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THE ROLE OF MESSIANISM IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN IDENTITY AND STATECRAFT

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Abstract

Russian messianism – the longstanding idea of Russia as a 'chosen' nation with a historical mission is typically represented as a cliché with little or no relevance in politics. However, an increasing deployment of several interrelated messianic ideas and notions has been noted in both public and official Post-Soviet discourse, raising the question of how we should understand its persistence and contemporary revival.

We first develop a conceptual framework based on insights about identity and statecraft from poststructuralist and related approaches, then proceed to trace key characteristics and narratives of Russian messianism in history and the secondary literature of various disciplines. The study proposes that Russian messianism should be conceptualised as a persistent discursive framework, holding a kaleidoscopic range of both complementing and contesting discourses, that have the purposes of legitimising the existence and policies of Russia as a state and defining Russian identity in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other.

This conceptualisation is then applied to contemporary Russian discourse. By analysing samples of key official discourse (2000-2007) the thesis shows how the Russian state adopts, negotiates and reproduces certain messianic narratives from public discourse, in which they abound. We then compare the convergence and divergence of the official and public political discourse with popular discourse, based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews with 160 semi-elite and ordinary Russians, conducted in 2005. We find that the Russian messianic framework is widely used at all levels of discourse and among all categories of Russian people, but in ways and contexts different from in public and official discourse.

Overall, this thesis makes contributions to Russian studies by providing a theoretical conceptualisation of Russian messianism; and to the study of international relations by an analysis of discourses central to the production of Russia as a collective identity, state and international actor.

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With love to my sweet Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
the true Messiah, to whom I owe everything

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

1.0.0 Introduction

1.1.0   Topic: Russian messianism and the crisis of Russian identity

1.1.1   The ambiguous end of Russian ideology and revival of messianism

At the end of his last Address to the Federal Assembly, in April 2007, Putin made a jesting referral to Russian messianism: "Of course, we should always be thinking about the future. Here in Russia we have this old tradition, a favourite pastime, of searching for a national idea. This is something akin to looking for the meaning of life. It is, generally speaking, a useful and interesting pursuit, and also one that is never-ending. Let us not launch into discussions on such matters today." (Putin, Annual address, 2007) Until only a few years ago, there was a rather common notion that Russian political leaders, after what can be perceived as the failed attempt at Westernisation, had abandoned ideology – whether Western, Soviet or Russian nationalist – and were only going to pursue *pragmatic* national interests. (Fedotov, 1999:86-87, Gorodetsky, 2003, Light, 2003) Before the presidential elections in 1999, Putin declared that there was no need to restore any "official state ideology" (Drobizheva, 2003:73). In 2001, the minister of foreign affairs, Igor Ivanov affirmed that:

> [o]ne of the fundamental conclusions drawn from these debates [about Russian identity] is that the country's foreign policy should be based on national interests rather than political ideology. [. . .] Russian diplomacy has always succeeded when guided by realistic, pragmatic considerations and failed when dominated by imperial ideology and messianic ambitions. (Ivanov, 2001:8).

Many Russian political writers welcomed this alleged 'de-ideologisation', agreeing that only pragmatism should guide foreign policy making. (Fedotov, 1999, Tolz, 1998, Voronov, 2000) However, the very same authors would often deploy an anything but de-ideologised framework for their writing, referring in all seriousness to a Russian historical mission, Russia's peculiarity and spirituality, and Russia as being a special, third civilisation. Let us provide a couple of illustrations from

mainstream Russian post-Soviet political discourse: Sergei Kortunov, Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Policy Planning, routinely writes about a Russian mission 'to lead humanity to unification through moral perfection', Russia as a "spiritual imperium", "a nation of high spiritual values", and Russians as a people through which "the spiritual connection of Russia with the world is carried out". According to him, only by understanding this special mission can Russian history become understandable: "Over the course of centuries, while surmounting innumerable obstacles, the Russian people prepared themselves for the fulfilment of this historic mission."(Kortunov, 1998b) Similarly, a Russian messianic idea is depicted as the key to Russian geopolitical identity in a standard university textbook on Russian geopolitics:

> *Today the national and geopolitical revival of Russia is related to the revival of the national idea as a messianic idea, that is, universal.* Will the Russian people be capable of understanding its national calling as being universal (*vselenskoe*), all-human (*vsechelovecheskoe*), interpret and protect the values of the Orthodox culture as all-human? This is precisely about spiritual values, new ethics, new morals, and the particular responsibility of the nation for these values. Our national future depends in much on the answers to these questions. Will we be capable of protecting the space fought for and protected by our great ancestors? (Vasilenko, 2003:73)

And a shift in Putin's own rhetoric could be noted a couple of years into his first term. Journalists observed how "under Putin realities are fusing with Russian ideas to produce a more practical, economic form of Eurasianism."(Hahn, 2002) This 'fusing' of Russian ideas with pragmatism was epitomized in Putin's annual address to the federal assembly in April 2005 where he stated: "Also certain is that Russia should continue its civilising mission on the Eurasian continent. This mission consists in ensuring that democratic values, combined with national interests, enrich and strengthen our historic community." (Putin, Annual Address, 2005) The ideas of having a historic, civilising mission, are not commonly deployed at the level of mainstream and official political discourse in modern European states, and lead us to wonder about their role and function in contemporary Russian statecraft.

The notion of a Russian 'end of ideology' could to some extent include ordinary Russians in the 1990s, many of whom were tired of messianic ambitions and Western stereotypes about Russia, longing to live in a "normal", i.e. Western country (Gvosdev, 2007:139), viewing grand ideological schemes with scepticism (Prozorov, 2008:227). But increasingly, with the general disillusionment with the West, attitudes seemed to begin to shift. In an opinion poll from 2003, 1600 Russians were asked the following question: *"Would you like to see Russia first and foremost a great power, respected and feared by other countries, or a country with a high standard of living, even if not one of the strongest countries in the world?"* 54% said they preferred high standard of living to great power status, but 43% would nevertheless prefer Russia to be a great power, respected and feared.[1] Furthermore, notions relating to spirituality and a Russian messianic idea abound at all levels of post-Soviet Russian discourse, from graffiti in the streets and cheap novels sold in the metro stations to academic literature, political movements, TV-shows and advertisements – for example the slogans in the 2005 *Slavyanskaya* vodka campaign covered almost all the typical clichés from the 'wide Russian soul' to Tiuthchev's famous lines on Russian exceptionalism.[2] Typically, these notions are intertwined with anti-Semitism and other xenophobic discourses (Rosenthal, 1997, Stephens, 1997). And in general, spirituality in Russian society has boomed since the fall of the Soviet Union, with revivals of all kinds of religions and spiritual, often apocalyptic, movements from Orthodoxy to occultism.[3]

The immediate question here is whether these tendencies in post-Soviet Russian society and discourse – that is, the official mention of messianic ambitions as having guided Russian foreign policy in the past, the notion of a messianic idea and of a higher mission, stereotypes of Russian exceptionalism and a revival of religion and esoteric spirituality – are linked with each other, and if we can usefully conceive of

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[1] New Russia Barometer XII (2003), tables available at www.russiavotes.org. [Accessed 2005-11-23].
[2] The latter read "*Umom rossiio ne ponyat' – a mozhno poprobovat'*" ("Russia cannot be understood with the mind – but one could try").
[3] Catherine Merridale has described:
"The twilight of communism (a grand secular morality tale in its own right) saw the proliferation of alternative eschatologies - astrology, extrasensory perception, magical healing, spiritualism, and a popular Orthodoxy whose prophecies were drawn directly from the Book of Revelation. [. . .] Across the former Soviet Union, recent ecological disasters, beginning with Chernobyl, have all been traced to Biblical prophecies, and the end of Russian civilization is regularly nigh." (Merridale, 2003:24)

them as a single phenomenon. This forces us to examine the frequently recurring notion of Russian messianism. Russian messianism keeps appearing in both Western and Russian literature on Russia, often referred to in brief, as a permanent but ambiguous feature of Russian political and historical identity – for example Lilia Shevtsova, a prominent Russian liberal, notes that Russia over the centuries has tried to establish its identity "on the basis of Russian messianism, Russia's claims to be a major geopolitical power center, and its unique history" (2000); and historian Geoffrey Hosking writes about "the Messianic energy of the original Russian national myth" which eventually finds it outlet "in the distinctive Russian variant of socialism". (Hosking, 1997:209-10)

The word messianism originates from the word Messiah, in Hebrew *mashiah*, which ultimately means *anointed* and *chosen*. (Duncan, 2000:6) Originally, according to Collins Concise Dictionary (*Collins Concise Dictionary, 3rd ed.*, 1995) the term refers to "the awaited king of the Jews, to be sent by God to free them", to "Jesus Christ, when regarded in this role" and "an exceptional or hoped-for liberator of a country or a people". However, in a broad secular as well as religious context, messianism can concern a Messiah that is not an individual but "that may be an entity such as a particular nation, class or party" (Duncan, 2000:6). The Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev provided the following definition: "Outside the theological sphere, although in connection with religious ideas, in all peoples who have played an important role in history, on the awakening of their national consciousness there has arisen the conviction of the special advantage of the given people, as the chosen bearer and perpetrator (*sovershitel'*) of the historical fate of mankind." (Quoted in Duncan, 2000:7)

It is not the claim of this thesis that the Russian pursuit of a messianic vision or identity by history, culture or faith is unique. A variant of Slavonic messianism was part of, for example, Polish culture, with the idea of Poland as a Christ of the nations, as Gerard Gillespie describes: "Through messianism, the Poles could turn defeat into victory; their losses in the political and military arenas were compensated for by a spiritual triumph which elevated them to the nation equivalent of Jesus Christ. In Europe, and perhaps throughout the Christian world, Poland would fulfil a mission analogous to that of Jesus among men."   (Gillespie, 1994:265) This

messianism was expressed for example in the works of the national poet Adam Mickiewicz (Walicki, 1968). More generally messianism has appeared in contexts where the idea of the nation has been imbued with mystical properties. Thus, Anthony D. Smith, the well-known writer on nationalism, in his work *Chosen Peoples* where he draws on Emile Durkheim's concept of nationalism as 'surrogate religion', describes various examples of communities which at certain periods have deployed myths portraying themselves as chosen for a covenant or a mission. (Smith, 2003, see also Talmon, 1993). It is the claim of this thesis, however, that the Russian understanding and deployment of a messianic language and culture is far more prominent and persistent than in other societies, and is still a key – perhaps even the key – defining referent in Russia's view of the world.

The one contemporary Western work that specifically treats Russian messianism is Peter Duncan's *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (Duncan, 2000). This is a useful overview of, and introduction to, the subject, and in the introduction provides a useful comparative perspective on messianism.[4] Duncan's work lacks theoretical awareness, however, leading it to treat Russian messianism simply as a continuous, broad phenomenon in Russian history and society rather than interrogating the national and international origins and functions of this complex multi-dimensional idea.

This thesis will pursue this line of inquiry, but it must first address the commonplace argument that Russian messianism is an extension of, or perhaps distortion of, Russian nationalism. This thesis will argue that messianism relates to nationalism in the broad terms of identity construction, but goes far beyond the concept of the nation. It is a persistent issue in certain countries' world-view, perhaps most notably Russia and the United States in the past century.

Messianism of a variety of kinds is embedded in the Russian world-view – it appears politically as empire and mission; spiritually as the notion of 'Holy Russia'; and geopolitically as Eurasia. The basis of messianism is the idea of a chosen nation, but at the same time it transcends the particularistic idea of the nation through its universalistic claims, as this quote from Russian political discourse illustrates: "Nationalism is for small peoples who fear extinction. The Russians are a great

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[4] For a critical discussion on Duncan's comparison of Russian and Jewish messianism, see Ilya Prizel's review of *Russian Messianism* (2003).

people [. . .] Russia speaks like Christ used to speak: come to me and share my spirit." (Kunaev, cited in Neumann, 1996:197) From American political discourse in the same period we see a very similar line of argument, here put forward by neoconservative ideologists William Kristol and David Brooks in 1997:

> American nationalism — the nationalism of Alexander Hamilton and Henry Clay and Teddy Roosevelt — has never been European blood-and-soil nationalism. [. . .] Our nationalism is that of an exceptional nation founded on a universal principle, on what Lincoln called 'an abstract truth, applicable to all men at all times'. Our pride in settling the frontier, welcoming immigrants and advancing the cause of freedom around the world is related to our dedication to our principles. (Cited in Williams, 2005:318)

Messianism becomes a form of supra-nationalism that explains the 'nation' does not suffice to contain the Russian or American ideas. Since messianism ultimately aspires to 'leave the nation behind' it effectively transforms into the antithesis of nationalism.

Within contemporary studies of nationalism, Russian messianism is related but *not* equated to what Benedict Anderson has described as a particular form of official nationalism, functioning to retain dynastic power over multi-ethnic empires, in his words "stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire." (Anderson, 2006:86-87) Official nationalism, he argues, "concealed a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm." (2006:110)

But on the whole, nationalism is a political science debate about modernist nation-building that rarely looks to international political theory as an explanation of why states and societies have the self-identification they do. Though we will draw on some insights about messianism as part of identity construction from scholars on nationalism, this thesis will not concern itself with the debates within nationalism and will not draw on mainstream political science theory, precisely because this thesis looks to international political theory to explain the multi-dimensional nature of the Russian claim to an exceptional past and future.

As Putin's jesting referral to Russian messianism implied, it can be a heavily stereotyped notion. 'The ingrained Russian messianism,' and 'the mysterious Russian soul' (*zagadochnaya russkaya dusha*) can together with 'the Russian bear' and

the alleged Russian 'orientalist despotism' be seen as part of a long-standing Western discourse on Russia as an Eastern Other (for this wider discourse, see Neumann, 1999). In fact, several Russian academics that were approached during fieldwork for this study refused even to discuss the idea of Russian messianism, saying that the clichés and populist scholarship made it a too painful subject.

Choosing Russian messianism as a subject of study is thus not unproblematic, as we run the risk of engaging in the populist reproduction and reinforcement of myths and stereotypes which could further exclude and alienate Russia from Europe and the West. However, the persistence of the ambiguous idea of Russian messianism, and the contemporary revival of messianic ideas in Russian public discourse suggests that beyond the stereotypes, it is a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.[5]

1.1.2   Statement of relevance

What makes it important and worthwhile to pursue the study of Russian messianism and its revival in post-Soviet discourse and society? A main reason is the crisis of identity since the collapse of the Soviet order. The Soviet Union's complex and divisive legacy and disintegration, the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism as a statevalue system and the subsequent perceived failure of Westernisation, the long wars in Chechnya, the sale of national assets and economic crises have all been contributory factors to an undisputable crisis of social and political relations in post-Soviet Russia. Peter Shearman provides a summary from a conventional foreign policy perspective:

> When the empire collapsed along with the communist project, Russia was left in limbo, with an uncertain sense of identity and a fundamental conflict among the political elite over Russia's future direction. Without a fixed identity since 1992, Russia has verged on chaos, with occasional political and economic crises, like the dispute in Chechnya and Yeltsin's siege of the White House, leading to violent conflict. (Shearman, 2001:254-55)

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[5] Indeed it is unwise too to discard stereotypes themselves as politically irrelevant: it has recently been argued that precisely stereotypes play an important and underestimated role in national identity construction. (Rezende, 2008:107)

The Russian crisis of identity also forms part of the wider crisis of collective identities under globalisation, or what Campbell calls "the globalization of contingency" or "the erasure of the markers of certainty, and the rarefaction of political discourse". (Campbell, 1991, 1998:171) Politician Igor Chubais had summed up the crisis of Russian identity in 1998: "Until we restore our identity, until we figure out our own value system, until we find our own idea, we will not really be able to solve a single other problem."(Quoted in Winchester, 2008) The question then, is whether Russian messianism is the answer to the post-Soviet crisis of identity. Can we understand the wider issues of post-Soviet Russian state- and collective identity by studying the phenomenon and concept of Russian messianism? To answer this, this thesis has three broad aims which provide the basis for its subsequent hypotheses and research questions. These are to:

a) Provide a conceptualisation of Russian messianism which will help us to understand some of its key functions and forms.

There are few studies specifically on Russian messianism, and while they may be very useful as overviews and histories, they typically lack a deeper theoretical conceptualisation, such as Peter Duncan's above mentioned work (2000), and also Russian Vladimir Storchak's rich historical works on messianism (2003, 2005). Furthermore, many important studies from various disciplines provide analyses of specific messianic discourses, but not on Russian messianism as a phenomenon in itself. This could include Marlene Laruelle's extensive and excellent work on Eurasianism (2004, 2006, 2008), Dmitri Sidorov's study of the Moscow Third Rome narrative in contemporary Russian geopolitics (2006), Andzej Walicki's seminal work on Slavophilism (1975), Stephen Lessing Baehr's work on the paradise myth in eighteenth century Russia (1991), Daniel Rowland's work on the narrative Moscow the New Israel (1996), Julia Brun-Zejmis' study of messianic consciousness in the samizdat movement of the 1960-70s (1991), and Michael Urban's analysis of post-Soviet political discourse (Urban, 1998) to name but a few diverse examples. And finally, various studies highlight phenomena in Russian history and contemporary society which relate to messianism, but have had no need to consider their wider

implications for contemporary Russia in international relations. This could include David Rowley's analysis of Russian millenarianism (Rowley, 1999).

In order to provide a sophisticated and comprehensive conceptualisation, we proceed to trace Russian messianism and its key characteristics, narratives and categories in history and the secondary literature of diverse disciplines. Following our findings, we propose that Russian messianism has continuously been a central element in Russian identity and statecraft, and that it should be conceptualised as a historically persistent discursive (interpretive and narrative) framework, holding a kaleidoscopic range of both complementing and contesting discourses, that have the purposes of legitimising the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor and defining Russian identity in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other. While this conceptualisation could run the danger of becoming reification, we argue that it nevertheless is an important tool in the sense of an umbrella-term which helps us to identify and locate contemporary narratives and themes, including many which are not evidently explicitly messianic, within a long-standing, broad, discursive tradition. This is thus not so much a study of the concept of messianism, as a study of various discursive practices which can be usefully labelled as such.

b) Increase our understanding of contemporary Russian collective identity at different levels of discourse.

There exists a large body of contemporary studies on Russian nationalism and radical/extremist political ideologies (e.g. Brudny, 1998), but few study the resonance of these ideologies among ordinary people, beyond opinion polls. Furthermore, undertaking a systematic mapping and analysis of messianic discourse in Russian public discourse would have been an unfeasible project given both its proliferation in many different social domains, and the limits of this study. Instead we have centred our analysis on the official and popular discourse planes, where the resonance and manifestation of Russian messianic discourse is less known. For these two planes we have selected specific samples – the President's annual addresses to the State Council, 2000-2007 respectively semi-structured interviews with ordinary and semi-elite Russians from Moscow and St Petersburg. As we explore the 'texts' from these

samples, we will compare and contrast their use of messianic and related discourse with the same in texts from public discourse, using also findings from the secondary studies of Russian nationalism, etc.

How then can field research, asking ordinary people on the street and in their homes questions, comparing their answers with what politicians and academics say and write, actually help us understand the meta-problem of Russian state and collective identity? Regardless of how authoritarian Russia as a political entity might be becoming, what ordinary people in Russia think, feel and perceive is important for, and reflective of, the state as a whole. This is particularly so in terms of state stability – ever important in the vast and diverse state, so fraught with disintegration – which doubtlessly is dependent on a sense of cohesion in Russian society at large. Furthermore, drawing on insights from discourse analysis and theory, it can be argued that we are likely to better understand the role and functions of messianic and related narratives in relation to the crisis of social and political relations by studying their more 'common sense' deployment and resonance among ordinary Russians, not only among the intellectual elites among whom representations of Russia can be very far-fetched from Russian social realities.

c) Enhance our understanding of contemporary Russia as a state and international actor.

Russia is a vast country whose central role in global politics cannot be denied. Perceptions of a 'new Cold war' between Russia and the West are only one of many reasons for seeking to enhance our understanding of contemporary Russia. The ways in which its identity as a state and international actor is being constructed is therefore of great political importance. We will argue that mainstream IR studies often simplify international actor identity construction, failing to take into account influences from public and popular levels of discourse on the process of defining and legitimising Russia as a state and international actor. Ideas, perceptions and 'stories' from these levels of discourse can thus constitute important subjects of study for IR.

There are some excellent works within International Relations (IR) on Russian state and collective identity building on self/Other studies, particularly by Iver

Neumann (1996, 1999) and Andrei Tsygankov (e.g. , 2005, 2007, 2008), but again, they do not study Russian messianism as a single phenomenon, although their works are highly useful as part of its study, and so this is another gap in scholarship this thesis aims to fill.

Overall, this thesis seeks to make a contribution to Russian studies by providing a theoretical conceptualisation of Russian messianism; and to the study of international relations by an analysis of discourses central to the production of Russia as a collective identity, state and international actor. The following section outlines the specific hypotheses, research questions and methodology we have developed in order to meet these aims.

1.2.0   Hypotheses, Research questions and Intellectual Approach

Three hypotheses will be put forward as basic presumption according to the research topic – the role of Russian messianism in contemporary identity and statecraft – and the thesis aims – to conceptualise Russian messianism to understand its key functions and forms; to increase our understanding of contemporary Russian collective identity at different levels of discourse; and of contemporary Russia as a state and international actor.

H1. The persistence, and contemporary revival, of messianic ideas in Russian public discourse suggests it is a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.

We will base our study on the assumption that Russian messianism is closely related to Russian identity, since its ideas and narratives constitute representations of Russia and the Russians. We suggest that it is particularly necessary to Russian political and cultural identity since it is in these domains the messianic narratives and ideas appears most strongly and persistently. Russian politicians denounce messianic ambitions (Ivanov, 2001:8), Russians are apparently tired of ideology (Gvosdev, 2007:139), and Western academics denounce studies of Russian exceptionalism as "tired forms of explanation" (Engelstein, 1998:877). And yet messianic ideas and narratives are appearing all over Russia, from restaurant names to party ideologies –

even mainstream parties that are not explicitly nationalist or religious reference Russia's spirituality, uniqueness and special path. The persistence, and contemporary revival, of messianic ideas in Russian public discourse thus suggests that Russian messianism is a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity. In order to investigate this hypothesis, we begin by advancing one research question, based both on the domains in which Russian messianic ideas are appearing, and on the nature of Russian messianism itself:

Q1. How can the study of discourse enhance our understanding of Russian collective identity?

Russian messianism can be validly defined in various ways – as for example an ideology (Laruelle, 2008), a concept (Duncan, 2000), a national myth (Hosking, 1997:209-10), or a religious concept (Rowley, 1999). As all none of these are mutually exclusive, and as all fall under the broad and functional category of *discourse*, our study will attempt to define Russian messianism in these terms. It can also be argued that discourse incorporates the various domains of social interaction in which collective identities, as social realities, are produced. Therefore we will investigate how the study of discourse in its different understandings – Russian messianism as discourse, and discourse as domains of social interaction and representation – can enhance our understanding of collective identity formation, and by extension Russian collective identity and its necessary components. We will do so by exploring discourse, ideas, and state identity construction from different perspectives of International Relations theory: neorealism, realism, constructivism, and poststructuralism. Following insights from both poststructuralist and realist approaches, we will advance a conceptualisation of Russian messianism as a discursive framework.

H2: The messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia.

This hypothesis addresses our quest to understand the wider problem of post-Soviet Russian state- and collective identity by studying the phenomenon of Russian messianism at different levels of Russian discourse. If we follow broad paths of discourse theory and analysis, we find that the significance of Russian messianism can not be found hermeneutically inside the narratives themselves, but need to be understood in their wider discursive social and political contexts. While it would appear that Russian messianism indeed is a historically persistent part of Russian political and cultural identity, the revival of its ideas and narratives in post-Soviet Russia is notable, and suggests a possible correlation to the undeniable crisis of social and political relations in Russia following the fall of the Soviet Union, described above. This has led us to put forward our second hypothesis, and we advance two research questions for its investigation. These each concern popular respectively official discourse, two broad levels of Russian discourse on which the role of messianic and related narratives are less known compared to public discourse.

Q2. What is the manifestation and resonance among ordinary Russians of the messianic and related narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse?

As stated above, contemporary studies of Russian political and cultural discourse often focus on specific writers and movements in public discourse, not involving popular opinion, save occasional opinion polls. The unique semi-structured interviews with a large sample of both ordinary and semi-elite Russians from Moscow and St Petersburg, the two 'capitals' of Russia, were developed, conducted and analysed in response to this research question, and their findings, presented across three chapters, form the core of the original research of the thesis. As we argued above, what ordinary people in Russia think, feel and perceive is important for, and reflective of, state and collective identity as a whole, particularly so in terms of state stability; the role and functions of messianic and related narratives in relation to the crisis of social and political relations are likely to be better understood by also studying their 'common sense' deployment and resonance among a variety of ordinary Russians from different levels of society.

Q3. What is the function of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the Russian crisis of identity?

As we noted previously, Russian messianic ideas and narratives were beginning to be deployed in official discourse under Putin, and we have selected precisely as samples of official discourse the Annual Addresses of Putin's presidency 2000-2007. The ways in which a state deploys a particular discourse in the context of state-of-the-nation addresses ought to reveal key functions of that discourse, since the state, unlike writers in public discourse, has to mediate a number of different interests through its discourse, which thus has to be carefully balanced and considered.

Even if authoritarian, in a broad sense of the word, the state is perhaps in many senses less free than writers and organisations of public discourse. In these samples we will study instances of messianic-related intertextuality in comparison with public discourse, and we find that the state, despite at times clearly distancing itself from messianic discourse, nevertheless adopts and mediates various Russian messianic discourses.

H3: One of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discursive framework for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other.

This is a development of Hypothesis H1, based on our findings in addressing the previous research questions, which focuses on the dimensions of statecraft, foreign policy and, by extension, the international aspects of Russian identity and messianism. Typically in the literature on Russian messianism, the question is asked if it has directly informed Russian foreign policy.[6] We believe that this way of framing the question is unhelpful, since direct causal relationships between ideas and foreign policy are hard if not impossible to establish.

Instead we need to ask more broadly how we can conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in Russian statecraft and, by extension, foreign policy. Our findings through exploring discourse and identity in IR theory suggest

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[6] See for example an interview with Peter Duncan in *Washington ProFile*, 2008-04-17, available at http://www.washprofile.org/en/node/7601 [accessed 2009-10-11].

that we can usefully talk about narrative frameworks that persist in states because of their legitimising function, with stories that may change over time but whose central logic – based on a self/Other opposition – and character are continuously reproduced. Having advanced the hypothesis that Russian messianism can be usefully conceptualised as a discursive framework, we furthermore suggest that one of its key functions is to legitimise the state, and that its strength indeed lies in a self/Other dichotomy expressed in discourses of danger and Otherness. We have formulated our final research question as to investigate this hypothesis:

Q4. How can we understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West?

In the case of Russia, its collective and state identity cannot be divorced from the perennially ambiguous relation to Europe, later 'the West'. (Neumann, 1996) The contradictions of the relation were summed up more than two centuries ago by the playwright Fonvizin: "How can we remedy two contradictory and most harmful prejudices: the first, that everything with us is awful, while in foreign lands everything is good; the second, that in foreign lands everything is awful, while with us everything is good?" (Quoted in Hosking, 1997:198) If Russian messianism, following hypothesis H1, is a necessary part of Russian cultural and political identity, then Russian messianism is intrinsically wound up with the relation to the broad Western Other. The answer to this research question can by no means be uncomplicated, and Hypothesis H3 is addressed continuously throughout each chapter of the thesis using diverse methods, data and theoretical perspectives.

1.3.0   Methodology

We have adopted a problem-solving approach for this thesis, believing that conceptual pragmatism and openness are essential for solving the problem of Russian messianism and collective identity. As Luke Shapiro has argued, "if a phenomenon is characterized as it is so as to vindicate a particular theory rather than to illuminate a problem that is specified independently of the theory, then it is

unlikely that the specification will gain much purchase on what is actually going on in the world. [. . .] It makes better sense to start with the problem". (Shapiro, 2002:601) Our problem is multifaceted, and we will put forward three broad aspects from which to understand this phenomenon within IR:

- o Russian messianism as routine state identity construction
- o Messianism as typical for exceptionalist states: multicultural empires or civilisations
- o Manifestations of Russian messianism within particular social, historical and intellectual contexts in Russia, the West and worldwide

Exploring different theoretical approaches we develop a broad methodological framework within IR based mainly on insights from poststructuralist and multidisciplinary Self-Other studies for exploring Russian messianism from the above aspects. It involves mainly three, in some sense interrelated, methods of discourse analysis: identification of the functions or strategies of discourses; interdiscursive analysis or identification of narratives; and predicate analysis. Discourse, thought and identity are all dynamic and relational; we never speak, think or exist in a vacuum. Rather, we are engaged in a continuous process of reproduction of the world through our words. To understand Russian political life, then, we need to contextualise deployed themes of Russian messianism, the representations of Russia as self in relation to Others. Following insights from dialogism, by studying representations of Others, dangers, enemies and threats, we also reveal the unstated counter narratives of the self.

The Russian messianic framework also has its own particular stories and signifiers, some which are quite unique to Russia, which suggests that we must study and analyse these stories with a deep understanding of Russian history, religion and culture, but also of the wider intellectual and cultural currents influencing Russian thought, such as European Romanticism in the time of Slavophilism, as well as contemporary anti-globalist and anti-American movements. Chapter Four will focus both on the cultural specificities and wider cultural and historical contexts of Russian messianism by providing a historical background which shows that there is a clear historical continuity of Russian messianism as a narrative framework. Based on secondary sources from a range of disciplines it outlines core features of Russian

messianism and its persistent narratives and discourses, and in so doing helps us better understand the contemporary uses of messianic discourses. Part Two, the core of the thesis, will attempt to establish how it fits in with contemporary Russian politics, with particular reference to foreign policy implications, and will focus more on the understanding of Russian messianism as routine state identity construction and as typical for multicultural empires or civilisations. As outlined, we will base our analysis on two specific sets of primary data – Putin's annual addresses for official discourse – and the 160 semi-structured interviews for popular discourse – but also use a variety of both primary and secondary sources to contextualise and interpret our findings, comparing and contrasting popular and official discourse with public discourse.

1.4.0 Thesis organisation

The thesis is divided into two parts: apparatus and original research. The first part includes, apart from this introduction, a theory chapter, a methodology and a historical overview which are aimed at providing a comprehensive conceptualisation of Russian messianism. It begins to investigate hypothesis H1 [7] on Russian messianism as potentially a necessary part of Russian identity by addressing research question Q1, how the study of discourse can enhance our understanding of Russian collective identity.

Chapter Two, the theory chapter, explores discourse, ideas, identity and their relation to politics from key perspectives of International Relations theory – mainstream constructivism, neo-realism, classical and culturalist realism, poststructuralism and other approaches. Simple but fundamental insights about discourse, identity and statecraft from poststructuralist, classical/culturalist realist and other self/Other studies lead us to propose an inclusive conceptualisation of Russian messianism as constituting a historically persistent discursive (interpretive and narrative) framework, based on a logic of opposition and holding a range of both contesting and complementing narratives and signifiers which represent different interests but which on the whole function to legitimise the state through the

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[7] H1. The persistence, and contemporary revival, of messianic ideas in Russian public discourse suggests it is a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.

continuous construction, contestation and reproduction of Russian collective identity in relation to Others.

We then proceed in Chapter Three to explore the different methods, associated with the different theoretical approaches explored, which are available for addressing our research questions. The chapter shows why the study of discourse is essential for understanding Russian collective identity and why it provides the best methods for studying Russian messianism. We introduce and justify our intellectual and evidence categories, and outline a methodology based on strands of discourse analysis and self/Other studies.

Chapter Four proceeds to trace Russian messianism as conceptualised, its key characteristics, narratives and categories in history and the secondary literature of diverse disciplines, in order to be able to identify and locate contemporary narratives and themes, and their functions, within the historical tradition. In so doing, it begins the investigation of hypothesis H3 – that one of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discursive framework for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other – and research question Q4, on how we can understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West. The chapter affirms the centrality of an ambiguous-dichotomous self/Other and good/evil framework for both Russian messianism and collective identity, showing a persistent, though diverse, production and reproduction messianic narratives across centuries.

Based on the findings of the apparatus chapters, we formulate hypothesis H2: that the messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia.

Hypotheses H2 and H3 are then investigated by studying Russian messianism and related narratives at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse, in chapters Five to Eight which form the core of and constitute the original research of the thesis. Based on analysis of President Putin's eight annual addresses to the nation in comparison with texts from public discourse, Chapter Five explores the role of contemporary Russian messianic discourse in the construction and reproduction of the official, or 'sanctioned' Russian collective identity, thus

addressing research questions Q3, on the function is of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the Russian crisis of identity, as well as Q4, on how we can we understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight move onto popular discourse, addressing research question Q2 by exploring the manifestation and resonance among the Russian population of the messianic and related narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse, based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the large and diverse sample of elite and ordinary Russians from Moscow and St Petersburg. Here we seek to find out if Russian messianism is exclusive to intellectuals detached from everyday life, or whether Russians at all levels of society draw upon messianic discourse; and if so, what the role and functions of their deployments of messianic discourse appear to be. More broadly, chapters Five to Eight thus implicitly address the thesis aim to increase our understanding of contemporary Russian collective identity at different levels of discourse.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis, addressing Q4, the broad research question on how we can understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West, by summarising the findings, demonstrating the ways in which they enhance our understanding of contemporary Russia as a state and international actor.

2.0.0   How to understand Russian Messianism in Theory

2.1.0   Introduction

As our introduction set out, picking Russian messianism as a subject of study carries with it many academic pitfalls, not the least the risk of engaging in the populist reproduction and reinforcement of myths and stereotypes which will further exclude and alienate Russia from Europe and the West. Because of the both stereotypical and ambiguous status of Russian messianism, finding a workable theoretical framework within International Relations (IR) for its conceptualisation is a challenge indeed. But the abundance of messianic notions and narratives, indeed stereotypes, in contemporary Russian, not Western, discourse calls us to take on the challenge. We will seek to advance our understanding of Russian messianism as a social phenomenon based on the assumptions that it relates to ideas and identity, or forms of Russian collective identity, and that ideas and collective identity in some way are relevant to statecraft. We will primarily address the following questions:

- How can we advance our understanding of Russian messianism, its survival, continuity and revival, through IR approaches?
- What theoretical tools do these IR theories/approaches provide that are useful: generally, for understanding identity and statecraft; and specifically, for understanding Russian messianism and its functions?
- What are the weaknesses with these theories/approaches?

We suggest that neither neo-realism nor mainstream social constructivism is helpful in the conceptualisation of Russian messianism. Neorealism does not explore identity production at all but takes actor identities as given. Constructivism, despite professing to deal with the role of ideas and identity in IR, fails to capture the actual politics of identity, hence also Russian messianism. We instead develop a conceptualisation of Russian messianism using basic insights about identity and politics from several conceptual positions: critical and poststructuralist IR approaches as well as certain more sophisticated cultural/historicist realist approaches which highlight different dimensions within which we must understand

Russian messianism as a social and political phenomenon, and its survival, continuity and revival.

The chapter argues that while a coherent, continuous collective identity is an ontological impossibility, the stories we tell about ourselves (in discourse, ideology, national symbols etc), and the boundaries we inscribe between us and others function as to make-believe we have a coherent identity. But different stories about who we are compete with each other, so the stories or discourses that tell us who we are and who we are not are thus inherently political.

We will argue that in foreign policy, the story-telling is made within discursive (narrative and interpretive) frameworks that are continuously reproduced, and which also function to legitimise the existence of the state, and are often reproduced over a long time. In the case of Russia, we suggest that *messianic* discourse[8] has predominantly filled the functions of making believe there is a coherent Russian identity, and we provide a new conceptualisation of Russian messianism as being a dichotomising discursive framework holding a range of both complementing and contesting discourses with certain key characteristics.

2.2.0 Constructivism

The mainstream developments in the field of IR theory over the last fifteen years suggest that constructivism would provide an appropriate framework within which to understand Russian messianism. Ideas and identity studies have relatively recently entered the mainstream of IR and their entrance are part of what has been called the 'third debate' in IR (the first being realism vs. idealism, the second neorealism vs. neoliberalism) – supposedly consisting of two camps with traditional, rationalist, social science IR scholarship on the one side, and challenging reflectivist, critical approaches on the other. The biggest difference between the camps is thought to be epistemological, with questions such as: What can we actually know about the world? Can there be such a thing as a social science, applying the methods of natural science to the social world? What is acceptable to study within IR, and what isn't?

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[8] We acknowledge that the very use of certain concepts, such as *discourse*, implies prior philosophical commitments which are bound to bear upon and indeed frame the discussion and overview of different theoretical positions.

Social constructivism, most notably propagated by Alexander Wendt (1992) claims to bridge the gap between the two camps, by bringing the social questions of ideas and identity from reflectivism and 'making them accessible' to the mainstream rationalist approaches. (Smith, 1996:394-95) Assuming as we do that Russian messianism is about ideas and identity, what tools might constructivism offer towards the understanding of Russian messianism as a social phenomenon?

Theo Farrell, summarises the constructivist research agenda: "Uniting the constructivist literature is a concern with explaining the evolution and impact of norms on national and international security." (2002:72) Norms and ideas carry a lot of explanatory burdens in constructivism. So how are they understood? "Norms are intersubjective beliefs about the social and natural world that define actors, their situations, and possibilities of action."(Farrell, 2002:49) Antje Wiener provides the following definition: "Ideas are understood as socially embedded. They represent shared reference points which send the same message to different actors causing the same behaviour among these actors. [. . .] [I]deas are not exclusively situated in or generated by the brains of individual actors, in addition, they entail a social structuring element." (Wiener, 2003:261) They "are constructed through social interaction on the one hand, and have a constitutive impact on behaviour, on the other." (Wiener, 2003:266)

Norms or ideas thus shape identity; and then identity shapes actor behaviour, or policy, and so according to constructivism, states do what they think most appropriate, not only what they are materially capable of. "In so doing, states are guided by norms that define the identities of the main actors in world politics (i.e. modern, bureaucratic, sovereign states) and define the formal rules and accepted practices of the international game." (Farrell, 2002:52) Tannenwald provides quite a clear typology for norms and ideas, with the following categories: "policy prescriptions, norms, principled beliefs, cause-effect beliefs, ideologies, shared belief systems, and broad worldviews. In this typology, Russian messianism could be categorised as an ideology or shared belief system: "a systematic set of doctrines or beliefs that reflect the social needs and aspirations of a group, class, culture, or state [i.e. Russia and the Russians]. Examples include the Protestant ethic or political

ideologies such as liberalism, Marxism, and fascism. Intellectuals tend to play key roles in the development and maintenance of ideology." (Tannenwald, 2005:16).

Also, constructivist work that continues in the tradition of the social theories it has borrowed its main insights from looks at ideas and ideologies not as autonomous entities but as *discourses* (see for example Ringmar, 1996). Overall in constructivism, Russian messianism thus appears as a set of norms, a belief system or discourse defining Russian actor identity, policy and, by extension, the rules of the international game.

However, constructivism despite its claims to bring the social to an undersocialised discipline has a lot of problematic issues. (Wiener, 2003:257) We identify three interrelated problems of mainstream social constructivism, both as a general theory of international relations, and as a specific approach to understand Russian messianism, its survival, continuity and revival and functions. The first is its ahistoricist, positivist epistemological approach; leading both to the second problem: its failure to recognise the contested nature of ideas and identity; and to the third: the failure to account for the origins of identity and actorship.

Let us begin with the epistemological stance, which is clearly stated both by constructivists and their critics. Farrell, writing from within the approach, states that the "epistemological approach taken by the constructivists discussed in this essay is a conventional but not critical one; the purpose is to build knowledge about the world and contribute to mainstream IR debate. The big challenge for constructivists is deciding how to engage realism." (Farrell, 2002:72) Maja Zehfuss, more critical of constructivists, writes that they "in contrast to so-called postmodernists, respect the established procedures and methodologies of social science and engage in debate with rationalists, or so the argument goes." (Zehfuss, 2001:341) The social and ideational thus needs to be adapted to fit the mainstream positivist IR debate, and the post-positivist approaches from which constructivists have borrowed their insights, are often excluded from the 'legitimate' debate. With the positivist epistemology, the social – norms and ideas, or 'intersubjective beliefs' – as a *variable* can supposedly be observed and measured according to objective scientific standards. Constructivism thus proposes that by identifying the norms which define a particular actor identity, we can predict state behaviour.

But trying to apply objective scientific standards to the ideational in Russian political discourse is a highly problematic quest. There is a whole conglomerate of different, both contradictory and complementing ideas, themes and ideologies which compete to define Russian actor identity: various approaches to deal with the Soviet past and its ambiguous legacy; and various representations of Russia (e.g. as European or Eurasian, as normal or exceptional, as a state or a civilisation). Russian messianism alone contains many different narratives and different norms, and they do not always correspond. Mainstream constructivism thus does not have the tools to deal with the contested nature of discourse and identity production.

And even if we single out one prevalent idea – say the peculiar Russian spirituality –it is unlikely that we would be able to predict a specific actor behaviour following this idea. Constructivists claim that ideas "send the same message to different actors causing the same behaviour among these actors" (Wiener, 2003:261) but the peculiar Russian spirituality has many different interpretations, some implying for example that Russia must isolate itself from the less spiritual world, others that Russia because of this peculiarity must actively bring it to the rest of the world in one way or another. This constructivist assumption about ideas and norms thus overlooks the fluidity of language by which ideas and norms are constructed.

Because of subscription to a positivist epistemology, albeit with the social and ideational as a variable, social constructivism can be said to become structuralist (despite its focus on agency) and to assume the rationalist ahistoricity, a move which makes it less adequate as a tool for understanding the historically contingent development of collective identities. As Zehfuss states, "identities as they are defined in discourse fail to be logically bounded entities. Identities are continuously articulated, rearticulated and contested, which makes them hard to pin down as explanatory categories. The stories we tell about ourselves are [. . .] not necessarily coherent." (Zehfuss, 2001:338) She uses German post-war identity construction as a case study and argues:

> The contingent, elusive and even contradictory character of German identity,
> as it was represented in the debates, must be excluded if the supposedly
> scientific standards are to be upheld. The fascinating, subtle creation of the
> subject in the process of telling history, and thus identity, is not part of an

analysis which starts by postulating subjects. Hence, political questions, for instance about how subjects come to be in the first place, are ignored. (Zehfuss, 2001:341)

Constructivism neither asks nor explains how states/actors came to be in the first place. The inability to deal with the origin of identities is thus another consequence of the rationalist, positivist epistemology and superficial understanding of the relationship between the ideational and the material, and between agent and structure. Ideas and norms are claimed to 'arise in social interaction' then 'define identity'. But as social interaction presumes the presence of actors, and as actors are defined by ideas and norms, we find ourselves in a circular argument. If identity – defined by ideas and norms– is formed in interaction, how can one interact without some pre-existing identity? Its circularity is in fact similar to that of the prevalent mainstream IR approach it claims to challenge: neorealism. In neorealism, which the next section will discuss in more detail, the structure, the international system, is constituted by states, yet the states in their turn are constituted and defined by the international system. (Ashley, 1984) While constructivism criticises neorealism for its reification of the international system – famously summarised in Wendts slogan and article title '*Anarchy is what states make of it*' (1992) – it instead reifies the state, as states automatically are assumed to be actors and main decision-makers of the anarchical system. (Weber 2005)

Constructivism's insights about the mutual constitution of ideational and material structures thus do not offer any content-specific theories of norms, ideas and identity formation, which makes it hard to understand the role of messianism in Russian identity and politics drawing only upon mainstream constructivist work. It is quite ironic that an approach whose core contribution to IR is claimed to be about ideas and identity fails precisely in that area. As Zehfuss aptly concludes, "constructivism and identity may be in a dangerous liaison not only because identity is both necessary for and a danger to the approach. The liaison also endangers the possibility of considering the political implications of constructing and representing identity. As a result, constructivists may just miss the politics in international relations." (Zehfuss, 2001:341)

In sum: we cannot advance our understanding of Russian messianism very far through mainstream constructivist scholarship. It claims to have the theoretical tools needed to study ideas and identity, and by extension Russian messianism, but these tools are problematic or inexistent on examination. Constructivism might borrow useful concepts (such as *discourse*) from social theory; observe messianic norms and ideas as being part of Russian identity; and claim to be able to predict how Russia as a 'messianic state' would act in the international system, yet because of its rationalist epistemology and ahistoricism, it cannot answer the question of why specifically Russian messianic norms and ideas persist and are being revived in Russia, nor explain their origins and function.

