The National Question’ . 6.

¹⁴³ Stuttaford, ‘The rebirth if Ivan Ilyin’, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Author unknown. Putin's philosopher.’ *Irrusinality*. Accessed December 22, 2014. <http://irrusinality.wordpress.com/2014/12/22/putins-philosopher>

Solovyov, and Ivan Ilyin. These three are often cited in Putin's work and speeches, and also used to justify Russia's unique or unparalleled place in history. In short, their works romanticize the need for obedience to the strong ruler and defending the people from cultural corruption.¹⁴⁵ It is evident that religion has grown in importance throughout Putin's Presidency, and continuing from his essay in 2012 Putin clarifies the importance of religion as such: *'And, of course, we are counting on an active involvement in this dialogue of Russia's traditional religions. The foundations of the Christian Orthodox Church, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism-with all of their differences and peculiarities-include basic, shared moral, ethical, and spiritual values: compassion, reciprocity, truth, justice, respect for elders, family and work values. These value systems cannot be replaced by anything: and we need to reinforce them.'*¹⁴⁶

This elucidates well Russia's continuous withdrawal regarding secular Western values, and rather than seeing the West as a partner of cooperation, it is now the 'Significant Other' that is an example of immorality and unethical behaviour in the eyes of Putin. In addition, there is very little focus on democratic values, instead the weight of importance lies on law and order in society. Putin states: *'There is no room for dialogue amidst riots and violence. No one should be tempted to pressure the authorities into specific decisions by means of civil disorders. Our law enforcement agencies have proven that they are capable of easily and efficiently suppressing any attempt at doing that.'*¹⁴⁷

This shows Putin's autocratic attitude in a much stronger degree than during his first term as President. Therefore, his last term in office bears a strong resemblance to 19th Century Russia, with the Official Nationality doctrine, where

¹⁴⁵ Galeotti, "Putin's Empire of the Mind," 5.

¹⁴⁶ Putin, "The National question," 8.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*,9.

obedience to God, emphasis on law and order, and discipline were strongly encouraged in the Russian society, and the words Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality were part of Russia's identity.

Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, 19 September 2013, Novgorod Region

The Valdai International Discussion Club was formed in 2004, with the goal to encourage dialogue between Russian and international intellectual elite. The purpose for these discussions is to make a neutral and independent analysis of economic, political and social events in Russia and the world in general. Moreover, the Valdai Club aims to reinforce the world's intellectual elite on how to overcome global crises.¹⁴⁸

The topic of the Club's anniversary session was '*Russia's Diversity for the Modern World*'. In this meeting Putin gave a speech in regards to Russia's process of its national identity in the 21st Century. Putin explains: '*... questions about who we are and who we want to be are increasingly prominent in our society. We have left behind Soviet ideology, and there will be no return. Proponents of fundamental conservatism who idealise pre-1917 Russia seem to be similarly far from reality, as are supporters of an extreme, western-style liberalism.*'¹⁴⁹

Compared to his first term in office where Putin enthusiastically emphasized openness towards a constructive relationship with the West, although not always in agreement over the extent of Western influence, Putin had a much more pragmatic approach regarding decisions of international affairs. However, during

¹⁴⁸ Valdai International Discussion Club.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valdai_International_Discussion... 2.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valdai_International_Discussion...)

¹⁴⁹ Official Site of the President of Russia, 2. 'Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, 19 September 2013, Novgorod Region.

<http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/news/6007/print> (accessed October 5, 2014)

