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Contemporary Russian conservatism

Elena Chebankova*

School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK

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This article analyzes contemporary Russian conservatism through the prism of ideational and positionist ideological perspectives. The author argues that Russian conservatism proposes a distinct value package through its anthropocentric nature, its plans for modernization of Russia, and its future outlook that must rest on the best elements of tradition. The author compares these trends with the Western conservative tradition, making distinct parallels between the two strands of conservative thought. The author also explores the attitude of Russian conservatism toward the post-modern world. This is intrinsically linked to the discussion of Russia's attempts to develop a political and ideational alternative to the West, introduce a distinct model for the architecture of international relations, and find Russia's position in the global world.

Keywords: conservatism; modernity; modernization; Russian politics; ideology; post-modernity

Introduction

Many analysts and observers of Russian politics are becoming increasingly interested in the nature of Russia's contemporary conservatism. Commentary on this political trend varies significantly. Western observers remain skeptical, while their Russian colleagues are trying to reach a consensus on the nature and genesis of this ideological trend. This paper will show that conservatism has a long historic tradition within Russia's political life. More importantly, it contributed to the formation of a political consensus within Russian society over the past decade. This paper will discuss this ideology's main tenets. It will begin with an overview of some overarching features of Russian conservatism and will then proceed to examine some of its particular elements which are applicable to the contemporary political situation in Russia and beyond.

Conservatism: main positions

At the outset, it seems logical to outline a number of overarching theoretical positions that form the basis of Russia's conservatism and to compose a prism through which this ideology's particular features can be examined. We can select the three most important points. First, conservatism, as an ideology, is distinct from other ideologies in that it represents a standpoint, a position. In contrast to strictly

*Email: echebankova@lincoln.ac.uk

ideational ideologies, such as Communism, socialism, liberalism, nationalism, and fascism, conservatism does not have a clearly formulated existential value package. Neither does it have a meaningfully articulated project for an ideal model of future society (Mannheim 1936, 40). As Huntington (1957, 458) notes, "no conservative ideal exists to serve as the standard of judgment. No political philosopher has ever described a conservative utopia. In any socio-political system there may be institutions to be conserved, but there are never conservative institutions."

However, while such positionism (Mannheim 1936; Huntington 1957) plays a large part in the Russian conservative outlook, it cannot define it fully. Thinkers and ideologues of contemporary Russia (Leont'yev 2010a; Remizov 2010; Averyanov in Ilyashenko, Kobyakov, and Averyanov 2014) seek to qualify the positionist approach by claiming that it deprives conservatism of its developmental dynamic and restricts its future-oriented potential. Hence, the second main characteristic of Russian conservatism is its focus on the future, which divorces it from the positionist past- (or present)-centered frame of mind. From this point of view, this thought is preoccupied with the ways of weaving the eternal concepts and morals into the fabric of the contemporary, future-focused world. In doing so, conservatives divorce the past from the eternal by selecting those transcendental values of previous ages that they wish to take to the future (Leont'yev 2010a; see also Grot 1891; Mezhuyev in Malofeyev et al. 2010). In other words, Russian conservatism seeks to recreate tradition in a new form. Remizov (2010, 15–16) brands this re-actualization of eternal morals within the conditions of post-modern urban society as "productive revanchism."

Thus, in contrast to the established Western view that contemporary society is focused on the future (Giddens 1998, 94) – an ideal model of which modern ideologies have promised to men in differing forms – Russian conservatism hopes to diffuse its attention between the past, present, *and* future. This future-oriented focus of Russian conservatism is rather idiosyncratic. Its most important aspects are of an economic nature. These are largely linked to the repetitive socio-political turmoil that the country succumbed to during the twentieth century. The rapid change of ideological paradigms, which inflicted painful wounds on Russian society, gave these thinkers incentives to search for the most stable methods for *development and modernization* of Russia. This development is seen in building a prosperous, stable, and economically viable country resilient to the repetition of past troubles. Hence, their project is largely a reaction to the deprivation of Soviet times, the impoverishment, suffering, and moral collapse of the 1990s, and the gradual economic recovery of the 2000s (Remizov 2010, 7–8).

Anthropocentrism is the third overarching feature of Russian conservatism. Conservative thinkers see humanity as the main actor of historic progress. They believe that each stage of socio-political development determines its own model, or narrative, of Man. They seek to narrate a particular human anthropology that could provide a meaningful alternative to the neoliberal, left liberal, and libertarian traditions of the age. These thinkers take modernity as a foundational matrix and strive to integrate its eternal features with the rapidly changing nature of the post-modern world. The Man of modernity, they argue, was a self-developing,

progressive being with the Kantian will to reason and the Nietzschean will to exert power (power to overcome personal weaknesses) (Fukuyama 2003; Tsymbursky 2008; Dugin 2009; Pinkard 2010; May and Gemes 2009; Remizov 2010). With the help of these qualities, Men of modernity have produced the finest works of literature and art, as well as a wealth of scientific discoveries and inventions.

Transition to post-modernity, they argue (Panarin 2001; Tsymbursky 2008; Remizov 2010), is intertwined with accelerated urbanization, growing specialization, and professionalism; globalizing tendencies; migration and the rise of multiculturalism; development of segmented identities; and redefinition of family and gender relations. The uneven fabric of the post-modern society plunges the world into uncertainty by depriving humans of the previously established episteme of norms, values, morals, and behavioral patterns that have been formed gradually by faith, religion, politics, and the philosophy of modernity. As Anthony Giddens (1998) notes, the Man of post-modernity becomes a creature of "self-actualization" often seen in the pursuit of hedonistic pleasures, particular personal emotions, and fancy desires (Lasch 1996; Panarin 2001; Fukuyama 2003). This human is focused on constructing a particular personal identity exposing, one way or another, those inner soul features that contradict the norm-giving matrix of modernity.

This atmosphere of uncertainty makes it increasingly difficult to provide definitive ethical parameters that define a contemporary Man. Yet, this problem remains central to the future development of any type of society – modern or post-modern – for its successful resolution ensures a stable reproduction of socio-political foundations of human civilization (Mezhuyev in Malofeyev et al. 2010; Remizov 2010). Russian conservatism sees the task of narrating the anthropology of contemporary Man as the main challenge of the age (Tsymbursky 2008; Remizov 2010). This drive is also fueled by the embitterment that stems from the erosion of pre-existing Soviet paradigms of human behavior produced by the Soviet *type* of modernity. Hence, conservatives are concerned with building a bridge between some positive norms of the Soviet (and Russian imperial) modernity and contemporary post-modern Russia.

These three intellectual trajectories determine a conservative answer to a host of substantive questions pondered by Russian society today. These questions include (1) the role of the state and societal expectations placed upon it, (2) treatment of historic myths and their application to the present, (3) the problem of Russia's cultural-civilizational distinction and her permanent search for political alternativism, (4) the task of preserving particular cultures of the world, and (5) the ways of development and modernization of Russia. I will detail these issues in what follows by referring to the anthropocentric and positionist features of conservatism in the first four points and by examining the future focus of this thought in the final subsection of this paper.