2.3.0   Neorealism

The term 'realism' in mainstream IR usually connotes both neorealism, classical realism, and any other of its variants. We agree however with R. B. J. Walker's suggestion that political realism "must be understood less as a coherent theoretical position in its own right than as the site of a great many contested claims and metaphysical disputes." (Walker, 1993:105) 'Neorealism' differs considerably from 'classical realism' (or 'neo-classical' if referring to its twentieth century thinkers), and even classical realism itself contains contradictory, both historicist and structuralist, positions: "Structuralist positions generally aspire to scientific status, to ahistorical laws and explanations. Historicist positions lean towards the categories of hermeneutics and practice." (Walker, 1993:115)

As a result of its structuralism, neorealism, the perhaps still most dominant IR orientation since the 1980s, is assumed – following the classic IR opposition between realism and idealism, between difference and identity – to privilege structure (the international system) over agency (the state), space over history, and power and interest over ideals and ethics. In aspiring to scientific status, neorealism as a rationalist-positivist approach, sees actors as self-interested and "motivated by a logic of consequences. Ideas are "hooks" on which interests are hung, and they mostly rationalize actions made necessary by material interests." (Tannenwald,

2005:18) Both ideas and state identity are thus determined by underlying material structures, by the anarchic international system.[9]

The survival, continuity and revival of Russian messianism in political discourse should thus be understood in terms of the instrumental use of ideas to rationalise actions made necessary by material interests in the anarchic international structure; to secure the survival and further the power of Russia as an international actor. In order to further our understanding of Russian messianism, we must thus deepen our understanding of material structures and of politics as a function of power and interest – which makes considerable sense for anyone acquainted with Russian history. Problems arise however when we seek to understand structure and power through neorealism.

First of all, it has been argued that neorealism's structuralism is problematic in that it reifies both structure, the anarchic international system, and its parts, the sovereign states, and thus cannot problematise and analyse either of them. The state is defined by the structure, yet the structure in its turn is supposedly made up of and cannot be comprehended independently of the state – for the circularity of neorealism, see Richard K. Ashley's seminal article 'The Poverty of Neorealism' (Ashley, 1984:254-58). In Walker's words, neorealism's structuralism "either compromise the coherence of structuralist principles as such, as with the ontological priority given to the state, which results in an 'atomist' or 'reductionist' style of structural analysis" or else "reinforce the static and reifying potentiality of structuralism, as with the use of various kinds of utilitarianism and rational choice theories." (Walker, 1993:115-16)

Secondly, the neorealist conceptions of power – and politics – is rather limited: "For all its emphasis on "power politics," neorealism has no comprehension of, and in fact denies, the social basis and social limits of *power*. For the neorealist [. . .] power must ultimately be reducible to a matter of capabilities, or means, under the control of the unreflective actor whose status as an actor is given from the start." (Ashley, 1984:259) The power of an actor, Ashley explains, does not depend on the

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[9] In Walker's words, neorealism is characterised by "the absence of any serious theory of the state. It offers merely something like a theory of the structures of oligopolistic competition in which states become 'units' and units become synonymous with firms operating within some kind of market." [. . .] It is precisely because of a refusal to come to terms with the historical specificity of the state, and particularly with its participation historically in both political and economic activity, that structuralist forms of realism are so prone to portray the state in such an empty fashion." (Walker, 1993:117)

inherent qualities of an actor or entity, but depends on its recognition within a community as a whole, and to get recognition, the actor needs to have competence, to do a performance. So, while it is quite possible that the political use of ideas in general is related to underlying material structures and interests, it is very hard to study these from an ahistoricist perspective. Structures are not eternal, but products of history and process, and by ignoring practice, process and "the historical specificity of the state" (Walker, 1993:117) Structuralist neorealism is unable to analyse the material interests and structures related to the political use of ideas such as Russian messianism; *power* beyond its simple conception as material capabilities and the real power politics of ideas and identity and the state.

2.4.0   Classical, Culturalist and Historicist Political Realism

Other realist orientations, however, do better in this respect. As was argued by Ashley in 1984, and later by for example Michael Williams (2004), classical realism is very different from neorealism and on close examination reveals a much more sensitive understanding of politics, power, ethics, ideas and identity than is commonly assumed. Hence it might serve us better than neorealism in seeking to understand Russian messianism. By briefly looking at the writings of Morgenthau, perhaps most closely associated to modern classical realism, we will suggest that classical, culturalist and historicist realist approaches can contribute with important insights into the power politics of ideas and identity; and into the conceptual logics of Russian messianism understood as universalist nationalism. We also note that the classical realist moral critique of universalistic claims can be applied both to radicalist ideas and ideologies such as messianism as well as positivist-rationalist approaches to politics, including both neorealism and mainstream social constructivism.

We have agreed that following general realist assumptions, we must deepen our understanding of material structures and of politics as a function of power and interest. Here, Morgenthau's conception of power is considerably broader than both neorealism's and what is commonly assumed about classical realism:[10] In his own

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[10] E.g. Morgenthau's narrowly understood principle of 'interest defined in terms of power'.

words: "Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another." (Morgenthau, 1967:9)

As we will see, for Morgenthau, ideas and ideology clearly fall in the category of things which can establish and maintain the control of man over man. Power in this realist orientation is more than material capabilities, and politics and statecraft are understood not simply in ahistoricist structuralist terms but in terms of process, practice and contest over the determination of values and wills. As Ashley explains, within the classical realist tradition,

> statesmanship is not, as objectivism would have it, the "execution of a rule," or acting in accordance with some external objective necessities, or mechanical obedience to a timeless model for which all purposes are reversible and time and tempo are no matter. Nor is it reducible, as in neorealism, to rational choice, under constraints, on the part of an actor whose status as such is pregiven and unquestioned. Rather, statesmanship refers to *practice*, playing off the generative scheme in ways ranging from the awkward and uninventive to the artful and creative – and always with an eye to the problematic reproduction of the state itself. (Ashley, 1984:267)

(Ashley refers to this as the *balance-of-power scheme*.) The state and its identity in this orientation is thus not, as often assumed, given, but in constant reproduction, with ideas and values playing a central part in this contested process.

Interestingly, Williams's reading of Morgenthau reveals an embedded critique both of messianism as universalistic nationalism, and of the rationalist-positivism, the claim to analytical objectivity and stress on the separation between fact and value, which defines *both* neorealism and mainstream constructivism and is commonly assumed also to define the whole 'realist tradition'. Williams argues that "one of the most significant challenges arising from a reengagement with Morgenthau's realism lies in its claim that this vision of analytic neutrality is not a mark of scientific responsibility but is potentially a contribution to political irresponsibility." (Williams, 2004:654) Any claims to objectivity, whether in messianic ideology or IR theories, relate to the universalism-idealism which classical realism

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sees as so morally dangerous. Williams finds in Morgenthau a conscious political relativism which is guided by ethical concerns. (Williams, 2004:649-50,58)

Following Guzzini and Rengger among others, he unravels in Morgenthau's writings an affinity to certain critical constructivist and poststructuralist theory perspectives of collective identity formation. These include particularly self/Other studies, their focus on the relation between language and identity, and the oppositional process of identity formation: "Categorizations are necessarily comparisons, and comparisons are dichotomous: in/out, us/them. Relations between groups necessarily resemble the nature of the concepts that underlie their construction and inevitable opposition." (Williams, 2004:655) Messianism, or universalistic nationalism as Morgenthau calls it, is the radicalisation of the self/other logic of opposition, claiming moral universality and monopolising identity while exacerbating difference to the extreme. This a central concern in *Politics Among Nations*:

> The morality of the particular group, far from limiting the struggle for power on the international scene, gives that struggle a ferociousness and intensity not known to other ages. For the claim to universality which inspires the moral code of one particular group is incompatible with the identical claim of another group; the world has room for only one, and the other must yield or be destroyed. Thus, carrying their idols before them, each group convinced that it executes the mandate of history, that it does for humanity what it seems to do for itself, and that it fulfils a sacred mission, ordained by Providence, however defined. (Morgenthau, 1967:249)

As Williams argues, Morgenthau's ostensibly narrow concept of politics and power can be understood "as a direct attempt to counter the Schmittian logic of enmity at both the conceptual and the social levels". (Williams, 2004:648) If we see messianism as a framework based on a logic of opposition, classical realism can also be seen as providing a both normative and analytical framework through which to understand and counter messianism. The normative element again suggests realism's affinity to some poststructuralist approaches. (Williams, 2004)

One example of realism applied to Russian messianism is found in the work of Alexei Arbatov, a Russian culturalist realist who develops line of argument about

Russian messianism similar to those of certain poststructuralists. Arbatov defines messianic ideology as one of four "system-forming pillars of empire" common both to the tsarist and Soviet empires, which alone could "assimilate many diverse peoples at different levels of societal development – from the industrial economy to nomadic cattle breeding – and living on a vast space in a monolithic society" (Arbatov, 2006:23-26). A logic of enmity and, using Campbell's terminology (1991, 1998), discourses of danger are seen as central to this ideology and to the legitimisation of Russia as a state:

> A belief about the security, secrecy and incessant struggle against external and internal threats and conspiracies was an inseparable element of this ideology. Initially it was based on harsh historical experience, but later it became a necessary condition for the regime's existence. The support and legitimization of this regime and the messianic ideology required continuous expansion of the empire's borders. This depleted the national economic and manpower resources, brought about new vulnerability and discontent inside the state, and evoked fear and hostility in surrounding areas. As a result, the fixed idea about external and internal threats became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The militant foreign and domestic policies, based on the supposition of conspiracies inside and outside the country, produced actual opposition in the country and abroad. (Arbatov, 2006:23-26)

In a similar vein, though not involving a logic of opposition, Alfred Rieber understands Russian messianism as a powerful, persistent myth of Russian statecraft: powerful and persistent because of offering an intellectually compelling and sophisticated explanation for the inexplicable, striking *continuities* of Russian history:

> (1) the long process of colonization and conquest that increased the territorial expanse of Russia from a small principality in the fifteenth century to one-sixth of the world's land surface in the nineteenth century; (2) the remarkable longevity of Russia as a great power, lasting from the time of Peter the Great to the present, while during this same period other contemporary empires had lost their territories and fallen from the ranks of the mighty; and (3) the concentration of political power and hence the making of foreign policy in the

hands of a small number of people, often just one man or woman – whether Peter, Catherine, or Joseph Stalin – which naturally led to the conclusion that there were no institutional restraints on the extensions of that power either domestically or internationally. (Rieber, 1993:321)

The *real* reasons behind these continuities are in Rieber's account a mix of Russia's geocultural and geopolitical conditions, including its relative economic backwardness, its permeable frontiers along its periphery, its multiculturalism and its cultural marginality. While Rieber's account arguably is a form of structuralism, it is rather sophisticated, emphasising the social and historical contingency of the structures in question. Both Rieber and Arbatov thus point to the central, unifying and legitimising role of Russian messianism as a persistent myth and ideology in an expanding, diverse multicultural empire with very specific conditions.

What then are the weaknesses with of these realist approaches? We readily affirm that classical, culturalist and historicist realist approaches are more sophisticated and useful for understanding ideas, politics and identity than both structuralist neorealism (with its reductionist structuralism) and mainstream constructivism. The problem, as Walker explains, is that while political realism's statism and focus on 'difference' and conflict are born out of a concern with the dangers of radical universalism, or messianism as identity politics, political realism in this manner fails to problematise the constructed grand oppositions between particularism and universalism, difference and identity, structure and agency, and realism and idealism. (Walker, 1993:123-24)

The previous section stated that constructivism fails to provide useful tools for analysing the politics of ideas and identity because of not grasping the agent-structure problem, and this is the same in the case of realism, though it arguably is more sensitive to the political in identity construction. Classical realism, Ashley argues, fails as a theory of world politics because it is so deeply immersed in the tradition: it lacks any independent theoretical standards for the criticism of that tradition's limits or questioning of the historical conditions underlying its own tradition; is unable to grasp the deeper dimensions of crisis in the world polity; and because its refusal to engage and learn from opposing theories and arguments.

"Thus, while classical realism is rich with insights into political practice, it fares no better than neorealism as a scientific *theory* of international politics." (Ashley, 1984:274-75)

Similarly, the type of realist work on Russia and messianism exemplified by Arbatov and Rieber offers general and indeed plausible explanations for the persistence of Russian messianism but not necessarily a cohesive theoretical framework for analysing contemporary messianic discourse. However, as our study does not seek to establish a theory of international politics but is looking for insights into political practice which can help us understand the persistence and politics of Russian messianism, these weaknesses are not paramount to our study.[11]

We will thus proceed with the assumption that some insights from realist approaches are useful for studying Russian messianism, though we will draw more on analytical tools from the poststructuralist and critical perspectives to which we have argued realism often relates.

2.5.0   Poststructuralist and Multidisciplinary Self-Other studies

Poststructuralists are concerned with the relation between knowledge, language and power. Their conceptions of power go far beyond the neorealist conception of material capabilities: "[T]he specifically symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality – in particular, social reality – is a major dimension of political power." (Bourdieu, quoted in Ashley, 1984:225) Ideas then, rather than being some light variables independent from material structures, are understood in deeply political terms of interest and power as defined above. The theoretical approaches we explore in this section are mainly poststructuralist but also include related paths such as critical constructivism, ethnography and social psychology. They differ in some respects, and highlight different aspects of identity formation and politics, but generally share certain common assumptions.

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[11] Ruth Wodak for example defends the notion of "conceptual pragmatism", arguing that "the first question we have to address as researchers is not, 'Do we need a grand theory?' but rather, 'What conceptual tools are relevant for this or that problem and for this or that context?' (Wodak, 2001:64)

A first of these basic assumptions is that what we touched upon in the previous section, namely the *oppositional* process of identity formation.[12] Meaning is brought to language in the first place only through the construction of binary oppositions, such as good/evil, dark/light, man/woman (Derrida, 1978:79-153, White, 1988:188) Like language, through which it is constructed, identity is given meaning through the inscription of oppositions, of boundaries and is thus *constituted in difference*: "[T]he constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an "inside" from an "outside", a "self" from an "other", a "domestic" from a "foreign"." (Campbell, 1991, 1998:11) As Neumann explains, the "basic insight of this literature goes back to Emile Durkheim's theory of the social division of labor: The lineation of an "in-group" must necessarily entail its demarcation from a number of "out-groups", and that demarcation is an *active* and ongoing part of identity formation. The creation of social boundaries is not a consequence of integration; rather, it is one of its necessary a priori ingredients." (Neumann, 1999:4)

There can thus be no self without Other, and the self is constructed in discourse where it is defined and situated in relation to various Others or signifiers.[13] To give a specifically Russian illustration of the relativity of identity, we could take Dostoevsky's famous statement that 'In Europe we are only Tatars, but in Asia we shall appear as Europeans' (quoted in Sarkisyanz, 1954:248). Every state identity as any human collective has its own specific setups of significant Others and signifiers telling its members who and what they are, by who and what they are not, and within every society there are thus different self/other nexuses each with its own set of *diacritics* – ethnic, cultural, religious, spatial, civilisational, and so on – all with important political implications. To study a particular human collective we thus need to study its competing setups of significant Others, signifiers and diacritics of identity. (Neumann, 1999:5)

This brings us to our second, core assumption, namely that not only opposition, but *contradiction* is inherent to language and discourse – and by extension

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[12] "We view, and this needs to be emphasized, the discursive construction of 'us' and 'them' as the basic fundaments of discourses of identity and difference." (Wodak, 2001:73)

[13] One of few within conventional studies of nationalism who stresses the centrality of the symbolic demarcation of the Other for the construction of a collective self is John Armstrong, in his work *Nations before Nationalism*. (Armstrong, 1982), for a brief but useful discussion of this work, see Smith (1998:167-68,81-87).

also to identity – from micro to macro levels: "[S]ince meaning resides in language and since language is context bound and therefore unable to preserve stable meaning over time, contradiction resides in identity formation itself [. . .] Contradiction, then, functions throughout discourse, as the principle of its historicity." (Neumann, 1999:27) At the level of the state (and nation), the contradictions of identity are even more multifaceted.

The basic contradictions inherent to language mean that state identity is problematic in itself - its foundation is not a given, the state's existence continuously has to be justified and legitimised. And beyond the legitimisation of its existence, the state's specifics, roles and interests are anything but given: political leaders have to continuously negotiate between a number of different and complex interests, situations and needs – socio-economic, cultural, political, trade, ethnic and religious, and seek to strike a balance between them which will uphold political stability – the true 'balance of power'. States are thus never 'finished' as entities, and as Campbell notes, there is "a tension between the demands of identity and the practices that constitute it [that] can never be fully resolved, because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed."

We can here conclude that a) states are in permanent reproduction; and b) that states have no ontological status apart from the practices that constitute their reality, that is, they are without "prediscursive foundations." (Campbell, 1991, 1998:12) So, there is contradiction and incoherence residing at all levels of discourse, rendering a coherent, continuous collective identity impossible. Yet, humans tend to strive to conceive of and represent collective identity as coherent, as an uncomplicated given.[14] And this is where we find the function of ideas and ideology (which in constructivism appeared so abstract): *the stories we tell about 'ourselves', and the boundaries we inscribe between us and others function as to make-believe we have a coherent identity.* In disguising the incoherencies and contradictions of collective

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[14] There are obviously different ways to conceptualise why this is so, why collective identities are constructed at all, and this study does not have the scope to explore them in depth. For a helpful overview on the literature on identity formation in IR, see the first chapter of Neumann's *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (1999). For a more traditional survey of perspectives on nationalism, see Smith's survey *Nationalism and modernism*. (Smith, 1998)

identity, story-telling (or more broadly speaking, discourse) in the form of stereotypes, ideas, narratives and ideology has a crucial political function.[15]

As an example, just consider Samuel Huntington's heavily criticised but influential theory of the 'clash of civilisations' (1996) – incidentally hugely popular in Russia – which told a neat story of a number 'civilisational' identities, most notably 'the West' and 'the Islamic world', and their interaction; and in so doing offered a seemingly unproblematic way of conceiving identity in a global and anything but unproblematic context. Thus the logic of opposition brings meaning to both language and stories, and ideas and stories offer meaning to identity and social reality.

As characterised by K.D. Bracher, ideology is "the attempts of groups – nations, states, organizations – to simplify complex realities into one, all-embracing truth in a bipolar framework of foe/friend (quoted in Talshir, 2006:1). Stories about who we are, and who we are not, are a political necessity, because they offer to make sense things that otherwise do not make sense. Story-telling, or identity construction, thus "establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated". (Campbell, 1991, 1998) We will now proceed to look in more detail at examples of how these core assumptions or insights have been developed in and applied to studies of identity and statecraft, both on Russia and Russian messianism and other specific and general cases.

Iver Neumann was among the first scholars to bring the insights of social theory to IR studies, and provides an extremely useful overview of different theoretical paths for understanding identity formation through the self/other dichotomy (1999). His own work draws mainly on the insights of dialogism. Bakhtin, its founding father, turned away from the dialectical theorizing of identity, redressed what he called "epistemologism," "the reification of a knowing and sovereign self, cut off from the consciousness of the other" and argued "that the other has the status of an epistemological as well as an ontological necessity." (Neumann, 1999:13) Neumann's IR study of Russian ideas and identity, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, is a sophisticated historical discourse analysis of the persistent, contending representations of Russia reflected in Russia's since long ongoing debate about Europe. Neumann powerfully

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[15] For a brief and useful overview of Foucault's reasons for replacing 'ideology' with 'discourse,' see Talshir (2006:8-9).

shows how the process of delineating a European Other from the Russian self, in other words the debate on how to relate to the Europe/the West, constitutes a persistent and integral part of Russia's identity process, and also explains nineteenth century Russian messianism from within this framework – the next chapter will present these findings in more detail. (1996)

A particularly important insight about Russia in Neumann's work is the continued *ambivalence*, and not only logic of opposition, in the Russian relation to Europe as Other. Other examples of where this type of approach is applied to specific countries include for example Xavier Guillaume's application of dialogism to Japanese identity formation where he shows how different representations of Japanese identity were in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries developed in response to external (mainly Western) influences. (Guillaume, 2002)

In a similar vein, Michael Urban maps and analyse the various dialogic discourses of national identity competing to fill what was portrayed as the absence of a national idea in post-Soviet Russia. Urban underscores the politic battle of the process of collective identity formation in Russia, arguing that "the producers of a would-be national idea, are in fact politicians locked in bitter struggle with one another." (Urban, 1998:970) The methodology of his study involved analysis and interpretation of the dialogic discourses generating from these politicians, looking "for the significance of the signifiers in question by examining their associations with, and oppositions to, other signifiers prevalent in the discourse from which the respective narratives spring." (Urban, 1998:972)

His findings draw attention to the political, world-creating capacity of language, to the function of discourse to, again in Bracher's words, "simplify complex realities into all-embracing truths in a bipolar framework of foe/friend" (quoted in Talshir, 2006:1); as well as to the contested nature of discourse.

> In short, the tendency is to invest individuals and social or national groups (reified) with one or another set of (essential) qualities or characteristics (hypostatised and sometimes mystical) that are valorised in the respective discourses, and then to unfold a discussion of the world wherein these individuals or social/national groups (thus invested) act out their respective tendencies. (Urban, 1998)

Urban singles out two main discursive regimes constituting the post-Soviet debate, both containing different themes and sometimes within themselves contradicting discourses, but nevertheless coherent enough for various scholars to identify them in basically the same way, the first being an objection to the present state, and the second an objection to that objection. The first objection is made comparing Russia to an Other – the West – and finds her deficient. The common subtext could be worded: "Things are much better there; our state is utterly failing us and should be replaced."

The second regime, the objection to the objection, is the messianic position, and Urban suggests its common subtext could be: "Who are you to prefer another to your own? You must be someone who either does not understand, or despises his own country which is …['spiritual', 'all-human', 'collectivist', 'chosen by God' etc]". (Urban, 1998:981) This position is however anything but coherent, but as Urban notes, it exists largely in the form of irrationally put together myths, symbols and Slavophile ideas, mainly in the communist-patriot discourse. Notably, this discourse "deals only in absolutes: good vs. evil, selfless sacrifice vs. treasonous ambition, patriot and culture bearers against satanic agents sowing confusion and chaos. It makes no distinction between spheres of action – state/society, public/private – and norms appropriate to each" and Urban argues these radical characteristics "confine the communist-patriotic discourse to the plane of eschatology". (Urban, 1998:981)

Going back to William's reading of Morgenthau and classical realism, we are reminded Morgenthau saw as the great danger of universalistic nationalism, or messianism, precisely its totalitarian refusal to be limited to the sphere of politics, instead encroaching all social spheres including morality, economics, art and so on. (Williams, 2004:643-46). The kaleidoscopic breadth and incoherence of the communist-patriot, or broadly speaking messianic, discourse counter posed to its simplistic binary logic leads us to suggests that one function of this logic is to divert focus not only from the ontological impossibility of a coherent identity, but also from the discourse's own internal incoherencies, through the exacerbation of the difference between self and Other to the extreme. The absolutist, eschatological discourse is not only a post-Soviet phenomenon however, but is in Urban's view characteristic of the whole Russian intellectual tradition:

> [T]he pronounced tendency in Russia today for political expression to take the form of intense moral-cultural struggles for the 'soul' of the nation reflects longstanding practices particular to that country's political class, the intelligentsia. In the discourses historically associated with this class on the political field, eschatological considerations overwhelm mundane concerns, thus constructing a world in which good and evil are locked in mortal combat and political actors assume their significance largely in the act of joining battle with evil. (Urban, 1998:970)

Viewing Neumann's and Urban's work together, it can be surely concluded that much of political discourse in post-Soviet Russia constitutes reproductions and variations of much older narratives, permitting us to discern in Russia a historically persistent discursive framework, though Neumann stresses ambiguity, and Urban opposition, in the relation to the Other.

Another approach to self/other studies is based on social psychology. Work in this vein specifically on Russian messianism includes that of Daniel Rancour-Laferriere in his interdisciplinary work on Russian nationalism (Rancour-Laferriere, 2000) and Evgenii Barabanov who defines messianism as "disctinctivist mentality" and views it in very negative terms: "To Barabanov this mentality is pathological; he believes that mechanisms of repression have produced in Russia a widespread "neurosis of distinctiveness" that is manifested philosophically in the specific character of Slavophilism and related currents in Russian thought." (Scanlan, 1994b:52) A problem with this type of psychoanalysis applied to collective identity is that it tends to reify the self, or in Neumann's words, deal with 'a self that is not socially situated'. An exception is Lacanian psychoanalytical theory which studies "identity formation as an attempt to overcome a lack, as a process of desire for the power of the other, that produces an image of the self." (Neumann, 1999:8) Henriki Heikka is one who has taken this path to study contemporary Russian identity.[16] Heikka in particular

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[16] Heikka makes a point of separating his approach from that of constructivists, arguing that mainstream constructivists simplify identity in that their theories' "casual claims rest on a modernist account of agency, which omits the tension between identity and decentring of the self." Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, on the other hand, shows that "self as a linguistic representation is not the original self, as constructivism suggests, but the result of a cultural process by which the first understanding of the self, constructed through visual identification, becomes subordinate to the

seeks to explain what he terms *hypernationalism*, which we would argue refers to the same phenomenon we term Russian messianism:

> [T]he idea that a lack in the symbolic other is the prerequisite for any identity allows us to construct an alternative hypothesis about the phenomenon of hypernationalism, one adding a Lacanian twist to Freud's and Rousseau's criticism of corrupt polities. In hypernationalist discourse, the inferior other (the Communist, the imperialist, the Jew, the Black) is the signifier of the lack in the symbolic other, the displacement needed to hide the impossibility of the collective identity constructed in the symbolic. (Heikka, 1999:88)

In his case study on Russia, Heikka analyses the (for Russian political discourse typical) hypernationalist/messianic/anti-Western worldview of Sergei Kortunov–Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Policy Planning (whom we cited in our introduction) and argues that its logic is *not* – contrary to Kortunov's own claims, and what respectively mainstream constructivism and neorealism would have us believe – a result of how Western governments have behaved towards Russia, nor due to changes in the international structure. Rather, an imaginary desire leads Kortunov's Russia to identify itself with what it is not – the heart of an interculture – and this causes Russia to become "an alienated, split, and desiring self, fearful of losing something it never had." (Heikka, 1999:99)

Following Lacan, Heikka argues that "a deconstruction of the operation of [symbolic] desire can help us understand the relation between Russian identity and Russian foreign policy". (Heikka, 1999:93) Kortunov's Russia does not want to "define its identity by the master signifiers offered by the currently available language" (neoliberal economic discourse) and so a desire is created for new master signifiers, of which some function to describe the (symbolically represented, constructed) self, some represent a threatening Other, some a symbolic Other (e.g. God), some inferior Others (e.g. the Jews). [17] The reader of the discourse is a receiver-other, and participates in this construction of identity by assuming a system of knowledge based on the master signifiers presented in the discourse.

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covenant of representation and to the basic rules on which social and political order is based." (Heikka, 1999:58-9)

[17] In the symbolic, desire operates in relation to language. Here we find the concept of master signifiers, "which function as the bearers of people's identity. They derive their power from people's relation to them (from being people's representative in the symbolic) and from the ensuing split in people, which in turn arouses desire." (Heikka, 1999:90)

The concept of 'symbolic desire' is quite unique to the Lacanian approach taken by Heikka, and possibly problematic to pin down as an explanatory category. It should be noted though, that both Western and Russian academic discourse often refers in psychoanalytical terms to a Russian 'inferiority complex' towards 'the West' and Russian messianism and ideas of great power as having a compensatory function (e.g. Bassin, 2006:112). While we dismiss the popular, essentialising related concepts of a 'common Russian psyche,' the notions of desire, inferiority and compensation reiterate the centrality of 'the West' as significant Other in Russian popular discourse, and again following Neumann, the ambivalence and not only opposition, to this Other.

Overall, we find our two core assumptions reiterated and expanded upon in Heikka's Lacanian approach. Firstly, we find an analysis of the textual politics of a specific identity discourse which is based on identifying, locating and examining *various* key signifiers or Others – descriptive of self, threatening, symbolic, inferior, and so on. Secondly, the function of the messianic discourse, or essentialising story about the 'self', or system of knowledge, is again identified as bringing ostensible coherence to what is otherwise not coherent – as Heikka writes, the reader/receiver of the discourse gets "a feeling of security and a sense of direction". [18] (Heikka, 1999:102)

If we can accept that states are continuously re-invented in relationship to broad internal-external discursive politics, how then should we characterise the role and function of Russian messianism in relationship to Russian statecraft, including external relations and perceptions? A lot of the literature on Russian messianism is concerned with proving the relation between Russian messianism and Russian foreign policy (Duncan, 2000:144-46).

We are of the view that a neat, direct causal relationship between the Russian messianic ideas and Russian foreign policy is impossible to establish, since as such it could never be empirically verified. As has been pointed out, ideas are indeed "hard to pin down as explanatory categories." (Zehfuss, 2001) However, what we can do is

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[18] Heikka, like Barabanov assuming an openly normative position, argues that this kind of discourse is corrupt, because the speaker neglects the desire of the reader-receiver (in this case the Russian people) which reduces them to a position of slavery. "Their right to express their lack is suppressed by the masters (probably honest) ignorance of the split in his own identity." (Heikka, 1999:103)

to analyse in more depth the functions of foreign policy and story-telling and then analyse what power relations and identities are part of certain stories.

A useful poststructuralist approach is found in David Campbell's (for IR) pioneering work on American foreign policy: *Writing Security* (1991, 1998). It highlights how identity construction, or story-telling, or othering, at the level of the state is done through the practice of foreign policy, by the use of 'discourses of danger': "The constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is not a threat to a state's identity or existence: it is its condition of possibility. While the objects of concern change over time, the techniques and exclusions by which those objects are constituted as dangers persist." (Campbell, 1991, 1998:12-13) So 'we' are united not only against other actors, but also against other signifiers such as dangers.

What then are the discourses of danger? Campbell traces its origins to the church and Christendom as the previous ordering entity before the modern state. He sees a correlation between the state project of security and the church project of salvation:

> The state grounds its legitimacy by offering the promise of security to its citizens who, it says, would otherwise face manifold dangers. The church justifies its role by guaranteeing salvation to its followers who, it says, would otherwise be destined to an unredeemed death. Both the state and the church to maintain order within and around themselves, and thereby engage in an evangelism of fear to ward off internal and external threats, succumbing in the process to the temptation to treat difference as otherness. (Campbell, 1991, 1998:50-51)

Danger can be domestic, coming from within, but the discourse on danger externalizes it, makes an Other – could be black or Hispanic American in America, or a Jew or Caucasian in Russia, responsible for it. For the US, the case study in Campbell's work, he argues that it has an acute crisis of representation, following the end of the effective discourse of danger 'operation anticommunism'. With what Campbell calls "the globalization of contingency", "the erasure of the markers of certainty, and the rarefaction of political discourse", the reproduction of US identity

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has become more difficult, requiring new discourses of danger. (Campbell, 1991, 1998:171)

One example of a new international discourse of danger is the environment. In this discourse, Eastern Europe, yet again "the East" – less technologically advanced, not ecological and so on - looms with its environmental disasters as a danger to "us" in "the West". (Campbell, 1991, 1998:171-72) Interestingly, when we look at Russian contemporary discourses of danger, we find the same discourse but reversed: the materialistic, decadent West (typically represented as the author of globalisation), poses a great environmental danger to the natural, healthy and ecological Russia/the East, the defender of the environment, (see e.g. Sokolenko, 1999) again suggesting that insights on intertextuality from dialogism could be helpful in understanding these phenomena.

If Campbell, and Arbatov from among the realists (see previous section), are right about the discourses of danger, it seems that we can again talk about persistent discursive frameworks with stories of danger and Otherness, that may change over time but whose central logic of opposition is continuously reproduced; and that a main reason for their persistence lies in their legitimising and assimilatory functions. Our proposal then, is that Russian messianism can be conceptualised as such a framework.

What then are the weaknesses with this approach? Campbell's work *Writing Security* has been rightly criticised for not accounting for the contested nature of discourse, in that it studies only the dominant story of the American self, and not also those stories that challenged it. (Neumann, 1999:28)

It should thus be reiterated that story-telling, being inherently political, is not at all a simple, straightforward process – different stories or discourses about whom we are, and whom we are not, with different diacritics of identity, compete with each other, resulting not only in simple opposition but ambiguity and ambivalence in the construction of the self and relation to Other. And different interests and power relations are implied in or connected to different stories and different signifiers. It should therefore be a central question to IR in general to enquire how and why and certain stories (and groups of them) about collective identities, such as those of Russian messianism, prevail over others.

Furthermore, following for example the insights in approaches taken by Urban and Heikka, it is important to note that signifiers defining and legitimising a state as a collective self include not *only* negative ones of danger and enmity, but also positive ones of describing the self and its symbolic Others (though strictly speaking a negative Other is a logical implication of each positive signifier), something which mainstream ethnographic studies of nationalism have for long argued, stressing the central role of national myths in legitimating the social order.

The core theoretical assumption is that: "[t]he nation creates and recreates itself through continuous symbolic discourse about its present and future, by referring to its past. [. . .] Symbols of national identity and myths of national past, being employed in the political discourse, serve as legitimation of power and political leadership. At the same time, the legitimation of power by the rulers on the one hand, and the willingness to accept and appreciate power and leadership by the ruled on the other, are mutually reinforced by belief in shared national values." (Hellberg-Hirn, 2000:7)

In conclusion then, the insights and analytical tools from poststructuralist and related self-Other approaches, while each having its own limits and weaknesses, are the most adequate and helpful for understanding identity and statecraft in general and Russian messianism and its functions in particular.

2.6.0   Conclusion: A new conceptualisation of Russian messianism

In general terms of IR theory, we have suggested that the conventional framing of the so-called 'third debate' between 'reflectivist' and 'rationalist' approaches with constructivism claiming to occupy the middle ground, is unhelpful for students of ideas and identity politics (Patomaki and Wight, 2000). Neo-realism and mainstream constructivism both fail to take into account politics of identity. Instead we have suggested that a shared emphasis on interest and power, defined in broad social terms, and a stress of the legitimising and assimilatory functions of discourse bring together realists and poststructuralists as unconventional allies.

Insights from certain strands of these approaches into different aspects both of identity and statecraft in general and Russia and Russian messianism in particular

have led us to propose an inclusive conceptualisation of Russian messianism as constituting a historically dominant discursive (interpretive and narrative) framework, based on a radicalised logic of opposition and holding a range of both contesting and complementing narratives and signifiers which represent different interests but which on the whole function to legitimise the state through the continuous construction, contestation and reproduction of Russian collective identity in relation to Others; and creating a system of intelligibility, making sense of the world for the state as well as for ordinary people.[19]

The first question arising following this conceptualisation concerns how much Russian messianism as defined here should be understood in terms of the universality of identity construction and statehood; how much in terms of similarity between specific types of political entities – e.g. empires, civilisations – and how much in terms of contextual specificities, both Russian and broader.

If, as we have argued, opposition and incoherence are universally inherent to language and thus to any state identity construction, the discursive framework with which we equate Russian messianism is this sense a normality and indeed necessity to any state as a collective identity. Any state needs to legitimise its own existence and actions; any state faces the need to mask the ontological impossibility of a 'collective self' and the complexities and ambiguities of politics in its widest sense, the intricate balancing of multiple interests. And in all states, this is done through telling essentialising stories about the self in the form of discourses of danger, national myths, political ideologies etc, stories containing different types of signifiers, locating the self in relation to Others – symbolic, threatening, inferior, etc – stories which may vary over time, and which are contested in nature, but whose central logic is replicated over and over again as their crucial political functions remain.[20]

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[19] Obviously, these are only some of the possible functions of the phenomena of Russian messianism. As Shapiro has stressed: "There are always multiple possible true descriptions of a given action or phenomenon, and the challenge is to decide which is most apt." (Shapiro, 2002:604)

[20] 'Universality' here does not refer to some concept transcending time and space as the sovereign state to which it relates here is a historically conditioned. Yet, the laws and binary logic of language through which the state is constructed can be pragmatically and conditionally termed 'universal' or at least 'common'. Similarly, we mean by 'structures' historically conditioned social, material, geocultural etc structures.

However, messianic stories of the type told in Russia are not widespread in all states/societies today, and especially not at the level of political discourse. Not all states tell stories in which they have a mission to save the world; that they are the spiritual alternative to an evil West, the Christ to the nations, and so on.[21] What makes Russian messianism really stand out is the radicalisation of opposition between identity and difference in which difference becomes otherness and Other becomes enemy; its eschatology and its inherent claims to universality.

These are not however characteristics unique to Russia: we have seen how universalist nationalism of different states was a key concern for classical realists such as Morgenthau, and we can note intertextuality and similarity between American and Russian discourses of danger and both exceptionalist and universalist claims through for example Campbell's above discussed work on American foreign policy. Rieber and Arbatov presented the specific geocultural and ethnographic conditions of Russia as a multicultural expanding empire as key explanatory categories of Russian messianism as a legitimising and unifying ideology.

The radicalisation of the self-Other logic of Russian messianism as this type of framework could then arguably be seen as specific not only to Russia but to other, in key respects similar, political entities such as the United States. Where social realities and geocultural conditions are more complex than say in a small, relatively homogenous nation-state, it would make sense if the simplifying, radicalist self-other framework is more attractive.

The Russian messianic framework has its own particular stories and signifiers and binary oppositions, some which are quite unique to Russia, some which it has in common with other identity representations, which again suggests that we must study and analyse these stories within specific social, political, historical, cultural and intellectual contexts if we want to understand this dimension of Russian statecraft.

We suggest thus that the core, radicalist logic of opposition masks *both* the kaleidoscopic and incoherent character of Russian messianic discourse as well as the ontological impossibility of a coherent identity, indicating both specificity and

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[21] For example Heikka's work, discussed above, identifies as the perceived main threat against Kortunov's hypernationalist/messianic Russian self the "the 'new world order' imposed by the West, based on materialism and the culture of consumption." (Heikka, 1999)

normality of Russian messianism as a social and political phenomenon. But we do not claim to have answered in full the question on the universality/specificity of Russian messianism as a social and political phenomenon, only to have highlighted some of the different analytical dimensions within which it can be usefully understood.

The concern with the relationship between the *universal* aspects (in the sense of being common to all states) such as the oppositional character of discourse and identity and the overall ambiguities and complexities of political and social life; and the both historically and structurally *specific* aspects and conditions both of 'empires' and 'civilisations' as a type of political entity, and of Russia and Russian discourse in particular contexts, will underlie much of our discussions in the following chapters as we explore the Russian messianic framework and its narratives and signifiers in more detail and at different levels of discourse.

While the conceptualisation of messianism as a persistent dichotomising discursive framework could be limited in the sense that it becomes a reification (Hughes, 2005), and that of a stereotype, we would argue that it nevertheless is an important tool in the sense of an umbrella-term which helps us to identify and locate contemporary narratives and themes, including many which are not evidently explicitly messianic, within a long-standing, broad, discursive tradition. This is thus not so much a study of the concept of messianism, as a study of various discursive practices which can be usefully labelled as such. This identification and location is important if we are to understand the politics behind the deployment of these narratives and themes.

Much of this thesis is concerned with the forms these discourses take today, what objects of concern have replaced old ones in the same old narratives and which of the messianic narratives that work best in Russia today. The next chapter, drawing on the work of various scholars from different disciplines that analyse different dimensions and periods of Russian discourse, will seek to further demonstrate why this overarching term is warranted.

3.0.0   Methodology

3.1.0   Introduction

i)   Theory and methods

The previous chapter discussed the relative merits for conceptualising the continuity and survival of Russian messianism, as set out in some of the leading theoretical approaches to International Relations- constructivism, neorealism and political realism, before adopting a theoretical framework based mainly on insights from poststructuralist and multidisciplinary Self-Other studies.

Seeking to establish effective methods for studying the manifestations and resonance of Russian messianic discourse in official discourse and among ordinary Russians, this section will briefly review methods associated with each theoretical approach and explain why our theoretical framework leads us to choose certain methods and reject others. We will then go on to examine the conceptual tools identified in the previous chapter in more detail, and set out how we intend to use them and the methods they entail. Specifically, this chapter sets out to answer the following:

- o What are the methods that we will adopt to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses?
- o Why are these methods better than others for this research project?

Questions of IR theory and methodology have traditionally been distant to studies of Russian foreign policy.[22] Peter Shearman pertinently captures an attitude common among foreign policy specialists as well as many other less 'theoretically inclined' conventional researchers:

Generally speaking, specialists on Russian foreign policy take little notice of what they see as arcane and often confusing debates on epistemological problems that now seem to dominate in International Relations. Many who

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[22] Neumann's work is a notable exception (1996, 1999).

48

try to keep up to date with contemporary writings on IR theory often come away confused rather than enlightened. Recent discussions on theory and 'inter-paradigm' debates often seem to those whose interest is in substantive issues little more than attempts at one-upmanship, playing out in the academic world a paradigmatic play of a kind of Realist power struggle over academic turf. Rarely, in the most recent discussions between positivists and post-positivists, for example, are substantive questions relating to the real empirical world even mentioned. It is almost as if the world 'out there' did not exist. (Shearman, 2001:250-51)

These essentially positivist scholars thus get on with studying, explaining and predicting things in the 'real empirical world' instead of 'following methodological fads'. [23] The crux is, however, that methodology matters very much beyond academia. As Steve Smith argues, the importance of the discussions that these foreign policy specialists avoid lies in "positivism's role in determining, in the name of science, just what counts as the subject matter of international relations. Its epistemology has had enormous ontological effects, and these have affected not only the study but also the practice of international relations." (Smith, 1996:38) The way in which we choose to study the 'real world' is thus a highly political question, because it affects what we find. And what we find out about the world affects action, policy, and so on. Walker explains further:

> As even conventional neo-Kantian philosophies of science have insisted time and time again, the appropriate conceptualisation of the problem already prefigures the solution. It is not a matter of arguing about ontological and epistemological issues in the abstract. Philosophical commitments are already embedded in concepts like state or state-system, utilitarian accounts of rational action, and [. . .] typologies like the so-called levels of analysis schema that has played such an important role in this discipline. (Walker, 1993:100)

So, what many of the post-positivist approaches explored in the previous chapter stress is precisely the politics behind the ways the world 'out there' is reified –

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[23] We here understand positivism broadly as the adoption of the methodology of natural sciences to explain the social world. (Smith, 1996:11)

represented as an unquestionable given. Because of their positivist and rationalist epistemologies, the previous chapter argued, mainstream constructivism and neorealism are inadequate as tools for understanding the historically contingent development of collective identities, and the origins, persistence and revival of specifically Russian messianic ideas. These epistemological stances lead to various methodological difficulties.

Let us begin with constructivism. Firstly, the constructivist claim that ideas "send the same message to different actors causing the same behaviour among these actors" (Wiener, 2003:261) overlooks the fluidity of language by which ideas and norms are constructed. Ideas can signal very different things to different actors in different contexts, which is why, in Shapiro's words, "we must operate with a view of politics that is sensitive to textuality." (Shapiro, 2001:319)

As constructivism does not do so, its methods for studying ideas inevitably fall short. Secondly, constructivism argues that we need to study the *norms* which define e.g. Russian actor identity, and by doing so we can predict actor behaviour. But as there is, competing in official Russian discourse alone, a conglomerate of different both contradictory and complementing ideas, themes and norms, and as mainstream constructivism does not present any tools to deal with this contested nature of politics, it is methodologically difficult to study Russian messianism in terms of norms from a mainstream constructivist perspective. This again relates to constructivism's insensitivity to language and its contingent nature.

Neorealism is assumed to more than anything deal with the 'real world' of material capabilities, inter-state conflict, and real power relations. But it has adopted, among others, a methodology based on microeconomics. In Walker's words, it offers "something like a theory of the structures of oligopolistic competition in which states become 'units' and units become synonymous with firms operating within some kind of market." (Walker, 1993:117) This creates an ambivalence since neorealism makes a lot of claims about pluralism and difference, but at the same time uses "an epistemology that, in its claim to a universalistically designated model of science, affirms the principle of identity." (Walker, 1993:118) So there is little room for studying the specificities of particular states since states are assumed to be structurally very similar. And seeing Russia as a unitary actor among many others

rather limits the study of this country which is so structurally different from many other countries with its enormous territory and cultural, economic, ethnic and other extreme diversities.

So while neorealism claims to deal with the 'real world' it uses simplistic metaphors and analogues (micro-economics, game-theory etc) as basis for its methodologies, which means that complex realities are reduced to simplified schemes and systems, the academic value of which must be questioned. Central here is the unquestioned contradiction between the complex domestic realities (where pluralism is acknowledged by neorealists) which is assumed to depend on a simple international reality (the balance of power in the unitary international system).

Within a neorealist framework Russian messianic ideas would be viewed as part of the domestic discourse, and since neorealism favours the international over the domestic ('outside' over 'inside') these ideas would be largely irrelevant except as instrumentalist "hooks" to justify international political action domestically, and they would depend on the international balance of power. "Neo-realists [. . .] will argue that the distribution of power among states will dictate which Muscovite discourse wins; for example, under unipolarity those discourses wishing to counterbalance the United States [. . .] will win." (Dessler and Owen, 2005:606) So unless we question the whole international/domestic dichotomy, there is no room for understanding Russian messianism within international relations theory (Walker, 1993).

 If neorealist approaches to methodology are too ahistoricist and narrowly structuralist, would other conventional positivist methodologies such as historical comparitivism fare better? Here one would seek to compare for example policies of different countries in different periods, to identify patterns and produce classifications. A typical example of this approach with bearing on messianism understood as typical for empires is an attempt by Peter Wallensteen to prove that relations between 'major powers' can be described as shifting between universalism and particularism. His "focus is on comparing periods of collective major power universalism, and on contrasting them to periods of predominant particularism." (Wallensteen, 1984:244) He finds that pursuits of universalist policies are characterised by fewer wars and confrontations, while periods of predominant

particularism are characterised by higher levels of war and confrontations. An immediate problem with this approach is, as Michael Nicholson has pointed out, the ambiguity of measurement when describing social factors, which often leads to arbitrary definitions. (Nicholson, 1996:138) And this, as Walker explains, makes even historical comparativism structuralist and ahistoricist: "A sensitivity to history and time is always in danger of being undermined through reification. This *is* the essential complaint brought against the utilitarian or rationalist approach by those who are identified with reflection. Historical practices are analysed as ahistorical structures. Conscious human practices are erased in favour of structural determinations." (Walker, 1993:100-01) So, to reiterate, any historical approach does not do as methodology for studying Russian messianism – we need to adopt a sensitivity to textuality, history and human practice.