his last term in office it has become clear that Putin's Russia is unique in a way that is not based on pragmatic decisions.¹⁵⁰ As to what he really means by 'an extreme, western-style liberalism' can only be left to speculations, but that his relationship with the West and his views on Western liberal democracy has shifted over the years, can be understood through his decisions, actions, statements and speeches. And regarding his thoughts on *fundamental conservatism* pre-1917, he might reject fundamentalist supporters from this time, but certainly not the ideas and values that developed from this period in Russia's history. This is seen through his frequent use of references to various philosophers, writers and religious scholars from this period. So after rejecting fundamentalist supporter of conservatism, Putin refers to a known conservative monarchist philosopher, Konstantin Leontyev (1831-1891) explaining the Russian 'spirit' Putin aspires to: 'Russia- as philosopher Konstantin Leontyev vividly put it- has always evolved in "blossoming complexity" as a state-civilization, reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church and the country's other traditional religions. It is precisely the state-civilization model that has shaped our state polity. It has always sought to flexibly accommodate the ethnic and religious specificity of particular territories, ensuring diversity in unity.'¹⁵¹ Again, Putin's strong reference to religion as a big part of the shared Russian identity can be seen as another factor that can distance Russia from the West, and focus on a new kind of Russian exceptionalism or uniqueness. Putin's remark on Russia as a civilization is in itself enough to understand that he holds the belief in Russia as something unique, rooted in its cultural history and also ethnic identity, although the latter is not as prominently referred to, but rather as the backbone or fundament of the multinational Russian people. Although the ethnic Russians

¹⁵⁰ Galeotti, "Putin's Empire of the Mind," 2.

¹⁵¹ Meeting at the Valdai International Discussion Club, September 2013, 6.

(Russkii) do not govern the state, they sustain (maintain) the foundations of the “Russian civilization” on which the state is based.¹⁵²

To demonstrate Putin’s objectives on secularism in what he defines as Euro-Atlantic countries he explains: *‘Another serious challenge to Russia’s identity is linked to events taking place in the world. Here there are both foreign policy and moral aspects. We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnership, belief in God with the belief in Satan.’*¹⁵³ This statement from Putin clarifies his views of Western secularism, and at the same time explains explicitly that this is what Russia should distance itself from. It also indicates he believes the Russian identity is threatened by the moral corruption from Western secularism, and by referring to Satan he stresses how morally corrupted the West has become; although it is perhaps difficult to associate a belief in Satan with secularism in general, his meaning is clear. Putin continues explaining his understanding of European secularism as such: *‘The excess of political correctness have reached the point where people are seriously talking about registering political parties whose aim is to promote paedophilia. People in many European countries are embarrassed or afraid to talk about their religious affiliations. Holidays are abolished or even called something different; their essence is hidden away, as is their moral foundation. And people are aggressively trying to export this model all over the world. I am convinced that this opens a direct path to degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis.’*¹⁵⁴ Here, Putin demonstrates overtly how he feels

¹⁵² Galeotti, “Putin’s Empire of the Mind” 4.

¹⁵³ Meeting at the Valdai International Discussion Club, September 2013, 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

about European secularism in 2013, and indirectly warns Russians on the moral degradation of Western values connecting them to the lack of religion in society. Putin feels the need to defend Russian civilization against this chaos of immorality he interprets from Western secularism. And in comparison to his first term in office, where Putin managed to keep his own political and religious beliefs apart from state policy, his last term is a merger of the two. In a speech from 1999 Putin stated: ‘ *a state ideology blessed and supported by the state... (means) practically no room for intellectual and spiritual freedom, ideological pluralism, and freedom of the press—that is, for political freedom.* ’¹⁵⁵ So from his words in 1999 and to his words in 2013 there is a shift in state policies, which can be understood through his emphasis on conservative values. What Putin personally perhaps disapproved of in his earlier terms, he now vigorously wants to ban. What Putin really refers to when he mentions political parties in Europe promoting paedophilia, can only be left to speculations, but that he sees homosexuality as immoral and that he wants to implement laws against gay “propaganda” is a fact.¹⁵⁶ This again proves that Putin’s view on Russia’s national identity is heavily influenced by religion, in particular the Orthodox Church as common glue for society’s moral guidelines.

¹⁵⁵ Galeotti, “Putin’s Empire of the Mind,” 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Valdai speech, October 24, 2014.

Putin talks to Valdai Club in Sochi on the theme: “ The World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules”.

This meeting from 2014 is heavily influenced by Russia’s annexation of Crimea, further leading to the crisis in Ukraine. It also reflected Russia’s and the West’s conflicting value system; where the West sees the annexation as a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, and Russia sees it in an historical perspective where Crimea is a part of Russia and its identity.