Attitude toward the state

The conservative attitude toward the state entails two main features: anthropocentric and positionist. The former places a range of unique demands

on the state through a particular set of socio-political and ethical values. The latter exhibits support of the strong state that could ensure security, territorial integrity, stable development, and modernization of Russia. In the first case, conservatives diverge from the liberals and socialists, who seek to regulate the state through taxes and surplus value, respectively. In this sphere, conservatives stress the idea of inter-generational justice and argue that Russia's large oligarchic capital unjustly enjoys the benefits of former Soviet assets – the land, the wealth of natural resources, and the system of large industrial enterprises (Remizov 2010). Thus, they seek to control the state by demanding that it places limitations on large industrial capital that, in their view, has outstanding inter-generational debts to the former Soviet people.

In many ways, these ideas involve a monumental anthropological task of creating a qualitatively new national elite. This elite should, instead of siding with neoliberal global interests led and directed by the West, create a new existential value package of the age for Russia. This value package could act as a paradigm, a framework within which both society and its large industrial capital would operate. For most conservatives, it is the task of creating a class of national bourgeoisie whose main loyalties would lie at home and whose objectives would coincide with the immediate interests, development, and the fate of Russia (Kurginyan 2009; Delyagin 2014b). Russian national capitalists, in this conservative view, must make a clear psychological, emotional, as well as rational economic connection between personal enrichment and their country's future. This capitalist economic elite, conservatives insist, must stop viewing Russia as a mere hunting ground and treat it like its financial and historic home. In many ways, these are the eternal values of patriotism and loyalty to the nation-state that clash with the post-modern idea of cosmopolitanism and world-citizenship.

Khazin (2013), Russia's conservative economist, a permanent member of the conservative Izborskiy Club, and a member of the higher council of the International Eurasian movement, claims that, since the very dawn of Russia's capitalism, the country's elite were divided between those who belonged to the so-called national bourgeoisie and those who merely conducted business in Russia but did not link their personal and financial future with the country. The Russian royal family, he argues, belonged to the second category, which largely precipitated the outcome of the Russian Revolution. The Communist economic and political elite, whose aim was to convert their political power into tangible personal assets and to become part of the global system of capitalism, aided the collapse of the USSR. This very elite have subsequently privatized resources and turned their extraction to personal advantage. This stalled technological modernization and development of Russia for nearly two decades (see also Leont'yev 2010b, 2011).

Yet the financial crisis of 2008 revealed that there are segments of Russia's big business that have stakes in sustaining Russia's national interests and securing the geopolitical strength of the country (Khazin 2013). Representatives of such big business appeal to the Russian state to defend their interests abroad. This created,

probably for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a psychological link between the new industrial elite and the Russian state, invoking (or creating the grounds for invoking) feelings of patriotic loyalty desired by conservatives. Wide circles of Russia's conservatives enthusiastically welcomed this tentative emergence of a national bourgeoisie. Sergey Kurginyan, Russia's socialist conservative and a member of the Izborskiy Club, called for the creation of a wide political alliance between the national bourgeoisie and left patriotic forces, while Mikhail Delyagin (2013, 2014b) claimed that "offshore oligarchs must be neutralized as a political and economic force."

These sentiments led conservative ideologues to develop a package of measures that aimed to end the situation in which Russia's economic elite channel their profits abroad and claim loyalty to global financial institutions, thus challenging and subverting the Russian state (Fursov 2011; Dugin and Oganesyan 2012; Aksyutich 2014; Shugayev in Bogdanov et al. 2014; Delyagin 2014a). Putin's (2013) initiatives on expatriating companies from offshore jurisdictions (Prokhanov 2012; Aleksandrov 2013; Delyagin, Glazyev, and Fursov 2013; Ryabukhin in Bogdanov et al. 2014) and legislative bills that banned Russian politicians from opening bank accounts abroad are of particular importance. The initial draft law on foreign accounts also assumed a prohibition on foreign property possession. Yet the initiative has been torpedoed allegedly through the lobbying of interested parties. Similar initiatives concerning large infrastructure projects aimed at the development of the national capital and industry. Vladimir Yakunin, the head of Russia's Railroad Corporation, called for a radical change of Russia's developmental model. He suggested massive investment and development of Siberian and Far Eastern infrastructure – a project that could place industry, production, and an industrial economy at the heart of Russia's development.

From the positionist perspectives, Russian contemporary conservatism is also intrinsically linked to the idea of a strong state that could sustain the country's geostrategic interests in the international arena in order to achieve stable development at home. In many ways, this tenet of conservatism mirrors early republican thought. The early humanist vision of politics assumes that "the most basic aim of any ruler must always be *mantenero lo stato*," i.e., strengthening the state and defending its people (Skinner 2002, 9, 121–122). Ways of strengthening the state were seen through the achievement of peace and stability at home, through the ability to wage war with neighbors in order to secure internal peace, and through the achievement of "the honour, grandeca, unity, and repose" of all its citizens (Skinner 2002, 21). Such ideas are thoroughly positionist in that there is no recipe or agreement on how to achieve these goals (Huntington 1957, 460; Skinner 2002, 22–23, 121).

Valeriy Fadeyev, the editor in chief of the influential *Ekspert* journal, observes the closeness of Russia's conservatism to these early ideas: "we must return to our historic idea of a strong country, and this should form the emerging consensus in Russia. This consensus has republican connotations, but at the same time, it bears traces of Russia's traditionalism and conservatism" (see Tolstoy 2013b). It is also important that different varieties of Russia's conservatism that existed throughout

the country's history have been united by the goal of preserving *a* model of Russian statehood that is conducive to securing and maintaining Russia's strength in the international arena in order to assure stability at home. While substantive (ideational) means toward meeting such statist targets alter with the change of political eras, the procedural framework has always been in the achievement of Russia's sovereignty and great power status internationally. The breadth and magnitude of this great power status also varied with time. Yet the concept of Russia's ability to pursue her geostrategic interests abroad independently and to defend the inviolability of her natural and political borders remained unchanged.

This position is largely driven by a host of geopolitical and domestic fears that have both theoretical and idiosyncratic explanations specific to Russia. From a theoretical angle, Huntington (1957, 470) aptly notes that

> men are driven to conservatism by the shock of events, by the terrible feeling that a society of institutions which they have approved or taken for granted and with which they have been intimately connected may suddenly cease to exist.

In most cases, such fears are constructed around artificial or real perceptions of rivalry, around the "fear of the unknown or the obscure," around "a hasty identification or 'naming' in the stark terms of good and evil, divine and demonic" (McCormick 1997, 109; see also Cassirer 1946; Adorno and Horkheimer 1999; Sorel 1999). Indeed, Russia lives, or at least perceives herself as living, in a permanent state of danger. The struggles for influence over the Eurasian space, for political positions in Europe, and for the architecture of international affairs, all test Russia's statehood, territorial integrity, and position in the world arena. The intensity of this battle is matched by Russia's unique geographic position, vastness of her landmass, and the richness of her natural resources. As Peter Hitchens (2014) notes, Western critics of Russia must understand the realities of Russian history that have always dictated the feelings of threat.