Here, as the previous chapter argued, historicist, classical and culturalist variants of realism fare better, with their rich insights into political practice and process, and deeper understanding of ideology and the self/other dichotomy. In Buzan's words, realism "is a broad church. Its core ideas about power, struggle, domination and insecurity cross cultural boundaries more easily than those of its main rival, liberalism." (Buzan, 1996:62) As Buzan points out, realism is indeed very methodologically eclectic and can actually be reconciled with postpositivist approaches to methodology: "There are traditions within realism that are receptive to the idea of language as power, and discourse as a major key to politics [. . .] and much of the postmodern debate is precisely concerned with issues of power, hierarchy and domination that are congenial to the realist tradition. (Buzan, 1996:59)

How then does post-positivist scholarship relate to the 'real empirical world'? Post-positivist approaches generally do not dismiss the importance of empirical research – but as Walker stresses, "empirical knowledge is a more complex and interesting process than it is so often made to appear." (Walker, 1993:100) Below we will broadly outline of our essentially post-positivist framework for studying Russian messianism, which we hope will indeed help us understand how Russian messianic ideas have bearing on the 'real world out there' and current political practice.

52

ii)   Aspects of understanding Russian messianism and their methods

Our methods will inevitably reflect our theoretical conceptualisation of Russian messianism. As Shapiro points out: "There are always multiple possible true descriptions of a given action or phenomenon, and the challenge is to decide which is most apt." (Shapiro, 2002:604) Chapter Two singled out three broad aspects from which to understand this phenomenon within IR:

- o   Russian messianism as routine state identity construction

- o   Messianism as necessary for exceptionalist states: multicultural empires or civilisations

- o   Manifestations of Russian messianism within particular social, historical and intellectual contexts in Russia, the West and worldwide

The insights about relativism, opposition, dualisms and incoherence as inherent to language and by extension to any identity construction leads to a view of the Russian messianic framework as a normality/necessity to any state as a collective identity, with its core functions including legitimisation, balancing complex interests and masking various incoherencies, creating systems of intelligibility, all achieved through 'storytelling' in the form of discourses of danger and otherness, national myths, political ideologies containing different types of signifiers.

These discourses may vary over time, and are contested and dialogic in nature, but their central logic is replicated over and over again as their political functions remain, and as their practices become institutionalised. To draw on Christopher Hughes, Russian messianism can be treated "as a concept around which various associated themes are divided, contrasted, regrouped, classified, and derived from one another." (Hughes, 2005:267)

The significance of the narratives can thus not be found hermeneutically inside the narratives themselves but need to be understood in their wider discursive and political context. To understand Russian political life, we thus need to contextualise these themes, the representations of self and Others, and the interests

53

they may represent. In Urban's words, we need to look "for the significance of the signifiers in question by examining their associations with, and oppositions to, other signifiers prevalent in the discourse from which the respective narratives spring." (Urban, 1998:972)

Our analysis must uncover the hidden dualisms which bring meaning to the discourse and coherence to an identity representation. "We view, and this needs to be emphasized, the discursive construction of 'us' and 'them' as the basic fundaments of discourses of identity and difference." (Wodak, 2001:73) By studying representations of Others, dangers, enemies and threats, we reveal the unstated counter narratives of the self. Before we take these notions further, let us note that this methodology also will apply to the study of Russia as a special political entity, a civilisation or multicultural empire. In this understanding there is an emphasis on the radicalisation of the opposition between identity and difference in which difference becomes otherness and Other becomes enemy; on the eschatology and claims to universality within the self-representations.

These characteristics are not found among all states as collective identities but neither are they particular to Russia alone. Chapter Two noted that instances of similarity between, for example, American and Russian representations and suggested that where social realities and geocultural conditions are more complex than in for example a small, relatively homogenous nation-state, it would be understandable if the simplifying, radicalist self-other framework is more attractive or indeed necessary.

This understanding of Russian messianism can be usefully studied both from a perspective of political philosophy and in terms of comparative studies, but because of the focus and scope of our study we will not pursue those paths at length but proceed primarily with the methods available through forms of discourse analysis. Here, particularly insights on intertextuality from dialogism are necessary: "Individuals, when they speak, do not create their own language, but they use terms which are culturally, historically and ideologically available." (Billig, 2001:217-18) Hence, "all utterances are dialogic in that they are responses to other utterances and their meaning has to be understood in relation to these other utterances." (Billig, 2001:214)

Discourse, thought and identity are all dynamic and relational: we never speak, think or exist in a vacuum. Rather, we are engaged in a continuous process of reproduction of the world through our words. A core insight of dialogism applied to self/Other studies is that a prevailing discourse (or representation of self) acquires its form by the discourse it opposes, which can help us understand the intertextuality between for example Russian and American messianic representations. But the Russian messianic framework also contains manifestations, stories and signifiers that are particular for Russia as a country and/or for various historical, social, political and intellectual contexts. This again suggests that we must study and analyse particular stories within their different contexts, and with a deep understanding of Russian history, religion and culture.

Forms of discourse analysis will thus be the central method of this study, but taking into consideration the above three core aspects of understanding Russian messianism, we have adopted the notion of "conceptual pragmatism", agreeing with Ruth Wodak, an authoritative voice in critical discourse analysis, that "the first question we have to address as researchers is not, 'Do we need a grand theory?' but rather, 'What conceptual tools are relevant for this or that problem and for this or that context?'" (Wodak, 2001:64) We will thus follow the principle of triangulation, to avoid as much as possible being biased: "to work with different approaches, multimethodically and on the basis of a variety of empirical data as well as background information". (Wodak, 2001:65)

On this basis, our study has drawn from different disciplines which highlight different key aspects of understanding Russian messianism, both historically and its contemporary manifestations. The next chapter, the historical overview, will focus on the cultural specificities of Russian messianism and will show that there is a clear historical continuity of Russian messianism as a narrative framework, though this continuity cannot be explained in structuralist or dialectical terms. Based on secondary sources from a range of disciplines, we will outline some of its core features and persistent narratives and discourses as well as highlight some of the key social, cultural, political and intellectual contexts of some of its particular historical variations.

Part Two, the original research of the thesis, will attempt to establish how it fits in with contemporary Russian statecraft and identity, focusing on the understanding of as Russian messianism as routine state identity construction and as typical for multicultural empires or civilisations, as well as considering key particular contexts of the present, such as the collapse of the Soviet order, globalisation and anti-Americanism. Following our findings in the theory chapter, our methods for this part will mainly draw on poststructuralist and related self/Other studies, but will continuously be open to other perspectives to gain a more complex understanding of Russian messianism.

We will base our analysis on two specific sets of primary data, one for official and one for popular discourse, but also use a variety of both primary and secondary sources to contextualise and interpret our findings, comparing and contrasting popular and official discourse with public discourse.

In sum, our methods mainly include analyses of Russian discourses based on the assumption that they are dialogic, and that their predicates, metaphors and dualisms are politically significant, though other perspectives from fields such as political philosophy, history, and occasionally hermeneutics will be used, mainly in the literature review.

3.2.0   Discourse, and discourse analysis applied

i)   Meanings of discourse

We have argued above that the study of discourse is necessary if we want to enhance our understanding of the collective identity of Russians, and this section will outline how we intend to do study discourse, clarify the concept and its varied use. In the words of Michel Foucault, who developed and indeed transformed the concept, discourse should be understood "sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements." (Fairclough, 2003:123)

Discourse can thus be used in different senses, as Norman Fairclough explains, as an abstract noun referring to "language and other types of semiosis as elements of social life" or domains of statements, and concretely referring to "particular ways of representing part of the world", or text as representation.[24] (Fairclough, 2003:26) In representing the world, or part of the world, discourses construct social realities. In other words, they produce and reproduce the things in our worlds, as they define "*subjects authorized to speak and to act*" as well as "*knowledgeable practices* by these subjects towards the objects which the discourse defines [. . .] In the process, people may be destroyed as well as disciplined, and social space comes to be organized and controlled, i.e. *places and groups are produced as those objects.*" (Milliken, 1999:229)

As Chapter Two argued, discourses make sense of things that don't make sense, and can therefore also be defined as systems, or structures, of signification (which define and enable some subjects and objects, and silence and exclude other, alternative modes of identity and action). (Milliken, 1999:229)

In our study, then, 'Russian discourse', refers to the general domain of statements in Russia and Russian. In this context it can be helpful to think of 'Russia,' as the subject of discourse, becoming *a discursive space*, a centre for many competing representations, "an argumentative texture or a discursive fabric that brings together many different threads which can be combined and woven differently". (Wetherell, 2001:25)

'Russian official discourse' refers to the domain of official, or state sanctioned, Russian political statements and texts; 'Russian public discourse' refers to the broad domain of unofficial but published texts and include various overlapping domains – academic, political, cultural, religious, etc; 'Russian popular discourse' refers to the also very broad domain of views, attitudes, ideas and narratives among ordinary Russian people, 'the masses'; 'Russian messianic discourse' refers to the 'individualisable group of statements', 'regulated practice accounting for a number of statements' or indeed 'structure of signification' or 'discursive framework' which

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[24] A third definition is provided by Wodak: "A discourse is a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective." [. . .] "'Discourse' can thus be understood as a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as 'texts', that belong to specific semiotic types, that is genres" (Wodak, 2001:66)

we suggest is manifested across different discursive domains; and lastly, individual discourses can refer to distinctive narratives, ideas and statements that fall within this framework.

The study of Russian discourses in these different senses thus helps our understanding of Russian collective identity and social reality at multiple levels of its construction, contestation and representation. Discourse analysis becomes the only appropriate method for addressing our hypothesis H2, that the messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia; and our research questions Q2 and Q3, asking what the manifestation and resonance is among ordinary Russians of the messianic and related narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse; and what the function is of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the Russian crisis of identity.

ii)   Discourse analysis applied to the research project

How then will we use discourse analysis to address these specific questions and hypothesis? Fairclough explains that analysis of discourse tends to be not so much a detailed linguistic analysis of texts as the analysis of the rules and practices that govern discourse as a domain of statements. (Fairclough, 2003:123) Our study will deploy mainly three, in some sense interrelated, methods of discourse analysis: identification of the functions or strategies of discourses; interdiscursive analysis or identification of narratives; and predicate analysis.

Narratives as constitutive of collective identity have core *functions* which can be identified through discourse analysis. Following for example Bach, the core functions of narratives constitutive of collective identity include: ordering – the narrative endows meaning to events; delimiting – a master narrative creates a system of intelligibility; perpetuating – reproduction of the hegemonic master narrative; and challenging – the counter hegemonic function of marginalized narratives. (Hall, 2001:106) Similarly, Wodak identifies four types of *discursive macro-strategies* of discourses of national identity:

constructive strategies (aiming for the construction of national identities), preservative or justificatory strategies (aiming at the conservation and reproduction of national identities or narratives of identity), transformative strategies (aiming at the change of national identities), and destructive strategies (aiming at the dismantling of national identities). Depending on the context – that is to say, on the social field or domain in which the 'discursive events' related to the topic under investigation take place – one or other of the aspects connected with these strategies is brought into prominence." (Wodak, 2001:71-72)

Different discourses entail different policy priorities and power relations, and to understand these, it is therefore important to consider and identify the functions and strategies of messianic ideas and narratives in our analysis of Russian texts from official, and to some extent public, discourse.

The main concern in the analysis of our material, however, will be to identify the discourses, themes and narratives drawn upon in the material both from official, public and popular discourse (*interdiscursive analysis*); and to identify and explore the subjects and objects that are being produced or reproduced in the texts, and the hidden dualisms which the significance of the texts rest upon (*predicate analysis*). In other words, we will explore the different representations of a Russian self (or selves) as well as those of Others, and their signifiers.

As we are seeking to understand if and how messianic discourses manifest and resonate, and how they can be contextualised in official discourse and among ordinary Russians, the texts we have selected are not, unlike the many texts in public discourse we will compare them with, directly representative of Russian messianic discourse. Instead, different discourses are drawn upon and mixed together, typically in a dialogical/polemical relationship. Hence, an "*interdiscursive* analysis of texts is concerned with identifying which discourses are drawn upon, and how they are articulated together. Even if realization of a particular discourse is very small, e.g. just a word or phrase, it is still a case of drawing upon that discourse." (Fairclough, 2003:8)

As we explained in the previous section, 'Russia', as a subject, can be understood as a 'discursive fabric that brings together many different threads' or

discourses, and so our study will seek to locate and examine the threads of messianic discourse which run across very different layers and combinations of the fabric. (Wetherell, 2001:25) We have suggested that one of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discourse, in its broad sense as a framework, for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor, and that as such messianic ideas are a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity. In this context, the concept of master narrative is central.

A master narrative can be understood both as a founding myth or national idea, and as a framework of interpretation which structures a variation of narratives. As its contested nature is an essential feature of discourse, there is seldom one master narrative. One role of the following chapter, the literature review, has been to identify and trace two central master narratives in Russian discourse, both of which are messianic but differ significantly. We do not seek to theorise about the historical relationship between the two different master narratives, but the analysis of our material from official and popular discourse will be attentive to instances when the master narratives are drawn upon, and their interplay.

Predicate analysis too is useful for establishing particular discourses; for "elucidating both how discourses overlap, as well as the structures of meaning that they share." (Milliken, 1999:231) These basic forms of analyses overlap and complement each other. What then is predicate analysis? "Predicate analysis focuses on the language practices of predication – the verbs, adverbs and adjectives that attach to nouns. Predications of a noun construct the thing(s) named as a particular sort of thing, with particular features and capacities. Among the objects so constituted may be subjects, defined through being assigned capacities for and modes of acting and interacting." (Milliken, 1999:232) Studying the predications of Russia and its Others in the texts will also help us to identify the core oppositions or dualisms which the significance and coherence of the representations rest upon, which in its turn will help us understand better Russia's relation to the West and address research question Q4[25].

Based on these three methods of discourse analysis - identification of the functions of discourses; interdiscursive analysis or identification of narratives; and

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[25] Q4. How can we understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West?

predicate analysis – we have formulated questions which will form the basis of our analyses of the selected texts and material, the answers of which will lead us to answer our research questions Q2, Q3[26] and ultimately Q4:

- o What themes and narratives can be singled out?
- o What messianic and related discourses from public discourse are drawn upon, and what is the relation in the text to these discourses?
- o What subjects/actors and objects are constructed or reproduced, explicitly and implicitly?
- o What types of predicates are used to represent Russian collective identity?
- o What narratives are deployed to define Russia as a state actor?
- o In the texts, which predicates and values of Russia/the Russians are represented as desirable/needful?
- o What dualisms does the text rest on? Is the relation to difference in the text that of radical opposition?
- o What Others, dangers and threats are constructed?
- o What particular discursive strategies, functions, and power relations can be identified in the use of messianic and related discourse?
- o Can certain patterns of argumentation be distinguished?

Some of these questions overlap and many apply only to one of the discourse planes. In addition, each chapter will ask subject-specific questions relevant to the dimension of identity/statecraft being explored in that particular chapter.

3.3.0 Evidence

i) Categories of evidence

This section will present the different categories of evidence of Russian messianic discourse, focusing mainly on Part Two, the core of the thesis, which looks at contemporary Russian messianism, but also introducing our next chapter, the

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[26] Q2. What is the manifestation and resonance among ordinary Russians of the messianic and related narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse?
Q3. What is the function of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the Russian crisis of identity?

literature review, which addresses hypothesis H3[27] and looks at secondary source evidence of Russian messianism historically. Having outlined a basic framework for discourse analysis and formulated a number of questions to pose in our analysis of primary source material of Part Two of the thesis, we now have left to present and explain our selection and categories of evidence for analysis. Let us repeat two of the research questions which are addressed by Part Two of the thesis as they contain our levels of analysis, and as such structure and inform the categories of evidence:

Q2. What is the manifestation and resonance among ordinary Russians of the messianic and related narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse?

Q3. What is the function of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the Russian crisis of identity?

Recapping from the previous section, our analysis will work with primary sources from three broad discourse planes: popular discourse, the domain of views, attitudes, ideas and narratives among ordinary Russian people; official discourse, the domain of official Russian political statements and texts; and public discourse, the broad domain of unofficial but published texts from the overlapping academic, political, cultural, religious, etc domains. Using the above developed framework for analysis, we will investigate our hypothesis that 'Russian messianic discourse' as a discursive framework is manifested across these different planes. In addition to the primary sources, we also draw on a range of secondary sources to build and deepen our academic interpretation of the findings from the primary sources.

The selection and use of texts from public discourse differs from that of official and popular discourse in that very diverse materials are drawn upon, and no single sample for analysis has been selected. Undertaking a systematic mapping and analysis of messianic discourse in Russian public discourse would have been an

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[27] H3: One of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discursive framework for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other.

unfeasible project given both its proliferation in many different social domains, and the limits of this study.

TABLE 3.1   Categories of evidence

Discourse plane	Primary sources	Secondary sources
Official	President Putin's annual addresses to the State Council, 2000-2007.	Russian and Western academic works from various fields including international relations, politics, geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, philosophy and religious
Public	Newspaper and academic articles. Political TV-show transcripts. Popular and academic books. Political party/organisation websites and programmes.	
Popular	160 semi-structured interviews with ordinary and semi-elite Russians of Moscow and St Petersburg conducted in 2005.	Public opinion polls and analyses.

Instead we have centred our analysis on the official and popular discourse planes, where the resonance and manifestation of Russian messianic discourse is less known. For these two planes we have selected specific samples – the President's annual addresses to the State Council, 2000-2007 respectively semi-structured interviews with ordinary and semi-elite Russians. As we explore the 'texts' from these samples, we will compare and contrast their use of messianic and related discourse with the same in texts from public discourse.

The public discourse texts range from widely read major newspaper articles, transcripts from popular political TV-shows, university textbooks in geopolitics and academic journal articles to political party and organisation programmes, manifestos and websites. Each text used from public discourse will be introduced and contextualised, its importance and proliferation explained to show the value of the comparisons between the discourse planes.

ii)   Intellectual categories of Chapters 5-8

As our introduction set out, we have developed three broad intellectual categories, based on the distinction between the temporal and the spatial dimensions of Russian identity: 'Russia: History, Present and Destiny' explores Russia as a temporal-social entity; 'Russia and the world: Self and Other(s),' looks at Russia as a spatial-political entity; 'Russia as messianic,' assumes that the temporal-social and spatial-political dimensions often converge in messianic discourse. This categorisation structures the presentation and analysis of each of the seven presidential annual addresses in Chapter Five, and each individual category (with slight modifications) is the title and basis for one each of the subsequent interview-based chapters. As any intellectual categories, these overlap substantially, particularly given the near kaleidoscopic character of Russian and Russian messianic discourse, but we expect that they facilitate the exploration of this complex subject.

TABLE 3.2   Intellectual Categories

'Russia: History, Presence and Destiny'	Explores the central narratives and definitions of contemporary Russia as state and country, as well as narratives of its history and future, i.e. Russia as a *temporal-social* entity.
'Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)'	Explores Russia as a *spatial-political* entity; identifies and analyses the specific constructions threats, problems and 'discourses of danger'; studies the predications of 'the West' as Other; and the relation between the 'internal' and 'external' constructions of Russia.
'Russia as Messianic'	Traces and analyses the explicit references to and use of Russian messianic discourse as defined and categorised in the theory and literary review chapters.

iii)   Official discourse: President Putin's Annual Addresses 2000-2007

Chapter Five explores the function of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the post-Soviet Russian crisis of identity. We have selected as our basis for analysing official discourse former President Putin's annual addresses to the State Council, 2000-2007. The state addresses have become perhaps the prime sample of the official discourse through which the Russian state constructs and defines itself and the collective Russian identity. The President in this context provides direction for the state, sets out tasks for the future, but most importantly, provides a sanctioned, official and legitimating framework for understanding and defining Russia, its past, present and future, Russianness, the world, and Russia's place in it, at the same time establishing himself as the legitimate spokesperson for the Russians, using a technique through which "the true producer of the ideas and beliefs becomes blurred." (Slade, 2006)

Asking the questions from the discourse analytical framework developed in the previous section, we will be looking at several important dimensions of Russian identity and statecraft in these eight speeches and their evolution, placed in the three broad categories detailed in Table 3.2. The instances of messianic-related intertextuality in these texts is studied more closely, comparing the state's sanctioned discourse with society's unsanctioned discourse – both where similar signifiers, narratives and discourses are used; and where the same questions and issues are framed differently, paying special attention to the hidden dualisms which bring coherence to the official identity representation. Moving in chronological order we debate each of these categories in terms of their official/sanctioned and public/non-sanctioned disclosures.

iv)   Public discourse: the semi-structured interviews

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight move from official to popular discourse. In order to get original, diverse, unpublished and high quality material from popular discourse, we chose to conduct semi-structured structured interviews with a large and diverse

sample of Russians in Moscow and St Petersburg. The interviews became an effective means to explore the resonance and manifestation of messianic and related discourse among ordinary and semi-elite people in contemporary Russia; and to compare the convergence and divergence of the deployment of messianic and related narratives from official and public discourse with popular discourse.

Based on these interviews we explore the ways in which semi-elite and ordinary Russians, ranging from clergy, wealthy businessmen, academics and journalists, to students, house-wives, pensioners, manual labourers, immigrants and prostitutes, consciously and unconsciously draw upon old and new messianic discourses as they talk about and define Russia and Russianness; and present the actors and worlds they construct and reproduce.

The interview questions (see Appendix II) were developed and piloted with assistance from native Russians with sociology and psychology backgrounds. The interviews were thus structured: the same questions were given, in the same order, to each respondent, though for some questions there were different follow-up questions depending on the answer. The questions were developed to enhance maximum flexibility: the interview could last from three minutes up to two hours, making it possible to gain access to both a great number and diversity of people. Interviewees were found and selected using different methods: often through personal recommendation by friends and acquaintances, typically leading to a chain of further recommendations to other people; sometimes through requests by phone (academics and other semi-public people); and, as in the majority of cases, directly approached in the street, in parks, metro stations, etc across very different areas of the cities.

Most people in the street did not have time for an in depth interview, but were often happy to spare ten or fifteen minutes for a short survey-like interview. When they found a question interesting, they would elaborate on it. To others, for example businessmen, managers, clergy, academics, journalists and very old or handicapped people, it would have been quite impossible to gain access lest through personal recommendation for a personal *interview* as opposed to an anonymous social survey. The interviews were all conducted by the researcher, recorded and

later transcribed by a native Russian.[28]

In total, we conducted 160 complete interviews in autumn 2005 with semi-elite and ordinary Russians in Moscow and St Petersburg. The sample does not claim to be representative of the Russian population as a whole but is however large and diverse enough not to claim to at least some degree be representative of the two 'capitals' of Russia. Why did we focus our study only on Moscow and St Petersburg, given that they are scarcely representative of typical Russian town and cities, and what are the implications of our choice of cities for the analysis of the interviews?

First of all, it can be argued that major ideational movements in Russia were rooted first among the educated city-dwellers, then spread to the rest of Russia (Storchak, 2003). Our sample arguably came close to being a litmus test of trends in contemporary Russian identity perceptions, especially with the interviews conducted right in the middle of the decisive decade of Putin's rule.

Secondly, the Moscow and St Petersburg populations contain an in Russia unmatched diversity of people: from the highly educated, wealthy, and influential, to a variety of intellectuals, professionals as well as 'ordinary' people. Pilot interviews were conducted in Demyansk, a small provincial town not far from Novgorod. Here both the interviewees and their answers were much more homogenous. It is of course impossible to say with certainty what the results would have been had we chosen more typical cities, but judging from the pilot interviews in Demyansk and contemporary research on Russian nationalism, the anti-Western and russocentric sentiments which were present in our sample would have been more pronounced. As this study argues, an ambiguous-dichotomous relation to the West is central to Russian messianism. But, there was much less nuance, insight and variety in the Demyansk narratives compared to the pilot interviews in the 'capitals'. Hence we concluded that the more diverse population from the two 'capitals' would be better suited for exploring the different facets of contemporary messianic discourse as manifested in public and official discourse.

Beyond our choice of cities, the main biases lie in an overrepresentation of

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[28] We saw it as an advantage for the interviews to be conducted by a non-native Russian speaker. When the interviewer comes from the same background as the interviewee, there can be a risk of the interviewee assuming that the interviewer has the same knowledge as he or she, and he or she might not explain for example cultural phenomena in the same way as to an outsider: "Some evidence suggests that interviewing across class, gender, or ethnic barriers can actually be more effective than matching the background of interviewer and interviewee." (Rubin, 1995:111)

male respondents (90 male, 70 female), people in their twenties, and educated people (75 had higher education, 85 did not). The male bias was not desired, but hard to avoid: it was very hard to get interviews with women over thirty. The age bias was conscious: we sought to compare 'Soviet' and 'post-Soviet' generations, and it was thus important to have a large number of young people. In total, 80 'post-Soviet' (age 15-29) and 80 'Soviet' (age 30+) respondents were interviewed.

The slight over-representation of people with higher education stems from our comparison of 'semi-elite' with 'ordinary' Russians. 30 interviewees were classed as 'semi-elite', a loose category to define a very diverse group of Russians, including academics, clergy, businessmen, journalists and others. Some of them are more or less prominent in their sphere of society, and some are virtually unknown but nevertheless influence and reflect key aspects of Russian discourse in their professional capacity.

How then did we process and analyse this large quantity of material? A common trap when analysing qualitative data such as interview material is 'anecdotalism', where telling instances of the apparent phenomenon studied are included without providing the criteria for including some instances and not others. (Silverman, 2001:34) To avoid this, we chose to analyse the data both qualitatively and quantitatively, thus preserving the depth and quality of the longer interviews while at the same time showing some indication of how typical various tendencies would be *in the sample*. For the quantitative analysis, the respondents' details and answers were coded and fed into the statistics programme SPSS, making possible detailed comparisons between different categories of respondents.

A list of all interviewees, their age-group, sex, education, etc. and their coded answers to all interview questions where coding was possible is found in Appendix I. For the qualitative analysis, the interviews were read several times to identify trends and emerging themes and narratives. Selected interview case studies, categorised in terms of the research questions they contribute to answer, are found in Appendix III, and all case on which a case study was made are marked with an asterisk after the case number when cited in text, e.g. (C1-M50*).

3.4.0   Conclusion

This chapter has sought to establish an effective methodological framework for studying contemporary Russian messianism which will help us understand the relevance of its uses on the 'real world out there.' In sum, our framework is based mainly on insights from poststructuralist and multidisciplinary Self-Other studies and its main methods derive from forms of discourse analysis. The previous chapter sought to understand messianism from a theoretical perspective, based on secondary sources. Part Two, the original research of the thesis, is based on primary sources, and studies evidence of Russian messianism within a contemporary perspective; and Chapter Four, the literary review, is based on secondary sources and studies evidence of the Russian messianic framework within a historical perspective. Its secondary sources come from diverse fields – history, cultural and religious studies, Slavonic studies, philosophical thought and more – but the works which are drawn upon (and not only reviewed, as in some cases), by both Western and Russian academics, generally have in common a sensitivity to textuality which makes this historical and cultural background of Russian messianism as a narrative framework and legitimising discourse fit with the contemporary analysis of the core of the thesis.

The review outlines core features of Russian messianism and its persistent narratives and discourses, and in so doing helps us understand identify the contemporary uses of messianic discourses within a wider historical and cultural context.

4.0.0   Russian Messianism as Intellectual Tradition

4.1.0   Introduction

Chapter Two proposed a broad conceptualisation of Russian messianism as constituting a persistent discursive framework, based on a logic of opposition and holding a range of both contesting and complementing narratives and signifiers which represent different interests but which on the whole function to legitimise the state through the continuous construction, contestation and reproduction of Russian collective identity in ambiguous relation to the West as broad Other.

We argued that this conceptualisation, despite its limitations (stereotyping and reification), could be an important tool as an umbrella-term helping us to identify and locate contemporary narratives and themes, including many which are not evidently explicitly messianic, within a long-standing, broad, discursive tradition. This chapter aims to defend this theoretical conceptualisation by outlining this discursive tradition from a historical perspective on the basis of a range of both Western and Russian historical, cultural and other secondary sources. We do not aspire to provide a comprehensive history and literature review of messianism in Russian thought – that would be well beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, our aims for are the following:

- o   To provide a theoretical background to our analysis of contemporary messianic discourse, both in the interviews with ordinary and semi-elite Russians (popular discourse) and in the President's annual addresses (official discourse). In order to do so, we need:

- o   To outline of some of the central ideas, narratives and characteristics of the broader discourses of Russian messianism within a historical framework, with consideration for their key social, political, intellectual and cultural contexts.

- o   To review a selection of the relevant secondary literature, with particular reference to categorisations, conceptualisations, historiography, and the question of historical continuity of Russian messianism.

In terms of the hypotheses and research questions of the thesis this chapter will further explore hypothesis H3: the persistence of Russian Messianism as a legitimising discursive framework for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other; and in consequence address research question Q4: how should we understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West?

As we have argued in the previous chapters, in order to understand Russian statecraft, we must study and analyse the particular stories, signifiers and binary oppositions which have been and are being used to construct Russian collective identity in both in their specific and broader contexts, seeking to understand the politics and wider social issues behind their deployment. And especially in post-Soviet Russia, there has been a prolific reproduction of messianic and related thought. As Vera Tolz explained at the end of the first post-Soviet decade:

> The pre-revolutionary thinkers who exercise the greatest influence on today's discussion about Russian nation-building and to whom current intellectuals refer are the Slavophiles of the 1840s, late 19th century Pan-Slavist Nikolai Danilevsky and historian Vasilii Klyuchevsky, early 20th-century philosophers Nikolai Berdyaev, Georgii Fedotov, Ivan Ilin and Vladimir Solovev, as well as the Eurasianists [. . .] These thinkers of the past are now viewed 'as if they were contemporaries' and as 'teachers, to whom [today's intellectuals] should turn in their search for spiritual and ideological inspiration'." (Tolz, 1998:994)

We therefore need to have a grasp of the genealogy of messianic discourses. On the whole, the chapter will affirm our hypotheses about the continuity of Russian messianism and its legitimising functions over the centuries as a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.

4.2.0   Historiography and literature

Russian messianism, its history and role in Russian identity and politics, can be a rather contentious subject among scholars. One position relates to what our first chapter discussed, the stereotypes about Russia and Russians in Western discourse,

and sees the phenomenon of Russian messianism (as being central to Russian identity and politics) as largely a myth and stereotype in itself (Engelstein, 1998, Keenan, 1994).

A typical example of this position is that of Marshall Poe, who begins his book *The Russian Moment in World History* by asserting – quite correctly – that "history is not written in a vacuum" and then sets out to expose and revise all myths about Russia and its history, clearing "away this accumulated underbrush so that we may better see the true visage of Russia and its people." (Poe, 2003:1-2) (Apparently, Poe's own account must not have been written in a vacuum since it will show the *true visage* of Russia and the Russians.) Together with the myths of Russia's predisposition to authoritarian government and inbound expansionism by war, he attempts to deconstruct the idea of the innate Russian messianism:

> The idea of Russian messianism was the brainchild of late-nineteenth Russian historical philosophers, men who had read a bit too much Hegel for their own good. Having misunderstood a number of banal sixteenth-century texts concerning *translation imperii*, they speculated that the Muscovites believed they were the true inheritors of the Roman Imperial legacy and its supposed mission was to save the known world. Sketchy though it was, the theory of "Moscow, the Third Rome" gained considerable popularity among the chattering classes in Russia and Europe. By the early twentieth century it was quite common to speak of an ingrained Russian messianism. This error was only compounded by the arrival of the Bolsheviks on the scene. Soon after 1917, pundits were explaining the millenarianism of the Russian soul. (Poe, 2003:3-4)

Despite the highly contradictory epistemological claims in Poe's account, a couple of points here are right. It is certain that German philosophy and Romantic nationalism had an enormous impact on Russian intellectual discourse, and that this period saw a great proliferation of messianic-related discourse with the Slavophiles, pan-Slavists and other Romantic nationalists; and it is also true that the ideas of 'the innate Russian messianism' and 'the Russian soul' were developed and popularised in this period both among Western and Russian intellectuals (see e.g. Carter, 1990:14-15) and later with the coming of the revolutions and Berdyaev's subsequent influential

interpretation of international communism as reincarnated Russian messianism. (Sidorov, 2006:323-24)

And populist accounts of Russian messianism persist to this day: many contemporary Russian scholars maintain, without evidence from primary sources but frequently referring to the mysterious Russian soul, historical fate and eternal Russian values, that messianism has always been an inseparable element of Russian collective consciousness. For example Vasilenko, widely published political scientist, sees 'the Russian messianic consciousness' as the basis for Russian geopolitics, and – perhaps 'having read a bit too much Hegel for her own good' – conceptualises this in terms of an age-old dialectic relationship between the Slavonic self-will and freedom on the one hand, and the instinct of national preservation and unity on the other. (Vasilenko, 2003:66-67) Arguably, this type of literature belongs to the primary evidence on Russian messianism in its reproduction of the myths and stereotypes that Poe's position seeks to expose and revise.

But all this aside, Poe and similar accounts disregard abundant evidence of various earlier variants of anything but banal and insignificant Russian messianic discourse. Diverse scholars from both Russia and the West, doing painstaking analysis of Russian primary sources, find evidence of a multitude of Russian messianic narratives and discourses which persistently have been reproduced and over the centuries in different contexts and at different levels of discourse, and which often appear to have been central to key aspects of Russian collective identity. Based the evidence from these sources, we argue that despite the often contradictory and contested nature of the different messianic discourses, they all have in common certain key features which warrant the use of 'Russian messianism' as an overarching term rather than the narrower notion of being *chosen* and *anointed*, or as a single ideology.

These features include the notions of *spirituality* and *religion*, from Orthodoxy in Slavophilism and Russian imperial ideologies, to the 'spiritual harmony' of Eurasianism and the often eschatological and even Christological symbolisms of Russian populist and later Soviet discourses; the theme of a *special mission*: whether sacrificial (suffering to save Europe from Mongol Yoke, Napoleon, Fascism, etc) or great and political (linked to ideas of empires and utopias); and lastly, the perhaps

73

most fundamental and yet most ambiguous feature of Russian messianism, the *self/Other dichotomy* defining Russia in relation to a 'significant Other', parallel with the longstanding religious framework of good vs. evil, with a range of connoted binary oppositions.

Furthermore, there is a broad agreement between these diverse scholars on the distinction between what have been called two master narratives, national myths, traditions, regimes of thought or indeed competing alternatives of Russian identity: Holy Russia (*svyataya Rus'*) and Moscow Third Rome (*Moskva Tretii Rim*). This section provides a brief outline of core features and possible categorisations, and of the works of some of the scholars we draw on for our broad conceptualisation of Russian messianism as a historically persistent discursive framework, (and others who may differ), before we proceed to the chronological historical overview based on these sources.

i)   Continuity, coherence and categories

A general distinction can be made between descriptive and interpretive scholarship, and Duncan's work on Russian messianism (2000), mentioned in Chapter One, belongs to the former category. It is an effective introduction to and broad historical overview of Russian messianism, rich in useful citations from prominent Russian thinkers, but the sections on each thinker, movement or period are brief and, with a few exceptions, very descriptive. Duncan identifies a continuity and coherence of Russian messianism as a phenomenon – he writes that it "has persisted as a trend of thought in one form or another since the sixteenth century, with roots going back much earlier" and that it tends to come to the fore in crisis times (Duncan, 2000:141) but the study lacks a theoretical framework within which to conceptualise this, and to justify the use of this single term for a diversity of ideas and movements.

David Rowley is one Russianist who at first appears to disagree with the argument for historical continuity of Russian messianism. He uses the term Russian *millenarianism* for the commonly assumed single tradition in Russia, and argues that a distinction must be made between secular and religious and millenarianism, between metaphor and belief, between political culture and counter-culture:

"Religious millenarianism cannot be considered part of a national tradition, since the defining characteristic of such crisis cults is their counter-cultural nature." (Rowley, 1999:1594)

In a similar vein, V.V. Serbinenko argues in favour of an evaluative distinction between the *metaphysics*, or philosophy, of the Russian idea and the *ideology* of it, the two of which are often confused in his opinion. "As ideology is functional in its nature, and 'philosophical reflections on the fate of Russia' are precisely philosophical, the two must be evaluated differently: Ideology cannot be expected to be consistent and in that sense non-contradictory, as its purpose certainly is not the truth [. . .] An ideological doctrine is judged by its effectiveness" (Serbinenko, 2001:3)

These distinctions have their points, but they are helpful only to a limited extent to our study. There is certainly a wide gulf between the mass suicides of the Old Believers at the time of Peter the Great (perceived as the Antichrist and signifier of the End), and the religious metaphors in Russian imperial ideology. Nevertheless, the distinctions between secular and religious, metaphor and belief, philosophy and ideology, are far from clear cut in the Russian messianic tradition, as we will seek to exemplify.

Firstly, as Russian religious expert Vladimir Storchak stresses, there were distinctly religious aspects of the secular anarchist and socialist Russian movements, with the religion of 'man-deity' (*chelovekho-bozhia*) and sacralisation of concepts as 'human reason' and 'human consciousness.' (Storchak, 2005:74) In parenthesis, Storchak's thesis in two parts on Russian messianism is a descriptive but comprehensive work based on analysis of a wide range of primary sources, from state and church documents to popular songs and folk tales, and strong evidence for both the continuity and centrality to state and collective identity of Russian messianism as a relatively coherent phenomenon since at least the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church, despite contesting sub-traditions within. (2003, 2005) And in a later period, Julia Brun-Zejmis finds that the secular democrats of the samizdat movement were following in a messianic tradition, defining themselves by sacrifice, even in Christological terms, and were often suffering literal persecution for their secular beliefs. (Brun-Zejmis, 1991)

Secondly, turning to the religious philosophers, we must note that Dostoevsky managed to be both a deeply religious philosopher, dealing with what Serbinenko's 'metaphysics of the Russian idea,' *and* an active proponent of imperial, expansionist messianic ideology. And philosophers Nikolai Fedorov and Vladimir Solovev both worked together, united in the belief that Russia had been chosen both to bring about world unity through Christian messianism and to achieve the resurrection of the dead. (Duncan, 2000:43) As Young describes, they parted when it became obvious that Solovev envisaged resurrection a metaphorical and spiritual sense, and Fedorov *literally*. (Young, 1994:64-65) While there was a notable difference between their personal beliefs, it was not immediately obvious, and it cannot be said that they belonged to two entirely different traditions.

The impossibility to uphold this type of distinctions is one of the reasons for our use of the concept of discourse. Discourse theory does not seek to distinguish between 'actual inner beliefs' and 'instrumentalist ideology' but argues that they cannot be separated, and this is certain also for the Russian messianic tradition. Rather, categories which are possible to uphold are between contesting discourses.

Within the messianic tradition there are two competing alternatives of Russian identity: Holy Russia (*svyataya Rus'*) and Moscow Third Rome (*Moskva Tretii Rim*) Storchak calls them 'messianism' and 'missionism,' even though both concepts are broadly categorised as messianism (*messianizm, messianstvo*) (Storchak, 2005). These are a more appropriate way of conceptualising the difference, discussed above, between religious millenarianism (and religious philosophy) and imperial ideology – though while their relation is contested, they often overlap.

Dmitri Sidorov summarises some of the main variations of the Moscow Third Rome narrative: "its original meaning in Muscovy was eschatological and primarily inward-looking, promoting ideals of a protective Orthodox empire; in the nineteenth century often had pan-Orthodox meaning and connoted taking over the second Rome (Constantinople); in the twentieth century in the West the concept was understood as justification of Russian imperialist messianism." (Sidorov, 2006:324) This 'missionic' master narrative typically relates to the notions of translation of

empire and civilisation, at large representing a Russia with a providential role within both history and space.

Holy Russia, on the other hand, has stronger eschatological connotations. This is the spiritual, sacrificial, morally superior, God-bearing nation (*narod Bogonoset'*), set apart from the unclean lands of Europe, from the world, and even from history in the more apocalyptic discourses. Russia does not just have a mission but becomes in this discourse a Messiah of the nations, repeatedly suffering to redeem Europe and mankind. Many scholars see a clear continuity and coherence of this narrative, and Serbinenko here makes an apt summary:

> Through all the history of Russian thought and literature moves the image of Russia suffering, bearing repeated strokes of misfortune, consuming herself in historic conflagrations, but ever renewing herself like the Phoenix and aspiring to be the true Resurrection. Whatever the historical and intellectual gulf that separates the ancient Russian ideal of 'Holy Russia' and the image of Russia 'crucified' in the revolutions and wars of our epoch, it cannot be denied that they constitute a single perennial theme of the Russian national cultural tradition. (Serbinenko, 2001:6)

This Christological discourse indeed permeates Russian literature as diverse as Pushkin's poetry (Duncan, 2000:21) and, as mentioned above, the secular discourse of the Samizdat movement. (Brun-Zejmis, 1991:656) It began however as a political rather than religious concept as the counter-hegemonic discourse to the Third Rome doctrine, first used by the boyar opposition against Ivan the Terrible, juxtaposing the holy Russian lands to the unholiness of the Tsar (Neumann, 1996:8-9); and was also later very much deployed in the same counter-hegemonic fashion to the Westernisation from Peter the Great and onwards. It can be defined as 'messianic peasant ideology' in the sense that it was gradually popularised, and the people and the land became the main subjects rather than the state. Hence, to some extent the relation between these master narratives, Moscow Third Rome and Holy Russia, also reflects a traditional discursive opposition between the Russian state and Tsar, on the one hand, and the people, or nation, and the land, on the other – which is only partly overcome by the idea of the marriage between the *Batiushka Tsar* and *Matushka Rus'*. (Duncan, 2000:14, Neumann, 1996:9-10) In some respects these also parallel the

contradiction between universalism and exceptionalism, or multiculturalism and ethno-centrism, as later chapters will discuss. But because of the contingent nature of discourse these distinctions and their relations are not essential and cannot be explained in structuralist or dialectical terms.

ii)   The Self/Other and religious dichotomisations

Chapter Two stressed that identity is defined by difference, and that specific identities are best understood through the studying of how the boundaries between identity and alterity are upheld. We suggested that a core feature of messianism, or, in Morgenthau's terms, universalistic nationalism, is defined by a radicalised logic of opposition. Works of diverse scholars suggest that a core feature of Russian messianism, and Russian discourse as a whole, is the self/Other dichotomy defining Russia in relation to a 'significant Other', parallel with the longstanding religious absolutist construction, in Urban's words, of "a world in which good and evil are locked in mortal combat" (Urban, 1998:970). Beginning with the latter, this dichotomising 'geography of good and evil' frames not only religious or cultural aspects of society but is closely related to statecraft in terms of legitimisation of the state through, in Campbell's terms 'discourses of danger' (Campbell, 1991, 1998); justification for expansionism (Rieber, 1993, Rowley, 1999); and ideological assimilation of a diverse population in a country of complex geocultural realities (Arbatov, 2006).

Stephen Lessing Baehr's work on the eighteenth century Russian paradise myth is a prime example of interpretive Russianist work which confirms the longevity and continuity of Russian messianism as a dichotomising framework with the function specifically of "propagandizing the Russian status quo." (Baehr, 1991:ix) And, we have suggested that messianic discourse functions not only to delineate self from other but actually dichotomise them, and Baehr's work powerfully illustrates how in the various Russian paradise myths the boundary between self and other is exacerbated to extremes.

The extension of the typically religious good/evil dichotomy is the self/Other dichotomy, mainly referring to Russia's cultural and historical identity defined in an intense oppositional relation to the West. As Boris Groys has argued, Russian philosophy is entirely consumed with resisting Western universalism: "Russia, from the point of view of Russian philosophy, is not a part of the West, and therefore by its very existence restricts Western aspirations to the universality of thought. It is this restriction that, indeed, constitutes, in the eyes of Russian philosophy, its own specific philosophical calling." (Groys, 1992:185)

And following historian Andrzej Walicki, nineteenth century Russian messianism can be understood as an objection to 'Western' religion and concept of progress:

> Different Russian utopias of earthly salvation and the corresponding conceptions of progress represented, therefore, a secularization and historicization of the idea of the Kingdom of God. The peculiar eagerness with which the Russian intelligentsia committed themselves to the search for a "horizontal" (historical) collective salvation was, in a sense, the other side of their intolerance of the traditional Christian ideas of a transcendent Absolute and a "vertical", individual salvation in afterlife. (Walicki, 1994:82)

Walicki's earlier, seminal work on the Slavophile-Westerniser debate, *The Slavophile Controversy*, conceptualises 'the structural pivot' of Slavophile ideology in terms of an antithesis between Russia and Europe, contested in the famous – and arguably still ongoing – Slavophile/Westerniser debate (Walicki, 1975:222-24). But – despite its basic sociological-structuralist approach – Walicki's work shows at the same time how this antithesis is blurred in the writings of many 'classical' Slavophile thinkers, reiterating that ambiguity and not only dichotomy is a core feature of Russian messianism as a discursive framework. The relation of the Russian self to the Other in messianic discourse is thus possibly best characterised as one of intense ambiguity which can be conceived within a continuum from radical opposition and superiority, to equality, to inferiority.