In addition, this speech is almost a continuation of his 2007 speech in Munich where Putin made a wake-up call for many Western countries by strongly criticizing Washington for its “unipolar” view of the world. This statement persuaded many Western leaders to change their attitude towards Putin’s Russia. In regards to the “ unipolar” power Putin states:

‘ In a situation where you had domination by one country and its allies, or its satellites rather, the search for global solutions often turned into an attempt to impose their own universal recipes. This group’s ambitions grew so big that they started presenting the policies they put together in their corridors of power as the view of the entire international community. But this is not the case. The very notion of ‘ national sovereignty’ became a relative value for most countries. In essence, what was being proposed was the formula: the greater the loyalty

towards the world's sole power centre, the greater this or that ruling regime's legitimacy.'¹⁵⁷

By these words Putin truly shows his distaste for what he sees as a excluding and dominating Western power, and a power that interferes with other nations sovereignty. This is a big change from his first term where he still saw the United States and Western Europe as a strategic partner for many different issues. In 2014 that door is closed, and Putin continues to underline what he sees as a hypocritical and dominating West: *'Let's ask ourselves, how comfortable are we with this, how safe are we, how happy living in this world, and how fair and rational has it become? Maybe, we have no real reason to worry, argue and ask awkward questions? Maybe the United States' exceptional position and the way they are carrying out their leadership really is a blessing for us all, and their meddling in events all around the world is bringing peace, prosperity, progress, growth and democracy, and we should maybe just relax and enjoy it all? Let me say that this is not the case, absolutely not the case.'*¹⁵⁸

By this statement Putin is shifting the blame to the United States after the United States and also Western Europe for criticizing Russia on its annexation of Crimea March 2014. And regarding fighting international terrorism, an issue Putin was willing to cooperate actively with the United States on in his first term in office, in his last term however, it is a clear turn in his attitude from his first term as president on the matter. Putin argues: *'They once sponsored Islamic extremist movements to fight the Soviet Union. Those groups got their battle experience in Afghanistan and later gave birth to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The West if not supported, at least closed its eyes, and, I would say, gave information, political and financial support to international terrorists' invasion of Russia (we have not*

¹⁵⁷ Valdai speech of Vladimir Putin: Putin talks to Valdai Club in Sochi on the theme: "The World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules." (2014): 3. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Valdai_speech_of_Vladimir_Putin (Accessed November 3, 2014).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

*forgotten this) and the Central Asian region's countries. Only after horrific terrorist attacks were committed on US soil itself did the United States wake up to the common threat of terrorism. Let me remind you that we were the first country to support the American people back then, the first to react as friends and partners to the terrible tragedy of September 11.'*¹⁵⁹

Again, Putin blames the West of hypocrisy, and mostly the United States. He also blames the US for supporting international terrorism, and by doing so cutting off most of the diplomatic relationship left between the West and Russia creating a total block for any cooperation, and demonstrating that Russia does not need the West for anything. Putin continues to demonstrate Russia's independent place in the world: *'Now the Soviet Union is gone, what is the situation and what is the temptations? There is no need to take into account Russia's views, it is very dependent, it has gone through transformation during the collapse of the Soviet Union, and we can do whatever we like, disregarding all rules and regulations. This is exactly what is happening. Dominique here mentioned Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia before that. Was this really all handled within the framework of international law? Do not tell us those fairy-tales.'*¹⁶⁰

This reflects Putin's view on the West in 2014. His understanding of Western behaviour is one of hypocrisy, immoral values, meddling in other nations affairs and therefore contributing to an unstable world. Putin goes on defending the annexation of Crimea as such: *'First of all, regarding my view of Ukraine's sovereignty: I have never disputed that Ukraine is a modern, full-fledged, sovereign, European country. But it is another matter that the historical process that saw Ukraine take shape in its present borders was quite a complex one. Perhaps you are not aware that in 1922, part of the land that you just named, land that historically always bore the name Novorossiya... Why this name? This was*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

because there was essentially a single region with its centre at Novorossiisk, and that was how it came to be called Novorossiya.'

So here Putin uses history to justify the annexation of Crimea, but what is perhaps noteworthy is that this annexation from a Western point of view makes little sense economically but it does based upon the Russian point of view, as Putin justify it under the philosophy of Ivan Ilyin and his followers from the 19th Century. And under this belief using Russian history as justification, the religious and spiritual matters trump the material ones. In this way it is protecting the Orthodoxy, which for Putin is an important part of Russian cultural identity.