> The country has no natural defensible borders. A street in southern Moscow, *Ulitsa Bolshaya Ordynka* (the street of the Great Horde) commemorates to this day the five-yearly visits to Moscow of the Great Horde, to collect a tribute from that frontier city. We tend to think that the Urals, supposedly mountains but really rather unimpressive hills, form Russia's eastern boundary. But it is not really true. From every direction, the heart of Russia lies open to invaders. Moscow has been invaded or occupied by Swedes, Poles, Lithuanians, The Golden (or Great) Horde, Crimean Tatars, and Napoleon. No wonder the Russian word for 'security' (*byezopasnost*) is a negative construction ('byez' means 'without'; 'opasnost' means 'danger'). The natural state of things is danger. (Hitchens 2014)

Thus, from a historic perspective, geopolitical fears, coupled with the fears of domestic unrest induced from abroad, constitute the foundation of Russia's positionist conservative drive to consolidate the state. Russian conservatism initially emerged in response to the horrors of the French Revolution, which shook the foundations of European order and threatened Russia with similar developments at home (Rogger 1966; Berlin 1994). In this light, Russian conservatives have been permanently engaged in the ideological struggle against domestic utopias and liberal radicalism that attempted to undermine the stability

of the state. In 1907 Prime Minister Peter Stolypin succinctly described the struggle of Russian conservatism with the liberal and left-wing radicals by saying that "they are in need of great upheavals. We are in need of a great Russia" (Ascher 2001, 4; Waldron, Ascher, and Waldorn 2002). Conservatism of the early nineteenth century stood against the circle of Decembrists who challenged the foundations of the Russian state in 1825, proposed to set Poland (then part of the Russian Empire) free, and planned to diminish the Russian Army (Starikov 2011). Later, at the end of the nineteenth century, conservatism countered the radical socialist revolutionary movement led by intellectuals such as Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky. In 1905, conservatives condemned those liberals who sent congratulatory telegrams to the Japanese Emperor on his victory over the Russian army in the Russo-Japanese war (and this case seems both topical and indicative for many contemporary conservatives of today – see Mikhalkov 2014).

In the twentieth century, this was in many ways the defensive drive toward securing Russia's achievements in the spheres of economics, science and technology, education, space and Arctic exploration, and many other areas of human achievement. From this point of view, the policies of Soviet Communism had a strong conservative flavor. It could be argued that the Bolsheviks ceased to be globalist left radicals almost immediately upon assuming office. Their subsequent travails in constructing a world economic, military, technological, and nuclear superpower capable of adequately defending itself were evidence supporting Russia's conservative course. In very recent times, Russia's conservatives are united by the idea of consolidating a Russian state that could return the country to its former leading position in the spheres of intellectual achievement, science, technology, and economic production. Prokhanov (2014), a leading member of the conservative Izborskiy club, has always hoped that the Russian state will achieve a particular "spiritual consolidation and strength." He has called for Russia to "restore its values and recreate its place in history." The state, according to Prokhanov, should be capable of "strategic doings." It should have the "economy, [and] industry which can sustain the realization of all strategic plans."

Interestingly, Western European, and to a large extent North American, conservatism also emerges partly in response to the geopolitical fear of, and rivalry with, Russia. Such fear is driven by differences in value packages, customs, political traditions, and more significantly geostrategic considerations. While Russia often feels the need to protect her statehood, civilizational distinctness, and vital military-economic geographic territories from Western assimilation – and this is what fuels Russia's conservatism of all types – Europe has a similarly irrational need to consolidate her political will in opposition to the perceived threat from the East. This sentiment is particularly well reflected in the writings of Carl Schmitt and Friedrich Nietzsche, which remain topical to this day. Schmitt claims that Russia stands as a serious counterforce to all consolidated political forces of the West, such as liberalism, socialism, and the Church (McCormick 1997, 94–96). This is due to Russia's extremity "in its countlessness, in its embrace of the technical," and because it is "so radical in its rebellion against form of any kind, in

its embrace of spiritual anarchy" (cited in McCormick 1997, 95). Schmitt also feared that the strength of Russians' belief in their "orthodoxy with regard to good and evil is overwhelming" (cited in McCormick 1997, 130).

Nietzsche (1990, 138), at the same time, was a forerunner of this sentiment by seeing Russia's strength of will as a threat to Europe:

> the strength to will... is strongest and most amazing by far in that enormous empire... in Russia. There the strength to will has long been accumulated and stored up and kept in reserve, there the will is waiting menacingly – uncertain whether as a will to negate or a will to affirm – to discharged itself ... It may take more than Indian wars and complications in Asia to rid Europe of its greatest danger.

Nietzsche, in this fear of Russia, proclaims the arrival of grand politics. He predicts the struggle over the "mastery over the whole earth – the *compulsion* to grand politics" (Nietzsche 1990, 138). In this struggle, Nietzsche looks strikingly into the future and calls on Europe to unite in response to the Russian threat. He invokes it

> to become equally threatening, namely to *acquire a single will* by means of a new caste dominating all Europe, a protracted terrible will of its own which could set its objective thousands of years ahead – so that the long-drawn-out comedy of its petty states and the divided will of its dynasties and democracies should finally come to an end (Nietzsche 1990, 138).

History and myth

In this light, the creation of various myths – historic, political, and civilizational – represents the *modus vivendi* of Russia's conservative thought. From a theoretical perspective, deployment of myths based on powerful interpretations of events invokes civic consciousness and has both positionist and anthropological objectives. In the former case, myths aid the tasks of civic mobilization and the sense of collective security. As Sorel (1999, 140) claims, human beings "do nothing great without the help of warmly coloured and sharply defined images which absorb the whole of our attention." He also insists that not all things can be explained rationally and that proponents of rationality will never "understand why an individual, be it a Napoleonic soldier or a striking worker, would perform a selfless and heroic act" (Sorel 1999, xi; see also Mannheim 1936, 120). In the second case, myths help to maintain the sense of belonging to a group of people with a distinct collective identity. Here, Le Bon (2002), an intellectual who is often mentioned in relation to Russia's conservative thought, claims that people are guided by unconscious motivations and that those motivations are often formed collectively.

At the same time, the spontaneity of the myth-building process has been questioned, in particular during the age of information and technology. McCormick (1997), following Cassirer (1946, 282), writes:

> Myth has always been described as the result of an unconscious activity and as a free product of imagination. But [in the twentieth century] we find myth made according to plan. The new political myths do not grow up freely; they are not wild fruits of an exuberant imagination. They are artificial things fabricated by very skillful artisans.

> It has been reserved for the twentieth century, our own technological age, to develop a new technique of myth. Henceforth, myths can be manufactured in the same sense and according to the same methods as any other modern weapon – as machine guns or airplanes. That is a new thing – and a thing of crucial importance.

Russia's conservative thought sustains a similar view, claiming that information wars and battles for the dominant interpretation of history and current affairs have become the hallmark of post-modern politics. Margarita Simonyan, the editor in chief of RT TV, admitted that the channel is virtually positioned on the nerve of contemporary politics, struggling for a sizable place in the discourse and providing an interpretation alternative that is capable of winning minds in the conditions of information wars that take place in today's world. A similar confession came from U.S. officials, when Hilary Clinton (2011) insisted that the "[information] war has been declared" and that the USA must step up its efforts in the struggle against the alternative media that provides an interpretation of events which differs from the U. S. position. In this complex situation, myth meets myth, interpretation meets interpretation, and political narrative meets another political narrative. Hence, truth and reality become segmented and particular, with each segment resting on a set of powerful myths, particular truths, and particular interpretations (Lyotard 1984; see also McCormick 1997; Dugin 2009; Wagner 2012). Relying on this conservative position, Putin (2013) also claims, quite in tune with the American line, that information campaigns and myth-buildings represent

> one form of global competition. These are marked by the attempts to influence the world-view and self-perceptions of entire peoples, and to impose alien value systems. This form of the global world competition is very similar to that which takes place in the sphere of natural resources and transportation.