This is powerfully illustrated and analysed in Neumann's *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (1996), briefly outlined in Chapter One. While there are plenty of cultural-historical and ethnographical works on the evolution of Russian national identity

and on concepts of messianism and those related to it, few come from an IR perspective, and Neumann's work was in this sense unique when it was published. It is a sophisticated historical discourse analysis of the persistent, contending representations of Russia reflected in Russia's since long ongoing debate about Europe. Neumann shows how the process of delineating a European Other from the Russian self, in other words the debate on how to relate to the Europe/the West, constitutes a persistent and integral part of Russia's identity process, and he also explains nineteenth century Russian messianism from within this framework.

Based on the above notion of a continuum of the self/Other dichotomy, Neumann makes a valuable distinction between xenophobic and 'spiritual' Romantic nationalists: for the xenophobic ones Europe is definitely *morally* inferior to Russia whereas for the more 'spiritual', Europe and Russia belong to different civilisations which defy moral assessment. (Neumann, 1996:177-79)

Both Walicki and Neumann's works on Russia's relation to Europe, defined by the longstanding, ambiguous 'inferiority/superiority complex' illustrated in Chapter One by Fovizin, highlight another central function of Russian messianism: compensation: "The Russian debate about Europe furnishes a number of examples of how Romantic nationalists, when confronted with the lower economic output, standard of living or military capability of Russia in contrast to Europe, have written off such comparisons as insignificant compared to others." (Neumann, 1996:199) So, the typical narrative can go, Europe may be more economically advanced but has paid for this by its 'spiritual death.'

Below, in the historical overview of Russian messianic discourses, we highlight the works of various scholars who bring to the fore variations of binary oppositions pertaining to this self/Other logic: Russia as morally superior, Europe as immoral and decadent; Russia as spiritual, Europe as materialist; Russia as peaceful, Europe as aggressive, and so on. Subsequent chapters will then explore contemporary manifestations of the outlined Russian self/Other ambiguities and dichotomies in the framework of Russian messianism.

4.3.0   Historical overview of Russian messianic discourses

4.3.1   Early variants of messianic discourse

As Russia's dominant 'self' cannot be understood apart from its 'significant Others' of first Byzantium and later Europe, neither can early Russian messianism as an expression of Russian identity in all its interrelated variations – Moscow Third Rome, Holy Russia, Russia the New Jerusalem, the Paradise Myth, and so on – be understood apart from the Eastern, Byzantine influence on Russia – first its church culture, and later its fall; nor from the Western, Roman theories of *translatio imperii* (translation of empire) and the parallel *translatio studii* (translation of civilisation) which were central in Europe in the Middle Ages; nor from Israel and the Bible and its framework and narratives within which both the Eastern and Western political cultures identified and legitimised themselves.[29]

Chapter Two, following Campbell, suggested that a key aspect of messianic discourse has always been the 'evangelism of fear' and subsequent construction of Otherness and a geography of good and evil, which function to legitimise the role of the ruling political entity – whether the state promising security to its citizens or the church guaranteeing salvation to its followers. (Campbell, 1991, 1998:50-51)

Baehr shows how in Russia, closely related to this construction of a geography of good and evil, has been the idea of the church, and later the state, as creating a 'heaven on earth.' This early messianic-related discourses dates back to Russia's conversion to Orthodoxy – he cites evidence of this for example from the Primary Chronicle, in which round A.D. 987 the emissaries of Prince Vladimir reported to their prince about their experience in a Greek Orthodox church, saying they did not know whether they were in heaven or on earth, only that God dwelled there with men. (Baehr, 1991:15) These influences from Byzantium, Baehr argues, led to the search for 'heaven on earth' becoming central to Russian culture with first the church and later the state as claiming this 'function', using it as a prime means to propagandise the Russian status quo. (Baehr, 1991:ix)

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[29] See Baehr (1978) for a useful overview of their use in Russia.

i)   *Moscow - Third Rome*

The master narrative of Moscow Third Rome was thus articulated first in religious discourse. Its messianic claim is famously articulated in a letter written by the church elder Filofei to Prince Vasilii III around 1523:

> The church of the old Rome fell because of the infidelity of the Apollonarian heresy. The Second Rome, the Church of Constantinople, was hewn down by the axes of the sons of Hagar. And now this Third Rome of thy mighty kingdom, the holy catholic and apostolic church, will illumine the whole universe like the sun. . . .Know and accept, O pious Tsar, that all the Christian kingdoms have come together into thine own, that two Romes have fallen, and that a third stands, while a fourth there shall not be; thy Christian kingdom will fall to no other. (Carter, 1990:14)

As Carter notes, Filofei then proceeded to claim that the Russian people were "a new Israel, a people chosen by God, the first among all Christian peoples, and called to fulfil the Kingdom of Christ on earth." (Carter, 1990:14) As can be seen, all three significant Others – Europe (as Rome), Byzantium (or Constantinople) and Israel are present in the same text. In Russian discourse, passing from Greece, to Rome, to Byzantium, to Russia was the role of world-dominant Empire (*translation inperii*), and passing from Israel, to Byzantium, to Russia was religious truth (*translatio studii*).

Keenan argues that Filofei's letter probably was not intended as 'a call to greatness,' but rather as a warning to the Tsar in religious, not political context, and "had nothing to do with foreign policy or Muscovite manifest destiny. [. . .] There is simply no evidence that Muscovite policy or politicians were in any way influenced by the scribblings of bookish churchmen until the threshold of modern times – roughly the end of the seventeenth century." (Keenan, 1994:26-27) While, as we argued in the above section, there is no doubt that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a romanticisation and exaggeration of the historical importance for Russian identity of ideas like Moscow Third Rome, we should not underestimate the close relation between the church and the state in early Russian history up until the secularisation – Baehr for example more accurately calls the 'bookish churchmen'

82

"ecclesiastical propagandists of the state". (Baehr, 1991:21) And, as the next section will point to, 'Holy Russia' as a political counter narrative to Third Rome in the second half of the sixteenth century implies that the Third Rome narrative was already central to Muscovite politics and identity.

Storchak, follwing Russian historian Uspenskii, argues that the messianic pretensions within the Church arose with the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church from Byzantium beginning after the unification between the Eastern and Western churches in 1439. The Russian Church vehemently rejected the union made by the Orthodox Patriarch and the Roman Pope, as Russian identity as part of a wider Eastern, Orthodox identity had been forged by constructing Western Catholicism as a negative Other. (Storchak, 2003:10) In 1448 a *Russian* Metropolitan was elected, symbolising the breaking with Byzantium and the beginning of a gradual formation of Russian church autonomy, alongside with the forging of a narrower *Russian*, not only broadly Orthodox, identity. New rituals and procedures were instituted, mostly oriented towards Byzantine traditions, and yet the break meant the representation of Byzantium as a negative Other, with Russian church discourse swiftly pitting the purity of the Russian Church against Constantinople's "Plenum of Godless Turcs from the foul Tsar." (Storchak, 2003:5)

Then, in 1453, Byzantium fell - symbolically around the same time as the princes of Muscovy realised the centralisation and unification of the Russian lands around Moscow, gradually being liberated from the 'Mongol Yoke'. Russian church leaders represented the fall as God's punishment for the unification with the Catholic Church and swiftly assumed themselves to be the new leaders of Orthodoxy (Dukes, 1998:58-59), "making Moscow the site of the only *living church*". (Neumann, 1996:6-7) At the same time, the Grand Prince of Moscow began to claim the title of Tsar, a claim that was strengthened as a result of Ivan III's marriage to Sophia, the niece of the last Emperor of the Byzantine Empire.

So, the autonomy of the Russian Orthodox Church became linked to Moscow's pretension to the role of the new capital of Caesar. Evidence for these pretensions are found for example in the Account of the Passover by the Metropolitan Zosimi (1492), a document in which grand Prince of Muscovy Ivan III

83

is proclaimed "Lord and autocrat of all Russia, new Caesar Constantin, of the new city of Constantinople – Moscow – and all the Russian lands and other multitudes of lands and lords." (Storchak, 2003:6) Baehr describes how from this time forward, there was a strong tendency of Russia "to depict itself as a "perfected theocracy" and to idealize its present situation" (Baehr, 1991:18-19) and Storchak argues that various factors had led to a 'vacuum' in Russian identity which was filled by the Moscow Third Rome narrative. (Storchak, 2003:7)

It must be stressed that while Russia's self/Other dichotomy certainly is most easily equated to the well-known East/West dichotomy, this is partly a generalisation. As the Third Rome narrative itself implies, Byzantium – the *Eastern* Church and 'second Rome' – played a very central role in Russian identity formation. Byzantium was first a model and superior Other for Russia, then, with the union with the Catholic church and later its fall, Russia continued to copy the 'original' Byzantine model whilst through discourses of otherness turning Byzantium into an enemy and inferior Other, finally declaring itself to be the *true* Byzantium and centre of Orthodoxy.

Similarly, when the 'old' Europe of *anciens regimes* changed, beginning with the French revolution and challenge to monarchy and autocracy, the Russian state, having previously emulated the European model, began to declare Europe to be decadent and itself to be the *true* Europe. This ambiguity towards the Others, both Neumann and Storchak show, was contained in the Moscow Third Rome concept – Storchak uses the above discussed concepts of *messianism* and *missionism*.[30]

Neumann points to the doctrine having two contradictory dimensions, an internal-temporal and an external-spatial: "The internal significance of the doctrine is to equate the ruler with divine history on earth. The external dimension concerns the relationship to the Other, to the former areas of the Roman Empire. This is surely asymmetrical, inasmuch as the Other has been abandoned by God in favour of Moscow. (Neumann, 1996:8) Baehr stresses that when the state itself in the second half of the seventeenth century began to deploy the Moscow Third Rome narrative

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[30] "[I]n the idea of Moscow-Third Rome two tendencies were fused – the religious and the political: one emphasised the *messianic* blessing and holiness, and also the latent tuning towards isolationism away from the "unclean", "non-Slavonic-other-believing" surroundings; the other emphasised power and rule, and also a hidden foreign-political imperial "*missianic"* direction." (Storchak, 2003:10)

and other variants of this type of discourse as propaganda, it was part of the secularisation process shifting authority from the church to the state (Baehr, 1991:21). So, while Russian messianism originated with Orthodoxy, it must be noted how it came to permeate also the more secular discourses.

ii)   *Holy Russia*

The term 'Holy Russia' (*svyataya Rus'*) was first mentioned by Prince Kurbskiy in a letter to Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) in which the holiness of the Russian lands was juxtaposed to the unholiness of the Tsar himself. Kurbskiy was a leader of the boyar opposition, and Neumann points to the fact that as a result of the doctrinisation of Moscow-Third Rome, Russian boyars were losing power and were being divested of their independence. He supports the view of Michael Cherniavsky that it was the boyar opposition that invented the idea of Holy Russia, and "that this idea was part of their counter-hegemonic thrust, directed at the reigning doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome." (Neumann, 1996:8-9)

As we discussed above, 'Moscow Third Rome' and 'Holy Russia' can indeed be conceived of as two evolving master narratives or competing alternative representations of Russian identity. We also argued that a discourse acquires it form by the discourse it opposes, and this explains why these two narratives both compete and considerably overlap with each other. Having a directly political origin, 'Holy Russia' later became perhaps the most *popular* national myth of Russia, first denoting 'the people' and later embodying the "conception of the state as an extension of the tsar, the little father, married to the Holy Russian Motherland." (Neumann, 1996:9-10) The distinction between the people and the state would later be politicised by the Slavophiles.

Storchak describes how towards the end of the sixteenth century the 'Holy Russia' narrative was firmly founded in popular discourse, representing Russia as an exclusive state with a higher providential role, a country of churches and strict fasts. A stereotype had been formed, about the 'holy,' 'chosen-by-God' country, populated by the people 'chosen-by-God' (*narod Bogoizbranniy*) or 'God-bearing' (*narod Bogonoset'*). Holy, as we have noted, means to be *set apart* and the Russian people

were indeed forcefully set apart from the 'unholy' nations and people, perhaps in emulation of the Israelites and their explicit prohibition from intermingling with other peoples. Chaadaev in his famous letters resentfully wrote about this period that "we locked ourselves up in religious separatism" which is probably a fitting depiction of the state position (Chaadaev, 1969:43). Storchak describes some of the practical implications of 'Holy Russia' becoming state ideology:

> The local population was prohibited from contact with foreign guests. The state feared that the Russians could get infected with foreign 'Godlessness' and sought to separate foreigners into a special social group, literally forbidding contact with them. Foreign guests had to live in for this purpose separate parts of town outside the town (thereof the German settlement), to wear only their own clothes in order to be easily distinguished from the Russians, who under the threat of punishment were forbidden to whether dress- or hair-wise resemble foreigners. Any unofficial conversation between Russians and foreigners aroused immediate suspicion of defection from the Orthodox faith and traditions, which would automatically equal political conversion. (Storchak, 2003:11)

It is interesting to note how the construction of Russianness was made through "foreign policy" as defined previously by Campbell in a literal as well as discursive manner, with clothing and physical borders delineating the self from the Other as well together with the stark self/Other binary oppositions as holy/unclean and God-chosen/Godless. We can without any great leap of faith draw parallels to domestic "foreign policy" practices in the Soviet Union, both during the Stalinist terror where the other was internalised and during the Cold war with an external enemy. Storchak further points out that the 'Holy Russia' narrative also was clearly reflected in state and religious rituals which likened the Tsar to Christ; that foreigners visiting Russia noted how the Russians counted their Tsar as being "almost like God"; and that while in Western Europe, unrighteous monarchs were often likened to the unrighteous biblical kings, they were in Russia they were likened to Antichrist. (Storchak, 2003:13,20) So while the religious framework for legitimising the monarchy was common also to Western Europe, the messianic radicalisation was particular to Russia.

iii)   *Moscow New Jerusalem*

Daniel B. Rowland has argued that the Bible, and the theme of Moscow as the New Jerusalem or Israel, was much better represented in the Russian literature and architecture than images of Rome and the theme of Moscow Third Rome, and hence much more significant for early Russian identity and state legitimacy. (Rowland, 1996:3) Muscovy, he argues, understood and defined itself through the medium and narratives of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, representing itself for example in history-writing "as the re-embodiment of the Old Testament kingdom of David and Solomon, as a completion of fulfilment of Biblical events, as a "New Israel"." (Rowland, 1996:595) Muscovite rulers were identified with Old Testament heroes and their enemies were identified with Israel's enemies. (Rowland, 1996:603-04)

Attempts in seventeenth century Russian discourse to locate the Muscovites in the Biblical history testifies to the overarching importance of the Old Testament framework to Muscovite identity – for example, one popular theory was that Meshech, the son of Japhet and grandson of Noah, was in fact *Moscow* (Storchak, 2003:27). There is also plenty of evidence for the existence of the idea of Kiev as the New Jerusalem and that this idea would be transferred to the new capital should not be surprising (Baehr, 1991). Storchak sees no contradiction between the two narratives of Third Rome and New Jerusalem but argues that the idea of Moscow New Jerusalem from the sixteenth century and onwards was seen as the *concretisation* of Moscow Third Rome, with the idea that 'old' Jerusalem had been rejected and 'out of demand', being defiled by non-believing Saracens, which is why Jerusalem should rather be called Moscow. (Storchak, 2003:13) This, to reiterate, is based on the notion of *translatio studii*, the idea of the geographic translation of religious and civilisational truth. Moscow New Jerusalem can be seen both, as Rowland shows, as a wider discursive framework, as well as a narrative intertwined both with Moscow Third Rome and Holy Russia.

iv)   *The Third Way*

One of the first advocates of a Russian particular 'third way' can be found as early as in the seventeenth century in the writings of the Croatian catholic missionary Yurii Krizhanich (ca 1618-1683) who began his service at the tsar's court in 1659. He was among other things responsible for the missionary activity of Russia, which aimed at achieving a communion between the Slavonic peoples under the aegis of the Russian state. Storchak describes that in his major work *Politics*, Krizhanich revives the idea of the divine nature of the ruling power, as "all legal rules have not been established by themselves, but by God." (Storchak, 2003:29) The Tsar thus is and should be like God on earth in this discourse. Krizhanich is both one of the first to warn of the dangers of Europeanisation, and to theorise about the Russian national consciousness, looking at the culture and history of Russia in the framework of the development of humanity. "According to the logic of Krizhanich between the (Roman) Western and the (Byzantine) Eastern civilizations, Russia should choose its own, different and exclusive *middle way* of development of its civilization." (Storchak, 2003:30)

The Slavonic peoples are posited in relation to four ages of humanity – childhood, youth, adulthood and old age – and defined as the youth that whilst lacking knowledge "soon will play the lead role in the orchestra of world progress and greatness." As Storchak points out, similar ideas did indeed permeate the socio-political and philosophical thinking in Russia two-hundred years later. (Storchak, 2003:30) The example of Krizhanich shows that this discourse was not exclusive to Russian romantic nationalists of the nineteenth century but dates much further back in Russia, though its dissemination in the earlier periods was very limited.

4.3.2   Secularisation and millenarianism: the state vs. the people

While it makes sense to distinguish between the early religious variants of messianism and the well-known nineteenth century Romantic Slavophilism, there are also good reasons to see the modernisation of Peter the Great as a landmark for Russian messianism: "With the coming of Peter I, the entire Russian political debate

changed radically" Neumann writes, and mentions that scholars such as Szamuely and Riasanovsky hold "that the whole history of Russian political and social thought can be seen as the history of the development of contrasting views of the Petrine reform." (Neumann, 1996:10-11) Karamzin, the historian, concluded on Peter's reforms and Europeanization: "We became citizens of the world but ceased in certain respects to be citizens of Russia. The fault is Peter's." (Cited in Neumann, 1996:14)

As the capital was moved from Moscow to St Petersburg, the significance of Moscow Third Rome weakened (Neumann, 1996:10) but a more eschatological, religious variant of messianism was strengthened at the popular level. This had of course much to do with the great schism in Russian Orthodoxy (*raskol*) triggered by the reforms of Patriarch Nikon and intensified under Peter. As D. Kalkandjieva writes:

> The fact that the confrontation between [civil and sacral] powers took place in the metropolis contributed a lot for the mass character of the Russian schism. In a strange way, defending the old church texts and rituals the believers revived the idea of the Third Rome and simultaneously they betrayed the same idea in its part concerning Moscow as a fortress of true Orthodoxy, by leaving Moscow and going to the 'desert.' The Old Believers' propaganda addressed to the rural population, opposed the secular and church powers in Moscow and created a gap between rural and urban Russians which had long-term effect on Russian culture. (Kalkandjieva, 2000:254)

In the discourse of the Old Believers, Peter was represented as the Antichrist, whose rule signified the end of the world. This idea was taken literally by hundreds of Old Believers who committed mass suicide burning alive, which makes understandable Rowley's distinction between millenarian and metaphorical messianic discourse. (Rowley, 1999:1594)

So in this period we see the beginning of the deep rift between the urban and rural population, between the elite and the masses, as a result of the reforms and the schism. Whereas messianic discourse took on a more millenarian form among ordinary people, church, state and cultural discourse underwent a secularisation. But many secular discourses were still articulated within the wider messianic framework.

i)   *The Paradise Myth*

Russian secular messianism in the eighteenth century is embodied in Baehr has named the Russian paradise myth (1991). This cultural discourse or "merger of various classical, biblical, and patristic traditions of perfect times and places into a single "megamyth"" came from Western Europe and had peaked during the European Renaissance, later reaching Russia. Its key themes and narratives include for example the tsar as a political icon, represented as God, or God-like (in the case of Peter the Great even portrayed as a creator) with his land as the earthly image of heaven.[31] As part of the secularisation changing the religious into classical, the tsar was not only likened to Christ but to Apollo, Saturn and other gods; and the female monarchs as Catherine II to Minerva, Astrea and Diana. (Baehr, 1991:34-40)

Other key themes were the re-creation of the world, through imageries of virginity, childhood, and womb symbols; and of resurrection, cosmogony and reincarnation, of tsars, or by tsars, for example Peter the Great resurrecting Russia from the dead (Baehr, 1991:10, 41-49). The centrality of Peter the Great in many of these themes reiterates the significance of his reign and reforms for the changes in the Russian cultural and political identity, and this period saw a strengthening the idea of the 'marriage' of the Father Tsar to Mother Russia, and the related, increasingly stark oppositional relation between the state and the people. (Neumann, 1996:9-10)

The most central theme of the paradise myth is the idea of heaven on earth, of a spiritual paradise, of a 'sacred space', in Baehr's words "a place separated from the rest of the universe by some physical or symbolic boundary between "good" and "evil" or between the "sacred" and the "profane"" (Baehr, 1991:10) which reiterates the dichotomised structure of the Russian messianic framework.

Baehr also highlights the connection between freemasonry and Russian messianic discourse in the late eighteenth century, with most major writers in this

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[31] This, Baehr explains, was closely related to the ideology of royal absolutism, "the idea of Moscow (Muscovite Russia) as the Third Rome; "the imperial idea," connecting the rulers of Moscow to the imperial line of the Roman Emperor Augustus; the depiction of Russian monarchs as universal Christian sovereigns; and the ideology that the Muscovite sovereigns received their authority from God." (Baehr, 1991:18-19)

period being masons, supposedly committed to finding the higher wisdom (*premudrost'*) that would restore the lost paradise. Masonic allegory with myths of an earthly paradise, the focus on human self-correction and perfection and general mysticism reflects and is reflected in the general Russian religious framework of thought, and this part of Baehr's study can help us understand many themes of contemporary Russian messianism: the strong elements of spiritualism, neo-paganism, New Age and occultism in today's Russian discourse can be understood not only, as Laura Engelstein suggests, as products of the worldwide New Age movement and general 'postmodern eclecticism' but as phenomena with a long history in Russian discourse.[32]

4.3.3   From Romantic nationalism to Revolution

i)   *The Slavophile-Westerniser debate and its paradoxes*

The westernising reforms of Peter the Great had an enormous impact on Russian identity, leading Russian messianic discourse to become both an objection to, and an aspect of westernisation. As our introduction described, playwright Denis Fovizin complained at the end of the eighteenth century about the great contradiction between the extreme inferiority of and equally extreme superiority towards Europe: "How can we remedy two contradictory and most harmful prejudices: the first, that everything with us is awful, while in foreign lands everything is good; the second, that in foreign lands everything is awful, while with us everything is good?" (Hosking, 1997:198) This well-known polarisation of Russian identity discourse in what is called the Slavophile-Westerniser debate, based on the question of which model of statecraft and identity to follow: Europe's, or a distinctive Russian one.

As Neumann points out, the variants of Russian messianism in this period can also more particularly be understood as reactions in Russia against the Decembrist uprising – the Decembrists were represented as having been led astray by

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[32] She writes: "[T]here is nothing peculiarly Russian or specifically post-Soviet about the current penchant for horoscopes and New Age. Today's Russia is certainly burdened with challenges specific to the moment at hand, but its spiritual outlook is not out of sync with the times." (Engelstein, 1998:877)

Europeanism, so Russia needed to morally reassess its significant other – Europe – and as a result, various strands of messianic thinking arose. (Neumann, 1996:20)

The ambivalence towards Europe/the West, as well as the deep rift the westernized upper class and the culturally traditional Russian peasantry - both occasioned by the interaction with Enlightenment – have defined Russian identity construction ever since. Boris Groys extends the split between the elite and masses to a "psychological split in the soul of every educated Russian individual between his European education and the Russian mode of life. One could say that Russia here appears for a Russian man endowed with European consciousness as the Other, as his unconscious." (Groys, 1992:190) Groys further describes the complication for Russian identity which occurred when Europe turned away from the universalist ideology of the Enlightenment as a result of the French revolution and Napoleonic wars and turned towards a variety of unique national cultures: "At that very moment when Russia still believed that it was moving along the path of universal Enlightenment, the very idea of the Enlightenment collapsed, and the relatively easy task of becoming enlightened was replaced for Russia with the much more complex task of becoming original." (Groys, 1992:186) German philosophy and Romantic nationalism thus came to have great influence on Russian thinkers who, using this array of new – western - intellectual tools, developed and popularised both new and old Russian messianic narratives in their response to westernisation.[33] The musicologist and cultural critic Richard Taruskin highlights the irony of the elitist nature of the Romantic nationalist discourse:

> At a time when the inhabitants of the Russian countryside thought of themselves simply as "Christian folk" (*krest'yanye*) or "the Orthodox" (*pravoslavniye*) and would never have dreamed of claiming their *barin* (the owner of the land to which they were confined to by law) as their countryman, the most enlightened (that is, Enlightened) and Westernized barins were already thinking of their "souls," together with themselves, as constituting the *narod*, the Russian "people." (Taruskin, 1997:3)

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[33] Neumann sums up this paradox: "the core of Slavophilism was a protest against Russia following the models which emerged in the Europe of the double revolution. Nevertheless, Slavophilism itself was actually an imported cultural programme, an adaptation of ideas whose genesis was inextricably linked to the very same double revolution which the Slavophiles despised." (Neumann, 1996:39)

So it should be emphasised that the Slavophile-Westerniser debate in this period took place in elite discourse. The thinking of both individual Slavophiles and of the discourse as a whole developed over time, mutually influencing the state and the Westernizing positions, which is why it is impossible to outline any coherent doctrine.

Very generally speaking, the idea of Slavophilism in the 1840s and 1850s was that only the backward but spiritual, Orthodox Russia could lead the 'modern', materialistic and decadent Europe to redemption, and the Slavophiles sought to demonstrate the uniqueness of Russia, the organic nature of the Russian nation, and indeed its spiritual superiority to the West.[34]

ii)   *Chaadaev: an example of the ambivalence towards the Other*

A defining moment for this debate was the publication in 1836 of the first letter of the intellectual (and ex-follower of the Decembrists) Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856), in which he tore Russia's past, future and present to pieces (in fact he claimed that Russia had neither) with statements like: "We belong to that number of nations which do not seem to make up an integral part of the human race, but which exist only to teach the world some great lesson." (Chaadaev, 1969:38) The importance of Chadaev's letter can be indicated by the fact that it is seen by major scholars as triggering both Slavophilism (Walicki, quoted in Duncan, 2000:20) and Official Nationality (Neumann, 1996:xii).

While the origins of Slavophilism and Official Nationality of course cannot be reduced to Chaadaev's letter alone, the impact of it on Russian society at the time was very great, becoming part of the massive ideational challenge of the French revolutions and the Decembrist uprising. In Neumann's words:

> The Decembrist uprising demonstrated to the state that it could not dominate the Russian debate about Europe simply by reiterating a legitimist position, and by keeping other positions from being formulated. Other Russians, such as Prince Odoevskiy, saw the Decembrist uprising as an example of how

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[34] The most comprehensive work on Slavophilism remains Walicki's *The Slavophile Controversy* (1975) but Neumann's *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (1996) also provides a rich and detailed contribution on Slavophile thinkers within a wider political and cultural context.

seemingly positive European ideas could slowly corrupt Russia's best and brightest. Their reaction was to set store by a variant of Russian messianism where the Christian idea of Moscow as the Third Rome was played down, but where the Christian historicism underpinning this idea was retained. Inspired by German idealism, they elaborated on the organic nationalist thinking of the 'Russian tendency' and established a Romantic nationalist position in the Russian debate about Europe. (Neumann, 1996:xi-xii)

Chaadaev challenged core assumptions of the leading Russian identity representations and his statements raised issues that could be disagreed with but not ignored:

One of the worst features of our unique civilization is that we have not yet discovered the truths that have elsewhere become truisms, even among nations that in many respects are far less advanced than we are. It is the result of our never having walked side by side with other nations; we belong to none of the great families of mankind: we are neither of the West nor of the East, and we possess the traditions of neither. Somehow divorced from time, we have not been touched by the universal education of mankind. (Chaadaev, 1969:34)

As Groys evaluates, "Russia for Chaadaev appears to be, in that sense, something radically Other in relation to the history of reason, culture, spirit or even soul in any of its forms: it is something thoroughly excluded from the universal Logos. [. . .] In Chaadaev's view, Russia has historical significance only as a unique and terrifying example which demonstrates to the rest of the world the devastating effects of total isolation from universal spiritual unity." (Groys, 1992:188) Chaadaev later repented of his judgments in the first letters and, under mutual influence from the Slavophiles, developed a form of Russian messianism where Russia's backwardness would constitute its strength, and Russia's role as providing a lesson to the world is ascribed messianic significance. The evolution of Chaadaev's thinking is symptomatic of the complexity of the identity debates of this period, and perfectly illustrates the ambivalent inferiority/superiority complex towards the Other underpinning Russian messianism.

iii)   *The reproduction of early messianic narratives*

Messianic discourse was most explicit in the Slavophile, anti-Western discourse which developed later into pan-Slavism and Eurasianism, together with a multitude of similar sub-movements and trends such as *narodnichestvo* and Dostoevsky's *pochvenniki*. The Romantic nationalist position reproduced various old messianic narratives as well as developing new ones – for example Kalkandjieva points out how the discourse Moscow as New Jerusalem under the Slavophiles was used, in its national dimension, to overcome the gap between rural and urban Russia. (Kalkandjieva, 2000:256) Pushkin contributed to the development of the sacrificial theme of Russia suffering to protect Europe through for example his text "To the Slanderers of Russia" in which he defended Russia's crushing of the Polish uprising against the strong critique from various sides in Europe. (Duncan, 2000:21)

And the narratives related to the tsar were revived in their various forms. Foreigners visiting Russia in this period noted how the Russians, speaking about the Father Tsar as the ideal of the Russian people, called the Emperor "the Russian Christ". (Storchak, 2003:20) The Slavophiles used the old distinctions of messianic discourse between the land and the state in an effective way, challenging the official ideology. They were not seen favourably upon by the state in the first half of the century, as they advocated the idea of the people and the land, the organic nation, as being the main bearer of history as opposed to the tsar. As for the state, it used the discourse of *Holy Russia* in the decade following the European springtime of 1848, thus borrowing from the messianic discourse of the Slavophiles it had previously sought to restrict. (Neumann, 1996)

iv)   *The Russian soul, and Sobornost'*

It was in the middle of the nineteenth century that the now cliché-like notion of the Russian soul developed. Prince Odoevsky, playwright, one of the "wisdom-lovers" (*lyubomudrie*) and an influential follower of Schelling was one of the first Russian writers to develop the theme of Europe's soullessness: through the industrial

revolution Europe, like Faust, had sold its soul and was hence dying from *pustodushie* (empty soul). (Carter, 1990:7) Russia then had a great task of "re-infusing" the in the technically advanced Europe "instinctive" powers which backward Russia retained, and its great mission was "to save Europe from Ossification". (Neumann, 1996:8,20) Stephen Carter traces the development of the concept of the collective Russian soul and shows that it was preceded by far by the idea of Western soullessness, that it appears that it was born as late as through Belinsky's praise of Gogol and then changed over time, first directed toward a distinctly Russian future, later this used as a tool with which to criticize the West.

> The idea that the Russians had a soul, then, appears to have been neither a direct borrowing of European theories about national souls in general nor a truly Russian invention. [. . .] In a broader sense, the emergence of the "Russian soul" coincided in time with the emergence of the Russians in the European consciousness, along with the Americans, as a people who were young and had a future, not old with a past. (Carter, 1990:14-15)

'The Russian soul' is thus a perfect example of a popularised concept that is often represented as age-old and ingrained but in fact was developed in the late nineteenth century Russia and then greatly boosted by Western intellectuals.

Another key notion of the Russian messianic discourse, developed in this period by the Slavophile writer Aleksei Khomyakov (1804-1860), is the principle of *sobornost'*, roughly translated as communality or conciliarity and referring to true Christian unity, or 'the initial form of life from which the religious dogmas of the first Christian faith were born'. (Groys, 1992:190-91) It is through its *sobornost'* that Orthodoxy, having preserved Russian communal life, supposedly can reunite Catholicism and Protestantism in mutual love. Again, this messianic notion is underpinned by the Russian self/Other dichotomy, as Groys analyses: "It is still precisely its extra historicity, its Otherness in relation to the history of the world spirit, that makes Russia able to incarnate true Christianity in its ultimate synthesis, to give it real life." (Groys, 1992:190-91)

Following the revolutionary times of Europe in 1848, the debate between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers changed, as the Russian state increased censorship, thus restricting public political space. The state around this time began to borrow from the messianic discourse of the Slavophiles and did so for around a decade, but with the defeat of Russia in the Crimean war, the state returned to Westernisation. (Neumann, 1996:xii) The discourse of the Slavophiles and others of the romantic nationalist position had in the beginning been rather introvert and expressed within a religious framework but towards the middle of the century the religious framework had been abandoned and Russia's superiority of spirit and historical role was stressed. The discourse developed into pan-Slavism in the 1860s and confrontation with Europe began to be advocated.

Pan-Slavism dominated Russian discourse in the 1880s, strongly influencing the official state discourse and functioning as legitimating Russian imperialism and eastward expansion. Ivan Aksakov (1823-1886) wrote that "[m]ore than once in the future Europe will be divided into two camps: on one side Russia, with all Orthodox, Slavonic tribes (including Greece), on the other – the entire Protestant, Catholic, and even Mohammedan and Jewish Europe put together." (Quoted in Neumann, 1996:63) The ideas of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* enjoyed great revival in Slavophilism and Pan-Slavism. Pan-Slavist Danilevsky, for example, wrote in 1869 that:

> From an objective, factual viewpoint, the Russian and the majority of the other Slav peoples achieved the historical destiny of becoming, with the Greeks, the chief guardians of the living tradition of religious truth, Orthodoxy, and in this way the continuers of the great cause, which was the lot of Israel and Byzantium: to be the God-chosen peoples (*narodami bogoizbrannymi*). (Duncan, 2000:33)

Notably, Danilevsky's categorisation of civilizations into ten historical-cultural types, of which the young Slav one must overtake and finish off the old European, "Romano-Germanic" one, is strongly reminiscent of Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of

Civilizations', a work which has had great impact on the contemporary Russian intellectual debate. (Tolz, 1998:102) Leontev further developed Danilevsky's ideas, and conceptualised the Russian mission as deriving from the heritage of Byzantine Orthodoxy and consisting in saving Europe from herself by "uniting the Chinese state model with Indian religiousness, and subordinating European socialism to them." (Quoted in Duncan, 2000:43)

vi)   *Universalism and particularism*

Other distinctly messianic writers influenced by Slavophilism are Fedor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Vladimir Solovev (1853-1900), and Nikolai Fedorov (1827-1903). Dostoevsky can be called an ideologist of Russian messianism as he developed, bolstered, philosophised about, romanticised and politicised various key narratives of Russian messianic discourse including the Orthodox mission to save humanity, the Slavonic cause as expressed by the Slavophiles, the Christ-like humility and suffering of the Russian people sacrificing itself for Europe, its various God-chosen and religious qualities, and the universality of the Russian man and many more. His overt politicisation of messianism was in the form of active propagation for the Russian imperial expansionism justified by messianic discourse:

> Not only did Dostoevsky support imperial Russian rule throughout the territory that it possessed during his lifetime, but he also encouraged its further expansion into Constantinople, perhaps even to India. The way Dostoevsky mustered support for these claims among his compatriots was exactly by appealing to a transcendental version of the commonplace nineteenth-century ideas of historical and ahistorical nations, namely that of the Russian civilization which according to him encompassed all of humanity: "Yes, the Russian's destiny is incontestably all-European and universal. To become a genuine and all-round Russian means perhaps to become a brother of all men, a *universal man*, if you please" (Neumann, 1999:19)

Russian messianism, as we have seen so far, thus contains both explicit notions of particularism and universalism and there is often a tension within individual discourses between the two.

In some of Dostoevsky's writings, the Jew figures as negative Other – the Antichrist – with eschatological warnings for a Jewish world conspiracy in which the Jews, capitalism, socialism and general spiritual and moral decadence are pitted against the Christian, pure, pan-human, all-uniting, loving Russian people.[35] The Jews suffered strong persecution under Alexander III and Nicholas II, first being blamed for the murder of Alexander II in 1881 then as subjects to various pogroms in the years to come, often justified by variations on the type of anti-Semitic messianic/nationalistic discourse developed by Dostoevsky among others. (Neumann, 1996:91)

Solovev, the mystical philosopher, distanced himself from many Slavophile and pan-Slavist writers because of their xenophobic, anti-Semitic and nationalist tendencies, instead writing extensively about Russia's messianic ideal and role based on his studies of the Jews and Judaism, dwelling at length on the tension in Russian – and any – messianism between particularism and universalism. Judith Kornblatt describes how the Jews, for Solovev a people 'both choosing and chosen by God,' who 'at their best are both particular and universal' came to serve as a model of Russia for true 'spiritual nation-hood,' as opposed to self-proclaimed "patriotic" messianism or particularistic nationalism. (Kornblatt, 1997:158-59,73-74) Solovev envisaged that the strengths of East, with its Muslim "in-human God", and West, with its "Godless human", were "going to be resolved in a new whole" and it was "Russia's great mission to realise this third and final phase of world history." (Duncan, 2000:44)

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[35] "The Yid and his bank are now reigning over everything: over Europe, education, civilization, socialism – especially socialism, for he will use it to uproot Christianity and destroy its civilization. And when nothing but anarchy remains, the Yid will be in control of everything. For while he goes about preaching socialism, he will stick together with his own, and after the riches of Europe will have been wasted, the Yid's bank will still be there. The Antichrist will come and stand over the anarchy." (Quoted in Duncan, 2000:40)

In the second half of the century, the Westernisers – whose main concern can be said to have been to reconcile universalism and nationalism – split into liberals, Russian socialists and embryonic Marxists (Neumann, 1996:39). The Marxist position grew strong in the 1870s, to be restricted in the 1880s after the assassination of Alexander II, a decade in which the state came to lean towards the Romantic, Slavophile position. In the 1890s however, the debate between the populists and the Marxists dominated the Russian intellectual discourse, only really interrupted by Solov'ev from the Romantic, religious thinkers.

Various elements of messianic discourse can be found in Russian socialism, populism, Marxism and even liberalism. This should by no means appear strange, as all the various positions on Russia, her national and civilizational identity and path of development, about the different Europes with its different models and so on were never isolated ideologies but continuously discussed, contested, rearticulated and influenced by other discourses – above was mentioned as an example the contradictions in the development of thought of for example Chaadaev.

A key thinker in this group and period is Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), leader and founder of Russian socialism. Those who followed Herzen in his hopes of a specifically Russian socialism, consolidated around the Russian peasant commune, came to call themselves populists (*narodniki*). They were strongly influenced by Marxism in their view not only of the development of capitalism in Russia but, more importantly, of Western capitalism. "The life and thought of the Russian peasant were exalted as a model of European development at large, and contrasted with decadent European individualism." (Neumann, 1996:52) Russian populism can be effectively understood as working within the same messianic framework of thought as the Slavophiles, in which Europe has the role of an inferior and decadent other and Russia with various superior qualities being its role model and, ultimately, Saviour. This framework is part of the explanation to why Russian socialism and Marxism differed so much from their Western counterparts.

Storchak argues that it was the essentially religious framework based on Christian ideas and concepts central to Slavophilism that defined Russian populist

and revolutionary thought, and provides a lengthy and interesting discussion on the genealogy of their ideas. He highlights their use of the Christian notions of a "new heaven" and a "new world", which the revolutionaries had learnt to expect and hence strived to achieve on earth; a universal brotherhood of peoples and nations; the idea of original sin (the age old sins of the bourgeoisie against the people); the idea of the Messiah, whose role is assigned to the Russian people (or the proletariat in the more European accounts); the focus on asceticism; the idealisation of the communal life; the view of the state as an historically necessary evil; high missionary activity, sectarian organisation, readiness to voluntary self-sacrifice and so on.[36] (2005:46-78) He also points to the intertextuality between the religious and revolutionary discourses in the "sacralisation" of various concepts:

> Besides the shown quasi-religious (the religion of "man-deity" [*chelovekho-bozhia*] in Dostoevsky's terms) "symbol of faith", the anarchists sacralised such understandings such as "human reason" and "human consciousness," having given them a status of inerrability in the knowledge of destiny and justice. They planned to achieve their missionary goals by two methods: the spreading of the rational sciences and socialist propaganda. (Storchak, 2005:74)

Duncan also mentions Anatoli Lunacharsky's (1875-1933) "God-building" movement and its aim to construct the messianic kingdom on earth, using Christological imageries to depict the proletariat climbing Golgotha, with blood flowing. (Duncan, 2000:52) The populist and revolutionary positions were thus similar to those of the Slavophiles on many key points – though, as Neumann points out, the positions could never merge due to their radically different views on industrialisation. (Neumann, 1996:71)

4.3.4   The Soviet era

i)   *Revolution, Marxism and Bolshevism as messianism*

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[36] As an illustration he cites Mikhail Bakunin: "It is my deepest conviction that all divine religions must be followed by Socialism, which in a religious sense is faith in the fulfilment of man's purpose on earth." (Storchak, 2005:74)

Russian identity production and messianism with the Revolution and in the Soviet era can be seen as characterised both by radical change and deep continuity. There was radical change in terms of the traditional question of Russia being either inside or outside history (see for example Kujundzic, 2000) – the revolution can be seen as passing Russian collective identity from one realm outside of history – exceptionalist feudalism – to inside another – universalist socialism. Messianism is also seen in different accounts as an explanatory factor and manifestation of, as well as encouraged by the revolutions.[37] (Duncan, 2000:53, Gill, 1990, 1998:2)

And yet, at the political level, this universalism can be seen in terms of continuity of Russian imperialism. As Rowley writes:

> Like the American notion of Manifest Destiny, Bolshevik millenarianism was secular. It did not propound the literal belief in a Day of Judgment, an end of time, and the divine transfiguration of the world. Instead, the Bolsheviks were metaphorically millenarian in their belief that the Russian proletariat was leading the way to a better future for all humankind. Bolshevism thus carried on the essential imperialist and universalist mood (with messianic overtones) of Imperial Russian political culture. (Rowley, 1999:1599)

And despite the radical changes to Russian state and society, there was a strong continuity also of the traditional Russian civilisational identity debate. As Tsygankov describes:

> Although liberal Westernizers could no longer be part of the official discourse, arguments between those who wanted to ''teach'' Europe and those who wanted to build Russia's own distinct civilization continued. The former line was especially pronounced in the Lenin-Trotski doctrine of world revolution which was based on the self-perception of Soviet Russia as superior to the ''decadent'' and ''rotten'' western capitalist civilization and justified a widespread external expansion. (Tsygankov, 2008:767)

We see thus a continuity of the messianic self/Other framework of the West as decadent, dying and unspiritual, pitted against a superior, messianic Russia and the New Soviet man. Groys also sees definitive continuity of Russian traditional discourse also into the Soviet era: "Soviet Marxism also cannot be properly

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[37] For a useful overview, see Shlapentokh's 'The End of the Russian Idea' (1992).

understood outside the framework of the Russian philosophical tradition. Indeed, the goal of Soviet Marxism became the realization, in Russian life, of the socialist theories formulated in the West, with the aim of achieving the final unity of the world. Even the most orthodox Stalinist dialectical materialism, under closer scrutiny, reveals a certain continuity of traditional Russian thought." (Groys, 1992:195-96)

Many narratives and themes from previous centuries were reproduced by the Bolsheviks and other authorities in the first decade of the Soviet state, alongside with new ones, based both on exceptionalism and universalism. The creation by the state of a new, Soviet man echoed the creationist narratives from the eighteenth century, and the creation of heaven on earth through international revolution initiated by Russia appeared as a new version of the mission to save the world. And further, as Prizel describes, "the Bolsheviks' long-term nationalities policy further blurred the Russian identity and bonded it to a "civilizing" role both universally and within the empire." (Prizel, 1998:182)

ii)   *The early Eurasianists*

The early Eurasianists were émigré Russian intellectuals who in the 1920s were further developing messianic discourses from the previous century, building particularly on themes developed by the Panslavists about the West as Romano-Germanic civilization and the idea of *translatio imperii* with Russia ready to take the torch and become the centre of world culture. Eurasianism proposed a Russian 'third way', asserting the existence of a third continent and special, organic, civilisation between East and West – Eurasia – with a distinct historical destiny – similar to what Krizhanich had proposed two centuries back (Storchak, 2003:30).

Marlene Laruelle's recent book *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (2008) is the best available and most comprehensive work on Eurasianism in both its historical and contemporary forms. Laruelle finds in early Eurasianism a definitive continuity of thinking about Russia's "otherness" in relation to Europe; and of traditional Russian messianism: "Because of its messianism, Eurasianism's philosophy of history conforms with the standard of Russian intellectual history."

(Laruelle, 2008:17,48). Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi, perhaps the most well known Eurasianist, wrote that "Europe is masquerading as the keeper of the world civilization to the detriment of all other civilization", epitomising the critique of the West which appears as the persistent core of Russian messianism. He maintained that Russia must stop to follow Europe as a model and instead fight cosmopolitanism as "there is truly only one conflict: the Romano-Germans versus all the rest of the world, *Europe and* [that is, versus] *Humanity*" (Quoted in Neumann, 1996:112,14).