However, from the Western perspective the Russian influence in the Crimea area was already highly significant, but without the obligation to subsidize it as Ukraine had. So from this perspective, Putin can seem to have lost his pragmatic way of thinking and acting, and replaced it with a view based on his own values and justifications. As Evans argued:

‘ Putin has sought to reshape reality to fit his values and goals, with considerable success so far; and seeks to ensure that the orientation for policy that he has chosen will continue to guide Russia’s political leaders in future decades. It is argued here that in its totality Putin’s thinking constitutes a distinctive choice of an identity for contemporary Russia.’¹⁶¹

This is very clear in his last term in office where the emphasis on Russia’s identity has been the central point as evidenced in the content of many of his speeches. And this identity, which Putin puts at the heart of Russia, bears the inspiration of orthodoxy, autocracy and emphasis on a unique nationality. With regards to autocracy, Putin has become increasingly autocratic as seen through his office where his advisors has become limited to the few who shares his exact ideas

¹⁶¹ Evans, “Putin’s Legacy and Russia’s Identity,” 901.

and views.¹⁶² Putin's current year in office has encouraged Russia's uniqueness through its cultural roots, values, patriotism and ethics, which again is a formula for a new Russian exceptionalism. So seen from this perspective, Putin's intervention in the Ukrainian crisis did not only authorize him to intervene, it ordered it.¹⁶³

Conclusion

What I have found as a recurrent theme throughout Putin's presidency is his emphasis on an autocratic government as a basis on how Russia will continue to develop. This can be seen as continuity from the 1800s until today, where the West continues to be the 'significant other' Russia defines itself against when reevaluating its national identity question.

After examining and comparing the concept of Russian national identity during Putin's years in power with that of 19th and 20th century Russia, I have found that with every time Russia faces a challenge or conflict during history, it tends to re-focus on the question of national identity. This is in accordance with the hypothesis based on Shevtsova. The factors seen to be of great importance for Putin is the question of religion and Russia's relationship to the West. However, I found the emphasis on national identity throughout Putin's years in office, but strongest during the last two terms of his presidency. In the course of these two last terms, (2004-2008 and 2012- 2015) his emphasis on the factors relating to the Russian national identity reflect in much larger degree the 19th and early 20th century concept of national identity in Russian history than his first term in office. (2000-2004).

Regarding the question of identity in general, I found Anthony D. Smith's classical definition of National Identity as useful:

¹⁶² Galeotti, "Putin's Empire of the Mind," 2.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3.

‘ a named human population sharing historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties of all members’

to elucidate my research question, comparing Putin’s presidency with the 19th and 20th century’s notion of what the Russian identity entails. Smith discusses many important aspects relevant to the Identity discussion during the 19th and 20th century Russia, which is also recognized during Putin’s terms in presidency. One significant part of Smith’s discussion of Identity is space and territory which proved to be of importance regarding the Western and non-Western model. These different kinds of national identity conceptions, has been important for the identity debate throughout Russia’s history, and have again been central under Putin’s leadership. In Russia’s history the Western and non-Western models have depended on Russia’s view of the West at a given time, something that has occurred in positive and negative waves. During the Western waves in Russian history, the West was seen as something to aspire to and learn from. This usually occurs right after a conflict or challenge in history, as the Crimean War, (1853-1856) or as seen during the dissolution of the Soviet Union (December 1991).

However, the periods of Western influence in Russia has differed in what should be considered valuable for Russia regarding its development and national identity. One example would be Yeltsin’s presidency during the 90s and Putin’s first term as president (2000-2004) These two periods welcomed Western influences, but differed in regards to what Western values Russia should integrate with. Yeltsin was a man of the Westernist way of thinking, meaning he truly believed Russia was a part of the Western world, and therefore should integrate with its political as well as its economical value system. During Putin’s first term in presidency on the other hand, integration with the West was more or less restricted to the economical and technological aspects. Putin saw the necessity in lifting Russia’s economy and

modernizing the technology by using the West as a model to do so. But regarding Western liberal political values, Putin was much more reluctant in integrating Russia than Yeltsin was. He did not share the liberal political values that Yeltsin held, but believed Russia could develop its own democratic system based on what Putin considered 'Russian values', and not become a replica of the West.