In this environment, a historic myth becomes the focus of primary attention for Russian conservatism from both positionist and anthropological angles. These are erected with the view of alleviating the condition of epistemological uncertainty, to position the nation in one stable geopolitical track, to clarify and explicate the geopolitical division of the world, and to form an existential identity that could sustain such a division ideologically. The task of Russian conservatism is to tie up various stages of Russia's history, in the same fashion as France managed to tie up her revolutionary terror and Jacobin dictatorship in her great narrative. Pondering this task practically, Leont'yev (2011) worries that Russian history has been de-mythologized more than any other history in the world due to its numerous revisions at different periods of time. Yet, he sees a tentative conservative consensus emerging in Russian society – a consensus that is based on the understanding that

> our history belongs to us; that we cannot transplant other experience and someone else's history to our soil; that we have to learn the lessons of our history and take from it what is of particular value to our particular culture and our particular civilization.

In this light, Putin's policy toward the study of history and creation of a single textbook for schools must be translated as the need to develop a historical myth that will meet such challenges. He claims that "Russia must create a value-spiritual basis, upon which each person, and in particular young persons, may

build their civic consciousness." Putin (2012) claims that Russia will not be able to "resurrect her civic self-consciousness unless it understands that the country's history enjoys one thousand years of historic development," and that "Russia did not begin in 1917 or 1991," as some re-established historic myths of the 1990s claimed. Only by uniting the country around this 1000-year-long myth could Russia develop her strength for future evolution. Interestingly, this approach to history is reminiscent of the German romantic idea of *Volksgeit* championed by Herder, Shiller, Fichte, Shelling, and their followers in the fields of art, theology, jurisprudence, and international relations. *Volksgeit* represents a metaphysical notion that signifies the spiritual development of people concentrated in the spirit of the group (Berlin 2006, 232). It is an understanding that there are "varieties of human experience as the self-expression of the infinitely various spirit of the nation, of the people, or of history, or of the universe" (Berlin 2006, 232–234; see also Mannheim 1936, 120–121; Bowle 1954, 30–34; Pinkard 2010).

This idea relied on collectives of individuals, rather than on single individuals, and emphasized the importance of interconnection between historical and social patterns. It hoped for the

> possibility of connecting representatives from widely different walks of life under the aegis of a common historical spiritual umbrella of the *Volk* and that the presence of those collectives that have a common unconscious 'spirit' and common collective memory allows us to treat such collectives as single indivisible units. (Mannheim 1936, 41; Cassirer 1946)

Schmitt ([1919] 1986, 62) sustains this conservative approach in the twentieth century by saying that

> history is the conservative God who restores what the other has revolutionised. It constitutes the general human community as the historically concretized people, which becomes a sociological and historical reality by means of this delimitation and acquires a capacity to produce a particular law and a particular language as the expression of its individual national spirit. Therefore, what a people is 'organically' and what the *Volksgeit* signifies can be ascertained only historically.

This resonates remarkably with Putin's idea of "spiritual clamps," which are called upon to unite Russia around the pattern of her socio-historic development. From this point of view, the emphasis on "the spirit," spirituality, traditional values, and history is not surprising. In many ways, Putin calls for the revival of Russia's *Volksgeit* that could serve as a foundation to the new national idea. Hence, he chooses to ignore the cosmopolitan sentiments of Russia's liberal intellectuals, whose views are largely out of step with the dominant segments of Russian society, and sides "with Russia's moral majority," in many ways pragmatically, but nevertheless with the view to better respond to the gist of Russia's traditional spirit (Lavelle 2013). In his 2013 Valdai speech, he laments that Russia, having suffered the collapse of her statehood twice during the twentieth century, to some extent lost those unifying "historic codes," or "spiritual clamps," that could implicitly reflect the national spirit and the internal logic of its historic development (Putin 2013).

Yet, in contrast to Herder, Shiller, and other Romantics, contemporary Russian conservatism searches for the conceptual middle ground, in which an individual is

not considered as being "entirely submerged to the single spirit of the whole nation, of which he/she is a small cog and for which he/she is prepared to die if need be" (Berlin 2006), but as an important part that forms the whole and without which the entire organism cannot function properly. The importance of this particle (atom) is seen through a situation in which the whole, while united by common memory and foundation, cannot be considered as completely unified or having a unique agreement on the idea of the good life that it has formed through the centuries and which it alone understands and cherishes. Rather, there is a clear recognition of the profound divergence of views, of creative, inventive, and intelligible origin of various intellectual trends that must seek co-existence and dialog.

Putin (2013) claimed that he hopes for dialog among those different social and intellectual forces, which have divergent perceptions of Russia's history and future. He calls for an epistemic reconciliation of Russian society by claiming that "the Westerners, the Slavophiles, the proponents of the strong state and the liberals must work together on drafting our common goals for the future." In this light, the implicitly embedded value pluralism, in which Russia is not seeking consensus on either a liberal or conservative basis, instead hopes for the recognition and coexistence between these epistemically different ideas of the good life to become the cornerstone of the conservative plan for the future. Russian conservatives believe that traditional Russian values have always been based on tolerance and inter-civilizational dialog. Russia, in their mind, has almost always – with the exception of the Soviet period – managed to avoid the formation of the total conception of ideology, in which one group (the nation) subconsciously shares a particular point of view (Mannheim 1936, 64–65). As Vladimir Medinskiy, Russia's conservative Minister of Culture, argues, "we never had Crusades. Our tsars have never promoted an idea that Russia is for Russians. We have always relied on inter-cultural, inter-religious, inter-ethnic, and inter-civilizational dialogue" (Tolstoy 2013a). It becomes clear that Russia's conservatism is searching for ways of critically reconstructing the country's distinct historic-ontological myth so that *Volksgeit* would be able to capture, with some degree of certainty, specific historic moments within which it is located. In order to achieve this, it requires "an episteme, a space, in which the myth of the people could engage the logos of the state" (Dugin 2009).

Russia as a political alternative

Logically following from the above, Russian conservatism also rests on the belief that, in order to secure the country's stable development domestically and internationally, Russia must "be herself," i.e., it must preserve her existential, cultural, and ideological distinctness. This thinking leads to the development of a conservative political myth on Russia's alternativism. The myth on alternativism obtained practical political character and was fed into a century-long praxis, which was visible in Russia's constant striving to become a political alternative to the West. It was initially visible through the distinct Orthodox religion, which continued to develop an idea of the Third Rome as a rival to the Holy Roman

Empire (Hartley 1992, 369–370), consolidated by presenting a strong claim to European great power status by Peter I and Catherine II, and was finalized with the idiosyncratic inland structure of her empire. This alternativism triumphed during the era of Soviet Communism, when Russia was pursuing an alternative path to Euro-American capitalism (Kurginyan in Tretyakov et al. 2007; Fursov 2012). The lenience toward the alternative, and the associated geopolitical isolation, has been well captured by the highly praised conservative phrase of Alexander III, who claimed that Russia's only allies are her army and navy (Oye and Menning 2004, p. 1).