The Eurasianists had a complex often pragmatic relation to communism and the Soviet Union, as both "united against the West, sympathized with non-European cultures *by definition*, and condemned the European experience *out of principle*" and both wanted to make a 'clean sweep of the past' – but the Eurasianists rejected Marxism and the distinction between proletariat and bourgeois (both Western social concepts) and the Soviet internationalism, since their key theme was precisely the organic nation and faith expressed in culture. (Laruelle, 2008:26-29)

Laruelle describes how Russia and Eurasia were used synonymously and interchangeably depending on context and purpose, with Russians represented as "the connecting element of Eurasian national diversity" and Russia's inherent supranationality was said to have been revealed with Mongol Empire. (Laruelle, 2008:39-41) Orthodoxy was central to the ideology, despite a superficial openness to Eastern religions.[38] On the whole, early or classical Eurasianism can be defined as an ideology of empire justified in terms of spirituality and the reification of space, with a constant internal tension between metaphysical discourse, culturalism and politics. (Laruelle, 2008:47)

iii)   *Berdyaev and the Russian idea*

Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), influential theoretician of Russian messianism and author of *The Russian Idea*, wrote extensively on Russian philosophy of history and politics from the turn of the century and over the first four decades of the Soviet era.

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[38] Laruelle describes: "Eurasia is depicted as a multinational and polyconfessional space, but the Orthodox Church alone is considered as worthy of representing the ideology of the future Eurasian state." (Laruelle, 2008:45)

His thinking changed significantly with time, having started as a Marxist, later to become a Christian existentialist and critic of the Bolshevik regime. Poltoratzky distinguishes between his 'historical attitude before 1920' and his 'eschatological attitude of the 1940s'. (Poltoratzky, 1967:195) In terms of the distinction between the two master narratives of 'Third Rome' and 'Holy Russia', Berdyaev stressed, in his later period, that the Russian idea is "not the idea of a flourishing culture and mighty kingdom" (i.e. not 'Third Rome') but "the eschatological idea of the Kingdom of God" (or 'Holy Russia'). (Cited in Poltoratzky, 1967:205-06)

His interpretation of Russian history, thought and identity, and the development of anarchism and revolution as the antithesis of messianism are the most interesting aspects of his prolific writing in the context of our study. Where do we position his thought with regards to the central Slavophile/Westerniser problem? His own view was that both positions were outdated and flawed because or their flawed evaluation of the Petrine reforms.[39]

For Berdyaev, precisely dualism had been central to Russian collective identity and thinking since Peter the Great's westernising reforms in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. He saw the reforms, at the same time as the consolidation of serfdom, as creating a schism between state absolutism and the Russian messianic, sacred kingdom, and between the upper, leading stratum of Russian society and the masses. Poltoratzky describes: "The church schism was thus a result not only of ignorance and dark adherence to ritual, but also of doubt whether the Russian kingdom was the true orthodox kingdom." (Poltoratzky, 1967:201-03)

In Berdyaev's account, the 'Russian national consciousness' responded to Peter's revolutionary reforms by constructing the narrative that the Russian messianic kingdom was taken over by the Antichrist. The church schism and the distrust of the state as the 'Antichrist' – instead of the messianic Christ – led to the schismatic thinking of the Russian intelligentsia in the 19th century. The intelligentsia had accepted Petrine universalism and westernisation but rejected the empire, and schism was manifest in its struggle against the empire and the emergence of the

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[39] "Slavophils 'did not understand the inevitability of Peter's reforms for the mission of Russia in the world; they refused to recognise that only in the Petrine epoch did thought and word, including the thought of Slavophils themselves, become possible, as did also great Russian literature'. Westernisers, on the other hand, 'did not understand the originality of Russia, refused to understand the painfulness of Peter's reforms, did not see the particularity of Russia'." (Cited in Poltoratzky, 1967:196)

stateless anarchist ideal of the 19th century. Ironically the intelligentsia, which opposed the state in the name of the people, was persecuted first by the authorities, then later by the masses through the revolution 'which it had itself been preparing for almost a century.' (Poltoratzky, 1967:201-03)

For Berdyaev, revolutionary Russian thought was as a perverted incarnation of true Russian messianism, and he concluded on the schismatic nature of Russian identity that the "Russian people, as an apocalyptic people, cannot create a middle-of-the-road humanist realm; it can create either a brotherhood in Christ or a comradeship in Antichrist." (Cited in Duncan, 2000:55) Berdyaev's writings must be treated both as a primary and secondary source on Russian messianism, with himself as both its advocate and its theoretician. While Berdyaev's reification of 'the innate Russian messianism' contributed to an often populist and reductionist Western historiography (particularly in the Cold War context) on Russia, his notions of schism and dualism in Russian collective identity correlate to the findings of for example Michael Urban, cited in Chapter Two, on the dichotomised character of contemporary – and historical – Russian public discourse (Urban, 1998:970).

iv)   *Stalinism*

If in Bolshevism and Marxist-Leninism we find reproduced both eschatological, universalist and expansionist narratives, the mission of which is to spread Communism internationally and create if not heaven on earth then the perfect, classless society, in Stalinism we see variations on other more particularistic and isolationist messianic themes – a return to exceptionalist feudalism and nationalism. "Socialism in one country" in some respects reproduces the master narrative of *Holy Russia* outlined before. Russia – or now the Soviet Union – must, as the bearer of absolute truth, separate itself from the rest of the world in order not to be defiled, and purge itself from internal enemies.

This was reflected in the isolationist foreign policy up until the war, and in the state's increasing suspicion, paranoid control of public space and the of private lives of its citizens. Storchak's above description of the state measures toward "ideological hygiene" in the sixteenth century could easily be mistaken for a

describing Soviet ideological practice: the strict border controls, the separation of foreigners from the citizens and the demonisation of internal and external others. Anti-Semitism was also part of the state discourse, again intertwined with "the West."[40] The purging of 'public enemies' at al levels of society was as we know literal during the Great Terror.

Another traditional messianic narrative that became part of official discourse is related to the glorification of Stalin's person, especially supported and articulated in messianic terminology by the Orthodox Church in the years of its more privileged position. Apart from reproducing the Russian archetype of power, the family-metaphor, with the tradition of the ruler being portrayed as a father of the nation (*batiushka*) (Hellberg-Hirn, 2000:10), Stalin was also presented as being chosen by God, historical destiny or divine providence, and in some instances is even likened to Christ. (Duncan, 2000:58-59)

From the mid-1930s patriotism and Russian nationalism had been rehabilitated in Soviet official discourse, and there was a culmination of this kind of rhetoric in and after the Great Fatherland War with nationalism and patriotism expressed in terms of sacrifice and suffering. The defeat of the Nazis was linked with the defeat of the Tatar-Mongols and of Napoleon, battles in which Russia was portrayed as having sacrificed itself to save Europe from alien invasion. Interestingly, Sidorov highlights the little known fact that Stalin, as part of a World War II scheme to bring Eastern Europe and the Middle East under Soviet control planned – but ultimately failed – to use the Russian Orthodox Church as agent in "the creation of a 'Moscow vatican', a Moscow-centered transformation of the Orthodox world." (Sidorov, 2006:324)

v)   *Cold War and Soviet missionism*

There was a significant continuity of the messianic framework in the whole Cold War discourse with the now radicalised self/Other bipolar framework. The Cold War, Campbell argues in his study on US foreign policy, discussed in Chapter Two,

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[40] Duncan writes: "The virulent attack on Western culture, characterised as bourgeois cosmopolitanism, continued until the death of Stalin. It developed into an anti-Semitic purge, as "cosmopolitan" became code for "Jewish". It peaked in January 1953 when Jewish doctors were accused of plotting to kill Stalin."(Duncan, 2000:57)

notes that the term 'Cold War' was coined by a fourteenth century Spanish writer to represent the persistent conflict between Christians and Arabs and that correspondingly, the Cold War as we know it 'was not a time or context specific phenomenon but rather part of the ongoing process of US identity production through foreign policy', that is, through discourses of danger.' (Campbell, 1991, 1998:53) It was, he argues, "a struggle into which any number of potential candidates, regardless of their strategic capacity, were slotted as a threat." (Campbell, 1991, 1998:33) The same could be said with regards to Russia and the Soviet Union where, as in the US, the conflict was not only geopolitical but represented in cultural and ideological terms. (Campbell, 1991, 1998:25) Both Stalinist and later Soviet "foreign policy" in Campbell's broader sense thus served to forge a collective identity by active othering, creating internal and external common enemies.

Shearman, writing from a conventional foreign policy perspective, notes how in Russia, empire and mission were linked to the self/Other dichotomy: "During the Cold War Russia's identity and its destination were defined by the Soviet empire/state and the mission/ideology of the Communist Party. Identity and destination were both linked to the conflict between 'East' and 'West'." (Shearman, 2001:254-55) Discussing messianism's possible influence on Soviet foreign policy, Duncan points to for example the invasion of Afghanistan as "an extension of the efforts to subdue central Asia." (Duncan, 2000:146) The discourse of a mission, based on the bipolar framework, thus extended beyond the Soviet empire itself and was used to legitimise the accession of the various Soviet satellite states as well as 'protected' third world countries.

vi)   *Romantic messianism in the Soviet period*

The later Soviet era from Khrushchev saw a proliferation of Romantic messianism in unofficial public discourse. Among these were the literary group nicknamed the *derevenshchiki* who, advocating "the protection of peasant morality and customs, the villages themselves, and the churches and other historical monuments of Russian

culture" began to frame their discourse in terms of a conflict between the Russian natural environment and technological process. (Duncan, 2000:62-67) This discourse would be reproduced in the decades to come pitting the natural, spiritual and protector-of-the-Earth Russia against the heavily industrialised, technological destroyer-of-the-environment West.

Various messianic themes were revived in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the growing revival of Russian nationalism, and the Russian revolutions and other key events in Soviet history were often framed within a spiritual rather than Marxist framework. On the whole, Agadjanian describes the 1960s as "a period of ongoing social and cultural diversification and, at the same time, of a reactive hardening of the Soviet regime; it made the institutional framework increasingly at odds with the changing society." (Agadjanian, 2001b:473-74) A key publication in this period was the literary journal *Molodaya gvardiya* with the publishing house of the same name in which the general messianic discourse of the cosmopolitanism, soullessness and Americanization of the Western world would for decades be counter posed to the spiritual Russia, often mixed with strong anti-Semitic discourse, and where "the October revolution was presented as a manifestation of this Russian spirit rather than a stage in the international class struggle." (Duncan, 2000:71)

A key thinker in this period to consider is of course Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), who apart from his books published much through the *samizdat* journal *Veche*. Rowley argues that it is wrong to see Solzhenitsyn as a Russian messianist, since Russian messianism is inherently linked to imperialism which Solzhenitsyn opposes – in fact he has faced harsh opposition for not, like (mistakenly called) right-wing nationalists, denouncing the break-up of the Soviet empire. Instead Solzhenitsyn is a nationalist in the true sense of the word as he speaks for a Russian organic nation, the ethnic Russian people and Russian culture. (Rowley, 1997) Rowley's point is of great importance, especially as the label nationalist is still used to depict the growing general Russian chauvinism and imperialism. Yet, again, the framework on Russia and the West which Solzhenitsyn uses is certainly same old Romantic messianic framework of the previous century, with a strong religious imagery arguably based on the Holy Russia master narrative. Solzhenitsyn reproduces and reinforces it by his damning critiques of the West with its spiritual

inferiority and false ideas of freedom – "We see it today crawling on hands and knees, its will paralyzed, uneasy about the future, spiritually racked and dejected" he writes (quoted in Neumann, 1996:143) – as well as referring to messianic concepts such as the 'Russian national mission'. Russia, he argued, should isolate itself from the Europe and the world and "look to its unspoilt Northeast [. . .] where 'free people with a free understanding of our national mission can resurrect these great spaces, awaken them, heal them'." (Quoted in Neumann, 1996:146) As the next chapter will show, Solzhenitsyn's and related positions of messianism continued to have an important place in public discourse in the 1990s.

Just as Storchak shows that the thinking of the Westernisers of the nineteenth century was often framed in a messianic discourse, Julia Brun-Zejmis has argued that messianic thinking was developed among the secular democrats in the Samizdat movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This section of the intelligentsia, who in its struggle for human rights was 'spiritually transformed' began to deploy narratives of martyrdom, in some interpretations suffering through "a Russian Golgotha in order to fulfil its moral mission." (Brun-Zejmis, 1991:656) Brun-Zejmis draws a parallel to the compensatory role of messianism in Chaadaev's contradictory thinking and argues that the "messianic consciousness shared by some Samizdat writers of the 1970s can be viewed as an expression of their overwhelming guilt for the Soviet past and their feelings of national inferiority." (Brun-Zejmis, 1991:658)

vii)   *Glasnost, perestroika, and the – temporary - end of history*

The end of the Soviet Union came with a change in the state's position on the West as Other; from enmity and military confrontation against the 'camp of imperialism' over to one where the West, or the 'capitalist system' was depicted as morally inferior but possible to cooperate with, not "wholly Other". (Neumann, 1996:156-57) Eventually, "those who favored Russia's strong cultural association with Europe persisted and ultimately prevailed" (Tsygankov, 2008:767) and in this framework, "Russia was not held to be morally superior to Europe; rather, it was seen as its potential equal and in certain respects its contemporary inferior." (Neumann,

110

1999:163-64) While socialist distinctiveness continued to be part of official discourse during perestroika, Soviet missionism thus gradually had to give way to an increasing desire to become a 'normal' European power.

As Soviet identity and statecraft had been legitimised through Soviet missionism and the struggle against the West/imperialist camp/capitalist system in the dichotomised self/Other framework, the changes in the view of the Other led to fateful changes in the state itself, leading eventually to the collapse of its institutional structures. Or, as Prozorov argues, "the Soviet system was nonreformable simply because in that period nobody could be bothered reforming it. Gorbachev's Perestroika therefore marks a tragic attempt at a grand historical project in post-historical times." (Prozorov, 2008:218) The change away from the dichotomised messianic framework at state level ironically led to an outburst of particularistic variants of nationalism and messianism as public political space was expanded. (Duncan, 2000:115) As Agadjanian describes: "The overall identity crisis that developed during the course of this disintegration was essentially dominated by the energy of particularism [. . .] A natural outcome of this was the growing importance of such symbolically strong identities as those of ethnic, linguistic and religious grouping." (Agadjanian, 2001b:473-74) The next chapter will discuss the prolific messianic discourse of the politics of the 1990s, showing how the dichotomous messianic self/Other framework was not absent from state discourse for many years but has gradually returned, testifying to its apparent necessity for Russian cultural and political identity.

The collapse of the Soviet Union signified the failure of one grand messianic mission, and at the same time ushered in yet another type of messianism – in the sense of a timelessness. As Prozorov succinctly puts it: "The enormity of the collapse of the Soviet order was such that it could well be perceived as the 'end of time', which indeed calls for a certain suspension of action because everything has already happened." (Prozorov, 2008:212) Messianism, in one form or another, thus appears to continuously be part of Russian politics and identity.

4.4.0   Conclusion

i)   *Historiography and continuity of Russian messianism*

We have sought to show how scholars from several different disciplines – history, the history of philosophy, politics, international relations, geography, Slavonic studies, the study of religion, and more, from both Russia and the West, find evidence of a certain type of messianic and related narratives and discourses which persistently have been reproduced over the centuries in Russia. Certainly, key events and trends of thought have led to reification, stereotyping, reinforcement and sometimes creation of Russian messianism and some of its concepts and characteristics: we have seen that the 'Russian soul' was very much a product of Western nineteenth century Romanticism (Carter, 1990:14-15); the dichotomised self/Other East/West framework dates centuries back but was much reinforced by classic European Orientalism (Laruelle, 2004:116-17); and the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 marked the beginning various reductionist, often populist historiographical approaches among both Western and Russian intellectuals which were reinforced later in a Russophobic Cold War context.

These often argued in terms of an unambiguous continuity of Russian messianism, seeing a clear causal relationship between messianic ideas and foreign policy– for example using the original Third Rome concept as evidence of Muscovite, Russian and later Soviet orientalism and inherent expansionism (Rowland, 1996:613, Sidorov, 2006:323-24). The studies we have drawn upon still point to a definite continuity, but generally draw a much more nuanced historiographic picture of this framework, pointing to the importance of less known but yet important themes and narratives, such as for example the 'Paradise Myth' (Baehr, 1991); 'Moscow New Israel' (Rowland, 1996, Storchak, 2003:13); and the earlier variant of the Russian 'Third Way', by Storchak traced as far back as the mid seventeenth century and the writings of court official Krizhanich (2003:29).

We have also seen how that this production and reproduction of messianic narratives has taken place in very different contexts, for different purposes, at different levels of discourse, with contradicting and contested narratives, making

Russian messianism impossible to pin down as a single explanatory category of foreign policy, or as a single ideology. It continues to appear as a persistent but never quite tangible part of Russian political and cultural identity. Nevertheless, we have sought to present those of its central elements, characteristics and narratives which appear to be more or less persistent and consistent, and we will here briefly recap on some of them.

ii) *Master narratives and missionism*

We have outlined the distinction, agreed upon by many diverse scholars even though it is blurred, between Holy Russia and Third Rome as master narratives, national myths, traditions, and both competing and complementary alternatives of Russian identity, in some periods correlating to the rift in public discourse between the people and the state, and to a certain extent paralleling the contradiction between particularism and universalism – though as we have seen, many individual discourses draw on both.

We have also noted the importance of the – parallel, and intertwined with the others – narrative of Moscow New Israel, less known but, as argued, more significant for Muscovite identity and statecraft than Third Rome, and which links Muscovite culture both with Western Europe and with America. (Rowland, 1996, Storchak, 2003:13) This theme renders interesting the long-standing Russian anti-Semitism, popular among many of the Slavophiles and other messianic Russian writers, expressed both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries within the dichotomised self/Other framework pitting thus not only the West but the Jews, capitalism, spiritual and moral decadence against the Christian, pure, pan-human, all-uniting, loving Russian people.

Central to both of the messianic master narratives is both the idea of being chosen and anointed – manifest from the religious Muscovite state rituals to the themes of the historically providential role of the USSR in Soviet propaganda – and missionism, manifest from diverse narratives of sacrifice and suffering; to the political utopianism of many Russian thinkers; to the civilising mission in Tsarist and Soviet imperial/expansionist ideology.

113

iii) *Spirituality, religion and metaphysics*

Russian messianism, as we have seen, originated with the Church and the connection to Byzantium, and just as it is through the Church much of Russian messianic discourses have been produced (e.g. the original Third Rome concept and Muscovite ideology), Orthodoxy has continued to feature as a central element in diverse messianic discourses at other levels and strands of Russian discourse, from the schismatic Old believers (claiming to have the true Orthodox faith) (Rowley, 1999) to many Russian philosophers (e.g. Kornblatt, 1997, Neumann, 1996, Poltoratzky, 1967, Walicki, 1975, 1994) to the revival of nationalism under Stalin (Duncan, 2000:58-59, Sidorov, 2006:324).

We have also sought to demonstrate that religion, Christological sacrifice, spirituality and metaphysics as elements of the Russian messianic framework have by no means been limited to religious discourse, but have been evident in various supposedly secular contexts and discourses, from the paradise myth in the seventeenth century (Baehr, 1991); to the populism and anarchism of the late nineteenth century (e.g. Storchak, 2005:46-78); to Soviet communism; and later the secular democrats in the samizdat movement (Brun-Zejmis, 1991).

iv) *Functions of Russian messianism as a self/Other framework*

Among the aims of this chapter were the continued investigation of hypothesis H3 – that one of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discursive framework for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other – and subsequently the continued address of research question Q4, on how we can understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West. As we have argued, there is a broad consensus on the centrality of the ambiguous-dichotomous relation to the West for Russian identity, from Groys arguing that Russian philosophy in its entirety sees its

calling as to restrict Western aspirations to the universality of thought (1992:185); to Walicki arguing that opposition to the West was structural pivot of Slavophilism (1975:222-24) to Neumann's historical discourse analysis on the perennial Russian debate on Europe (1996).

We have also highlighted that while Russia's self/other dichotomy certainly is most easily equated to the well-known East/West dichotomy, this is in part a historical generalisation, as both Byzantium and Israel played central role in Russian identity formation. Both were first emulated, then depicted as unclean and rejected by God, in a process which saw the construction of a geography of good and evil where Russia as their rightful successor is defined, contradictorily, in opposition to the rejected predecessors.

A radical self/Other opposition has been evident in a number of contexts and discourses: in the abovementioned discourses against Byzantium and Israel as rejected, godless messianic states/peoples (Rowland, 1996, Storchak, 2003:5,13); in the 'geography of good and evil' inherent in the paradise myth (Baehr, 1991:10); in the great schism in Russian Orthodoxy triggered by the Petrine reforms, with Peter the Great represented as the Antichrist; in Panslavism and early Eurasianism – Trubetskoy wrote for example that "there is truly only one conflict: the Romano-Germans versus all the rest of the world, *Europe and* [that is, versus] *Humanity*" (Quoted in Neumann, 1996:112,14) – as well as in the doctrine of world revolution, pitting a superior Russia against a decadent Western civilisation (Tsygankov, 2008:767); and later in the Soviet Cold war discourses. In sum, our exploration of Russian messianism in different contexts and at various levels of discourse across the centuries affirms the usefulness of the concept of a Self/Other framework which defines Russia in relation to a 'significant Other' and which is parallel with the longstanding religious framework of good vs. evil, with a range of connoted binary oppositions. We can conclude that the relation of the Russian self to the Other in messianic discourse is thus one of intense ambiguity which can be conceived within a continuum from radical opposition and superiority, to equality, to inferiority.

Our methodology stressed that narratives, as constitutive of collective identity, have core functions which are important to identify. This can include giving meaning to

events; creating a system of intelligibility (a master narrative); legitimising, perpetuating or reproducing the hegemonic master narrative or legitimising the status quo; and challenging the status quo. (Hall, 2001:106) We have seen how various scholars identify political functions of messianic discourses. In Chapter Two, we suggested that the messianic framework as a dichotomising 'geography of good and evil' legitimates the state (and earlier the church) through 'discourses of danger' or 'evangelism of fear' (Campbell, 1991, 1998); justifies expansionism (Rieber, 1993); and ideological assimilation of a diverse population in a country of complex geocultural realities (Arbatov, 2006). In this chapter, Baehr argued that from the conversion of Russia to Orthodoxy, messianic and religious narratives, including the paradise myth and the image of Russia as a "perfected theocracy" functioned precisely as to legitimise the status quo (1991:ix, 18-19); Rowland alongside with others argued that the Biblical framework as a whole – not only the narrative of Moscow New Israel – functioned as to give meaning to events and define and legitimise the Muscovite state (1996); Neumann argued that the function of the original Holy Russia discourse was counter-hegemonic thrust, "directed at the reigning doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome" (1996:8-9); and both Neumann and Walicki's works have highlighted the compensatory function of messianic discourse in Russia's relation to Europe (Neumann, 1996:199, Walicki, 1975), which Heikka in Chapter Two theorised about with regards to contemporary discourse (1999).

And as for messianism as an ideology of empire, or of states with complex geocultural realities, we find further support for this argument. While we argued that Serbinenko's proposed re-evaluation of the 'metaphysics of the Russian idea' is not very helpful for our study, his insights about ideology are, relating Russian messianism to "the exceptional drama and ultimately incomplete process of establishing a single ideological system of values in the Russian Empire" (2001:3-4). Similarly, while we ultimately declined Rowley's distinction in Russian messianism between metaphor and belief, he nevertheless makes an important point about the relation between messianic ideology and empire, arguing that "imperialism is the only sort of millenarianism that can be considered to be a Russian cultural tradition. If Russians are a people of the End, it is their tradition of empire-building that has so

structured their consciousness." (1999:1594) And following Laruelle, Eurasianism –
based on messianic notions, discursively linked both to Slavophilism, Panslavism as
well as doctrines of world revolution (Laruelle, 2008:16-49, see also Tsygankov,
2008:767) can be understood best as an ideology of empire, justified in terms of
spirituality and the reification of space.

As we have argued previously, it is rather impossible to judge to what extent
messianic discourse has informed and inspired Russian and Soviet imperialism in
terms of expansionist ideology; and to what extent empire, as a permanent Russian
geocultural condition, has necessitated messianic discourse for assimilation and
legitimacy – here for example, Serbinenko appears to stress the latter, and Rowley
the former. It helps to differentiate – as Sidorov does with regards to Third Rome –
between messianic discourse as 'imperialist' and 'imperial' (Sidorov, 2006:322-23):
and yet, there is little doubt that Russia *and* its messianic discourses have been both
imperialist and imperial in varying contexts.

As we have reiterated, the production and reproduction of messianic narratives has
been persistent across centuries, but taken place in different contexts, for different
purposes, centring on inherently ambiguous, vague notions such as 'spirituality' and
'mission', and as such impossible to define as a single ideology. This makes it
possible to suggest that the core logic of opposition of Russian messianism functions
not only to legitimise and assimilate, but also to mask the elusive, kaleidoscopic and
incoherent character of Russian identity and messianic ideology itself, a proposition
which we shall explore further in subsequent chapters.

5.0.0 State Production and Reproduction of Russian Messianism, 2000-2007

5.1.0   Introduction

Chapter One noted how, despite a continuous stress on pragmatism and an alleged 'end of ideology', a definitive deployment of ideological, messianic-related notions has for some time been evident in the Russian official rhetoric. Chapter Two discussed the need for the state, as an entity without pre-discursive foundations, to both justify its own existence and negotiate an official collective identity, employing discourse or narrative. In this way the state can balance between various complex interests, situations and needs whose incongruity is disguised by the dichotomised discursive structures in which the self must be separated and defined in relation to various Others.

Chapter Four argued that in Russia, messianic discourse has predominantly filled the function of the state's story-telling, and identified one of the core strengths of Russian messianic discourse as the continuous dichotomisation between the Russian self and 'the West' as a broad, inclusive Other. Russian messianism was specifically defined as a historically persistent discursive framework holding a kaleidoscopic range of both complementing and contesting discourses, with a major contradiction between two master narratives – Holy Russia and Moscow Third Rome – which also parallel the contradiction between exceptionalism and universalism, and ethno-centrism and cosmopolitanism. Chapter Three outlined a qualitative methodology based on discourse analysis for selection and analysis of contemporary Russian messianic discourse.

This chapter explores the function of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the post-Soviet Russian crisis of identity during the years of Putin's presidency, making comparisons with public discourse.

Our basis for analysing official discourse is former President Putin's annual addresses to the State Council, 2000-2007, and a wide range of sources from Russian public discourse (the broad domain of unofficial but published texts which includes

various overlapping domains – academic, political, cultural, religious, etc). Asking the questions from the discourse analytical framework developed in Chapter Three, we will be looking at several important dimensions of Russian identity and statecraft in these eight speeches and their evolution, placed in the three broad categories:

i)   Russia as History, Presence and Destiny

Explores the central narratives and definitions of contemporary Russia as state and country, as well as narratives of its history and future, i.e. Russia as a *temporal-social* entity.

ii)   Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)

Explores Russia as a *spatial-political* entity; identifies and analyses the specific constructions threats, problems and 'discourses of danger'; studies the predications of 'the West' as Other; and the relation between the 'internal' and 'external' constructions of Russia.

iii)   Russia as Messianic

Traces and analyses the explicit references to and uses of Russian messianic discourse as defined and categorised in the theory and literary review chapters.

We will study instances of messianic-related intertextuality in these texts more closely, comparing the state's official or 'sanctioned' discourse with society's public or 'unsanctioned discourse' - both where similar signifiers, narratives and discourses are used; and where the same questions and issues are framed differently, paying special attention to the hidden dualisms which bring coherence to the official identity representation. We argue that the state, despite at times clearly distancing itself from messianic discourse, nevertheless adopts and mediates various Russian messianic discourses, narratives and signifiers from its vast supply in public discourse, for the above outlined purposes.

5.2.0   The first Post-Soviet decade

In the context of Russian discourse, 'the end of history' sounds rather more like the realisation of messianic ideology than the assumed victory of liberal democracy and Western values to which Fukuyama famously referred (1992). Indeed, Prozorov describes this period in Russia precisely in terms of a 'Messianic suspension,' but sees it as different from Fukuyama's end of time, not being the victory of one grand ideology over another, but the suspension of all grand ideology and 'teleological metanarratives.'[41] (Prozorov, 2008:213)

Yet, the first post-Soviet decade saw the expectation, both in Russia and in the West, that Russia after the failure of Communism as one of its messianic projects finally had abandoned its 'special path', joined Europe and would now gradually become a 'normal', i.e. Western country, sharing values of liberal democracy, human rights, market economy, etc.[42] Official discourse centred on 'integration' and a 'strategic partnership' with the West. But this official discourse was not without opposition in the public sphere – the traditional debate on the West and Russia's civilisational belonging resumed with great intensity, again pitting Westernisers against various overlapping messianic-related positions: neo-Eurasianism, national-patriotism or the 'Red-Brown mix', neo-Slavophilism, neo-imperialism, ultra-nationalism, and more.

As we noted in Chapter Two, Urban's apt summary of the post-Soviet variation of the traditional debate describes the Westernising regime finding Russia deficient in comparison to the Other, its common subtext being perhaps: "Things are much better there; our state is utterly failing us and should be replaced"; with the second, messianic regime, objecting to this objection, its common subtext being rather something like: "Who are you to prefer another to your own? You must be someone who either does not understand, or despises his own country which is …['spiritual', 'all-human', 'collectivist', 'chosen by God' etc]". (Urban, 1998:981)

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[41] See also Shlapentokh (1992) for a colourful perspective.

[42] Interestingly, Sakwa has suggested that the struggle for democracy on occasion became a new form of traditional messianism. (1993:109)

While the debate on the West followed the same dichotomised, essentialist structure as in the previous century, the fall of the Soviet Union led to changes in Russian discourse which also affected the debate, for example in the interpretation of the fall as the failure of Marxism as a *Western ideology*. Scanlan explained that the post-Soviet Slavophiles could and did "argue that the failed Communist experiment should be taken as the final refutation of the myth that Western notions can adequately cope with Russia's special, historically generated needs and problems." (Scanlan, 1994:56) Over and over in the public discourse the messianic regime was deployed by politicians, academics and others, arguing that 'Western' values were incompatible with, if not diametrically opposed to, Russian values; that only the Russian 'crisis of identity' had led Russia to 'import' these alien values, with catastrophic results.

The assumed 'victory of liberalism' in official discourse was thus short-lived in Russia, with economic crises together with other factors increasing the disillusionment with the West, even by many liberals (see e.g. Shlapentokh, 1998). Most discourses of the messianic positions – Solzhenitsyn's strand of neo-Slavophilism excluded – regretted the breakup of the Soviet Union. There was a large dissemination of paranoid and xenophobic discourses, typically involving conspiracy theories linking the fall to a plot of the cosmopolitan/Zionist-Masonic West together with Russia's Westernisers, showing how the Russian identity in crisis could be sustained only by blaming its Western, Judeo-Christian other. (Rowley, 1997:326, Duncan, 2000:121-22)

What essentially happened in this first post-Soviet decade was a gradual merging of a lot of previously incommensurable political positions – monarchism, Orthodoxy and Slavophilism, neo-Eurasianism, hard-line communists, and other variants of nationalism – resulting in a kaleidoscopic but increasingly unified anti-Western master-discourse of the messianic, nationalist position. (Prizel, 1998:255-56, Neumann, 1999:168) This position changed its attitude towards the establishment from opposition to support, beginning when Primakov became Prime minister, and increasing when Putin came to power. Laruelle describes: "Numerous nationalist

figures came to support the authorities while preserving their political structures, resulting in a kind of vociferous but fictitious opposition." (2006:21)

Furthermore, many liberals, centrists and statists were transformed by the compelling messianic and related narratives. Neumann describes as the great drama of the 1990s they – previously seeing Russia as dependent on all mankind – began to go over to the Romantic nationalist, i.e. messianic or national-patriot position, in which Europe and all mankind is dependent on Russia. He explains this change, surprising given the economic and institutional advantages of the westernising position, in terms of the discursive and symbolic capital of the nationalist representation, i.e. the messianic framework, which "came complete with references back to an unbroken and proud national history". (Neumann, 1999:169). Richter notes that they "defined the Russian polity as a unique cultural identity ordained to perform an international mission as mediator between the northern industrialised countries of Western Europe and the Islamic and Asian countries to the East and to the South."[43] (Richter, 1996:81)

Messianism thus quite simply became mainstream. This could be noted not only in public discourse but also in other fields. For example Kelly noted how a "new ideological orthodoxy" could be discerned in philosophy, writing that: "Just as once no thinker could be considered enlightened or significant if he could not be shown to be a precursor of Marxism, now those who are not seen to have contributed to the Russian idea – or, worse, who have opposed it – tend to be marginalized, demonized or reinterpreted to fit a prior schema." (Kelly, 1999) This chapter will shortly proceed to trace how the official position in the subsequent decade related to this incongruent but powerful master discourse.

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[43] An illustration of this is the Yeltsin adviser Sergei Stankevich's definition of the Russian mission, which was to: "initiate and support a multilateral dialogue of cultures, civilizations and states. Russia the conciliator, Russia connecting, Russia combining. A charitable state, tolerant and open within the limits drawn by law and good will, but formidable beyond these limits. A country imbibing West and East, North and South, unique and exclusively capable, perhaps, of the harmonious combination of many different principles, of a historic symphony." (Stankevich, 2004, 1992)

5.3.0 Putin's decade: the wider background

An analysis of the annual addresses of President V.V. Putin has to be set in the political, international and economic context of the period in order to better understand the implications and evolution of these speeches. Putin's popularity and the rising legitimacy of his government initially derived much from the positioning of his regime as the negation of the chaotic Eltsinite years: Putin became the symbol of youth, strength and stability, everything that Eltsin had appeared to lack. Various factors contributed to the success of this representation.

First of all, Putin's first presidency was much defined by the conflict in the North Caucasus. As the new prime minister in 1999 Putin had promised 'to kick the shit' out of the Chechen rebels and sent troops back into Chechnya (Shevtsova, 2007:36). This quite certainly contributed to his election as president in 2000: "The success of Putin was that he demonstrated decisiveness in dealing with the Chechen rebels and had achieved considerable military success by the time of the election. He claimed that the war had been successfully concluded and that mopping up operations would occur in the near future." (Shlapentokh, 2003:76) Putin kept Chechnya under Moscow's control through military force, and maintained strict non-negotiation with the rebels. But the price came high, with increasingly violent attacks by the rebels, whom the Kremlin were keen to compare with Al-Qaeda after 9/11. The terror reached a horrifying level in 2004 with the bloodbath following the Beslan school seizure. The rising Russian ethnocentrism in both public and official discourse which this chapter will outline related closely to the conflict in the North Caucasus and its representation by Putin's regime.

Secondly, the Putin decade was also defined by soaring oil prices and the resulting revival of Russia as 'energy superpower'. As Sakwa describes:

> Buoyed up by high energy prices, by 2007 the Russian economy was back at its 1991 level, although it still had some way to go to return to the peak of 1989. Russia was a major beneficiary of the commodity-price boom of the early twenty-first century. Above all, the price of oil remained high, bringing in enormous revenues—every $1 rise in the price of a barrel of oil represents a

> $1 billion increase in Russian government receipts—and endowing the
> country with a large trade surplus. (Sakwa, 2008:246)

The rise in oil prices helped secure stability and led to respectable rates of growth in the Russian economy. This contributed greatly to Putin's popularity and his image as the 'guarantor of order'. (Shevtsova, 2007:44) Energy remained a key component in Putin's diplomacy – whether with Iran and Iraq, former Soviet republics or the EU (Jaffe and Manning, 2001).

As for Russia's relations with the West, this chapter will outline their gradual deterioration under Putin; though this development was far from straightforward and, rather, the relations have been marked by continuous ambiguity. Personal relations between Putin and President G.W. Bush were said to be good and Putin initially allied himself strongly with Washington's "war on terror". But the turn to US unipolarity was strongly opposed by the Kremlin. Russia was most vocal in opposition to the invasion of Iraq; and used US unilateralism, as we will show, as a new discursive platform to define Russia as the keeper of international law and indeed civilization. Putin pursued a policy of ostentatious independence actively seeking good relations with those Washington disapproved of in Caracas or Tehran, or inviting Hamas to Moscow for talks after their Palestinian election victory. As we will argue, this foreign policy that was simultaneously multi-vector (*mnogo-vektornyi*) but also ambiguous in Russia's position to the West has been politically useful for Putin's discourse about the revival of Russia as a great power under globalisation.

5.4.0   2000-2001: Crossroads

5.4.1   Russia as History, Presence and Destiny

i)   Official discourse

In Putin's first two addresses to the state council, attempts to produce an official construction of Russia and its past were generally vague, neither speech containing

many signifiers of Russia and Russianness.[44] Specific definitions of Russia were few and typically loose, such as "Russia is above all the people who consider this country to be their home" (Putin, Annual Address, 2000), and there was an implicit subscription to civic as opposed to ethnic or imperial identity markers.

Judging from his subsequent popularity, Putin successfully managed tap into the views and feelings of many ordinary Russians who after a decade of political, economical and societal turmoil were craving for stability and better living standards, legitimising his regime as the negation and overcoming of the 1990s, 'Yeltsin's decade'. (Prozorov, 2008:208)

The recurring message in the first two state addresses, as well as in the earlier Millennium Manifesto, was that Russia did not need ideology (whether "communist, national-patriotic or radical-liberal"[45]), revolution or counter-revolution, rather: "[s]tate stability built on a solid economic foundation is a blessing for Russia and for its people". (Putin, Annual Address, 2001) As Prozorov points out, Putin hereby effectively "delegitimises all determinate answers to the question of Russia's future but refrains from offering his own answer." (Prozorov, 2008:220)

The state repeatedly and explicitly rejected the notion that empire and messianism (the two concepts were often quoted together) should define Russian statecraft. As brief examples, Putin claimed in the Millennium Manifesto that he was seeking to free patriotism from "the tints of nationalist conceit and imperial ambitions" (quoted in Slade, 2006); and foreign minister Igor Ivanov would discuss the negative historical experiences following a Russian "imperial attitude", asserting that Russian foreign policy "should be based on national interests rather than political ideology", and that Russian diplomacy had always failed "when dominated by imperial ideology and messianic ambitions." (Ivanov, 2001:11)

Overall, the Russian state avoided grappling with its inherently complex and difficult dimensions such as empire, nation, and the Soviet legacy, but these questions themselves did not lose actuality, being intensely debated as we shall see in public discourse. Even though the Soviet state had defined itself in vehement opposition to imperialism, it was doubtless an empire of a kind, and how the

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[44] The Millennium Manifesto of 1999 began many of the trends that would follow in the annual addresses, for an excellent analysis of this speech see Slade (2006).
[45] President Putin in the Millennium Manifesto, 1999, see Slade (2006).

multicultural Russian Federation ought to relate to these predecessors was by no means clear even a decade after its birth.

ii)   Public discourse

While the construction of Russia and its past was fairly vague in the state addresses, far more distinct representations could be found in public discourse. Since the economic backlash of 1997-98, the liberal, westernising positions of Russia had been almost completely obliterated by the national-patriotic positions, which, as we outlined above, have reversed their locations on the periphery and the centre of Russian discourse. It was precisely the questions of empire, nation and the Soviet past which divided popular messianic discourse in the 1990s and first years of Putin.

While both the Russo-centric nationalism espoused by figures like Solzhenitsyn and the supra-national imperialism advocated by the national-patriots, or rather imperialists, were fundamentally anti-Western, their key difference was their relation to empire and the Soviet legacy: the imperialists celebrated both, typically as part of a coherent messianic tradition, while the Russo-centric nationalists attacked Marxism and Bolshevism for being a *western* ideology and argued that Russia should let its empire go, thus representing the Soviet period as a disruption to Russia's history (Rowley, 1997).

So, even though the state largely avoided the questions of empire and the Soviet past, and claimed to distance itself from 'imperial ambitions,' this was hotly debated in public discourse, with distinct support in large segments of the public sphere for the identity of an expansionist "Russian Empire", with the idea that Russia must restore the lost world balance of power. (Tsygankov, 2005, 2007)

In public discourse however, the concept of Russian 'imperial ambitions' was often used in a different context. In an article entitled 'The 'Imperial' and National in Russian Consciousness', representative of mainstream political discourse, Sergei Kortunov, the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Policy Planning and prominent academic who was introduced in Chapter Two, launches a vigorous defence against allegations that Russia would still harbour 'imperial ambitions'. It is the West, in

126

particular the US, and not Russia, which really harbours imperial and indeed *messianic* ambitions - Russia just wants to pursue her legitimate *national* interests.

The notion of 'Russian imperial ambitions', Kortunov argues, is a tool for the West to exercise economic and political pressure over Russia. What the West chooses to regard as imperialism is in fact only Russian *nationalism* – and the hypocrisy of the West is apparent in its support of national self-determination of all the former Soviet states *apart* from Russia. Russia does however aspire to be a Great Power (*velikaya derzhava*), Kortunov affirms in his conclusion, not as a superpower but one of the five leading powers of the world: "And this is not so because some want it or don't want it. It is an objective process, natural for Russia." (Kortunov, 1998a:27). The shifting in attention to the Western/US Other undoubtedly functions here as to take the focus off the complexities and contradictions of Russia and its ambiguous nationalism, a strategy that would increasingly define Russian official discourse in general.

iii)   Academic interpretation

Among western academics, the question of empire in post-Soviet Russia has often been conceived of as being about 'objective realities' versus Russian self-perceptions and rhetoric (see for example Adomeit, 1995). Some claimed that Russia now for the first time in its history existed as a nation-state, not as an empire; that empire and mission could no longer be main signifiers of Russianness. (Chulos, Piirainen, 1997:1) Lieven in his work *Empire* also views the fall of the Soviet Union as a definitive end of Russan empire, and argues that empire "doesn't pay in today's world" (Lieven, 2000:410) and Andrei Tsygankov argues that Putin is too pragmatic to seek to build an empire with "Soviet-like grandeur," instead has a "rational policy aimed at providing Russia with greater security and preparing for economic competition in world markets, " with a position shifting between different variants of Russia as a Great Power but not empire. (Tsygankov, 2005:136-37, 42)

Yet, as Lieven also notes, the whole concept of empire itself is strongly value-laden and has "strong polemical connotations" (Lieven, 2000:1-10, 413). It is not always clear what Western observers respectively Russian writers mean by empire, nor how the two correlate. However, as Sakwa stresses with regards to Russian

foreign policy, the Russian *perceptions* of Russia's status *do* matter (Sakwa, 1993, 2000:347). If the popular and political representation of Russia as a great empire would prevail over the representations of Russia as a civic or nation-state, then that is bound to affect also its actions and policies, whether or not observers choose define Russia as a present-day empire.

Regardless of the diverse definitions of empire, Russia with its remaining republics, many peoples, cultures and religions, vast population and geography, and decidedly ambiguous imperial legacies, and the accompanying problems of ethno-religious conflicts and claims for independence, undoubtedly struggles to fit into conventional models of collective identity construction of nation- or civic states, which fail to be applicable to Russia's ambiguities.

5.4.2   Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)

i)   Official discourse

Though messianic ideology was explicitly renounced in this period, the main official narrative of Russia can still be placed within the broad messianic-related framework, given its concern with the salvation of the state, the country, and its suffering people. The country and its people were represented as subject to a number of imminent internal and external problems and threats from which the state should protect and save them. Among the external threats in the state addresses, the West was implicitly present in statements, for example, on an 'infringement on national sovereignty in the guise of 'humanitarian' intervention'. Apart from "pragmatism, economic effectiveness, and the priority of national tasks", Russia's foreign policy foundation was outlined as being the protection of Russia from the threats to its sovereignty:

> Thus, in the conditions of a new type of external aggression – international terrorism and the direct attempt to bring this threat into the country – Russia has met with a systematic challenge to its state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and found itself face to face with forces that strive towards a geopolitical reorganization of the world. *Our efforts to save*

128

Russia from this danger are often interpreted in a subjective and biased manner, and serve as the occasion for various types of speculation. (Putin, Annual Address, 2000, italics added)

The dangers presented by Putin also included separatism, the expansion into Siberia by Russia's Far Eastern neighbours as well as the expansion of Islam (Shlapentokh, 2001:378) and Russia's demographic decline.

But by far the largest problem according to in this period was the state itself, in need of deep reform, modernisation and strengthening. In the 2000 address, Putin drew a picture of Russia standing at a cross-roads, facing the choices of remaining weak or becoming strong; being a third world country or one of the leading nations; "to rely on others' advice, aid and loans, or to develop relying on our own distinctive character, and own efforts"; to dwell on the past or look to the future, and made it clear that the state's destiny was in its own hands, but that to overcome the problems and dangers would take a lot of hard work (Putin, Annual Address, 2000).

The first two state addresses set out president Putin's detailed plan to modernise and reform the Russian state so that it would function to take care of its citizens, at times represented by Putin as victims of empire and ideology (Putin, 1999). So the state was casting itself as having the role to *save* the country, or the nation, from threats and dangers, and Putin himself was at times referred to as a saviour (Shlapentokh, 2001:378). All of this suggests that the traditional, if ambiguous, notion of the relationship between the Father/Redeemer-Tsar *state* and the Mother-Russia *nation* was as relevant as ever.