As we have seen, what these values consisted of became clearer as Russia's relationship to the West became strained. During Putin's second term in office the importance of Russia's national identity can be reflected in his speeches, where he repeatedly refers to Russian values as something that separates it from the West, and is unique to Russia's identity. Values such as autocracy, nationality and orthodoxy that were important during the 19th century, are often emphasized by Putin as obedience and respect of the law, patriotism, and religious guidelines, which resembles the 'Official nationality' doctrine under Nicholas I. Another important historical figure from the 19th and early 20th century that sheds light on Putin's values regarding Russia's national identity is Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954) with his belief that religious and spiritual matters should surpass material ones, and where the interest of the state must be first priority over anything else. During his last terms, Putin has often used this belief in regards to Russia's national identity as why Russia is morally superior to the West, where he sees Russia as a moral leader and where the West is morally corrupted by secularism, which puts Russia in a position of exceptionalism resembling the late 1800s.

I have found that every time Russia faces a crisis or a conflict, it re-evaluates the national identity question, first it is reaching out to the West then distancing itself from the West, but gradually we see a reaction, and Russia's history from the 19th and 20th Century can elucidate this. The defeat of the Crimean War contributed to a new evaluation of national identity, first by looking to the West, then later, in the 1880s separating its values from the West and focusing on Russia's 'uniqueness'

once again as under Nicholas I. The same can be seen after the ‘defeat’ of the Cold War during the Yeltsin-period, where Western Ideas heavily influenced Russia. This continued during the first period of Putin’s presidency. Therefore Yeltsin’s presidency and Putin’s first term can be compared to the period shortly after the Crimean War, Putin’s second and third terms can be compared to the late 1800s, where Russia’s relationship to the West again soured. Therefore, the West has always remained the ‘significant Other’ for Russia regarding its own identity. Whether Russia was in a positive period or a negative period with the West, it has never been irrelevant. It is this relationship, which as discussed, includes both feelings of attraction and aversion that influences Russia’s national identity. The West is seen as a competitor, a partner, inspiration, or a threat, all depending on how Russia evaluate itself as a nation at a given time in history.

Another major factor in Russia’s debate over national identity is the question of religion. It too, as the West, has been a factor of aversion and attraction throughout Russia’s history. Religion defined as Orthodoxy was important in the late 19th century and again during Putin’s presidency it seems to hold a central part in Russia’s national identity. During his third term as president, the Orthodox religion is for him the core that glues the nation together, historically, culturally, and morally. As Putin’s first period as president was a stabilizing period, where building up a strong economy and fighting internal corruption, was the central goal for Russia, focusing on Russia’s identity did not seem an urgent matter. Therefore, the question of the importance of religion was overshadowed by the need to modernize and strengthen the economy. As the West was a central part in modernizing Russia, Putin’s first period in office was more actively cooperating with the West in regards to economic integration, and also fighting international terrorism.

During Putin's second term as president however, the question of Russia's identity became more visible in Putin's speeches and major statements. After harsh criticism from many Western nations and institutions regarding human rights violations during Chechen War, Putin reacts by distancing Russia from the West. This results in a new focus on Russia's national identity where Putin now focuses on Russia's Orthodox heritage as the one important factor of Russia's identity. He now sees the West as morally inferior to Russia by pointing out immoral Western secular values, and also seeing Russia as something unique, and exceptional. The Orthodox religion is central for Putin in regards to its national identity question as it contributes with moral guidelines for society, and at the same time Putin argues that the Orthodox faith is Russia's historic heritage and it must be protected. Under this justification of religion, as a part of Russia's historic identity, Putin focuses on Russia as something that stands out from Western secular values. One example where Putin uses religion as a vital part of Russia's identity is the annexation of Crimea in 2014, where Putin sees it as a part of Russia's Orthodox inheritance and therefore it must be protected.

Putin's presidency has proven to show that when during times of challenge or conflicts, Russia undertakes a new evaluation of its identity, and the central factors in this identity debate are religion and also the West as the 'Significant Other' for Russia. The Western pressure in regards to Russia's actions today has led Russia into a new wave of an anti-Western Identity search. This wave has brought back into life the 19th century concepts of autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality as the main theme to counter Western secular values.

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