It is important that many such political myths depart from an idea of geostrategic competition and ideological value tension and largely rely on the Schmittian thesis of the political enemy. These mythic constructs serve as the tools of political struggle, domination, political–cultural manipulation, and forced existential choices for large groups of people (Sorel 1999, xi; see also Mannheim 1936, 120 and Le Bon 2002). At the same time, it remains central that, while Russia's political myths are defensive in character and stem from geopolitical fears discussed earlier, the enemy and enmity do not occupy a central significance in their narrative. Rather, despite claiming the right to an alternative, Russian conservative myth calls for a productive dialog, co-operation, and mutual complementarity between Russia and Europe. From this point of view, Russia's conservatism is similar to the conservatism of Leo Strauss, whose idea of political enmity stops short of the full Schmittian conception of the political seen in the need to define one's identity through enmity and through the potential of a military conflict and civil war. As Meier (1995, 87) observes, the "friends that Strauss chose for himself tell us much more about his identity."

It is significant, however, that friendship does not imply assimilation and full convergence, just as enmity does not imply a full-scale battle through which one could define his existential inner self. In this light, Russia is permanently balancing the duality of her attitude toward Europe. Writing during the Soviet period, Berlin (1994, 181) makes a unique observation on the complexity of Russia's relationship with Europe:

> The peculiar amalgam of love and hate is still intrinsic to Russian feelings about Europe: on the one hand, intellectual respect, envy, admiration, desire to emulate and excel; on the other, emotional hostility, suspicion, and contempt, a sense of being clumsy, *de trop*, of being outsiders; leading as a result, to an alternation between excessive self-prostration before, and aggressive flouting of, Western values. No visitor to the Soviet Union can fail to remark something of this phenomenon: a combination of intellectual inadequacy and emotional superiority, a sense of the West as enviably self-restrained, clever, efficient, and successful: but also as being cramped, cold, mean, calculating, and fenced in, without capacity for large views or generous emotion, for feelings which must, at times, rise too high and overflow its banks, for heedless self-abandonment in response to some unique historical challenge, and consequently condemned never to know a rich flowering of life.

From this point of view, Russia's conservatism shows relentless attempts to convert a perceived European enemy into a dialogical partner and it chooses an aggressive action only in response to the enemy's cultural, value, economic, and

geostrategic attacks. Narochnitskaya (2011) argues that the great Romano-German and Russian Orthodox cultures share the same Christian roots. She further claims that, prior to modern constitutions of all types, we have been united by the ethical norms of "do not kill," "do not steal," "Our Father," and the Sermon on the Mount. Hence, Russia and Europe represent two branches of one ancient civilization, whose dream has always been to achieve a genuine dialog, mutual complementarity, and peace on the continent. Narochnitskaya (2011) is critical of the Schmittian and Nietzschean drive toward animosity and self-definitions through the process of political enmity. The key to the relationship between Russia and Europe, she argues, is not in the creation of the new division lines. These lines are not novel in that they are painfully reminiscent of the motto of the centuries-long rivalry, which culminated in the emergence of the 1941 *Drang nach Osten* idea. Neither does a simple assimilation of Russia into the Western European ideational and ethical sphere serve the purpose. Genuine unity and dialog, Narochnitskaya (2011) claims, are seen in the *mutual recognition* of the

> validity and equality of our existential experience. It is seen in the understanding that our future lies in the constructive dialog of historic heritage and creative potential of all ethnic, confessional, and cultural dimensions of Europe: Germanic, Roman, and Slavic, and more precisely in reconciliation between Latin and Orthodox Europe. (see also Polyakov 2004)

This argument has an additional geopolitical dimension. Some conservative thinkers believe that Europe, Russia, and the USA must each become strong poles of international political influence, and the power should be redistributed equally within this triangle.[1] Hence, the return of Russia as one of the cornerstone elements of international relations could stabilize the European continent, provide it with a new developmental impetus, and return it to its former glory. Narochnitskaya (2011, 2014) claims that, in the current geopolitical climate, Europe is becoming a new periphery in the twenty-first century's geopolitical scene; and the further Russia is from Europe, the more the "old Europe" loses its status of a geopolitical center of gravity. She argues that the USA seeks to secure control over resources, capital, and transport routes, from the Middle East and Asia. To achieve this, it needs full political control over Europe and Eurasia. Hence, weakening Russia is not required to increase Europe's independence. It is rather intended to fit the "old Europe" into the Atlantic geostrategic project and turn it into a springboard from which the USA could control Eurasia. Narochnitskaya insists that this is not Europe's but someone else's game. In this game, the "old Europe" will invariably become a mere protectorate stripped of its independent decision-making capabilities.

The anthropocentric (or ideational) angle of this conservative argument on political alternativism claims that Russia must become a center of the twenty-first century alternative view on globalization. Panarin (2001) talks about the emergence of the so-called fourth realm, which is excluded from the globalist socio-economic consensus. This realm, Panarin argues, is not limited to the excluded third (underdeveloped) and second (developing) worlds. Rather, it encompasses the excluded of the entire planet united by their resistance to arbitrariness, greed, and the rampant nature of global capital. He claims that the

globalist open society works as a social Darwinistic environment, in which resources and territories are taken away from those less able and are transferred to the hands of those who are more aggressive, capable, and technologically equipped. Moreover, the newly obtained riches cannot be fully deployed for the benefit of the rapidly emerging national periphery using the outdated national sovereignty principle. These resources have now become redistributed in favor of the participants of the new global consensus (Panarin 2001). Hence, globalist elites break with their own populations, driving them into a new periphery and demanding them to repeat the ideological mantra that could sustain this process (see similar criticism in Lasch 1996; Chomsky 1998; and Harvey 2007). In support of this argument, Maxim Shevchenko (2012b, 2012a) calls the neoliberal group of multinational corporations that control global investment banks, the International Monetary Fund, and stock exchanges the international "party of power." This party, he argues, is at the heart of decisions over multibillion-dollar contracts, and through this it exerts economic, political, and ideological control over large groups of ordinary people (see also Keane 2003). Geidar Dzhemal (Dzhemal and Shevchenko 2012), the leader of Russia's Islamic committee, adds that the global international bureaucracy reinforces this "party of power" and, without being elected, swings key decisions in favor of global corporations that finance these institutions. The contemporary division lines, Dzhemal argues, run through the "party of global capital and international bureaucracy" and the "party of national elites," who "still support the nation states' sovereignty and the social periphery of the national labour" (see also Fursov in Tretyakov et al. 2007; Nagornyy in Tretyakov et al. 2007; Akopov 2014). Ordinary people who are repelled by the unfair redistribution of global wealth and political manipulation side with the latter, which often leads to the emergence of radical sentiments (Shevchenko 2012a).