Another ambiguity was that between the external and internal representations of Russia – a trend in these early addresses is also that of Putin allowing himself to be harsh and 'truthful' about Russia *internally*, listing negative Russian qualities, e.g. "a habit of putting off the most difficult things" (2002), "parasitic moods" (2003) "a state that has deceived citizens in the past" thereby losing their trust (2001); and identifying many grave problems. Yet, the *external* image is nearly always positive: Russia is constructed as reliable, trustworthy and strong, a positive ally, partner and peace-keeper.

ii) Public discourse

In public discourse too, Russia was and still is often represented as in need of salvation. For example, both popular political leaders Zyuganov and Zhirinovsky "have composed and published several extremely detailed analyses of their personal plans to "save Russia."" (Hanson, 1997:9) But the difference between official and public discourse in this area was that while Putin largely focused on practical solutions to the multitude of threats and problems facing Russia, public discourse has general been more concerned with the traditional Russian question *kto vinovat*? (who is to blame? whose fault is it?)

As we outlined above, there has been no shortage of answers. Conspiracy theories - involving the West, the Jews, the Freemasons, the Antichrist (in various innovative combinations) and at times aliens from outer space – were not limited to popular discourse but was and remains an essential part of Russian public political discourse.[46] As but one illustrative example, the Orthodox nationalist political party 'Holy Russia' explicitly strives to ensure "the protection of Orthodoxy and our nation from immediate anti-Christian experiments; the salvation of the Fatherland from the Satanic forces of worldly evil and the seducers of the nation and plunderers of the state." [47] Against the backdrop of this abundance of exotic theories, Putin's persistent call "to start to living according to normal human logic and realise that we have long and hard work ahead of us" (Putin, Annual Address, 2001) was certainly sobering.

iii) Academic interpretation

The considerable use of dangers, conspiracy theories and subsequent salvation in Russian discourse reinforces Campbell's argument that the "constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is not a threat to a state's identity or existence: it is its condition of possibility. While the objects of concern change over time, the techniques and exclusions by which those objects are constituted as dangers persist."

[46] Verkhovsky's article describes the centrality of the figure of the Antichrist to Orthodox nationalism, how it as a negative Other it contains various useful subordinate enemies of Russia: Jews, Catholics, the West, the New World Order and so, on. (Verkhovsky, 2004) See also Sidorov (2006:329), Laruelle (2004), and Rowley (1997).

[47] From '"*Za nashe Otechestvo – Za Rus' Svyatuio*" at the website of '*Svyataya Rus'*, http://www.sant-rus.ru/vestnik.html [Accessed 2008-04-25].

(Campbell, 1991, 1998:12-13). As discussed previously, Campbell's also draws a direct parallel between the state project of security and the church project of salvation (bearing in mind the church's central political role before the modern state):

> The state grounds its legitimacy by offering the promise of security to its citizens who, it says, would otherwise face manifold dangers. The church justifies its role by guaranteeing salvation to its followers who, it says, would otherwise be destined to an unredeemed death. Both the state and the church to maintain order within and around themselves, and thereby engage in an evangelism of fear to ward off internal and external threats, succumbing in the process to the temptation to treat difference as otherness. (Campbell, 1991, 1998:50-51)

The constructed dangers and threats facing Russia in both official and public discourse are both internal and external, but the discourses on danger externalizes them, reinforcing the demarcation between 'self' and 'Other', 'foreign' and 'domestic', 'friend' and 'enemy', thus playing a crucial role in the construction of a collective Russian identity.

As we have suggested, official discourses of danger in this period were more directed towards legitimising the state and Putin's leadership, and in the public discourses of danger a Russian 'self' was being reflected in the multitude of negative 'Others.' This dual function of 'danger-salvation' discourse – legitimising the state and shaping collective identity – provides another explanation for the rise of Russian messianic discourse in a period when the post-Soviet Russian state, Putin's regime and Russian collective identity were still uncertainly established. It also suggests that messianic discourses of salvation should be rather common among states and not a phenomenon exclusive to certain states.

5.4.3   Russia as Messianic

i)   Official discourse

The state's proclaimed rejection of ideology and messianism in this period was not unequivocal. In the midst of all pragmatism and detailed plans for reforming the

131

state, short paragraphs on culture and spirituality would somewhat randomly appear in the texts, such as this one:

> And these goals are not just material ones. Spiritual and moral goals are no less important. The unity of Russia is strengthened by the patriotism inherent in our people, by cultural traditions and common historic memory. And today in Russian art, in theatre and the cinema, there is a growth of interest in Russian history, in our roots and what is dear to us all. This, without doubt – I, at any rate, am certain of this – is the beginning of new spiritual development. (Putin, Annual Address, 2000)

In the 2001 state address Putin again affirmed that "our country's development is not measured only by economic successes but also, and not in the least, by its level of spiritual and physical health, although, of course, all of these things are interlinked." (Putin, Annual Address, 2000)

These vague references to a "new spiritual development" and "spiritual health" do not say very much in themselves but constitute a small but defining acquiescence to the popular messianic discourse and its core binary couple - material/spiritual – as opposed to the liberal discourse that had dominated official discourse during the first post-Soviet decade.

But just as Putin would also play with the meaning of liberal western notions, messianic concepts and themes were often invoked in the state addresses and imbued with meanings rather different from those in public discourse. Putin for example responded in the Millennium Manifesto to the vague but hugely popular 'Russian idea' with his own version, claiming that "the new Russian idea will come about as an amalgamation of universal general humanitarian values with traditional Russian values" (quoted in Slade, 2006); and in the 2000 address he related to the popular theme of a 'special mission' (*osobaya missiya*) by stressing the need to learn to work together effectively, imploring all state officials "to treat this as their main and most important mission, I repeat, their most important mission"(Putin, Annual Address, 2000).

In the latter speech he also emphasised the importance of "balance of interests" over "rigid ideological dogma", and an "analysis of shortcomings" over "soothing speeches", and set one of the key tasks for the state as being to "ensure

that there can be no backing away from democratic freedoms and that the economic course we have chosen cannot be reversed."

Putin's repeated message was that instead of trying 'to look for a national idea' and indulge in messianic philosophising, active steps should be taken to reform and modernise the Russian state - a message clearly aimed at these multitudes of intellectuals and politicians who since the Yeltsinite 1990s had taken it upon themselves to find the Russian national idea and provide an ideology for the new Russia.

ii)   Public discourse

Appraising messianism in the amorphous public post-Soviet Russian discourse is near to impossible. As previous chapters have concluded, Russian messianism is not a single, coherent ideology but a narrative framework holding a range of sometimes contesting discourses, which in this period ranged from the special mission and calls for restoration of empire to Russia's religious and spiritual exceptionalism. As we concluded above, Russian messianism became mainstream from the 1990s, and as this framework now operates at all levels of Russian discourse it does not suffice to identify groups of "ultra-nationalists" as its bearers. From liberals and statists to communists and ultra-nationalists draw upon messianic discourse.

Central ideological figures however in this period – some already mentioned – include party leaders Zhirinovsky and Zyuganov, as well as Rogozin of the *Rodina* party, Solzhenitsyn, Panarin, Dugin, the founder of the Eurasian movement, and Prokhanov, the editor of *Zavtra*.[48] A common notion in public discourse at this time was that Russia still was undergoing a 'crisis of identity' and was in a state of 'ideological vacuum', and these and many others were ready and willing to help solve this alleged problem.

iii)   Academic interpretation

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48 For overviews and analyses of the thought of radical political ideologists as Zyuganov, see e.g. Duncan (2000), Neo-Eurasianists like Dugin, Panarin and others see Laruelle (2004, 2006, 2008), Solzhenitsyn see Rowley (1997); and the various patriotic/nationalist foreign policy and geopolitics discourses, see for example Neumann (1996,1999), Sidorov (2006), Tsygankov (2007, 2008) and Urban (1998).

In the early period of Putin's regime, many western academics appeared to accept the official proclamation of a Russian 'end of ideology' and commitment to pursue *pragmatic* national interests (Gorodetsky, 2003, Light, 2003), and analyses of Russian foreign policy discourse concluded that Russia was still 'open to the West' (Kassianova, 2001:823). As we have discussed, these tendencies were certainly still part of official discourse, but their contestation in public discourse, defined by messianic themes, was sometimes underestimated, with the hegemony of the messianic framework of 'the Russian idea' notable even in the academic world. (Kelly, 1999).

In this period we thus see considerable difference between state and society, official and public discourse: Russian messianic discourses abounded in public discourse, united by anti-Westernism, but were only occasionally finding its way into official discourse, and then often transformed to fit with Putin's state-centred plan and message. Putin's early references to mission, spirituality, uniqueness and patriotism should thus be understood in the context of the abundance of many different variants of messianic discourse in society, and the impossibility to construct a cohesive Russian collective identity by pragmatism alone. Completely rejecting the abundant messianic representations of Russia would mean alienating the various popular, messianic-based national-patriotic parties and movements, but Putin's 'middle way' managed to accommodate both them as well as ordinary people wanting decent living standards rather than ideological grandeur. This resulted in increasing ambiguity in official discourse, which will discuss further on in this chapter.

5.5.0   2002-2003: one year West, one year East

5.5.1   Russia as History, Presence and Destiny

i)   Official discourse

The address in 2002 had a rather different tone from those in the previous two years. Signifiers such as 'comfortable', 'safe', 'developed' and 'equal' were juxtaposed

against 'restrictions', 'fear' 'underdeveloped' and 'unequal', implicitly reinforcing the distinction between 'the West' and 'the rest' and clearly aiming for Russia to fit into the first category. Several tasks for the Russian state and desired, future qualities of Russia could be listed, such as to become rich and strong, to make Russia a flourishing, affluent and safe country, to meet the best standards in the world, and to even create these standards (Putin, Annual Address, 2002).

The 2003 address again was markedly different from the previous year, containing a number of glorious predicates of Russia, and drawing on various messianic narratives. With few exceptions, Russia was represented very positively, as "continuously emerging as a strong country", "an attractive country for millions of people", "one of the civilised nations, fighting common threats", "a unique community of peoples", "a great people", "a great state but above all a modern, developed society" and, not the least, "one of the greatest powers on the planet." (Putin, Annual Address, 2003)

Though images of *empire* had not filtered through from public to official discourse as a legitimate definition of Russia, *greatness* and *great power status* certainly had – the very last words were that the "consolidation of all our intellectual, authoritative and moral resources will allow Russia to achieve the greatest goals. Great goals worthy of a great people." (Putin, Annual Address, 2003) Russia in official discourse was becoming more defined, a more confident state, while still facing many challenges no longer ashamed of its greatness.

ii)   Public discourse

It was admitted by many national-patriots, that Russia now, as before the revolution, is in need of modernisation. But, as Orthodox nationalist Narochnitskaya summed up, the same dilemma remains: "whether Russia can be modernised without the suicidal westernisation." Russia, she argues, as an Orthodox country, "does not belong to the post-Enlightenment Europe based on Descartes' rationalism, the ideational baggage of the French revolution and the Protestant ethic, from which

Marxism and liberalism derive." The answer to Russia's future and modernisation, she argued, instead lies in embracing and establishing the Faith.[49]

Another popular alternative in the same type discourse, is to point to Islamic countries as an *example* for Russia to follow, from a distance. Pan-Slavist Evgenii Troitskii admits, while denouncing globalisation and post-modernism, acknowledges that Russia does need actual modernisation and that Russia must learn from "an objective analysis of the experience of Iran" which is represented as "a country of a mission, an island of spiritual health, of spiritual counterbalance" with a growing population – "in contrast to the people ruled by Westernizers of the dying Russia". (Troitskii, 2002)

iii)   Academic interpretation

Putin's definition of Russia as "a great state but above all a modern, developed society" describes his concept of Russia as a "normal Great Power," which Tsygankov has analysed in detail.[50] Putin was recognising that Russia, in order to be modernised, cannot isolate itself from the West nor seek to apply utopian, distinctivist economic and political models, but was nevertheless beginning to toy with notions from the distinctivist messianic discourse. His simultaneous use of distinct and sometimes contradictory representations of Russia – both great, and yet in need of modernisation – became a reflection of a number of the key representations available in public political discourse.

5.5.2   Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)

i)   Official discourse

In the 2002 address there were no anti-Western references, instead openness to the West defined the tone. Russia was depicted to be in "constant dialogue" with the US,

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[49] Interview article in *Zavtra*: 'Rossiya - Vsegda Imperiya' with N. Narochnitskaya, by Prokhanov (2003).
[50] Tsygankov (2005) describes how 'Great-Power Normalisation' as a less anti-Western foreign policy strategy emerged in critique of Primakov's vision of Russia as an independent Great Power power in a 'multipolar world', balancing the West's power across the world, and how Putin embraced and reshaped this approach to make it his own.

and Putin stressed that one of Russia's tasks was to *find* allies, and to change "the quality of our relations with NATO", specifically pointing out the Russia-NATO "joint efforts" against international terrorism (Putin, Annual Address, 2002). Here it should be noted that the next month from the address, in May 2002, Russia and the USA announced a new agreement on strategic nuclear weapons reduction, and the same year Russian and NATO foreign ministers agreed to establish the NATO-Russia Council.

9/11 gave Russia and the US the opportunity to unite against the construction of a common enemy in international terrorism. The event seemed to indicate that a "new formula" might be found for Russian partnership with the West, and as Shevtsova describes, "Putin provoked high expectations for his new model of foreign policy among Russian moderates and liberals". (Shevtsova, 2007:163, for an overview see also Sakwa, 2008) Apart from the CIS, NATO and the US, no other international Others were named in the 2002 address.

The tone changed rather significantly in 2003. Now of course, the American war in Iraq had begun. Putin here spoke at length of "countries with highly developed economies and growing geopolitical ambitions", "countries [which] sometimes use their strong and well-armed national armies to increase their zones of strategic influence rather than fighting these evils [international terrorism] we all face." (Putin, Annual Address, 2003) The conceptual foundations of foreign policy also continued to evolve in 2003: "The main task of Russian foreign policy is to advance and safeguard our national interests. Here, the basic principle remains observance of the provisions of international law."

The construction of Russia as a safe-guarder of international law would expand over the years, with the parallel representation of the hypocritical Other preaching democracy and universal values but breaching international law. A notable tendency in Putin's state addresses was to represent the international system in terms of social Darwinism, in expressions like "we need to be clever and strong to survive in the bitter competitive struggle in the world" (2003) and "the global competitive battle" (2004), all in rather stark contrast to the narratives of Russia's great destiny which were also drawn upon also in the state addresses.

In 2003, with the beginning of distinctively anti-Western rhetoric, also was the first time in the context of the annual state address that Russia was defined as a "united multi-ethnic community of peoples", in line with neo-Eurasianist discourse in which Russia/Eurasia's 'harmony of different peoples and cultures' is its strength. In the same speech Putin also defined the residents of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as "people of our common Russian culture" thus affirming the inclusive, supranational character of Russianness. This trend was to continue, and in 2004 for the second year, the Russians were defined as a multi-ethnic people: "the only source and bearer of power in the Russian Federation." (Putin, Annual Address, 2004).

But parallel with the Eurasianist representation of Russian identity continued the representation of Russia as a European country, a part of Greater Europe. In relating Russia to 'the West', there was a thus a differentiation between US and Europe: while implicitly criticising the US, Putin represented Russia as belonging to Greater Europe, seeking to grow "closer and becoming truly integrated into Europe." (Putin, Annual Address, 2003)

This continued in 2004, where Putin stated that "the expansion of the European Union should not just bring us closer together geographically, but also economically and spiritually" (Putin, Annual Address, 2004) and in 2005 where Russia was repeatedly defined as a "major European power", and a "European nation, with European ideals." (Putin, Annual Address, 2005)

Putin's parallel use of two distinct discourses in representing official Russia shows again that collective identity is seldom coherent and free from contradictions, but contested, and the state in particular has to balance the different discourses with the impetuses behind them – contradictions which are exacerbated in the case of Russia with its perennially ambiguous civilisational belonging.

ii)   Public discourse

Many of the anti-Western national-patriots interpreted Putin's rapprochement with the West in this period as shaped by the 'need for survival in a globalised world',

according to the social-Darwinistic logic outlined above, and a new pragmatism. Sergey Medvedev, after describing the recent pro-Westernism, wrote that:

> His [Putin's] politics should never be called pro-Western (as, for example, Kozyrev's); Putin's politics is pro-Russian, in the pragmatic sense of the word. If for Kozyrev rapprochement with the West was an ideological step, an act of belief, then for Putin it was a move of enlightened egoism: he needs the West for Russia to succeed in the globalised world. As is well known, one of the principles of judo is to use the opponents strengths in one's own interest. (Medvedev, 2003:28)

So, the West was still defined as the opponent, and Putin despite his rapprochement with Western powers was understood as acting within this logic of opposition, just in a more politically refined way.

While the state in 2002 still appeared to be looking westwards and defining itself as European, neo-Eurasianist representations of Russia as the opposite of all things Western were still dominant in public political discourse, and Putin's use in 2003 of anti-Western rhetoric and Eurasianist expressions should not be understood only as a reaction to the Iraq war but within this context of increasingly anti-Western public discourse.

Certainly, in some accounts Eurasian Russia is, as Sergey Stankevich put it in 1992, a "conciliator", a "country imbibing West and East, North and South, unique and exclusively capable, perhaps, of the harmonious combination of many different principles, of a historic symphony." (Stankevich, 2004, 1992) But in contemporary neo-Eurasianism Russia is not only represented as a harmonious peace-maker imbibing West as well as East, but often as the leader of an allied Eastern, alternative civilization opposed to Western hegemony and globalisation: "Russia is the incarnation of the quest for an historical alternative to Atlanticism. Therein lies her global mission", neo-Eurasianist founder Dugin repeatedly affirms (Laruelle, 2006:8) and the same is echoed by many different political writers, as here:

> At present time there are two potential sources of real opposition to the Atlanticist expansionism – Russia and the Islamic world. The presence of the Russian global factor is a commonly recognized fact. It consists of the increase in the all-planetary significance of the spatial-resource potential of Russia, her

capability of taking the role as a centrally forming force in the post-Soviet space and the Slavonic world, and also in the possibility of organising an autonomous international system of states within the framework of CIS. (Sokolenko, 1999:21)

This more confrontational variant of Eurasianism comes closer to the dichotomised core of messianism as a narrative framework, with Russia – Orthodox, Soviet or other – as representing good; and the West – godless, cosmopolitan, capitalist - evil. As Laruelle argues: "For all the heterogeneity of Eurasianism, it is still possible to pin down its ideological matrix: restoration, a synthesis of anti-Western arguments, and a culturalist defence of political authoritarianism." (Laruelle, 2008:221)

Even writers with more romantic, Slavophile tendencies continuously reinforce this opposition between East and West, as Vasilenko, who affirms that the "confrontation between the East and the West is today becoming the confrontation between the natural and the artificial, the technical and the spiritual, the utilitarian and the ethical." (Vasilenko, 2000:294)

So while the historical-political context is different today, the simple but compelling dichotomising framework remains the same as it has been for centuries – quite certainly one of the keys to the success in this period of neo-Eurasianism in political discourse. Its dominance in foreign policy discourse has been evident in for example the official programmes of Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), of course the Eurasia Party, and even in an ethno-centric, Slavophile ideological programme such as *Russkaya Doktrina*, all of which have included a clause subscribing to the four-axis alliance Moscow-Teheran-Delhi-Beijing, justified by the now mainstream argument of Russia's 'harmony of cultures, peoples and religions.'[51]

iii)   Academic interpretation

The conglomerate of discourses, official and public, outlined in the above sections, testify to the long-standing difficulty in constructing a coherent Russian civilisational identity, and ambiguity on how to relate to the West. While we noted an increasing

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51 For the LDPR Programme, see http://www.ldpr.ru/partiya/prog/969/and the Russian Doctrine see http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/index.php?subject=5 [Both accessed 2008-05-28]

'anti-Western' consensus in public discourse, it should be noted that there often is a distinction in Russian discourse between Europe and America as 'the Wests', sometimes to the effect that the Europes, or Greater Europe including Russia, should be together, but that Atlanticism and Eurasianism must conflict.[52]

Nikolas Gvosdev discusses at length historical and contemporary Russia's ambivalence to Europe, the West, the distinction in Russian discourse between them, and Russia's relation to them, with Putin at times insisting on Russia's being an integral part of Europe, other times calling for a dialogue between East and West. He concludes that this ambiguity carries significant political advantages, in that Russia can "pick and choose what European standards and institutions it wishes to adopt" and being "as European" as it wants to be. (Gvosdev, 2007:138)

Putin's co-optation strategy, insisting that Russia is part of the West and a major European power at the same time as stressing Russia's specificity and deploying Eurasianist discourse has led Putin's supporters to identify his policies in terms of a ''Euro-Eastern'' civilisation. Tsygankov outlines its core principles:

> First, the countries of the Euro-East, such as Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, share with Europe values of a market economy and a growing middle class. Second, because of their preoccupation with domestic economic and social modernization, the Euro-Eastern area is in special need of maintaining political stability. Finally, domestic transformation of the Euro-Eastern nations requires preservation of political sovereignty and defence from attempts by outsiders to exploit the internal resources of the nations of the region (Tsygankov, 2008:772).

This model epitomises the advantages of this ambiguity. Nevertheless, Tsygankov also affirms that 'the West' as whole, referring both to western Europe and the United States as a civilisation, still functions undoubtedly as Russia's significant Other. (Tsygankov, 2007, Tsygankov, 2008:388)

The geopolitical aspects of the main contemporary civilisational models beside Euro-East have been quite effectively summarised in the political-sociological work edited

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[52] One example is Vladislav Inozemtsev, a prominent Russian academic discussing the difference between Americanisation and Europeanisation as forms of globalisation, wholly condemning Americanisation (the US seeks to Americanize the world as profoundly as possible, by spreading 'universal' values and ideas) but passing a much milder assessment of Europe. (2006:170-71)

by Kolosova, *Mir Glazami Rossiyan*, 'The world seen through Russians' eyes' (2003). Apart from the concepts of *Russia as a part of Europe or Eastern Europe*, and *Russia as one centre in a multi-polar world*, it can be argued that each falls under the messianic framework and together appear as new variations of the traditional messianic narratives, with variants of neo-Eurasianism dominating:

In the ethno-religious accounts of *Russia as a Slavonic or even just national Russian government* she must either "fight for the reunification of the Eastern-Slavonic land" or "concentrate its strength on the national revival of the Russian people", and *Russia as Byzantium* is "the main protector of Orthodox values and the only independent de facto Orthodox state since the fall of Constantinople in 1453." (2003:60-62) These representations link to both the 'Holy Russia' and 'Third Rome' narratives of Russia founded on Orthodoxy.

Russia as an "island" epitomises the isolationism of 'Holy Russia' as opposed to 'Third Rome', and Russia's main task in this representation is "intensive self-development on the "island" and the assimilation of the Eastern (trans-Ural) regions" and to "decline external expansion and a "global mission." (2003:60-62)

Russia as Eurasia is Eurasian exceptionalism, Russia is "the only one of its kind as a cultural-geopolitical Slavonic-Turkic complex, knit together with the system of the continental bordering areas, but also opposing them both for economic reasons as well as through its special spirituality." (2003:60-62) *Russia as the main part of heartland*, the core of Eurasia, represents Russia as having a special role in being the key to global stability, "a Great Power, called to serve as a bridge between the East and the West." (2003:60-62) This could be termed Eurasian missionism – though as discussed above, the idea of Eurasia as an alternative civilisation rather than as a bridge between civilisations is becoming much more dominant.[53]

So, in sum, while the official position still co-opted between different positions, most positions in public discourse related to aspects of the messianic framework, from the revival of the Russian nation and Orthodox mission of Russia as Byzantium to the

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[53] Mark Bassin provides an excellent discussion of the intense use of Mackinder's geopolitical 'Heartland' theory min post-Soviet discourse, its adaptation to match the "historical-geopolitical spaces of the Russian state" and the ideologically compelling conclusion that "Russia has at all times been the absolute center of all world-historical development." (Bassin, 2006:116)

special spirituality of Eurasia and the overarching notion that everything depends on Russia.

5.5.3   Russia as Messianic

i)   Official discourse

As discussed above, the official Russia of the 2002 state address was seeking to move closer to the West – and this year US-Russian foreign relations were at a peak following 9/11 and the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council. In the same speech there was a complete absence of messianic and related references. While no general conclusions can be drawn, this nevertheless supports our conceptualisation of Russian messianism as a framework which does not function without 'the West' as a negative Other.

As discussed above, public discourse continued to be predominantly anti-Western, but Putin in the state address did not move towards this position this year, instead joining Russia with the West in the anti-terrorist coalition and using the opportunity to represent the Chechen rebels as being on par with Al Qaeda and world terrorism in this global discourse of danger, thus justifying the war in Chechnya, which, as argued before, had been core to legitimising his own regime.

The next year's address saw the return of messianic rhetoric, and the war in Chechnya was explained within this framework. In the speech, Putin spoke out against the dangers of "populist slogans and empty promises", but he nevertheless plunged into precisely populist messianic-related narratives at the end of the address, speaking of the historical feat of Russia and its people – a unique community of peoples – and the sacrifices made to accomplish this feat.

Speaking of Chechnya, it was again the narrative of sacrifice that was used: "It is true that we have had to pay a high price to restore Russia's territorial integrity, and we bow our heads in memory of our fallen soldiers and of the Chechen civilians who lost their lives, in memory of all those who at the price of their lives did not allow this country to be torn apart and did their duty right to the end." (Putin, Annual Address, 2003)   Putin's constructed the conflict as being between "the

simple, courageous Chechen people" naturally belonging to the Russian country, and the "murderous bandits" seeking to tear the country apart.

ii)   Public discourse

The glorification of the Russian soldiers in the Chechen war, and correlating demonisation of the Chechen 'bandits' was a reflection of typical national-patriotic public discourse, in which the Chechen war provided a fresh platform for the traditional interplay of patriotism defined in terms of Christological sacrifice against demonized enemies of the Motherland.[54]

While Islam in the 1990s, with Eurasianist discourse dominating, had rarely been part of the negative Other construction, the Chechen wars saw its – rather contradictory – incorporation into the West as broad negative Other (Verkhovsky, 2004). And while many political analysts, like Putin, were very concerned with Russia's role in the globalised world (Kosolapov, 2004, Pavlov, 2004, Zagladin, 2000), this period also saw the successful incorporation of globalisation into the negative Other construction.

Globalisation, as representing 'the West,' has come to occupy a central place in contemporary messianic discourse as a common negative signifier, the anti-thesis of spirituality, Russianness and all things good. In national-patriotic, Orthodox nationalist, and even the Moscow Patriarchate's ideology, variants of Huntington's theory of the 'clash of civilisations' often forms the basis of the narrative: one civilisation is godless and wants to impose its godlessness on all others – Russia as the leader of Orthodox or Slavonic civilisation must together with 'the rest' fight against this universalist messianism of the secular liberal West both within and outside Russia. (Verkhovsky, 2007:185-86)

Evgenii Troitskii's popular work *Slavianstvo v usloviakh globalizatsii i informatsionnoi voiny*, (Slavism under the conditions of globalisation and informational war) is illustrative of this type of texts locating globalisation in the traditional good/evil logic of opposition:

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[54] See e.g. Prokhanov (2002) on 'the ideology of patriotism' as being sacrifice, stoicism, undivided love for Russia" in an article in *Zavtra* called 'Russkaya Pobeda'.

> The pro-American globalisation stimulates amorality, the robbery of the nations, depravity, terrorism, the application of fraudulent PR technologies in the pre-election campaign periods in 'the democratic society'. It influences wholly negatively on higher values that have been composed in Slavonic countries for centuries: the striving towards justice, honesty, diligence, spirituality, and patriotic feelings etc, which are being revived despite and in defiance of globalisation. (Troitskii, 2002:14)

As we established, the function of 'discourses of danger' is to define the self and legitimise the state, and as globalisation in the Russian messianic framework is often seen as an ample source of dangers. It "promises the Slavs not only neo-colonial dependence on the West, but derogation, insult to their national honour and worth and the threat of the spreading of AIDS and other dangerous infections." (Troitskii, 2002:78)

Globalisation and anti-Semitism are often intertwined in this type of discourse, amalgamated in terms such as 'zionist globalisation' (replacing 'zionist cosmopolitanism') and "the Judeo-American anti-Rome" – the US, resisting Russia as the Third Rome (Sidorov, 2006:329, Verkhovsky, 2004).

In Dugin's ever-evolving variants of neo-Eurasianism anti-globalism is intertwined with geopolitics, imperialism, spirituality, conspiracy theories, cosmism, occultism and anti-Semitism. As its negative, opposing signifier, globalisation renders the Eurasian-Russian identity quite inclusive, since, to quote Dugin, "all anti-globalist tendencies are potentially "Eurasian"." (Laruelle, 2006:9). It should be noted that this radicalised us/them framework appears quite similar to George W. Bush's statement on the war on terror after 9/11 that 'those who are not for us are with the terrorists'.

This brings us back to the understanding of messianism, or 'universalist nationalism' characteristic of political entities in which complex social realities and geocultural conditions require a simplifying, radicalist self-other framework to legitimise the state and unify the population. Interestingly, the American absolutism and messianism is often highlighted in Russian public discourse: Vladislav Inozemtsev, a prominent Russian academic, notes that "the Americans have become accustomed to an oversimplistic vision of the world, dividing it into light and dark

parts, into centres of good and evil" (Inozemtsev, 2006:172); Nikolai Pavlov, writes about the destabilising effect on international relations of "the black-and-white worldview, the messianic ideology of the United States, manifested in actual politics in the form of "Fourth Rome"" (Pavlov, 2004:84); and Zyuganov has claimed the American "new world order" to be "a universal messianic, eschatological religious project, on a scale of planning and preparation far exceeding the forms of planetary utopias known in history" (quoted in Duncan, 2000:136). (This is another example of the discursive move exemplified previously by Kortunov (1998a:27) who denied that imperial ambitions would have any relevance in Russia and instead attributed this characteristic to the Other.)

However, in Russian discourse, the logic of opposition is arguably more mainstream, radical and messianic than in America – in the patriotic/nationalist discourse we find typical articles apocalyptically entitled 'Tolerance of the Antichrist' (*Tolerantnost' k antikhristu*) and 'The Russian Opposition to the Coming Antichrist' (*Russkoe Soprotivlenie gryadushchemu Antikhristu*)[55] where the Antichrist can be either the Jews/Zionists, or globalisation, or both.[56] With the Other as Antichrist in this logic of opposition, there is also a missionary role for Russia as a Christ and Saviour: "The hopeful, saving alternative to the pro-American globalization, un-spiritual, exploiting in its nature, stimulating international terrorism, is the highly ethical Russo-Slavonic conviviality (*sobornost'*)". (Troitskii, 2002:91-92)

iii)   Academic interpretation

Globalisation is central to most contemporary Russian messianic discourse, as also Dmitri Sidorov notes. Exploring the role of the Third Rome metaphor in Russian geopolitics, he highlights the work of the influential writer and active anti-Semite

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[55] The first from the webpage of the party 'Russian National Unity' (*Russkoe National'noe Edinstvo*), May 2008, http://www.rne.org/sfk/0805/0805-23.shtml [accessed 2008-05-30], the second a series in *Molodaya Gvardiya* by Oleg Platonov (2007).
[56] This is illustrated in the party 'Holy Russia's' manifesto: "WE WANT TO LIVE IN AN ORTHODOX COUNTRY! WE DO NOT WANT TO LIVE AND DIE IN SODOM AND GOMORRAH! WE ARE AGAINST RUSSIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN GLOBALISATION." Under the rubric '"*Za nashe Otechestvo – Za Rus' Svyatuyu*" at the website of '*Svyataya Rus*', http://www.sant-rus.ru/vestnik.html [Accessed 2008-04-25].

Mikhail Nazarov, whose eschatological worldview is based on the original 'Third Rome' notion of Russia's mission:

> Russia is opposed to the rest of the world as the only country that potentially could keep it from the alleged apostasy (decline) of the coming anti-Christian kingdom (often equated to globalisation and/or the USA). Therefore (and not 'just because of its natural resources') the world conspiracy forces consider Russia its main enemy in their global war: without full control of Russia, the world 'behind-the-scenes' system (*mirovaya zakulisa*) can't establish the kingdom of anti-Christ. Hence the fate of the world is dependent on the Third Rome, its *catehon*, restraining, hold-back power of the Russian empire to provide humanity with a light-house for salvation.
>
> (Sidorov, 2006:327)

Sidorov holds that this worldview, while extreme, is representative of most Orthodox nationalists/fundamentalist discourse (2006:328). Both universalist *missionism* and exceptionalist *messianism* are woven together in this radicalised discourse: Russia is both the imperial Third Rome and the select, Christ-like nation. Laruelle further argues that Dugin's Eurasianist geopolitical doctrine and ideology would not function without enemies and conspiracy theories, without "the new world order as a "spider web" in which globalized actors hide in order to better accomplish their mission." (2006:8)

The radicalised logic of opposition between Russia and the West/globalisation as broad Other in Russian public discourse, manifested in spiritual/religious conspiracy and persecution theories thus both underscores the centrality of discourses of danger to Russian messianism as a persistent phenomenon.[57] But the deployment of these discourses must also be understood in the specific context of the wider, global backlash of cultural fundamentalism against globalisation and American/Western hegemony (Laruelle, 2008:220).

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[57] Duncan suggests that Russian messianism can be understood partly as collective paranoia or a persecution complex, linked to a on the one hand a "fever of conspiracy theories, centring on world Jewry or the CIA, and to the fear of being excluded from Europe; on the other hand, the delusions of grandeur, typified by "Moscow the Third Rome," and the belief in the October Revolution as the first step towards World Communism." (2000:147)

As for the Chechen wars and construction of the negative Other, Verkhovsky outlines how Islam became part of the Antichrist threat framework in Orthodox nationalist discourse during the second Chechen war, and argues that this related not only to the situation in former Yugoslavia and in Chechnya, but also to an increase in the immigration of Muslims to ethnically Russian regions of the country. This discursive merger was made possible through the claim that radical Islam, not only coming from a flawed religion but also being a dangerous synthesis of western technology and eastern passion, was used as a tool by the Western Antichrist. (Verkhovsky, 2004) The Chechen conflict certainly bore an acute internal dimension, with Russia's increasing population of Muslims, and with xenophobic, anti-Muslim organisations and sentiment increasingly prominent in the Russian political landscape. (Dunlop and Menon, 2006)

While not at all on the same level of radicalism, Putin's persistent threat construction of global terrorism certainly fitted with this development, and as we will outline further on, this period saw a gradual decline of Eurasianism, with its 'harmony of religions and cultures' in favour of ethno-cultural discourses, both in public and to some extent official discourse.

5.6.0   2004-2005: One year a glorious future, one year a glorious past

5.6.1   Russia as History, Presence and Destiny

  i)   Official discourse

Just like the two-headed eagle on the Russian emblem, Russian messianism in its two master narratives looks both forward to a glorious future, and back to a glorious past. The 2004 address stressed newness and building for the future, and in 2005, the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Great Fatherland War, historical continuity, tradition, spiritual values of forebears, and the glorious heritage prevail.

Putin in 2004 elaborated a narrative of the development in stages of the Russian state since the fall of the Soviet Union, in which the first stage was to 'dismantling the old system', a difficult time; the second 'clearing the debris from the

old edifice', and the third, which Putin in 2004 declared Russia had entered, 'rapid development' and 'creation of long-term objectives', 'the path of true democracy and sovereignty'. But, he stated, rephrasing Stalin, that Russia must still 'catch up and overtake' in economic development. (Putin, Annual Address, 2004)

The overall narrative was one of newness, faith and hope, looking ahead to a brilliant future, rather than continuity. The address carried praise for the people who are "enriching our national culture and building a new country", echoing slogans from both revolutionary Bolshevism and Stalinist building of socialism.

In 2005, there was a return to narratives of continuity and past glory. Russia was represented as a "unique and vast country" with a "rich cultural and spiritual heritage", and, slightly compromising the purist pragmatism, a place where "law and morals, politics and morality have traditionally been considered close and related concepts". Notably, Putin stated in the 2005 state address that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century", discursively moving the official Russian image towards the Third Rome framework. (Putin, Annual Address, 2005) Putin's statement, understood in the context of ethnic separatism in Chechnya and elsewhere (with the official construction of "the simple, courageous Chechen people" naturally belonging to the Russian country) suggested that the geopolitical disaster arose because the peoples unified under the historic mission of Russia had been divided on grounds of ethnicity and 'bad' nationalism.

And in 2005 variations of the logic of opposition were intertwined with sacrifice, a world mission, patriotism and Russianness as Putin both opened and concluded the 2005 state address by celebrating the memory of the Great Patriotic War, constructed as "civilisation's triumph over fascism", the defence of "the principles of freedom, independence and equality between all peoples and nations" won "through the strong spirit of all the peoples who were united at that time within a single state. Their unity emerged victorious over inhumanity, genocide and the ambitions of one nation to impose its will on others." (Putin, Annual Address, 2005)

The Russian people were depicted as "the soldiers of freedom", who "saved the world from an ideology of hatred and tyranny", "fought against slavery", "for

149

the right to live on their own land, to speak their native language and have their own statehood, culture and traditions", "for their right to independent development". (Putin, Annual Address, 2005) Putin's use of the narrative of sacrifice and mission in the context of "the Russian fight for the right to independent development and statehood" strongly suggested similarity between all those wanting or having wanted to impose their will on Russia – whether fascists or Nazis in the Great Fatherland War or the US and actors of globalisation today.

ii)   Public discourse

This discursive move, which is implicit in the state address, is explicit in the extended manifesto of NASHI, the Kremlin-sponsored youth mass movement, which states that the "victory of Russia in the Second World War created the basis for a world order which until recently guaranteed the world would be defended against global hegemony by any one country (whether Nazi Germany or the USA) and a repeat of a new world war."[58]

Ostensibly an NGO (the *only* one that can move Russian civil society forward, according to its manifesto), NASHI can freely propagate the populist messages which can only be hinted at in official discourse. And in its manifesto the discourses of danger are radical, unambiguous and occupy most of the text: "Today the U.S. on one side, and international terrorism on the other, are trying to take control of Eurasia and the entire world. Their sights are set on Russia. The task of our generation is to defend the sovereignty of our country the way our grandfathers did 60 years ago."[59]

Sacrifice plays a key role in this discourse too, as the manifesto reviews the historic threat against Russia from the West and Russia's history of suffering from invasions. And the historic sacrifice apparently has been worthwhile, as NASHI now is able to define Russia as "the historical and geographical center of the modern world" (Ibid.). Again, Russia no longer depends on the West, but everything depends on Russia.

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[58] From the NASHI website, 'NASHI Manifest s komentariyamy' (2005).
[59] 'NASHI Manifest….'

Putin's increasing representation of historical continuity in official discourse, with the Soviet Union firmly included in Russian historical identity, was bringing official discourse closer to mainstream public discourse, in which Russia typically is defined in terms of an organic nation where past and present are intimately linked and where heroes of the past hold politicians today accountable for how they take care of the Motherland. (See e.g. Prokhanov, 2007a) Precisely the acknowledgement of this organic identity marks a true Russian, Orthodox nationalist Khomolgorov argues: nationalists, those who dare to say that they are Russians (*russkie*) embrace all of Russia's thousand year old history and are part of this organic being, whereas those that only say that they are civic Russians (*rossiyane*) limit Russia at best to an entity beginning in 1991 'when democracy came down like manna from heaven'. (Khomolgorov, 2005)

iii)   Academic interpretation

This messianic narrative of the Great Patriotic war is deployed at all levels of Russian discourse as a signifier of true Russianness, and, as chapters six and seven will, certainly so among ordinary people. Chapter two argued that the stories we tell about 'ourselves', and the boundaries we inscribe between us and others have a crucial political function in disguising the incoherencies and contradictions of collective identity, instead creating the appearance of a coherent identity. The story of the Great Fatherland war, and the new "peace-keeping missions" to ensure human rights and freedoms, are precisely filling that function, within the simple messianic framework defining Russianness in grand, universalistic terms of the opposition to hatred, tyranny, slavery, for the sake of justice, freedom and independence, basically, the fight between good and evil. And at the same time, as noted above, the newer threat construction of 'international terrorism' (faithfully echoed in the NASHI manifesto) relates to a growing particularism in public discourse with the increasing ethnic intolerance and ethno-cultural, Russo-centric models of identity.

5.6.2   Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)

i)   Official discourse

Of the *desired* qualities of Russia, what Russia *should* be like or *must become*, according to Putin in 2004, we find "a true democracy", a "developed civil society" and, twice repeated, a "society of truly free people." Russia becoming *truly* free suggests that its significant Other, the West, is not free *indeed* (despite freedom being a key signifier of American identity) and that it does not have a *true* democracy, as, to paraphrase Bruce Hall, in the repeated references to '*true*' qualities of the self are counter-narratives of the '*false*' qualities of the Other (Hall, 2001:104).

Putin masters this type of discursive strategy: taking predominantly western, neo-liberal concepts like democracy, human rights, and freedom, reconstructing them as being inherently Russian and then turning them against the West to expose its hypocrisy – in the 2004 address he both addressed the US, stating that fighting terrorism cannot be an excuse for restricting human rights; and at the same time affirmed that "no one and nothing will stop Russia on the path to consolidating democracy, and ensuring human rights and freedoms." Russia's "peace-keeping missions" belong to the same type of discourse.

This continued in 2005 when Putin further elaborated and solidified the 'official' construction of Russianness by affirming that (despite rumours that Russians were "not used to or do not need freedom) "the [European] ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy have for many centuries been our society's determining values" (Putin, Annual Address, 2005); and in the famous Munich speech in 2007, in which Putin stressed for example, talking about the fall of the Berlin wall, that this "historic choice" was made by the people of Russia, "a choice in favour of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all the members of the big European family", and contrasted this to the hypocrisy of America, NATO and the West "trying to impose new dividing lines and walls on us". (Putin, 2007b)

ii)   Public discourse

Numerous parallels to this type of self-Other construction can be drawn to popular discourse. A famous example is the penultimate scene in Balabanov's Brat 2, a Russian patriotic action film from 2000 with cult-like status (that increased dramatically when the main actor died in an avalanche in 2002). The Russian hero, Danila, whilst humming a patriotic poem about the Motherland and loving everybody in the whole world, has killed his way to finally confront the American antagonist, the 'entrepreneur' Mr Manis, in his Chicago office.

The American is shaking with fear (his chess companion just having been shot dead beside him), but Danila is calm, downing glasses of vodka and making the next chess move. Then, unbothered by the fact that the American cannot understand him, he in Russian sums up his American experience in a monologue: "Tell me, American, in what lies strength? Money perhaps? You have a lot of money…so what?" Strength actually lies in truth, Danila explains to the crying American. Whoever has the truth is the strongest. Someone is deceiving the Americans, making them think that money makes them the strongest. But they are not, because they don't have the truth. (Danila then leaves with a vast amount of the American's money). The hypocritical, materialistic and decadent America might think they are ruling the world through their money, but they are corrupt and deceived (as are the Ukrainans who are also villains in the film, collaborating with the Americans). Russia, implicit in this narrative, is strong because of its truth and honesty.

A parallel binary opposition in Russian public discourse is between nationalism and liberalism, and between the poor and the rich – obviously a continuation of traditional Soviet discourse. Khomolgorov, again defining *true* nationalism (that is Russian nationalism, not the false nationalism of separatist groups or Ukraine) explains that it does not teach its nation to hate any other nation, whereas liberalism "teaches the rich to hate the poor" (2005); and Prokhanov similarly defines a patriot as someone who is on the side of the poor, not of the rich – unlike the "Russophobic bourgeois." (Prokhanov, 2001) And as is well-known, Putin

made extensive use of this discursive opposition in his construction of the battle against the new internal enemies of Russia, the evil capitalist oligarchs.[60]

iii)   Academic interpretation

Russia as true, and the West as false, is yet another variation of the traditional messianic logic of opposition, providing Russia with a strong, positive identity. The official co-optation of Western and Russian ideas had in the first years of Putin's presidency appeared as an attempt to please and appease both Russian society and the West. But Putin's new 'hijacking' of liberal Western concepts, openly playing with their meaning, and boldly representing Russia as fulfilling Western ideals much better than the West itself added a rather ironic twist to this framework, particularly considering that Putin's regime had seen an increasing centralisation of the state, curtailment of civil liberties and the state seizing control of mass media and national television channels. (Shevtsova, 2007:47-65) In this specific period, in January 2006, Putin had signed a controversial law giving authorities extensive new powers to monitor the activities of non-governmental organisations and suspend them if they are found to pose a threat (reflecting the state's fear of Western-backed 'colour revolutions' similar to Ukraine's in 2005), and in April 2007 police in central Moscow forcefully prevented opposition activists from holding a banned rally against Putin.

A parallel to Putin's discursive strategy can however be drawn to revolutionary Europe when official Russia subscribed to the European ideals of the *ancien regime*, representing itself as more European than Europe – and to a certain extent also to Soviet Russia, first to try to put the European ideology of Marxism into practice. As for the continuous glorification of the sacrificially poor and humble ('like Christ') in Orthodox-nationalist discourse, the political function of this discourse could no doubt, as was suggested Chapter Two, be of a compensatory nature given the large part of the population living under relatively poor economic conditions.

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[60] See for example Shevtsova's chapter 'Oligarchy as Myth and Reality' (2007) and V. Shlapentokh (2004). The most notable case in Putin's 'purging' of these internal enemies was the Yukos affair – in October 2003 Yukos oil boss Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who had supported liberal opposition to President Putin, was arrested over investigations into tax evasion and fraud, and in 2005 he was sentenced to nine years in prison in Siberia.