Panarin (2001) is convinced that, due to these developments, the world will soon become bipolar again, though this new bipolarity will not be of a military kind. Rather, there would be a division of those who consider compassion for the unsuccessful and the excluded to be a key component of their morality and elevate it to a central place in opposition to the Weberian Protestant ethic of success, practicality, and individualism. The latter, Panarin argues, is led by the globalist elite that strive for world domination and construct the architecture of international relations based on the principles of the English School. Hence, it is the ghetto, domestic and international, that must raise its head and call for a redefinition of the post-modern globalist idea of a Man. This must be a Man of compassion, a Man of social justice, and a Man of social solidarity. He believed that Russia must become the center around which this alternative morality and the new human narrative would congregate. Panarin (2001) writes:

> Those who have decided that natural selection has done its job and that the impoverished people have no alibi, would gather around the United States – the safe haven of an "economic man." Those who stick to the great tradition of compassion and repel the idea of natural selection and triumph of the strong over the weak, will stand by Russia . . . Resistance to America, as the epitome of the pagan cult of power

> and success, will not take place in the military-industrial sphere. The role of Russia in this area had passed. Rather, a new standoff will take place in the new ethical sphere. This will be a standoff between "an economic" Man and "a social" Man, between the morality of success and the morality of solidarity. Those who long for the vanity of success will choose America-centrism. Those who cannot agree with the decay of their country, as well as the majority of the world's periphery, will reinvent their morals from a great religious tradition – a tradition that is older than modernity and a tradition that will survive modernity.

Hence, in the mind of Panarian and other conservatives, Russia must inspire the world to a fairer redistribution of international power and resources and create a coalition of those who are willing to stand against the spread of a morality that claims the civilizational superiority of the West.

This anthropocentric myth also has a strong social conservative component. These deliberations stem from the understanding that globalization is conducted on the basis of the Western neoliberal value matrix and that this matrix has the potential to modify and challenge distinct socio-cultural narratives of the rest of world (Nagornyy in Tretyakov et al. 2007; Shevchenko 2009; Wagner 2012; Ilyashenko, Kobyakov, and Averyanov 2014; Smirnov 2014). Hence, Russian conservatism is trying to construct a myth that resists the pressures of the rapidly globalizing Euro-centric civilization and its distinct value package, actively promoted worldwide. Putin (2013) lamented the situation in which many post-modern values of the West, in particular those related to the rapid redefinition of stable identities, such as gender, family, and nation, pose a significant challenge to largely conservative perceptions of the Russian majority. Mikhail Veller, a contemporary Russian writer, notes that such challenges to stable traditional morals form a political basis that unites the state and society in Russia. In this light, post-modern left-leaning social liberalism of the West figures as a serious opponent of Russia's conservatism.

In a critique of liberalism, Russia's conservatism claims to represent the country's (and even the world's) silent majority, while claiming that neoliberalism and left-leaning liberalism are ideologies that defend minorities. Classical liberalism and neoliberalism, such thinkers insist, fend for the interests of the economic minority, whose global aspirations target the idea of the nation-state as one important constraint to the free movement of capital. Left-leaning liberalism that is in many ways opposed to neoliberalism strives to empower various segments of the social periphery and further destroys the border that has previously existed between the public and private. It expresses the interests of ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities. In contrast to this, conservatism defends the wishes of the majority, which are rooted in the ideas of history, nation, tradition, and religion. It is the majority, whose voice is silenced due to the attempts of both strands of liberalism to dominate political discourse (Remizov in Tretyakov et al. 2013a; Mizulina 2013; Narochnitskaya 2014).

Defending majorities invokes such conservative ideas as the defense of the traditional family, compassion, promotion of patriotism, and religious values based primarily on Russian Orthodoxy and Islam (Putin 2012, 2013). In most

cases, these conservative myths resemble Carl Schmitt's theorizations on political theology that build on

> the opposition of authority to anarchy, of faith in revelation to atheism, of the defence of the theological, of the moral, and of the political idea against the paralysis of 'all moral and political decisions in a paradisiacal, secular world of immediate, natural life and unproblematic carnality'. (Meier 1995, 76)

In this light, various Russian conservatives, such as Mikhail Remizov (in Tretyakov et al. 2013a), Konstantin Malofeyev (in Malofeyev et al. 2010), and others have criticized new Western family practices, in which the categories of "mother" and "father" have been replaced by the "parent A" and "parent B" proxies, practices regarding wearing Christian religious symbols, and other policies related to redefining traditional family and gender relations. Many such deliberations have resulted in the enactment of a number of socially conservative bills. This particularly concerns the adoption of the law banning propaganda regarding a homosexual lifestyle among minors as well as the adoption of rhetorical, economic, and political measures to support traditional families.

More importantly, a critique of liberalism is entangled with skepticism toward global capitalism and the global rich. A large number of Russian conservatives believe that the redefinition of family values and the emergence of the politics of particular identities serve the interests of global capital, which seeks to shift the perception of humans as collectives of individuals, united by a common spirit and traditional values, toward a new instrumental approach that views humans merely as labor tools called to reproduce wealth (Fursov 2012; Karabanova in Tretyakov et al. 2013b; Khomyakov in Tretyakov et al. 2013b; Starikov 2013). In this light, shoehorning people into a multitude of particular identities serves this purpose particularly well in that it breaks the bounds of social solidarity. Conservatives claim that pre-existing traditional identities act as an impediment to the global movement of labor and capital. Hence, the redefinition of these core bourgeois values aids ideological justification of the new realities of the global world. New global labor conditions require an ideology that could redraft our previous understanding of the traditional family and eliminate pre-existing loyalties to the nation, local region, family, or one's gender role (Shevchenko 2009, 2014; Fursov 2012; Khomyakov in Tretyakov et al. 2013b; Shishova in Tretyakov et al. 2013b; Starikov 2013). Conservatives believe that in such conditions, people part with previously important existential values and turn into the cogs of the global capitalist structure, gullible to political manipulation and devoid of social solidarity. These are the conditions of a controllable chaos in which control is exerted through the dismemberment of communities entrenched in those previously stable identities.

These sentiments also reflect a general conservative consensus that had formed in the West by the end of the twentieth century. Western conservative sentiment exposed the moral limitations of contemporary capitalism and argued that it must be built not on a mere *laissez faire* principle but rather on "an almost Hegelian sense that the values of community, loyalty and deference must be prized and cultivated above all" (Skinner 1985, 8–9). Among such voices are

those who claimed that the positivist ambitions of social science and public relations campaigns deprived people of moral principles, proclaiming "end of ideology" explanations to action, and by "doing so accepted silence of bewildered masses for agreement" (MacIntyre 1971, 3–11). Moreover, such thinkers warned that the hollowing out of the ideological foundations of the political system could result in a subsequent legitimation crisis, because a system based on political technologies, as opposed to a deeper conceptual foundation,[2] will struggle to appeal to its constituents during a time of economic hardship and decline (Habermas 1988, 33–94; see also Skinner 1985, 9; Tweedy and Hunt 1994, 294–296; Crossley and Roberts 2004, 5–8).

Cultures and particularity

Theories of cultures and civilizations continue this line of conservative thought. Civilizational thinking rebels against the universalist tendencies of ideational ideologies, liberal or socialist, that aim to harmonize the world's cultures under the aegis of a single globalization project. In contrast to ideational ideologies, some of which rest on the principle of natural law and rights (Huntington 1957, 458; Gray 1995, 40–42; Morrow 2005, 201–225; Williams 2006), conservatism does not have an ideational basis with claims to universal significance. This further underscores the positionist nature of conservatism, for in this case it defends not a particular *value package* but a mere idea of multiplicity and multivariance of such packages. As I already mentioned above, there is no such thing as a "conservative utopia," in which institutions "must be reshaped to embody the values of the ideology" (Huntington 1957, 458). Therefore, conservatism of all types inherently denies universalism as fundamentally non-conservative thinking. Huntington (1957, 459, footnote 6), Mannheim (1936, 116–119), Burke (see Cobban 1962, 40, footnote 75), Strauss (1953, 13–14), and Gray (2005) all claimed in one way or another that there are no transcendent institutions or universal moral principles and traditions that could sustain such institutions.

Hence, a conservative ideal includes acceptance of differing paths of arriving at the good life, paths that might be contingent on cultural factors and run through different incommensurable logical deductions. German romanticism could be seen as a precursor to this ideational complexity. In Herder, this trend of thought expressed the romantic hopes that the world must be built upon a multiplicity of different cultural and historic traditions and that nations could flourish based on their national spirit and idiosyncratic historic roots (Bowle 1954, 33; Berlin 1994; Pinkard 2010). In the mind of Romantics, God has chosen no specific nationality; yet it is through communication and interconnectedness of nations and cultures that humanity can find the cause for common good. "No nationality [in Europe]" may separate itself sharply and say "with us *alone*, with us dwells *all* wisdom" (Mazzini cited by Bowle 1954, 33).

This approach represents the nerve of Russian conservatism. Russia's conservatives insist on the preservation of cultures, nations, civilizations, and religions, and on the maintenance of various local ways of life, ethical norms and

forms, and most importantly, political systems. As Vitaliy Tretyakov (in Kiselev, Narochnitskaya, and Tretyakov 2009; see also Akopov 2014) claims,

> I am always repelled by the division of 'normal' and 'abnormal' countries that our friends or foes in the West are trying to impose. Russia has existed for over one thousand years, and how come it held up together for so long, if it is not normal?

Hence, this thought impugns the universal validity of liberalism and views the universalist drive of the West as a challenge to the extant diversity of political forms worldwide. These thinkers compare contemporary Western universalism seen in the promotion of democracy programs with the pre-existing global aspirations of the two superpowers of the Cold War era, in which political and existential myths of liberalism and Communism alike struggled for the right to be the supreme judge of right and wrong of the torn-apart world.

Narochnitskaya (2014) argues that

> Europe is ruled by a post-modernist, almost Trotskyist, left-libertarian elite. During Soviet times, the Central Committee Propaganda Department advocated the Marxist-Leninist utopia, which called for everybody to be granted an equal share of bread and expected all nations to merge and fuse on this basis. The Brussels propaganda department,

she continues,

> proposes something similar: it aspires to give everyone similar democracy and human rights and hopes that everybody will think the same about the meaning of life. Both universalist projects completely ignore fundamental differences in religious and philosophical worldviews of peoples and nations.

Hence, this perception of a multiplicity of truths and a radical pluralism of debate form one important element of Russian conservatism. Relying on this frame of mind, this thought sees the greatest injustice of the age in the idea of international unipolarity and in the "end of history" ideology, in which the Western way of life triumphs in every corner of the planet, submerging authentic cultures into its own image.

This forms the Russian idea of international justice and Russian thought tries to rescue the culturally oppressed of the world from their socio-cultural deprivation inflicted by global developments. Russian conservatism becomes an ardent advocate of inter-cultural and inter-civilizational justice, in which cultures are intertwined in a complex web of plurality, rejecting and denouncing universalization of global life. The vast majority of Russia's conservatives extend this view to the European continent, which they see as a uniquely complex conglomerate of nations with distinct traditions and cultures. Shevchenko (2014), for example, insists that the spiritual essence of Europe has always been seen in the plurality of different peoples and nationalities. Hence, he warns that the people of Europe will at some point rebel against the universalist ambitions of European Union bureaucracy. This bureaucracy largely pursues a "neo-Marxist policy" of creating a "faceless uniformly thinking mass of people, once referred to by Marcuse (1969) as victims of liberal totalitarianism." It is seen in the political desire of the elites to "socially construct a mediocre person with an embedded

value matrix that erases the perception of one's own history, the uniqueness of one's own ethnicity, territory and religion." This mass of mediocre consumers, according to Shevchenko, is "being dictated to from the cabinets of the international institutions. It is easily managed and controlled by the friendly media through modern discursive technologies and flux."

It is important that this refusal of transcendent universality finds a response among conservatives of all types in Russia and beyond. The new right circles in Europe and conservatives in Russia enjoy vibrant political communication. They share respect for institutions that shape political traditions and practice as well as the right of others to defend these institutions in turn buttressed by traditional values. Putin's own conservative sentiment relies on this understanding. In his 2013 Valdai speech, he spoke against the attempts to "civilize Russia from outside." He insisted that Russian society rejected the drive to impose Euro- and America-centric ideas on Russian soil and outlined the desire of Russians to construct institutions that could better reflect their traditional, cultural, and historic realities. He also claimed that "the attempts to install alien institutional systems on other nations" are a mistaken strategy that would malfunction worldwide.

On a final note, it is important that this ideology relies heavily on the sentiment of Russian conservatism of the nineteenth century. Solov'yov (1891) polemic with Nikolay Grot writes:

> any insistence on the exclusive rights of one's personality, on one's own personal truth is an imposture. It is the imitation of an alien, strange spirit. All mockery over the truth only because this truth is not *my* truth is an insult to the eternal humanistic truth.

Both Grot and Solovyov in their dialog insist that Russia must never indulge in propagating her national exclusivity – a trend that they saw as accepted by the West in its Eurocentric ways of dealing with the rest of the world. The task of Russian philosophy, they argued, is to give way to the propagation of universal kindness and truth, even if it comes in many different shapes and forms (Grot 1891). Furthermore, Rogger (1966, 210) argues that Russian conservatives of the nineteenth century refused the word "freedom" in its abstract sense. In turn, they had an idea of "freedoms," which rested not in "abstract theory but in history and in the groups' institutions that history had created." These were the rights and freedoms of concrete Englishmen and Germans as opposed to the rights of men and citizens.[3]

Furthermore, reading various conservative texts of the age, in particular those related to the liberal institutional reforms of 1861, one might confuse many statements with those made by conservative ideologues of the twenty-first century with regard to the liberal reforms of the 1990s. The main resentment against both the 1990s and 1861 reforms was their vacuous nature that in both cases seemed detached from the cultural and historic realities of Russia. Reflecting on the liberal reform of 1861, Pazuchin (1885), Pobedonostsev (2011), Rodion Fadeyev (1874; see also Thaden 1964, 144, 154), and the Minister of Interior Count Dmitriy Tolstoy (see Rogger 1966, 200–201; Baddeley 2012, 184–190) all complained

that the changes were conducted in a universalist liberal fashion, thus destroying Russia's civilizational foundations and transplanting alien values and political systems on Russia.