5.6.3   Russia as Messianic

i)   Official discourse

In the 2005 address Putin explicitly stated that Russia has a mission: "Also certain is that Russia should continue its civilising mission on the Eurasian continent. This mission consists in ensuring that democratic values, combined with national interests, enrich and strengthen our historic community." (Putin, Annual Address, 2005) This relates back to the infamous 'imperial ambitions' (closely tied in public discourse to the idea of a 'special mission') which the state so firmly had rejected in 1999-2001, but now were finding their way into the official construction of Russia.

Russia was also explicitly defined as a successor of the Soviet Union, "bound to the former Soviet republics through a common history, the Russian language and the great culture they share and their common desire for freedom"; and furthermore repeatedly defined as a *nation* (with 'a thousand year history', echoing the discourses on the organic Russian nation).

In 2000-2001 the official construction of Russia had been vague and uncommitted to either master narrative, now there was a simultaneous representation of Russia on the one hand as Eurasia, a successor to the Soviet Union, a multi-ethnic, supra-national entity, and on the other as a *nation* with its mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious assumptions – a dualism added to the already ambiguous official representation of Russia as 'European but not Western' (Gvosdev, 2007).

ii)   Public discourse

The above discussed contradiction at the level of official discourse is a clear reflection of the same phenomenon in public discourse. While the question of empire had previously divided popular patriotic discourse, maintaining the distinction between the two master narratives, nation and empire, was becoming increasingly irrelevant. While one would typically expect considerable contestation between distinct ideological positions arguing for the definition of Russian collective identity by their

155

respective choice of diacritics, the lack thereof was, and still is, quite stark - the contradictions are *not* being managed.

Even in a document like "Russian Doctrine" (*Russkaya Doktrina*), an Orthodox conservative project aimed to be a "platform for a wide coalition of societal patriotic forces," adhered to by for example Rogozin's new party "Great Russia" and allegedly supported by the authorities (Sidorov, 2006:330), stresses Russia's specific, unique and peculiar qualities at the same time as the Russian Doctrine is proclaimed a *global* project, centred on the "integrational potential of the Russian civilisation", "yet again called upon by History."[61]

Demurin, then deputy Chairman of the popular *Rodina* party, the precursor of both "Great Russia" and "Just Russia", is one of only a few in the Russian public discourse to address this central issue in Russian identity construction even if only momentarily. He acknowledges that there are "individuals who will claim there is a contradiction between the task of expanding the influence of Russian civilization, which is traditionally defined in an imperial rather than national paradigm, and specific guidelines for reviving the national feelings of people with Russian ethnicity. This contradiction is superficial, however."(2006)

The fault here, according to Demurin, lies at least partly with the West's, as the neo-Westernizers in the 1990s, and previously the Bolsheviks in the revolution, 'purposefully suppressed Russia's ethnic spirit' in order to destroy Russia. Only by fostering a national spirit amongst ethnic Russians can this be rectified. Again, this central contradiction is avoided by shifting the focus to the Other.

The incongruity between nation and empire is often seen as irrelevant in Orthodoxy-based national-patriot discourse. For example Narochnitskaya sees no contradiction between the Russian (*russkii*) and the imperial and stresses, in an interview by Prokhanov, that under the pre-revolutionary Orthodox, religious Imperial Russia the different nationalities were free to 'pray to their gods', and consciously felt belonging to and found freedom in the Tsarist state (Prokhanov, 2003); and Khomolgorov stresses that Russian (*russkii*) nationalism includes the Slavs – Ukraine and Belarus, and is a wider cultural and religious notion (Khomolgorov, 2005).

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61 http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/index.php?subject=5 [Accessed 2008-05-20].

iii)   Academic interpretation

There are thus several dualistic representations of Russia, not only in public but also in official discourse, from Russia as both a multi-ethnic, multicultural, supra-national Great Power and a single nation with its ethnocentric and mono-religious connotations; to Russia as Eurasian, Slavonic *and* European; and both being special or having 'special interest', and being 'normal,' like all states. Tsygankov points to Eurasian/European dualism being evident in a number of post-Soviet political concepts, such as "liberal empire" (deployed by Anatoly Chubais), "civilised Eurasianism" (Alexander Panarin), "liberal statism" (Vladimir Lukin and Sergei Stankevich) and, Putin's official discourse, Russia as "normal Great Power" and "Euro-Eastern." (Tsygankov, 2008:382)

As for the "normal Great Power" concept, it manages to draw from both positions in the traditional Slavophile/Westerniser debate, as Tsygankov explains, "[t]he term "normal" signals support for Westernisers, whereas the concept "great power" culturally reconnects with the historical perspective of the Eurasianists." (2008:382) He also notes that Putin's deployment of the term "civilising mission" was made in relation to the narrative of Russia as together with Europe working to secure human rights, women's emancipation, taking care of the weak and the poor, with Putin stressing that Russia not is after territories and natural resources, "but the human dignity and the quality of life of its citizens, whom it regards as its own cultural compatriots" (cited in Tsygankov, 2008:385). The multi-ethnic Russian Euro-Eastern normal Great Power as official Russian identity thus manages to cover many traditionally contradictory positions.

Slade argues convincingly that the "trend of the Russian state trying to co-opt competing principles for constructing the nation in order to establish hegemony in representing the national interest and the people of Russia through a new 'Russian idea' with the state itself at its base" is related to "Putin's control of the production of ideas and their distribution and consumption through state control of the media." (Slade, 2006)

Vladimir Shlapentokh, on the other hand, in 2001 described Putin as having "deeply contradictory interests", being evidently "weak as a leader" and reluctant "to make radical decisions" (Shlapentokh, 2001:390) But far from being a sign of weakness, Putin's management of contradictory discourses and interests has been necessary to consolidate power and achieve social consensus.

Tsygankov has argued that Putin's representation of Russia as a Great Power relates to its unifying function in light of Russia's volatile external environment and the threat of disintegration: "Great-power status is therefore not a goal in itself for Putin but rather a necessary condition for Russia's more advanced engagement with the world." (Tsygankov, 2005:134) This reiterates the explanations for Russian messianism put forth by Arbatov and Rieber who argued that Russia's peculiar conditions render messianic ideology a necessity. (Arbatov, 2006, Rieber, 1993)

But the historical continuities aside, as we noted earlier, some of the kaleidoscopic characteristics of post-Soviet Russian identity discourse are particular for the post-Soviet context. Mikhail Epstein noted in 1998 that "the ideological incompatibility among Marxist, nationalist and religious discourses, which sharply divided them in the late Soviet period, now becomes more and more irrelevant as these positions merge in the overarching type of radical discourse." As an illustration he shows how in a single sentence of Zyuganov's writings, "phrases imbued with religious meaning — "spiritual tradition," "*sobornost'*" and "heavenly ideals," merge together with "*derzhavnost'*" and "statehood," taken from the vocabulary of nationalists, and with "collectivism" and "brotherhood," the key words of communist jargon."(Epstein, 1998)

While the contradictions of Zyuganov and other public prominent voices are much starker than those in Putin's official discourse, Putin's co-opted definitions of Russia – as a multinational Eurasia and part of Greater Europe, or Euro-East; a normal Great Power and a nation; a successor to the Soviet Union and a modern, civic, democratic state – are not only a result of his personal discursive strategy but in much a reflection of a phenomenon in post-Soviet public discourse, succinctly defined by Epstein as "polyphonic, not just pluralistic, in the sense that different positions and voices interact in the consciousnesses of the most creative individual thinkers."(Epstein, 1998)

Dmitri Sidorov also notes this phenomenon in the field of geopolitics which is "characterised by frequent overlaps of ideologies: the same person often adheres to several ideologies" (2006:318) A contradictory but powerful master narrative is emerging, in which even Stalin, and sometimes Lenin, are not only rehabilitated together with the Soviet period, but represented as *good Orthodox believers*. (Shlapentokh, 2009)

This reiterates our claim that identity is contradictory and incoherent, even at the level of individual thinkers, yet here the 'stories' are the source of, not just the solution to, the incoherencies. A general explanation is suggested by discourse analyst Michael Billig, who writes that "[i]f ideologies did not contain contrary themes, they would not provide the resources for common sense thinking, for thinking involves dialogic discussion, or the counter-positioning of contrary themes, which can both in their way appear reasonable." (Billig, 2001:218)

It is difficult to judge to what extent the ideological contradictions in Russian political discourse provide the "resources for common sense thinking" and to what extent they form part of a monopolisation of ideology which usurps all potentially challenging positions, no doubt both are valid explanations.

5.7.0   2006-2007: Holy Eurasia?

5.7.1   Russia as History, Presence and Destiny

i)   Official discourse

The image which had emerged in the 2005 address of a strong Russia, confident in its history and future, and not concerned with its internal inconsistencies, was taken even further in the 2006 and 2007 state addresses. While each of Putin's previous state addresses had contained some doses of criticism, defining a scope for improvement and listing desired, needed qualities of Russia and the Russians, the 2006 and 2007 state addresses contained very little towards this end. Even the huge problems which had previously been spelled out were here referred to "ironing out

the imbalances that had arisen in our system of state organisation and in the social sphere" - something now basically completed (Putin, Annual Address, 2007).

And the 2007 speech in particular drew upon a range of different notions pertaining to the Russian messianic framework. The 2006 address had almost entirely left out the Holy Russia master narrative, with its spirituality, morals and exceptionalism, but in 2007 it was brought back, with Putin emphasising the importance for development of the "spiritual unity of the people and the moral values that unite us", as well as respect for Russia's "unique cultural values", "the memory of *our forebears* and for each page of our country's history", all referred to as the foundation for strengthening state unity and sovereignty.

Putin's call to respect the memory of '*each* page of our country's history' with all likelihood related to the state's project this year to create a single textbook and framework for teaching Russian history in schools – Putin's own message to history teachers was not to "allow anyone to impose a sense of guilt upon us."(Ostrovsky, 2008) Drawing on neo-Slavophile themes of messianic discourse, Putin sought to appeal also to the cultural intelligentsia, blaming economic crisis for the near disappearance of "many of our spiritual and moral traditions," and warning that "the absence of cultural beacons of our own, and blindly copying foreign models, will inevitably lead to us losing our national identity. As Dmitry Likhachev wrote, "State sovereignty is also defined by cultural criteria." (Putin, Annual Address, 2007)

Yet, Putin at the same time distanced official Russia from the exceptionalism and isolationism of the Holy Russia narrative by yet again invoking the Eurasianist narrative of a spiritual harmony of cultures:

> Having a unique cultural and spiritual identity has never stopped anyone from building a country open to the world. Russia has made a tremendous contribution to the formation of European and world culture. Our country has historically developed as a union of many peoples and cultures and the idea of a common community, a community in which people of different nationalities and religions live together, has been at the foundation of the

160

Russian people's spiritual outlook for many centuries now. (Putin, Annual Address, 2007)

Since 2005 Putin had gradually begun to deploy this spiritual-organic, not just pragmatic-geopolitical, variation of Eurasianism, referring to the coexistence of different confessions and ethnic groups as a "harmony" and "symbiosis", the "roots of Russian statehood", and the strength of Russia in the context of the state addresses.

But ethno-centrism, the Russian language, and Orthodoxy were taking precedence over the other components of this harmony. The 2007 state address had a lengthy discourse on the political, spiritual, patriotic and universal values of the Russian language and culture – and only as an afterthought, Putin stated that "of course, it is also vitally important today to help develop the national cultures of our country's different peoples, including through support for folklore groups." (Putin, Annual Address, 2007)

ii)   Public discourse

The contradiction between ethno-centrism and multiculturalism (parallel to that of nation and empire, described above) exemplified in Putin's official discourse had previously divided strands of popular discourse, but was becoming evident as a type of managed dualism *within* the different strands and domains public discourse.

Rodina's Demurin, again, argues that in order to survive as an actor in the conflict of civilisations, Russia must "save and multiply its vital force, which are the ethnic Russians and other peoples who make up this country, many of whom are heading for extinction." (Demurin, 2006) The mechanical adding of "other peoples" is typical in this type of argument – compare with Putin's brief reference above to "support for folklore groups" – as it pays necessary tribute to the official multiculturalism while still being within a distinctively ethno-centrist framework. Similarly, the extended manifesto of NASHI concludes both that "multiculturalism is an important advantage for Russia in the modern world"; but at "the same time, Russians are the state-forming and most populous people of Russia, and for this reason the fate of

161

Russia will depend in large measure on well-being of and position occupied by Russians." The manifesto celebrates patriotism but condemns "aggressive nationalism, separatism, religious intolerance" exemplified in Ukraine, Chechnya and Estonia.[62] There are thus two types of nationalism, one good and one bad The combination of militarism with Russian Orthodoxy is central also to NASHI: Project *NASHA Armiya*, Our Army, started in 2006, and has been geared towards increasing the status of doing military service (clips of Orthodox priests praying at army camps can be downloaded from the website); and the popularisation of Orthodoxy among youth is another core project.[63]

Prokhanov, in an article praising Putin's initiative to create a new, single history textbook for schools – as he called it, a 'centralisation of history', from a 'centralist government' – concluded, after making his own sweeping summary of Russian history, that what is needed in the present period is to complete the age-old, solemn, project of 'Russian civilisation', which, while changing form with different historical periods, still remains the same, and where 'the striving for Divine Truth and paradisal being, the Great Revelation' is being preserved."(Prokhanov, 2007a) Seeing Russian history as an organic coherence is central to contemporary messianic discourse, and Putin's centralised history curriculum revision, which saw a strong and unapologetic rehabilitation of the Soviet past including Stalin, undoubtedly moved official discourse closer to the messianic framework.

iii)   Academic interpretation

Being a supra-ethnic and supra-national ideology, contemporary Eurasianism seemed to fit well with the need in the multi-ethnic Russian Federation for an inclusive collective identity which is yet spiritual and messianic rather than civic – in some aspects it appears as a continuation of Soviet ideology, with the notion of the 'Eurasian people' nearly identical to the 'Soviet people' and 'friendship of the peoples' used much in official discourse in the late Soviet period.

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[62]'NASHI Manifest….'
[63] From the NASHI website, http://www.nashi.su/nasha_armia and
http://www.nashi.su/pravoslavnyi_korpus [both accessed 2008-11-22].

This identity mainly ties in with the Third Rome rather than the Holy Russia master narrative, with visions of empire and an international mission – though it is also decidedly exceptionalist, stressing the uniqueness of the Eurasian civilisation, and on closer examination reserves a special role for the ethnic and Orthodox Russians.

Laruelle uses the notion of *hypertrophied identity* to describe the synthesization of all currents of Russian nationalism which neo-Eurasianism espouses, refusing "to distinguish between what is ethnically Russian, what pertains to Russia as a whole (*rossiiskii*), and what is Eurasian". (2008:221) As she notes, this makes Eurasianism a very flexible ideology indeed, which explains its success, diversity and breadth of coverage in the post-Soviet period.

Inside Russia, however, Eurasianism's claim of a harmonious unity between Orthodoxy and the three other 'traditional' religions is disproved both by findings of widespread religious intolerance and ethnic hostility (Karpov, 2007) and what Warhola and Lehning terms the "ecumenical hegemonism" of Orthodoxy (Warhola, 2007). The Russian Orthodox Church officially supports the state's concept of 'four traditional religions' but, as Verkhovsky argues, this relates more to its aim to minimize proselytising by 'Western' groups, and also to the construction of the West as enemy Other. (2007:181, 85)

The ethno-centric/multicultural dualism is also part of the church's ideology and structure: it has contradictory politics and diacritics of Orthodox identity – sometimes ethno-centric, sometimes supra-national – depending on what territory it is operating, within Russia, within the former areas of the USSR and outside.[64]

A typically ambiguous concept epitomising the dualistic official ideology of the ROC is "the united community of faith – the Orthodox nation." As Verkhovsky explains, the ethnic "Orthodox nation" is meant to define identity where there is no civic "Orthodox nation" i.e. in situations of ethnic Orthodox minorities, whereas Russia itself is represented as a civic, supra-national "Orthodox country."

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[64] Verkhovsky describes how in the last years, the ROC has sought to widen its influence in the so-called "canonical territories." The Patriarchate has a distinctively supra-national, and a de facto base for imperial pretensions. But on territories outside of the former USSR – as well as within Russia itself, though in an inclusive way – the ROC operates on the basis of ethno-cultural markers of identity. It doesn't propagate nationalism as such but uses it practically to widen its influence. (2007:179)

(Verkhovsky, 2007:179) Again we find that precisely ambiguity of identity discourse has a distinctively pragmatic political function.

So, the standard moderate Eurasianist narrative on multiculturalism, a harmonious unity, bridge between civilisations, etc, might be a necessary part of both official and public rhetoric, but is unpopular and not translated into practice domestically, this period sees Eurasianism – in its standard multiculturalism – partly giving way to more strongly Orthodoxy-based, Russo-centric discourses – Dmitry Shlapentokh, for example, has recently pointed to the return of Byzantium as a model for Russian statecraft and identity.[65]

Verkhovsky sums up the political benefits of having Orthodoxy as the basis of Russian collective identity:

> It provides a common identity for a significant part of the population and includes in the role of leading partners the majority of the rest, it is closely related to the tradition of Russian statehood, including its imperial component, it represents the West as the main opponent (but not as a deathly enemy with which one has to war). Finally, the Moscow Patriarchate as the bearer of these ideas has no pretensions to control over the state, only to a gradual widening of its own influence. (Verkhovsky, 2007:187)

But, he explains, while the Orthodoxy-based model is appealing for the state as it searches to strengthen its legitimacy, it is not ready to fully adopt it and actually give up secularity. He suggests that this could relate to the Soviet upbringing of many of those in power – they respect the church but do not actually believe in its teachings; and to the church being seen as an unwelcome authority, rival to the state.

Yet, the greatest risk for adopting the church model as the basis for state legitimacy, he argues, is "building identity on a basis of religion in a not very religious society, where the actual growth of religiosity, though it persists, remains slow and unlikely to speed up." (Verkhovsky, 2007:187-88) While religious beliefs are not necessarily a prerequisite for an identity representation based on religious

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[65] He argued that it is politically attractive as it sheds the unpopular Eurasianist symbiosis and reaffirms Russia as an Orthodox country; it is still imperial and inclusive and emphasises Russia as a civilisation in its own right, defining "Russianness" inclusively mostly by cultural/religious attributes and yet stresses the dominant role of ethnic Russians; it bypasses Kiev, formerly the "mother of Russian cities" as the capital of an independent and unfriendly Ukraine; and encompasses a more cautious and moderate anti-Westernism than the neo-Eurasianist model, suiting the Russian elites to whom economic links to Europe are still vitally important. (Shlapentokh, 2009)

narratives to function, the interview-based chapters will however explore strong counter narratives to Orthodoxy as post-Soviet Russian identity.

And while a centralised master narrative is emerging in which ambiguities (such as Stalin as a good Orthodox believer) coexist quite happily, the rehabilitation of the Soviet past as exemplified in the history curriculum revision is not straightforwardly compatible with Orthodox official ideology, in which the church still partly represents the Soviet period in terms of martyrdom for the church. This can further explain the state's reluctance to fully adopt Orthodoxy as the model for collective identity. On the whole, however, the new history textbook and revised curriculum strongly supported the particularistic messianic framework to which Orthodox Russian identity also belongs. (See e.g. Wedgwoodbenn, 2008)

So while Russian collective identity representations in both official and public discourse were becoming more distinctive, and more similar to one another, they continued to be defined by ambiguity.

5.7.2   Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)

i)   Official discourse

Russia in the 2006 state address was constructed as a mature, responsible and reliable partner, a nuclear power, a peace-keeper with huge missions, both maintaining strategic stability (as "one of the most important guarantees of lasting peace") and ready to "settle local conflicts" (as could be noted in the summer of 2008), taking an active part in the UN and being a safe-guarder of the supremacy of international law.

The address hence also dwelt at length on the need for modernisation of Russia's armed forces, whose "mass heroism" was constructed as a vital part of Russian identity, "part of ourselves, part of our society", "of immense importance for the country and for the entire Russian people", with the calling of a soldier representing "the national unity of the people, the will of the Russian state, strength and honour"." (Putin, Annual Address, 2006)

And also in official discourse, the formerly implicit anti-Westernism became explicit and sharp. In the 2006 state address, the foreign policy threats spelled out were certainly extensive and mostly referred to the US. Putin stated that the US defence budget was almost 25 times bigger than Russia's, and that if their idea is 'their home – their fortress', Russia "must build its home and make it strong and well protected."

> We see, after all, what is going on in the world. The wolf knows who to eat, as the saying goes. It knows who to eat and is not about to listen to anyone, it seems. How quickly all the pathos of the need to fight for human rights and democracy is laid aside the moment the need to realise one's own interests comes to the fore. In the name of one's own interests everything is possible, it turns out, and there are no limits. (Putin, Annual Address, 2006)

The address continued to claim that the US is ready to use any pretext to strengthen itself at Russia's expense, therefore Russia must strengthen itself. This stance was made even more explicit at the famous Munich speech in 2007, and at the 2006 jubilee summit of the Russo-Chinese Shanghai Organisation Cooperation (SCO, apart from China and Russia including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). At the latter, Russian journalists noted the joint stance taken against the 'evil forces at work in the region' and cited the concluding declaration which stated that "[h]istorically made up differences in culture and traditions, in political and social systems… should not be used as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of other states [. . .] Particular models of societal development cannot become subject to export."(Melikova, 2006) In this context it should be noted that from at least 2004, Russo-Chinese relations had grown stronger. (Ferdinand, 2007) This was reflected for example in sharply increasing trade, joint military maneuvers, and Putin's "G3" summit with Russia, China and India, held immediately after the G8 summit in St Petersburg in 2006, as Shevtsova describes, "creating a semblance of an alternative club to those of the West" (2007:178-80).

In the 2007 state address, the stress on pragmatism in the context of foreign policy continued, with Putin affirming how Russia's "foreign policy is aimed at joint, pragmatic, and non-ideological work to resolve the important problems we face." (Putin, Annual Address, 2007) The West as Other was again very present. Clearly

166

reflecting popular patriotic conspiracy theories warning of "seducers of the nation and plunderers of the state"[66] Putin claimed that "[s]ome, making skilful use of pseudo-democratic rhetoric, would like to return us to the recent past, some in order to once again plunder the nation's resources with impunity and rob the people and the state, and others in order to deprive our country of its economic and political independence." (Putin, Annual Address, 2007)

ii)   Public discourse

The representation of Russia as Saviour and peace-maker with a mission was strongly present in public mainstream political discourse. A first example is of television analysts proposing that Russia is actually helping to save the world from a third world war between civilizations because of her exceptional tolerance and particular culture of freedom of speech which, according to Sergei Brilev, TV-show host of *Vestei nedeli* means that she is:

> the next-to-only world player with which both sides are ready to relate to: only Moscow is ready to hear both the West and Iran, and only Moscow is able to lead negotiations with the radicals from Palestine's winning movement HAMAS. […] Moscow's mission is so noble and so difficult. It is necessary to clean up the results from others' mistakes, preserve a unity of leading powers and put the radicals to listen to the voice of reason. And, of course, not forget about one's own interests and tasks. Russia has the new strength that is needed to solve these tasks. (Cited by Varshabchik, 2006)

In the Byzantine model, Russia's mediator role is constructed within the framework of Orthodox tradition. *Rodina's* Demurin, cited above, reviewing Russia's role in the 'conflict of civilisations' wrote that as "never before, the current situation requires a reasonable moderator whose actions would rely to a greater degree on cultural tradition and political wisdom than on material or military might."

This, of course, is what Russia is destined for: "Russia's Eastern Orthodox religious tradition, together with the unique traditions of its community, as well as its entire history, where the Russian people demonstrated openness to the

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[66] Quoted from 'Russkaya Doktrina'

assimilation of neighbouring cultures, as well as religious tolerance, must lay the groundwork for this mediating potential."

But even though Orthodox Russia must mediate between two civilisations, it thus favour one side: "On the civilizational plane, the Islamic East, or broadly speaking, the God-fearing Orient, confronts strong pressure – and in some cases, overt aggression – from a post-Christian, godless West."(Demurin, 2006) Thus, both the moderate and radical variants of Russia's missionism place Russia together with the Islamic world as God-fearing civilisations, versus a godless West – the traditional West versus the Rest.

iii)   Academic interpretation

The explicit anti-Westernism that now for so long had been mainstream in public discourse was now emerging steadily also in official discourse, hand in hand with the representation of Russia as a global peacemaker. Shevtsova asks what lies behind Russia's new and unexpected self-confidence, and answers herself:

> Largely, of course, it is high oil prices and the world's addiction to hydrocarbons that prompted the Russian elite to conclude that these fortunate circumstances could be exploited. The stabilization of Russia's internal situation under Putin and the resultant social support he gained were also pertinent. Other external factors are relevant: the profound sense of disorientation in Western nations as to how to build a new world order; U.S. setbacks in Iraq and growing hostility to American hegemony; and the crisis of the "color revolutions," which so alarmed the Russian elite in 2004-2005." (Shevtsova, 2007:165)

In both official and public discourse we find again the contradiction between particularism and universalism in these representations of Russia and the world – Russia with its 'unique cultural values' (official discourse), as an Orthodox civilisation (public discourse), objects to the universalistic, messianic aspirations of the secular West which, as Putin stressed, 'seeks to export its own particular models of societal development'.

168

Yet, this particularistic Russia is represented as having universal qualities, potentially exportable, as a global peacemaker, the 'safe-guarder of international law.' In the section below we will expand on this contradiction. And, while this Russia must resist the homogenisation by the West and globalisation, the discourses of this construction both become homogenised – in that they resemble one another strongly across different domains of discourse, including official discourse – and represent a type of homogenised anti-Westernism as the answer. As for example Laruelle writes on Dugin: "in his opposition to American globalization, [he] unintentionally contributes to the internationalization of identity discourse and to the uniformization of those theories that attempt to resist globalization." (Laruelle, 2006:8)

This reiterates our point that contemporary Russian messianism can and must be understood in different discursive contexts: as discourses of danger and Otherness functioning to legitimate states; as ideas historically and culturally particular to Russia; as identity constructions typical of political entities with complex social realities and geocultural conditions; and also as part of a global discourse of anti-Westernism, anti-globalism and anti-Americanisation.

5.7.3   Russia as Messianic

i)   Official discourse

2007 had been declared as the Russian Language Year, and in the state address the Russian language was deployed at length as a signifier of not only of Russian national but also international identity, the universality rather than particularism of Russian and Russianness being stressed in statements like:

> Russian is the language of a historical fraternity of peoples, a true language of international communication. The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements but is also the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself. As the common heritage of many peoples, the Russian language will never become the language of

hatred or enmity, xenophobia or isolationism. (Putin, Annual Address, 2007)

Together with the celebration of the Russian language came the creation of the concept and foundation *Russkii Mir* (the Russian World), a National Russian Language Foundation, and the epitomisation of the Russia produced in official discourse.

A keynote speech made by Vyacheslav Nikonov, appointed by Putin as director of the foundation *Russkii Mir* (note that it is *russkii mir* not *rossiiskii*) at a British Slavonic studies conference in 2008, perfectly illustrated the ambiguity between exceptionalist and universalist notions of Russian messianism, claiming both that Russia is different and special, and that Russia's values are universal, a model that can be exported.[67]

The Eurasia narrative was religiously deployed several times, Nikonov stressed that Russia is multi-ethnic and multi-confessional, that there is so much cooperation with different religious communities such as Buddhist, Muslim, Protestant – but at the same time he referred extensively to the traditional, 'Holy Russia', Orthodox values of *sobornost'*, *obshchinost'*, family values and morality, and stressed the importance of the Orthodox Church for Russian identity both home and abroad. The audience was told in no uncertain terms that Russia and *Russkii Mir* are not to be built on nostalgia for the past but on dreams for a great future, of freedom, justice, equality and peace. Finally, the speech reinforced our argument that having a Western Other transcends Russia's internal differences, as Nikonov, referring to foreign policy emphasised that the Russian leadership does agrees on the *important* issues: NATO, Kosovo's independence, and the Iraq war - all things in opposition to America as Other.

ii)   Public discourse

The tension between exceptionalism and universalism as Russian messianic identity models is also evident in Russian geopolitical discourse, and we will briefly illustrate

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67 The speech was made at 6.30pm, March 30, 2008 at the annual conference of the British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, see www.basees.org.uk.

this by looking at a chapter of Vasilenko's *Geopolitika* (2003), devoted to the relation between geopolitics, messianism and Russian identity.[68] As noted in Chapter Four, Vasilenko sees an historical, dialectic relationship between 'the Slavonic self-will' and longing for geopolitical freedom, on the one hand, and the 'instinct of national self-preservation' and unity on the other, typically resulting in the sacrifice of the Russian nation for the sake of the Slavonic state. Bridging this gap however, is the Russian national messianic idea, the idea of the Messiah-nation whose values and ideals are called for to save the humanity by showing 'the true path'.

As cited in Chapter One, Vasilenko argues that the national and geopolitical revival of Russia is related to the revival of the national idea as a universal messianic idea: "Will the Russian people be capable of understanding its national calling as being universal [*vselenskoe*], all-human [*vsechelovecheskoe*], interpret and protect the values of the Orthodox culture as all-human? [. . .] Will we be capable of protecting the space fought for and protected by our great ancestors?" (Vasilenko, 2003:73) The true Russian messianic idea, overcoming the gap between the Russian nation and the Slavonic state, is thus realised when the exceptional and particular is understood and realised as being universal. And all this, we understand, is intimately related to geopolitics, hence "the simplicity with which Russia in the 1980-90s gave up her large territories in the Baltics, Caucasus and Central Asia is explained by the defeat of the messianic consciousness, by the divorce from messianic ideals. To gather these lands anew is possible only with the help of the spiritual revival of the messianic consciousness." (Vasilenko, 2003:72) Geopolitical expansionism thus comes hand in hand with the spreading of the universal spiritual values and saving of humanity, as the revival of messianism merges the universal and the particular.

iii)   Academic interpretation

Interesting in the context of America as the significant Other of Russia, American exceptionalism just like Russian messianism has two contradicting narratives, one of particularism, focusing on America's providential role and past achievements, the

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[68] Vasilenko follows Berdyaev in claiming that "the external is but a symbol of the internal", so that the Russian lands should be considered as "the geography of the Russian soul." (2003:66)

other of universalism, having the future-looking mission of exporting American universal values. Williams describes the universalism of the American idea:

> The American national interest, properly understood, is — like the United States itself — exceptional. But it is not unique. It is part of an historic mission that can and should be shared by all peoples [. . .] The culmination of this logic is, of course, the promotion of democracy as part of a 'muscular patriotism' based upon 'freedom and greatness' [. . .] Creating an international order of values is good for *both* America and the world. (Williams, 2005:318-19)

One academic noting similarities between Russian and American discourse is Dmitry Shlapentokh, who notes that Dugin, who has been relatively successful in making his variant of Russian messianism mainstream in Russian discourse, "is structurally similar to American ideologists, who, while elaborating on the glory of democracy – the "radiant present" – avoid discussing how implementing democracy would relate to economic performance [. . .] All of them appeal either to the "radiant past" or "radiant present," and conspicuously avoid, for example, discussing how their geopolitical programs would affect the economic performance, reflecting fear of the powers which neither Russia nor the USA could master – radical Islam and the rising economic power of China." (Shlapentokh, 2007)

This reiterates that a core function of messianic discourse is to divert attention from the ambiguities, contradictions and problems of statecraft and identity in large, multicultural political entities such as Russia and the United States, by simplifying complex realities into appealing and unifying narratives of based on constructed dichotomies. As but one general example, 'patriotism' is largely an outdated notion in European countries, but plays a central role in both Russian and American discourse.

And for both these exceptionalist states their stories about themselves and their enemies function not only to legitimise the state and provide them with an identity, but are intimately linked to their geopolitical expansion – to borrow from Vasilenko, the 'geography of their souls'. This is the "universalistic nationalism" Morgenthau was concerned with – the claim to have God, or Historical Destiny, on

172

one's side (thus having moral universality) as the justification for 'intervening' in other less enlightened states.

5.8.0 Conclusion

In the beginning of the decade, we saw considerable difference between official and public discourse: different Russian messianic discourses, abounding in public discourse and united by anti-Westernism, were only occasionally and perfunctorily drawn upon by Putin. The only thing that united the official and public messianic-patriotic positions was their self-legitimisation in opposition to the liberal reforms of the 1990s – messianism as the 'spiritual opposition' (Laruelle, 2008:221) and early Putinism as the pragmatic negation of ideology (Prozorov, 2008:224).

But, as we have seen, the official position has gradually moved away from pragmatism and stability as almost the sole markers of Russian desired identity, closer to public discourse and its incongruent yet powerful master discourse. We have seen how Putin in the context of the state addresses increasingly has drawn on – if also modified – a wide range of messianic and related narratives such as spirituality, sacrifice, patriotism, Russian uniqueness and distinctiveness from the West, conspiracy theories and discourses of danger, glory and greatness, Russian history as an organic whole with the rehabilitation of the Soviet past, missionism and Russia as a global mediator, the cosmopolitan, Eurasianist 'harmony of cultures' as well, increasingly, various Orthodoxy-based and Russo-centric narratives.

Despite this gradual rapprochement, there are still differences between the official and public Russian discourse, especially with regards to the West as Other – even though Putin gradually deployed stronger anti-Western rhetoric, his position remained distinct in that the economy was seen more as a threat than US and Westernisation, and Russia continued to be defined as European. But we also noted a general shift in parts of Russian discourse away from the starkly anti-Western Eurasianism to more moderately anti-Western Orthodoxy-based, Russo-centric discourses.

A tendency defining Russian discourse as a whole, in its various dimensions and at different levels, is ambiguity, dualism and co-optation. This chapter has outlined a number of dualistic representations of Russia in both public and official discourse: as both a multi-ethnic, multicultural, supra-national Great Power (Third Rome) *and* a single nation with its ethnocentric and mono-religious connotations (Holy Russia), and with Russia as Byzantium somewhere in between; as a successor to the Soviet Union *and* a modern, civic, democratic state; as Eurasian and Slavonic, *and* European (but not Western); and both being special or having 'special interest' *and* being 'normal,' like all states.

How then do we explain these developments? What are the functions of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the post-Soviet Russian crisis of identity?

First of all, the official negation of ideology – despite being initially popular after a decade of societal and ideological turmoil with ordinary Russians craving stability – effectively became a negation of identity. It left, as Prozorov points out, the future of Russia – as well as the question in itself of whether Russia actually has a future – undecided, and hence the Russian crisis of identity remained unsolved. (Prozorov, 2008:226)

Contemporary variations of messianism, on the other hand, provide a compelling ideological basis for collective identity, with compensation for the loss of empire through representations of a superior Russia, and powerful narratives creating systems of intelligibility to make sense of what doesn't make sense: the end of the Soviet order, the globalised world, and so on.

We argued previously that discourses of danger and Otherness function to unify the population and legitimise the state, and this chapter has shown how an abundance of conspiracy theories and narratives in public discourses at times have been drawn upon even by Putin, in speaking of 'seducers of the nation and plunderers of the state' constructing both internal and external enemies against which Russia has been defined.

174

Furthermore, we have argued that the tendency at various levels of Russian discourse to represent the United States and the West in terms of aggressive messianism, universalism, absolutism, imperialism; and to subsequently define Russia (or Orthodox civilisation) in opposition and as an alternative to this civilisation also suggests the contextualisation of Russian messianism within a wider global discourse of anti-Westernism, anti-globalism and anti-Americanisation.

Apart from the inherently contradictory nature of discourse and general ontological impossibility of any coherent collective identity, discussed in Chapter Two, we have highlighted context-specific functions of the managed dualisms and ambiguities in Russian official political discourse. We argued that they both reflect the polyphonic but powerful master narrative in public discourse as well as Putin's personal discursive strategy of co-optation, consolidating power and accommodating national-patriots as well as ordinary people wanting decent living standards rather than ideological grandeur.

The relationship between official and public discourse is complex, however, and for example the state's increasing control of the media suggests that the master narrative in public discourse itself is a reflection of a centralising effort to monopolise ideology by usurping all potentially challenging positions into one. As Laruelle argues, this new patriotic doctrine's "exceedingly vague theoretical contours highlight the Putin regime's striving for political consensus: Cultural fundamentalism has become a way to avoid politics." (Laruelle, 2008:221-22)

We also suggested previously that messianic identity constructions are typical of certain large, multicultural political entities such as Russia and the United States, functioning to divert attention from the ambiguities, contradictions and problems of statecraft and identity by simplifying complex realities into appealing and unifying narratives of based on constructed dichotomies, and this chapter has noted structural similarities between Russian and American discourse, with both also having a contradiction between exceptionalist and universalist master narratives.

Russia in official discourse under Putin began as a vague representation, defined mostly by civic criteria, but has gradually become more defined, a confident actor, still facing challenges but no longer ashamed of its greatness and past, and no longer dependent on the acceptance of West. And while the first state address in 2000 had named hardly any other political actors, Russia was in 2006 positioned and defined in relation to a great number of states, regions and organisations, including the Union State with Belarus, the Eurasian Economic Community, the EU, the US, China, India, the countries of the Asia-Pacific Region, Latin America and Africa, and the UN.

This production of an identity, the story of a creation or recreation of a lost self where allegedly there was only vacuum, can in itself be understood in terms of messianism. That Putin, even after stepping down as president, enjoys an almost cult-like status in Russia is hard to deny: there are popular fan-websites celebrating him; the widespread youth movement sport iconic pictures of him everywhere; and there is even a popular techno song called *Takogo kak Putin*, on the video of which the Russian girl band Singing Together declare that they want a man like Putin, a man full of strength, who doesn't get drunk, who stands by his word.[69]

Slade draws our attention to the NASHI slogan *Vse Put'em* , translated as 'Everything is on the Way', an obvious play with Putin's name and the word for path or way (*put'*) (Slade, 2006). The near equation of Putin with 'the Way' could be understood as another example of Christological representation of Putin following the long-standing Russian tradition of deifying its rulers.

As the nationalist Prokhanov ironically commented, there is an image of a Putin who "gives medicine to the elderly, bread to the children, wages to the men and homely bliss to the women."(Prokhanov, 2002b) Ostensibly Putin has been distancing himself from these tendencies – the presidential website for schoolchildren used to particularly stress that one should only love the Motherland, not the president, and make sure not to hang portraits of the president on each wall in the house.

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[69] See the video on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFOPd6pgjI [Accessed 2008-11-23].

Yet, even though no cult of personality can be traced in the state addresses, the narrative that is constructed over the eight years of Putin's presidency – of the rebuilding Russia from the debris of the 'old edifice'; of rescuing Russia from various dangers; of rejecting the false and finding the true way; of uniting divergent political positions against one enemy; and restoring greatness and strength – is a narrative of a big mission, and of a Saviour completing it. As Putin affirmed in his last address: "In untangling the complex knots of social, economic and political problems, we have at the same time *built a new life*." (Putin, Annual Address, 2007) In conclusion we can thus say that while the Russian 'crisis of identity' not is over, the official 'end of ideology' certainly is.

6.0.0 Russia: History, Presence and Destiny

"Each and everyone of us have a very hard life, because we were born in a very hard country, a very difficult country, and we have a very difficult history. In my opinion, history as a discipline does not suit our country. Because any regime change means a change of history. So history is a variable value. We have been deceived so much, and held in forms of terror. These are complexes and cannot but be reflected in the character of Russian people. Nevertheless, I somehow believe in the justice, goodness and generosity of the Russian people, and consider that Russians are a good nation." (C142-M49)

"[A]ll other countries have passed their peak of development, but Russia is only beginning to develop, and it is quite possible to imagine that there is something big in front of us. But it's also quite possible that there isn't." (C39-M19)

"But Putin – he is an educated, young, talented, and strong-willed person. I don't know what he is thinking within himself, where he wants to take Russia – whether he wants to take Russia anywhere at all – I don't know these things. But either way, the outward things, that which I can see on television, I like very much." (C153-F67)

6.1.0 Introduction

Chapter Five looked at the way messianic discourse is used in the state production of Russian identity, comparing and contrasting the state's official discourse with public political discourse. This and the following two chapters will continue to explore the role of messianic discourse in contemporary Russian identity, moving from political to popular discourse.

Based on extensive interview material, we will look at some of the ways in which ordinary and semi-elite people, Soviet and post-Soviet generations, use or reject, the available messianic and related discourses to define Russia, and themselves as Russians, comparing the different categories. [70]

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[70] Interview cases with details and summary of coded answers are listed in Appendix II. Where a case study is available in Appendix III, this is indicated by an asterix at the end of the case number, e.g. C1-M18e* (M for male, F for female, followed by age, e for semi-elite interviewees).

One of the core dilemmas constituting the Russian crisis of identity is the question of history, in Tsygankov's words, "finding a historically sensitive solution to the question of Russia's national identity" as "until Russia knows what it is and until it clearly defines its post-Soviet values, it cannot successfully pose, let alone solve, the question of its larger civilisational identification." (Tsygankov, 2007:380)

This chapter specifically explores perceptions of Russia as a temporal-social entity. As contended in the previous chapter, there has for several years been a strong drive in political discourse, both public and official, to present Russians with a cohesive collective identity, which would provide a sense of stability and historical continuity, as well as legitimise the state itself. Putin's narratives in the state addresses gradually turned from stressing newness and the need to build for the future to history, tradition and a glorious heritage, alongside with introducing a gradual rehabilitation of the Soviet era. We will explore how these narratives resonate among ordinary and semi-elite people, and will seek to answer the following questions:

- o How do Russians today define Russia as a temporal-social entity, as something in history? Which narratives do they use to describe and define their country, its past, present and future?

- o How do they conceive of the relation between contemporary and past Russias, in particular the Soviet Union – in terms of coherence or incoherence, stability or disruption?

- o What is the function and role of messianic discourse (both as single narratives and the wider framework) drawn upon in the interviews in the context of Russian temporal-social identity?

Among a significant number of the semi-elite interviewees, a story was told about finding a lost identity. A change appears to have taken place; the uncomfortable, indefinable and often humiliating post-Soviet years to be over and new and more positive period has begun. There is no need to apologise for the Soviet past anymore, no need to be ashamed of the present, and all reason to hope for a good future.

Among ordinary people, we encountered a still widespread lack of tools with which to make sense of the past and present in Russia. Their stories were not as clear, the past not as clear – though there was a deep nostalgia for the Soviet period – and neither was the present or the future. Also evident was a great diversity and fragmentation of opinion, and often stark contradictions within single interviews.

But various tendencies can be discerned, the foremost of which is a steady rehabilitation of the Soviet past, based much on nostalgia, as well many the resorting to the familiar Russian messianic discourses.

6.2.0   Semi-elite Russians

To recap from Chapter Five: in 2005 – the same year the interviews took place – Putin in the annual address to the nation had turned from stressing newness and the need to build for the future, to narratives of historical continuity and past glories, representing Russia as a "unique and vast country" with a "rich cultural and spiritual heritage", a place where "law and morals, politics and morality have traditionally been considered close and related concepts" (Putin, Annual Address, 2005).

Very similar notions were present in many of the interviews with semi-elite Russians. Narratives could be discerned of finding of a lost identity, of becoming decidedly comfortable with Russia's history and present, as well as fairly hopeful of its future destiny. There was a clear tendency to stress Russia's long historical continuity, its great national and religious heritage, and particularly its over thousand years old history – "When," a business director exclaimed, figuratively addressing all Americans, "was your country founded, and when was the Bolshoi Theatre founded?" (C3-M26e) 'New Russia,' then, is not based on representations of Russia as a 'young' country (opposed to 'old', decadent Europe) or 'new civilisation' (Soviet) but is by the interviewees repeatedly constructed through discourses on historical ancientness and grandeur.

Similarly, the official rehabilitation of the Soviet period – Putin describing the collapse of the Soviet Union as "a major geopolitical disaster of the century", the

states official revision of history books, etc. – was also reflected in different degrees among a large number of the interviewees, in their own views and in their perceptions of views in society. Only four out of the 30 semi-elite interviewees considered the Soviet period to 'a mistake and lost time', with another four considering it to be 'both an important part of Russian history, and a mistake and lost time.'[71]

Most sought to provide a balanced view of the Soviet period, typically stressing that history is history; that while there was a lot of bad during the Soviet Union, there was also a lot of good points and achievements that ought not to be forgotten; that there must have been a higher reason for what happened and that one should learn from this (e.g. C1-F36e*). Some openly regretted the fall of the Soviet Union, others presented the Soviet Union and its rapid industrialisation as the natural and necessary basis and predecessor for the advancing 'New Russia' (C13-M36e).

The essentialist idea of an organic, 'true Russia', which historically suffers attempts from hostile, false forces to pervert or change its essence, was present also at this level of popular discourse. One of our thirty semi-elite interviews was with Archbishop Chaplin, deputy director of external relations of the Moscow Patriarchate (C14-M37e). He strongly condemned the discourse which categorically rejects the entire Soviet period as 'un-Russian'.

Instead, he argued, a distinction must be made between roughly two periods of the Soviet Union: 1917-1941, and 1941-1991. 1917-1941 Marxist ideology prevailed and this period must be seen a disruption of Russia's history; but with the Second World War, Russia "became herself again", and although Russia formally remained a Communist state 1941-1991, she began to develop according to her historical traditions. With Chaplin as a well-known spokesman for the Patriarchate, we can assume that this partial rehabilitation of the Soviet period represents its official stance.