These conservative thinkers were convinced that the liberal reforms denationalized Russia, "impugned patriotic feelings of gentry and nobility," and built the new institutions upon "false principles," which resulted in the "destruction of honor and duty" and the rise of corruption (Pobedonostsev 2011). Equally, they complained that capital has begun to rule a "faceless, featureless, denationalized mass of people," for which money has become the "measure of all things" (Rogger 1966, 198–199). Those authors represented the government-led branch of conservatism at the end of the nineteenth century. Their rather more populist counterparts from the Slavophile camp reinforced such sentiments by claiming that the Western liberal experience and its institutions were not suitable for Russia. Yuriy Samarin, Ivan and Konstantin Aksakov, Nikolay Danilevskiy, and Fedor Tyutchev believed that Russia represents a specific civilization, whose values and existential self-perceptions were different from those in the West (Christoff 1991, 224; Rogger 1966, 322; Kelly 1999, 6; Duncan 2000; Tsymbursky 2008).

Conservative modernization

Finally, it is important to discuss the modernizing and future-oriented drive of Russian conservatism. It is mostly applicable to the socio-economic realm, in which it claims that there are no contradictions whatsoever between conservatism and modernization. Vitaliy Averyanov (in Ilyashenko, Kobyakov, and Averyanov 2014), a founding member of the Izborskiy Club, claims:

> there is no contradiction whatsoever between modernization and conservatism. There are some layman delusions that conservatism equals reaction. Some often link it to the attempts to find a 'golden age', which is left in the past but which needs to be restored without allowing any change. In reality conservatism is a proponent of development; but prudent development, a development that is based on the flourishing of tradition.

Interestingly, such support of modernization does not seem odd in light of the classical conservatism of Edmund Burke, who chose to stand by the French Revolution and progressive developments that came with it. His intellectual position also revealed an antinomy, in which conservatism – a guardian standpoint rather than a programmatic ideology – backs revolutionary change. Yet, it is still logical from the point of view of a purely conservative thinker. For Burke, once the change has taken place, new institutions – as long as they serve political stability and development – must be supported and cherished. These institutions, as Huntington (1957, 461) points out, must be accepted as fate.

On a similar note, most Russian conservative thinkers realize that erecting walls to the global world and resisting the process of globalization altogether is futile. Yet, the answer to this fateful challenge lies in some form of acceptable adaptation. Hence, conservatives are at pains to find political and economic

responses that could combine new global realities with the range of traditional identities and nationally oriented modernization strategies found in Russia. This adaptation aims to modify the workings of the globalization project in Russia on the economic, ideological-political, and institutional fronts. In the economic sphere, the "conservative modernization" project has gained popularity within intellectual circles, political elites, and the general public. Such modernization is geared toward the stable development of the country's economy, consolidating her international status, achieving this through the reliance on the experience of previous generations (Remizov in Tretyakov et al. 2013a; Averyanov in Ilyashenko, Kobyakov, and Averyanov 2014). As Sergey Markov (in Tretyakov et al. 2013a) claims, Russia's conservative modernization assumes "moderate progress in the framework of order."

Practically, this conservative modernization is seen in attempts by the Russian government to invest in strategic industries that could consolidate and promote Russia's potential leadership in the international arena and help Russia to become one of the key players in the resolution of global challenges. These include the development of a variety of technologies to assist the ambitious project of Arctic exploration, the support of Russia's declining aviation industry, the restructuring of the Army, and the relevant modernization of Russia's industry and technology, as well as the launch of important infrastructure projects to develop and logistically link Siberia and the Far East of the country (Rogozin 2013, 2014; Yakunin 2014). It is hoped that these large, almost existential, industrial projects could give impetus to adjacent sectors of the economy and subsequently serve as locomotives for smaller and medium-sized business.

It is also clear that such projects have a conservative lenience toward consolidating the state's interests in the international arena and preservation of Russia's traditional values. These proposals in effect merge economic and ideological-political factors. Such a merger does not differ starkly from the Western situation, in which economic development is based on fundamental ideological principles of personal autonomy, inviolability of private property, growth, and freedom of enterprise. Russian conservative plans do not deny these principles and in many ways support them. Yet, it is with this in mind that Russian conservatives also focus on the ideas of strategic, large-scale developments that have a nationally oriented character with overtones toward the tradition of large-scale economic, industrial, and technological achievements. As Yakunin (2014) observed, the "global financial crisis is also a moral crisis. Hence, developing large infrastructural and industrial projects will aid the resolution of this crisis also, and more importantly, from an ethical point of view." Some of Russia's ideologues referred to these plans as "dynamic conservatism." Vitaliy Averyanov (in Ilyashenko, Kobyakov, and Averyanov 2014) states that "dynamic conservatism" reflects "renewal without the loss of identity." It is a drive toward change and development "but without changing our core identity ascribed to us by God and our ancestors. This concerns individuals, as well as communities and cultures as a whole." Such an approach has a statist flavor, in which the state aids and assists the implementation of these goals (Delyagin, Glazyev, and Fursov 2013; Prokhanov 2012).

On a final note, this economic ideology is reminiscent of previous periods of Russia's history. Leaving aside the pathos of Soviet industrialization as an extreme case of such thinking, Alexander III's and Nicolas II's rules had witnessed successful conservative governments that pushed Russia onto the road of rapid industrial development, at the same time making successful compromises with the traditionally autocratic political system and conservative population. The industrial reforms of Sergey Witte, Nikolay Bunge, Ivan Vyshnegradskiy, and Dmitriy Mendeleyev at the end of the nineteenth century represent an example of conservative modernization, or – to use Witte's exact terminology of the day – "modernized autocracy" (Von Laue 1958, 26–27, 1963; Harcave 2004; Kobyakov in Ilyashenko, Kobyakov, and Averyanov 2014). Finally, Peter Stolypin often invokes a comparison with Bismarck, "a conservative politician who wished to preserve the traditional institutions of autocratic Russia, but who recognized that conservatism did not mean a slavish adherence to an unchanging world" (Waldron, Ascher, and Waldorn 2002, 621).

Conclusion

Russian conservatism is an ideology that has both positionist and ideational overtones. In the ideational sphere, this trend of thought ponders some serious issues relating to the effects of globalization and post-modernity on culture, values, and morals of contemporary humans. Within this framework, Russia's conservatism attempts to devise an alternative value package for itself and the rest of the world, and makes multiple attempts to narrate a new Man of the post-modern era. In doing so, conservatives rely on the eternal values of modernity and make an attempt to recreate them in the newly emerging post-modern world. They raise issues of inter-generational justice, talk about traditional modern values such as family and patriotism, and in the economic realm speak of the need to create a new class of national bourgeoisie.

In the positionist sphere, Russia's conservatism is similar to its Western counterpart. It strives to sustain the strong Russian statehood that could ensure the country's territorial integrity and political, economic, and cultural security. It also proposes a new, multi-polar model of international relations. In doing so, this thought stands behind the idea of multiplicity and plurality of world cultures and argues that idiosyncratic cultural features must buttress all political systems and structures.[4] In many ways, this ideology harkens back to history and inherits Russia's conservative political thought of the nineteenth century. In some other ways, this thought is still in the making in that it ponders various issues of development and modernization and strives to look at the future, which should, for conservatives, be recreated on the basis of the best elements of tradition. The value of this thought lies in the fact that it has the most decisive influence on Russia's contemporary domestic and international policy. Hence, its importance to Russia and the rest of the world cannot be overestimated.

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