Chapter Five outlined how in political discourse a change has taken place: while a quite common view in early post-Soviet Russian discourse was that the Soviet period should be seen as a disruption to the otherwise unbroken history of

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[71] The question was *Seventy years of Soviet rule – is it a mistake and lost time, or an important part of Russian history?*" (Moscow, St Petersburg, Aug-Oct 2005, N=160)

'true Russia', it is now often the fall of the Soviet Union, and the brief Yeltsin period that is seen as the disruption.[72] (M42e, see also C18-M39e) Likewise, for some interviewees it was with the fall, not the beginning, of the Soviet Union that Russia ceased to 'be herself', and many considered the early post-Soviet years to be the most tragic period of Russian history.

As but one example, a retired physicist, neither positive nor negative about the Soviet period, stated with emphasis that "the most terrifying in the history of Russia is the Yeltsin rulership. Overnight all became bandits." (C29-M71e*) This shift in assessing Russia's history is reflective of the widespread disappointment with the results from the much anticipated "return" to Europe and the West, and the social and economic difficulties of that time.

But the rehabilitation of the Soviet period also constitutes the basis of a much stronger and more cohesive collective identity, in that it produces the image of historical continuity. Our interview material supports our hypothesis that this is achieved largely through messianic-related representations of Russia as being chosen, different and special; exceptionally religious, moral and spiritual; and a strong empire.

Two semi-elite interviews in particular epitomised this tendency, though it could be noted in several interviews. Both drew on a number of different, and often contradictory, popular and often messianic discourses, and subsequent chapters will return to them – they are also detailed in the case studies on Appendix III. The first one was with a young businesswoman from Moscow – wealthy, generally very pro-Western, and, interestingly, not the least happy with Putin:

> I consider, first of all, that Russia inevitably is a peculiar country [. . .] Russia has always been an empire of territories that she united with herself [. . .] I believe that it was happened that way, that God decided that there should be such a country, such a big country. And because of this we suffer (you know our history, all the problems) but from it we are also in a very advantageous position: we have all natural resources. All that the world is prepared to buy from us, God gave us for free. And I believe that Russia has a great

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[72] Ostrovsky, (2008) 'Flirting with Stalin'

responsibility. She has always been a large empire, it historically happened that way. [. . .] Considering our many centuries of culture and our history: we are still not such an ancient country as for example Greece. In comparison to Greek or Roman culture, though contemporary Italy and ancient Rome are two different things, their history dates back to the birth of Christ. Officially our history starts only from the ninth century. Within this period of time Russia has been able to contribute much to world culture and the Russian soul (I think many people have mentioned this to you) – we live between East and West. (C8-F31e*).

The seventy years of Soviet rule is in her account is partly a mistake, but nevertheless part of the historical continuity as being one of Russia's many difficult but necessary missions – Russia's responsibility is to show the world both "how to live, and how *not* to live."[73] The Soviet era appears as but a brief moment of history when considering Russia's centuries of contributions to world culture – and any mistakes due to its godless ideology fade when one instead focuses on Russia's God-given role as an empire. The second, messianically stereotypical interview was with a young director and owner of a Moscow PR company:

Russia can be proud of any of her periods. Russia has always been a very powerful country, a very religious country, both on the level of Orthodoxy and on the level of Islam. Russia has always acted in a certain manner: she fought wars of liberation and she was attacked a vast amount of times, and she won basically all these wars, because Russia is not a simple country - as any other country. We have nothing to try to be ashamed of. We probably acted incorrectly sometimes, but I think that to a large extent was a question of the level of education. There is not one country which one could say has a clear conscience. The Americans for example – I cannot imagine how it was possible to drop two nuclear bombs on two peaceful cities, what moral level their population must have. [. . .] If we talk about the Christian world – Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox - It seems to me that at present, in the sense of spirituality, Russia's potential is a lot bigger, from the point of view of moral-ethical principles and norms. […] Europe relates so tolerantly

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[73] The representation of the Soviet period as a demonstration of what *not* to do was popular also among ordinary people.

towards things like abortions, homosexuality and public prostitution – it surprises me, and I wouldn't want it to be like that in Russia. We are quite a lot more conservative here. [. . .] What makes a Russian in Russia is in much Orthodoxy, the principles that Orthodoxy propagates. Orthodoxy is first and foremost an orientation towards the outside world – to help, care for, share a crust of bread, and help one another. (C7-M31e*)

In this abstract one is reminded of Putin's message to history teachers not to "allow anyone to impose a sense of guilt upon us" – there is no need to apologise to the West for the Soviet past anymore, and no need to be ashamed of the present.[74]

Here, any problematic aspects of the Soviet period are diminished with the deployment of the traditional messianic framework of West – bad, Russia – good, West – amoral, Russia – moral and religious, etc. In both interviews historical continuity and Russian collective identity relate to notions of God and religion.

Obviously, the incorporation of the Soviet legacy into the representation of historical continuity with Russia as a divinely chosen, religious, ancient empire ought logically to be marred by the materialist, atheist basis of Communist ideology.[75] But, like in official discourse there is little concern about this inconsistency, as the above interviews also indicate – in itself a reflection of a greater collective confidence.

As we noted in Chapter Five, the messianic master narrative in public discourse incorporates the Soviet period fully with 'true' Russian history, at times even through representations of Stalin and Lenin as good Orthodox believers.[76] This point was never made among the interviewees, yet for example one male interviewee, when asked about the Soviet period in general, straightaway pointed out that while the one Orthodox Patriarch was thrown out by Peter the Great, one Patriarch actually appeared under Lenin in 1917 (C20-M48e).

Religiosity, Orthodoxy and related notions such as *sobornost'* (communality) and morality appear in many interviews as important markers of Russian identity. As one interviewee, a male company director from St Petersburg, summarised: "Russia

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[74] Ostrovsky, (2008) 'Flirting with Stalin'
[75] One solution is of course as Chaplin above (C14-M37e) to divide the Soviet into a revolutionary 'un-Russian' period (1917-1941) and a period when 'true' Russia is restored (1941-1991).
[76] Dmitry Shlapentokh (2009) 'Orthodox Stalin on the Wall'

without faith is impossible. No matter how hard the Communists sought to separate the people from faith in God, they couldn't make it even in the years they were in power." (C18-M39e) A third of the semi-elite interviewees defined Russianness in directly terms of spirituality, Orthodoxy or faith and a third also agreed with the statement that thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church, Russia's spiritual potential is greater than other countries'.

Many talked about Russian Orthodoxy as being spiritually stronger than other religions because of its strictness – comparisons were made with Muslim Ramadan festivities at night, Catholic traditions of penance and indulgence ('buying oneself off sin'), and Western secularity in general: 'in Britain they turn churches into houses' (C8-F31e*). There was thus a definite resonance among the semi-elite of the public discourses deploying Orthodoxy as a marker of Russian identity, whether Orthodox nationalist, the official ideology of the Orthodox church, or the overarching master narrative of 'Holy Russia'.

In conclusion: the fact that the official representation of Russia described in the previous chapter is reflected in so many semi-elite interviews is not unexpected, as it likely to have been disseminated early to these educated and typically politically aware semi-elite interviewees, and to at least a small extent also been shaped by views at this level of discourse.

6.3.0 Ordinary Russians

Compared with the semi-elite interviewees, the representations of Russian collective historical identity were a lot more diffuse among ordinary people, with even greater diversity and fragmentation of opinion, and again often with contradictions within single interviews. One interviewee, a journalist, summarised popular attitudes to the Soviet past this way:

> People still haven't realised what that period means, they are only beginning
> to approach consciousness of it. So there are people who consider that it was
> a great epoch, when we were strong and mighty and the whole world feared
> us. And there are people (especially those who have someone who suffered
> under Bolshevik terror and the Stalinist repressions) who consider these

> seventy years to be a gradual destruction of Russia. And in my opinion there
> is no kind of united view in society. (C23-F41e)

Judging from our interviews with Moscow and St Petersburg residents, analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively, this is a fairly accurate assessment.

"Seventy years of Soviet rule – is it a mistake and lost time, or an important part of Russian history?"[77] **(Moscow, St Petersburg, Aug-Oct 2005, N=160)**

TABLE 6-1	Total	Post-Soviet (age 15-29)	Soviet (age 30+)
Important part of Russian history	41%	39%	44%
'It's history' / You can't change it	23%	21%	25%
Mistake and lost time	18%	18%	19%
Both mistake and lost time; and important	11%	11%	10%
Not sure	5%	9%	1%

Answers to this question were quite evenly spread between post-Soviet and Soviet generations, the educated and uneducated, men and women.[78] Thus, if a broad generalisation is to be made, it is that all categories of people hold different views on the Soviet past, at all levels of society. When the interviewees were asked to assess general views in society about the Soviet past, a similar picture emerged.

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[77] Of course, as many interviewees pointed out, it is rather problematic to define a historical period as a mistake, and most periods, good and bad, are important. However, the question and its framework were typical for post-Soviet discourse, perfectly well understood by all interviewees, and generated clear, unambiguous responses about the Soviet legacy.

[78] However, slightly more males considered the Soviet period 'a mistake and lost time' and more females 'an important part of Russian history'; and more young people were not sure.

"What, in your opinion, does the majority of Russians think about [the Soviet period]?"[79] **(Moscow, St Petersburg, Aug-Oct 2005, N=125)**

TABLE 6-2	Total	Post-Soviet (age 15-19)	Soviet (age 30+)
Most are nostalgic about the Soviet period	27%	30%	22%
All think differently, impossible to generalise	19%	18%	20%
Old people are positive; young negative or indifferent	18%	20%	17%
Most are negative to the Soviet period	15%	12%	19%
Most don't think much about it	12%	8%	17%
Most see it as just history	6%	9%	2%
Views related to fate of family in Soviet period	2%	-	3%
Young people are positive; old negative	1%	2%	-
Most are ambiguous about this	1%	2%	-

The diverse responses across generations to this question point to a lack of a cohesive Russian collective identity representation. Nevertheless, the interviews did to a significant extent reflect the gradual official rehabilitation of the Soviet period, with the 41% of all interviewees who considered the Soviet era without doubt an important part of Russian history, and the 27% who believed most people are nostalgic about the Soviet period.

As among the semi-elite, there was a tendency to turn away from the extremes, relatively few either glorified the era or rejected it completely. A young student provides a typical quote: "On the one hand, during these 70 years colossal industries were built. Russia went from agriculture to an industrial society, and we finally won the war: the victory in the Second World War cannot be measured. But there were also other moments which were not altogether positive. There was both one and the

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[79] This was an open question – the categories of answers were created after the interviews.

other. On the whole, the idea was good. How they realised it – that is a different question." (C100-M20) Overall, appraised both positively and negatively, the Soviet Union appeared in the interviews as the doubtless predecessor of today's Russia – and an often recurring answer about the Soviet past was that 'one can never remove a line from a poem', or 'so it was and so it had to be'.

As among the semi-elite, the first decade of the post-Soviet period was quite often singled out as the misfit in Russian history, rather than the Soviet period. "Russia can be proud of her history", one quite strongly anti-Western post-Soviet interviewee summed up, "up until 1917, and from 1917 to 1991." (C95-M26*) And as among the semi-elite, many of the ordinary people expressed that they felt things had changed compared to the 1990s, and that Russia under Putin was now on a new and different path of development – though it was seldom clear what kind of development.

One interviewee, a female pensioner and former English teacher epitomised a common sentiment: "Putin – he is an educated, young, talented, and strong-willed person. I don't know what he is thinking within himself, where he wants to take Russia – whether he wants to take Russia anywhere at all – I don't know these things. But either way, the outward things, that which I can see on television, I like very much." (C153-F67) (For a similarly ambivalent attitude to Putin, see case study C157-F65*). The disavowal of the 1990s and, by extension, the West, thus appears as a unifying marker of collective identity.[80]

Generational differences appear when we move beyond the statistics of the interview answers. On the whole, the answers of Soviet interviewees (aged 30 and above) were much less reflective of grand ideology, and much more of everyday life social issues, than those of the post-Soviet generation (whose answers were often closer to those of many of the semi-elite). Nostalgia for the past and disappointment with the present pervaded many interviews with the older generation, particularly with regards to social relations: "You see, there was no hatred of anyone, but now, it seems to me, we have those things." (C157-F65*)

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[80] This reflects the whole of contemporary Russian political discourse, which, as Prozorov has pointed out, "is conventionally grasped in terms of a simple antithesis of the Yeltsinite decade of the 1990s." (2008:208-09)

One middle-aged man said with emphasis that all his friends and acquaintances agree that it was better during the Soviet Union; people thought less about money, all things could be settled in a friendly way. Even though all wasn't perfect, people were warmer and relations friendlier. "Because of this, people born the same time as me or before agree with the view that the Soviet Union was a better country. Not just better, but the very best." (C119-M45) Similarly, a slightly older woman stated with regret: "We do not all live for people, as we used to live. Overall it was difficult, we lived worse, but nevertheless we cared for one another. And now it is all just money, money, money." (C143-F55) The West is implicitly linked in these narratives to the perceived deterioration of social relations in Russia, with the westernisation of the 1990s ushering in capitalism, individualism, and so on, contrasted with Russia's own way defined by collectiveness, social cohesion, etc.[81]

For many of the interviewees, both old and young, the idea of 'Eurasia' appeared attractive simply because 'it's good to be together' and 'it is basically like the friendship of the Soviet peoples.' (e.g. C31-M18*) Comparisons between the Soviet period and contemporary Russia were often framed in terms of the unity and order of the past versus the disunity and disorder of the present (e.g. C82-F20).

After listing disorder, lawlessness, robbery and embezzlement of state property as constituting the greatest dangers to Russia, one 76-year old interviewee stated about the Soviet past: "I'm for Stalin, who kept order." (C160-M76) In total, seven percent of Soviet respondents considered disunity and social fragmentation to be the greatest danger to Russia (compared to none among post-Soviet interviewees).

In view of this it easy to comprehend popular origins of slogans such as Putin's 'dictatorship of the law', as well as the overall Putinist striving for stability and social consensus as opposed to grand ideology (see e.g. Prozorov, 2008). 'Unity', 'friendship' and 'order' are thus positive signifiers attributed to Soviet Russia which help explain its gradual rehabilitation in a society many perceive as fragmented.

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[81] Here we must note the distinction between different accounts of the Soviet period – when represented as a failed experiment, it could in public discourse be attributed to Marxism as being western ideology (Scanlan, 1994:56).

Interviewees of the post-Soviet generation to a larger extent painted a more positive picture of Russia and appeared to perceive more social cohesion.[82] Their answers more often reflected messianic discourse and related nationalist ideas. Having not experienced Soviet life as adults, yet being subject to state-promoted historical revision, these young people could afford to have a rather utopian view on the Soviet past. As a 20 year old female explained: "It is doubtless an important part of Russian history, when Russia learnt to exist independently, and became able to display its ability to accumulate and unify. This is part of the Russian mentality - the commonality of spirit [*obshchnost' dukha*]." (C79-F20)

The narrative of Russia's ancientness and peculiarity that emerged in the semi-elite interviews was similarly reflected among many ordinary young people. One example of these was a male economics student from Moscow, who declared in the interview that "the Russian nationality is not comparable to any other; it has its own take. The Germans are an older nation, but in our thousand year old history we have had many different wars, and that has given us a certain experience and certain traditions. They are uncommon, peculiar to the Slavs, not only the Russians."

Asked to define what makes a Russian Russian, he answered that "if we look purely historically, then the Russian person has always been honest, always ready to help others, and has always been with God." As can be seen in the case study of this interview, this student furthermore believed that Russia has a mission consisting in Cold War; that Russia can be proud of the imperial and the Soviet past; that Russia will become a source of power internationally; and that Russia's spiritual potential is greater than other countries' thanks to the Orthodox Church since "the Orthodox are in favour of uniting many nations." (C48-M19*)

We highlighted in the previous section how some semi-elite interviewees, in line with much of both official and public political discourse, used messianic-related, religious notions to build a narrative of historical continuity for Russia. Among

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[82] About 45% of the interviewees identified themselves with what they perceived as the majority of people in general, holding that most people think the same as themselves about the Soviet era, regardless of view, and about 41% in total believed that most people in general hold the opposite view of themselves. The first group comprised of relatively more post-Soviet than Soviet interviewees, so if we consider the attitudes to the Soviet legacy as being a central factor to post-Soviet collective identity, these data suggest that slightly more young people perceive a more cohesive collective identity.

young ordinary people there was also a significant degree of religious and historical determinism in answers to the question of the Soviet past, with answers such "if it happened, then it was meant to happen" (C39-M19), and "without Communism there would have been no Russia, and no history…but as it happened…the Bible says that everything comes from God. So God had a plan for Russia. And God made it so that there were seventy years of Communism." (C88-M22)

The latter statement is testament to the presence of the polyphonic, postmodern phenomenon in Russian political discourse of the merging of traditionally contradictory discourses also among ordinary people. There are no dilemmas: New Russia can owe everything both to godless Communism and to the God of the Bible.

But Orthodoxy appeared still as an ambiguous marker of Russian collective identity among ordinary people. Many talked positively about the revival of church-going, especially among young people, but answering the question *"What makes a Russian Russian?"* only 3% of ordinary interviewees answered in terms of 'Orthodoxy'. (Yet an additional 15% answered this question literally in the wider messianic terms of 'spirituality', 'soul' or 'faith' – see Chapter Eight on how many stressed the difference between the Church and the inner Russian spirituality.[83])

Again, the historicity of this marker of Russian identity was often stressed: "Now, overall, *Rus'* was spiritual from the very beginning, always. When was the Christening of *Rus'*, which year? I think it was in 989. And there, we are doing all right. We try, at least. The country is trying to be spiritual." (C76-M25) The Russian Orthodox Church was however accredited with a central role in Russia's spirituality, the potential of which one in two post-Soviet interviewees considered greater than other countries' – see Table 6-3 below.

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[83] Most people gave answers in terms of 'culture', 'literature', 'history', 'life in Russia', 'mentality', 'patriotism', 'roots', 'hospitality' and 'understanding of Russianness'.

"Is Russia's spiritual potential greater than other countries' thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church?" **(Moscow, St Petersburg, Aug-Oct 2005, N=157)**

TABLE 6-3	Total	Post-Soviet (age 15-29)	Soviet (age 30+)
Yes	39%	49%	30%
Yes but not thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church	8%	6%	10%
No	40%	32%	48%
Unsure	12%	13%	11%

Many interviewees mentioned the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church, its religious seriousness compared to Western Churches and its great popularity among young people – and as is indicated in Table 6-3, there was a notable difference between generations in attitudes to the ROC. The traditional framework of Western negative, materialist and secular values versus Russian positive, religious and spiritual values based on *sobornost'* (commonality) and which was used among the semi-elite also surfaced in many interviews with the post-Soviet generation, and to a smaller extent among the Soviet generation.

As in public political discourse, the West was typically accredited with the negative tendencies in post-Soviet society. Russians are becoming more like people in the West, and the values distinguishing Russians from others are being lost, a young female graduate described with dismay – but this used not to be so: "In Western countries money always played the key role, everything was oriented towards this, but for the Russian person it is not the key factor, all relations were based on purely human relations, on the Bible, on all people helping one another regardless of status in society. All would say "Good day!" but now nobody greets others. I find it a very negative factor." (C68-F22). This is yet another example of the implicit inclusion of the Soviet period in the narrative of temporal-social Russia as a very religious, different country, part of the construction of a cohesive historical Russian identity.

Interestingly, people who voted for Putin were much more prone to believe in the superior spirituality of Russia and the Orthodox Church, indicating a discursive closeness between official discourse and Orthodox and messianic discourses. [84] Fairly typical among the post-Soviet interviewees who voted for Putin and believe in the spiritual potential of Russia and the church was an 18-year old male student from Moscow, who also believed that Russia is a source or example of spirituality for the rest of the world; that Russia has a mission: "so that there was peace everywhere"; that America poses the greatest danger to Russia today and that Russia should oppose the West (C65-M18). Another person in this category, yet not Orthodox herself, was a 20-year old female graduate from St Petersburg:

> The majority goes precisely to the Orthodox Church. Spirituality in Russia is one of the most important peculiarities. [. . .] See why the foreigners travel here to visit… I saw some Frenchmen with their map, planning to travel to Novgorod to see all the churches… I don't know, they probably haven't got an as developed spiritual culture, and it is interesting for them to see our customs, as far as you can visit them: people going to church, praying… I myself am not very much into the Orthodox Church, i.e. I'm not christened, but it is undoubtedly an example for other countries. (C82-F20)

These cases indicate a more consolidated role of the Orthodox Church in post-Soviet urban society, and a relative success of the promotion of Orthodox messianic discourse. However, it should also be noted that several Soviet and post-Soviet interviewees made a clear distinction between on the one hand, Russian or Orthodox culture, and on the other, the institution of the Russian Orthodox church, presenting the culture or the people rather than the church as the reason or source of Russia's spiritual potential (See for example C137-F46).

Likewise, Verkhovsky has noted that many Russians, both elites and ordinary people, respect the church and Orthodox religion, but do not necessarily believe in or follow its teachings, and this notion was supported by our interviews such as (C82-F20) above, and others – one 40 year old man for example, explained with pathos

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[84] Of those that answered 'Yes' to the question whether Russia's spiritual potential is greater than other countries' thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church, 73% said that they voted or would have voted for Putin in the last presidential elections (compared to only 54% of those that answered negatively). Furthermore, one out of five interviewees believe *both* that Russia's spiritual potential is greater than most countries thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church, *and* that Russia will aspire to be a mighty empire, compared to one out of ten believing neither.

that he supports the church financially as it is an important social and moral authority, but is a staunch atheist himself (C130-M40).

The Great Fatherland War also appeared as a very important narrative in collective memory, often referred to in answers to different questions, from being one of the most tragic periods in Russian history and/or one that Russia can be most proud of, to the completed mission of Russia (defeating fascism and Hitler, saving Europe), and in many other contexts, by interviewees from across all backgrounds. It is a powerful narrative which, with its unifying enemy representation and theme of sacrifice, again transcends the differences between the previously divisive issues surrounding Russian collective historical identity – the Soviet legacy, ethnicity and imperialism, religion etc.

The interviews did not go into detail about questions of ethnicity – this was mainly explored through the question on what defines Russianness (What makes a Russian Russian, *Chto delaet russkogo russkim*), and only a handful out of the whole sample chose to define Russianness by 'roots', 'blood', 'birth' or similar ethnic identity markers.

Nine out of 160 chose Russian language as the main marker of identity, and a large part of the sample gave answers in terms of socio-cultural markers, such as mentality, culture, or similar, sometimes explicitly renouncing Russian ethnicity: "Russians, in fact, are not a nationality. [. . .] Russians are a worldview (*mirovozzrenie*). This does not depend on ethnic things." (C100-M20) And quite a few, as stated above, answered in terms of faith, spirituality and Orthodoxy, as well as many in terms of patriotism.

The fluid nature of these markers of identity makes it hard to assess ethno-centrism among the interviewees – Orthodoxy, as Chapter Five established, works both as an ethno-centric and supra-national marker of identity, depending on the context, and Russian language – strongly promoted as a marker of identity through projects like *Russkii Mir*, is not a biological identity marker but still Russo-centric. And yet many didn't know what to answer.

On the whole, we encountered many ambiguities and dualistic representations of Russia's past, present and sometimes future within single interviews, and this tendency is shown in more detail in the case studies in Appendix III.

6.4.0   The Other side

If messianic discourse is on the rise, as well as a gradual rehabilitation of the Soviet period, which are the discourses that run counter to these tendencies, responding to and opposing them (as well as being responded and opposed to)? The idea of an organic Russia with a coherent history was opposed by some with general uncertainty about history itself:

> In my opinion, history as a discipline does not suit our country. Because any regime change has meant a change of history. So history is a variable value. We have been deceived so much, and held in forms of terror. These are complexes and cannot but be reflected in the character of Russian people. (C142-M49)

The uncertainty not only about Russia's present but also about its past is understandable, and, as the as the official revision of history books in 2007 pointedly illustrates, warranted. Many interviewees expressed distrust of the present government and of any Russian government, often following the traditional distinction between the 'bad' state and the 'good' people, as the male quoted above who concluded with hope: "Nevertheless, I somehow believe in the justice, goodness and generosity of the Russian people, and consider that Russians are a good nation." (C142-M49)

The attitude to the Soviet past, as well as the question of empire and nation, is what principally divided the nationalism of the late Solzhenitsyn from the neo-imperialists in the early post-Soviet period; and a similar divide in discourse could to some extent be noted in the interviews, though the followers of the 'Solzhenitsyn model' (or 'Holy Russia') were outnumbered also at this level by the 'imperialists' (or 'Third Rome'), and a majority fell somewhere in between, often in the contradictory combinations of the two models.

The rehabilitation of the Soviet period was thus by no means uniform, 18% of the total sample agreed with the statement that the Soviet period as being "a mistake and lost time" (see table 6-1) and by some, mainly religious interviewees of different denominations, the Soviet period was even defined either as "God's punishment" or at least as a direct result from people turning away from God. (e.g. C11-M34e, C19-M37e, C24-F47e). The same interviewees often picked it, or parts of it, as the most tragic period in Russian history.

What is notable is that while this type of discourse runs counter to the arguably messianic discourses of rehabilitation of empire and the Soviet past, it nevertheless does so from within the framework of Russian messianism, but as part of its other, exceptionalist model – God is ever so much present in the picture, and in a sense, Russia again becomes similar to the chosen Israel of the Bible, repeatedly punished for its sins and then forgiven. Another popular representation echoed in many interviews was seeing the Soviet experiment as a mission in itself, the mission to show what *not* to do (see previously quoted C8-F31e*, also for example C121-F43, C130-M40).

And as there was disagreement on the past, there was also disagreement as to the present, and future. Not everyone could feel the hope and great expectations of a restored, arising Russia. As one male interview concluded: "We have great scholars, great writers and great poets. We cannot elude history. But at present, we have nothing left." (C142-M59)

Putin figured in very many interviews as the hope of Russia and the provider of its new stability, which testifies to the success of the official discourse representing him precisely as such. But at the same time, many, semi-elite as well as ordinary people, expressed their fear that the stability was not to be depended on, that Russia could at any time be thrown into another period of turmoil and disaster – particularly after the next presidential elections. The retired physicisist, having criticized some aspects of Putin's regime while still being very positive towards Putin himself claimed that it was "scary" to think about what would happen beyond 2008. (C29-M71e*)

Another interviewee, a female Russian Korean also used the word scary: "I even now consider, that nobody else should ever be put as head of the state. When

the term finishes and we must elect someone new – I don't even know. I will vote for Putin, but that vote will not count. It is very unpleasant, because it is only now that Russia quietly begins to stand on her feet, and it is just scary – will there suddenly be someone who tears it down? Tearing down is easy, restoring very difficult." (C121-F43) One interviewee, a journalist for *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, defined Russia as a peculiar society, always in transition. "She continues her existence in an empty space, having lost her foundations." (C5-M26e, see also C28-F60e on the dangers of transition.)

Counter narratives of Russia as temporal-social entity, and Russianness, defined by Orthodoxy and the related notions of religious superiority, abound, both among ordinary and semi-elite Russians. They include doubts about the sincerity of the majority of the Orthodox believers; and cynicism about the church, both its practices and links to the political leadership. A half Azerbaijani Russian described that "the majority of Russians go to church not for the sake of elevating their spirit with God or Christianity, but because it is fashionable. They smoke, drink, curse, rape, steal, and at the same time go with their family to church Saturday and Sunday. This is called hypocrisy, that's it. [. . .] The deception is bigger than the faith." (C122-F45)

Another paradox was raised by a sociologist who noted with disbelief the illogical intermingling of contemporary Orthodoxy with astrology and various New Age practices as well as the church's readiness to bless cigarette and vodka factories (C15-M38e, see also C21-M42e). Many, contrary to the typical narrative outlined above, thus found the church itself rather lacking in strictness, as this prominent Old Believer priest:

> We consider that the official Church of the Moscow Patriarchate has inflicted monstrous losses to our spiritual potential, because just as the Eurasianism of Dugin takes the position of compromise with the Muslims, so is the position of the Moscow Patriarchate a position of compromise with the contemporary world. The are willing to turn a blind eye to everything; they are willing to forgive any vices and weaknesses of the society; they are willing to be led by the contemporary world, but they have completely lost the accuracy of the strict Orthodoxy that was 200-300 years ago – which is why we cannot say

that they preserve some kind of potential, that they make its preservation

possible. No. (C6-M29e)

Some claimed that Russia would fall behind the Muslim world in religious strictness: for example, on the question whether Russia's spiritual potential is greater than other countries, a 76 year old male answered: "No. The Muslims outdo Russia. [. . .] The Muslims have greater strength and more righteousness on their side." (C160-M76).

The previous chapter also discussed how ethno-centric and Orthodoxy-based discourses have become increasingly central not only to public but also official discourse, and this was noted by some interviewees such as this Jewish writer and editor who pessimistically viewed Orthodoxy as simply the state's ersatz communist ideology and who also pointed to ethno-centric nationalism and xenophobia being closely related to this discourse:

There was a period of religious spirituality, then there was the period of political spirituality, ideological. And now what happened? First the Church, then after the Church - Father God Lenin, then instead of Lenin - Father God Stalin, and the Party as the Holy Spirit. After that they drove out Lenin, drove out Stalin, drove out the Party, and there was nothing left. Society can't stand a vacuum. A vacuum can't exist. They try to drag up the Russian Orthodox Church again. And the fact that they at this stage so much are pulling out the Russian Orthodox Church also leads to the well-known slogan of England for the English, America for the Americans, Russia for Russians. And for the rest of us? We are living the past. (C30-M75e)

This rather swift transition from communism to – a by some seen as superficial – Orthodoxy as state ideology was thus received rather cynically. As one man noted: "Our leadership at present treats the question of faith artificially. It is amusing to watch the leadership, who used to beat their chests and consider themselves atheists, now take part in church ceremonies and similar. It is simply blasphemous, in my opinion." (C142-M49)

These interviewees belong to the groups that the state in the early years of Putin's presidency was reaching out to through the official renunciation of grand ideology, imperialism and messianism, but who now clearly perceive the return of

198

ideology, only in a new shape. The many rejections of messianic and related discourses are thus testament precisely to their increasing prevalence in Russian society.

6.5.0   Interpretation

As described in the previous chapter, Neumann argues that in post-Soviet Russia the Westernizers eventually lost the battle for political power and Russian identity to the national-patriots, despite their material and institutional advantages, because "the nationalist representation came complete with references back to an unbroken and proud national history" (Neumann, 1999:169). Our interviews certainly reflected a longing for a coherent historical identity.

We have shown that particularly semi-elite and post-Soviet Russians use narratives similar to those deployed in official and public discourse to describe and define their country, its past, present and future, contrary to the views of ordinary Soviet people who differed more internally and were often more critical and pessimistic about both past, present and future. If many semi-elite, and some post-Soviet interviews reflected the more positive and historically coherent official construction of Russia – as derived from the state addresses – of 2004-2005 and onwards, the interviews with ordinary people as a whole, rather reflected the earlier official construction of Russia of 2000-2001, with its vagueness and general absence of signifiers of Russia and Russianness.

Chapter Five outlined the messianic master narrative of an organic Russia, merging previously incommensurable discourses: ethno-centrism and multiculturalism, Communism and Orthodoxy, empire and nation, etc. This master narrative was reflected in the interviews, particularly among the post-Soviet generation and some semi-elite interviewees. As we have seen, it took the form of religious historical determinism, spiritual identity markers, and the contradictory rehabilitation of both Soviet Union and of Orthodoxy, exemplified by statements like 'God made it so that we had 70 years of communism', 'the Russian people have always been with God', and in representations of a long, unbroken history of glory and greatness.

The presence of this type of profiles among young urban people can partially attributed to the then emerging ideological youth movements such as NASHI (founded in 2005) basing, as we saw in the previous chapter, their ideology on this common master narrative with strongly positive representations of Russia pitted against stark enemy representations.[85]

While religious narratives were drawn upon by many interviewees, Orthodoxy does not form an unequivocally accepted model for Russian collective identity. We found that many commend and respect the Church, and testify to its popularity and greater spirituality than that of Western churches, but there is also a lot of cynicism about the church, and about the quick religious conversions by formerly atheist political leaders. We thus find some support for Verkhovsky's argument that the Soviet, atheist upbringing both of those in power and the rest of the population, is one of the things that stop the state from fully adopting the church model as basis for Russian collective identity, despite its many advantages. (Verkhovsky, 2007:187-88)

Another way of constructing a coherent historical identity was through defining different periods of Russian history in terms of being truly Russian, or false, with the either implicit or explicit linking of the West to the 'un-Russian' periods. A common representation was that of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Westernising Yeltsin period (rather than as previously, the Soviet period itself) as the disruption to 'true' Russia's history

We also noted how the quiet nostalgia for the Soviet past among the less ideologically enthusiastic Soviet generation also implicitly links to the core of the messianic framework of Russia-good, West-bad and the compensatory function of messianic discourse, with the narratives of a past when 'all took care of one another' and 'there was no hatred', the disappointment with the present where 'it's all about money, money, money', and with the West – 'in Western countries money always played the key role' reflecting the traditional narratives of the Other with its negative values of materialism, secularism and individualism.

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[85] 'NASHI Manifest....'

While there was a clear tendency among the semi-elite to construct a coherent historical identity for Russia by using messianic-related markers of identity, only traces of this tendency could be noted among ordinary people; there appeared still to be a widespread social fragmentation and lack of discursive tools with which to makes sense of the collapse of the previous order of things, reflected in very ambivalent, uncertain representations of past, present and future.

On the whole, ordinary people are not quite sure of where Putin is taking them, apart from away from the 1990s. So, a disavowal of the Yeltsinite 1990s and, by extension, the West, and a gradual rehabilitation of the Soviet period function to unite many – but there is no vision of the future. As Prozorov argued in the previous chapter, this is inherent in early Putinism: through the evasion of ideology, Putinism becomes a 'period of meaningless stability'. (Prozorov, 2008:222)

In view of the perceived social disorder and lack of cohesion, we can understand not only the initial popularity of the Putinist striving for stability and social consensus as opposed to grand ideology (Prozorov, 2008), but also the uses of messianic and related discourse among ordinary Russians. As Catherine Merridale sums up:

> Russians have good reason to feel helpless in the face of spiralling and unpredictable inflation, organized crime, widespread corruption, and a long tradition of official disinformation. Rather than trying to control it all, many have given up, preferring escapist romance, including romantic versions of the past, as a counterbalance to their daily gloom. They do not trust their government, they do not understand their historians, and they are tired of dissecting their own souls. (Merridale, 2003:14)

As we have seen, and which is further illustrated in the case studies in Appendix III, many messianic and related discourses resonate among ordinary Russians, but often in ways very different from in public discourse. Eurasia, for example, was a concept little known among ordinary people, but perceived positively in terms of its similarity with Soviet Russia, defined by many in terms of 'unity', 'friendship' and 'order' – positive signifiers in a society many perceive as fragmented, with an uncertain future and a fledgling stability.

In sum, while there are still many diverse and contradictory representations of Russia as a temporal-social entity – some defined, some vague; some reflecting official and public discourse, some critical of them; some hopeful, some pessimistic – among ordinary and semi-elite Russians, many of them are still somehow framed within the pervasive traditional messianic framework.

7.0.0 Russia and the World: Self and Other(s)

"I hate this Americanisation, all this stupidity. It is better to be oneself than to try to appear like someone else." (C59-M18)

"She is right now stepping out as a powerful empire. Do you have a problem with that?" (C135-M43)

"The word 'empire' is somehow not completely clear for me, but the dominant role always has and always will be played by Russia." (C20-M48e)

"The whole continent of Eurasia lies in Russia. This must all be united and some new product given to the world." (C8-F31e*)

7.1.0   Introduction

Chapter Two set out the basic theoretical premises for our study: that stories at all levels of discourse, often reproduced over a long time, about who 'we' are, and who 'we' are not, i.e. competing narratives of a collective self, as well as stories about threats, dangers and enemies, function politically both as to construct the appearance of a cohesive collective identity; as well as to legitimise the existence and actions of the state claiming to represent this collective. In the case of Russia, we suggested that *messianic* discourse has predominantly filled these functions in Russian identity construction.

The previous chapter explored some of the stories which define Russia as something in history, as a temporal-social entity. Based on the same sample of interviews with Moscow and St Petersburg semi-elite and ordinary Russians, this chapter will move to explore the stories which define Russia as something in political space, and legitimate it as state and international actor.

There are numerous political dimensions to this subject and countless competing, complementing narratives of Russia as a spatial-political entity, and this

chapter will only cover some of the central themes which are most closely related to messianism: empire and 'imperial ambitions', the perennial question of Russia's relation to and location between East and West, Eurasia, 'the West' as broad Other, and discourses of danger and enmity. These are all central signifiers to the spatial-political dimension of Russian identity and are, as Chapter Five sought to demonstrate, inextricably linked to each another and to the overarching notion of a Russian special mission (*osobaya missiya*).

We will explore if and how these narratives, central to public and also official discourse, resonate among ordinary and semi-elite people, and will seek to answer the following questions:

- How do Russians today define Russia as a spatial-political entity, as something in space? Which images, narratives and metaphors do they use to describe and define their country as a state and international actor, and how do these relate to the representations of Russia as a temporal-social entity?

- How do representations of Russia as an empire or with 'imperial ambitions' resonate among Russians? What aspects of empire are invoked, in what contexts?

- How Russians define Russia's civilisational belonging? How do they relate to the idea of Eurasia? And how do they conceive of the relation between Russia 'the West' as broad Other – in terms of enmity or friendship, inferiority or superiority, normality or exceptionalism?

- Which are the perceived dangers to and enemies of Russia, and how do these relate to danger and enmity representations in official and public discourse?

- What is the function and role of messianic discourse (both as single narratives, such as 'mission', and the wider self-Other framework) drawn upon in the interviews in the context of Russian spatial-political identity?

As in the previous chapter on temporal-social Russia, we find ambiguous, contradictory and kaleidoscopic representations of spatial-political Russia. The interviews strongly reflect the tension between exceptionalism and universalism which, as ever, is central to both official and public discourse.

7.2.0   Semi-elite Russians

Among many of the semi-elite interviewees, there was a perception that something was changing for the better in Russia, that a kind of restoration from past humiliation was taking place. It was often (then) President Putin who was given credit for the change. "We don't need one Putin, we need a hundred Putins!" a young business director exclaimed, and said with pathos that if Putin could find a way to run for a third term, he himself would vote for him again, whether or not this would be constitutional. (C3-M26e) Another category of interviewees were deeply pessimistic both about society, politics and Russia's international role, comparing Russia's role in the world to Zimbabwe, and will be examined in section 7.4.

The previous chapter, analysing our interview material, argued that the representation of an ancient and cohesive Russian historical identity, with the fall of the Soviet Union (rather than the Soviet period) as its disruption is constructed to a significant extent through notions of continuity such as religiosity, culture, spirituality and tradition, as well as notions of empire and greatness, which define contemporary Russia as the successor both of the Tsarist and Soviet Empires.

But empire not only defines Russia as something in history, but also as something in political space. In both these aspects, Russian discourses on empire closely relate to the messianic notion of a mission – as Chapter Four showed, in the historical Moscow Third Rome framework temporal-social Russia as a mighty empire must save or convert the world in one way or another, and as Chapter Five showed, in contemporary Russian political discourse, spatial-political Russia has a special mission (*osobaya missiya*) typically relating to Russia's special geopolitical location.

As for official discourse, Chapter Five also showed that while the concepts of empire and imperialism under Putin were still officially unacceptable as markers of Russian identity, greatness and great power status became legitimate early on, at least in 2003-2004. Among the interviewees, the question on empire and imperial ambitions was received as perfectly natural and relevant, and on the whole, there was an

expectancy that Russia will be defined, or seek to be defined, as precisely an empire in political space. As the young female estate agent described: "Some kind of event is taking place [. . .] it will lead to some kind of imperial form." (C2-F26e) Of the semi-elite interviewees, one out of 30 said that Russia already is an empire; 12 out of 30 said they believe that Russia will step out internationally as a mighty empire, seven out of 30 said that it will be as a great power not empire; five of 30 said that Russia will attempt to step out as an empire but will fail; and only three of 30 said they believe Russia will decline imperial ambitions.

Many expressed that they personally desired Russia to be treated as an empire or great power, and others testified to this tendency in society (e.g. C27-M58e and C13-M36e). A typical example is a businessman from SPB who was certain that Russia would not decline any imperial ambitions, and explained why: "No, she will not decline, of course not. At present it is impossible without imperial ambitions, without defined military possibilities etcetera to talk about and claim anything at a world level. I am not saying that you have to step out in a position of active force, but if there is nothing behind you, you won't be talked to, you won't be taken as a serious state." (C18-M39e)

Precisely the desire to be taken seriously internationally was evident in many interviews, testifying to the importance of recognition by the West as Other for Russian identity. Some resented the use of the word 'empire', as the young owner of a Moscow PR-company quoted in the previous chapter, who argued vehemently that Russia would *not* seek to step out as an empire, and also that the idea of a mission is *not the least* popular in Russia. Nevertheless, asked why Putin might use the concept 'civilising mission on the Eurasian continent', he explained the following:

> The thing is that Russia occupies a very specific location between Western Europe and China and is a bridge between the shores of these poles. She can counterbalance these sides, interact, and be a terrific mediator in disputes and solving conflicting situations. Then Russia is also the country which is richest in resources and potential in Eurasia, which means that she cannot but influence both Europe and Asia right up to India. There is

> nothing surprising about this. […] Putin wanted to say that *everything depends on Russia* – fully rational thinking. […] Strong states don't have a peaceful life, ever. (C7-M31e*)

The image is very similar to Putin's construction of Russia in the 2006 state address as a mature, responsible and reliable partner, a nuclear power, a peace-keeper with huge missions, both maintaining strategic stability (as "one of the most important guarantees of lasting peace") and ready to "settle local conflicts", taking an active part in the UN and being a safe-guarder of the supremacy of international law.

On the whole, as is outlined in more detailed in the case study in Appendix III, the above interview was an epitome of the polyphonic Russian political discourse, touching here on several of its key contradictions: Russia doesn't have a mission, nor is this idea popular, but everything depends on Russia (not the West), the mediator between West and East; Russia is not an empire but must influence all of Europe and most of Asia; Russia must be strong, powerful and rationally conceivable, taking a leading political and economic role on the Eurasian continent – yet also take on the task to be a spiritual and moral example to the world. (For the same type of argument in political discourse, see Kortunov, 1998a)

The second interview, also available as case study, epitomising the tendency to draw on a number of contradictory, popular and often messianic discourses, was with the young pro-Western, anti-Putin business woman from Moscow, who also presented an image of Russia as having an important, peculiar political role as a benevolent empire: "Russia has always been an empire of territories that she united, always conquering her neighbours. And naturally, it never happens that one becomes great - like the lion, the king of the wild animals – without having special tasks and peculiar relations. Some are afraid of you, some love you, some are waiting for you to cleanse the savannah and some wait for you to take care of them." (C8-F31e*)

Later in the interview she argues however that Russia – despite always having been an empire – should deny the imperial ambitions but still "be very independent, with a clear structure – otherwise America will take over the whole world, if there is not some kind of opposition on our level." These two interviews are examples of the tensions present in many interviews between conflicting

representations between traditional Russian ideals of statehood and modern Western ideals of what is acceptable or 'normal' among states.

There was an awareness in many interviews that 'imperial ambitions' are perceived as negative according to the modern Western model (which is why many were quick to say that 'we are a *great power* not an *empire*), yet the self-representation of Russia as having an imperial-messianic role (as world mediator, opposing America, peculiar Russia with special tasks, Russia on whom the whole world depends) had a very strong appeal. From the interviews, it appears that this is partly so as it is in this role Russia is perceived to be able to compete on more equal terms with the USA, as the state embodying 'the West' – the interviews held many comparisons between Russia and the USA. It should also be noted that the notion of empire was popular also among explicitly liberal and pro-Western interviewees, both semi-elite and ordinary, as various case studies in Appendix III exemplify.

Implicit in these contradictions was the question (often made explicit by Putin) why America, and the West as a whole, can set out the norms for international society, and be quick to condemn perceived Russian imperial ambitions, yet show many of the characteristics of an empire, with a civilising mission itself. The tensions between representations of Russia as a state or spatial-political entity and Russia as a civilisation or temporal-social entity, present across the sample of semi-elite and ordinary interviewees, should therefore be partly understood through its relation of continued rivalry with America and 'the West' in general.

Representative of a more Westernising positions among the semi-elite was the interview with Professor Tatyana Zonova, head of the diplomacy department at MGIMO, Moscow (C28-F60e*). She rejected for example the exceptionalist narratives of Russia as an empire, and as Eurasia, as being "anachronisms in the contemporary world" and damaging to Russia's image, and yet embraced culturalist fundamentalism by representing Russia in terms of an "Eastern Christian civilizational model." Throughout the interview there was a tension between on the one hand the celebration of cultural and civilisational specificity and on the other the adherence to civic diacritics, secularism and joint international 'objective' responsibilities. It strongly echoed official discourse, defined by these contradictions

208

between Russia as a 'normal' spatial-political entity and as a 'particular' temporal-social entity. (For a useful discussion, see Tsygankov, 2005)

As outlined previously, post-Soviet political discourse has been heavily dominated by Eurasianist ideologies, based firmly on this core dichotomy of Russia-good/West-bad, and closely linked with the discourses on empire and civilisation: Russia is typically represented as having a global mission as the alternative to Atlanticism – an alternative world civilisation, the alternative model of statehood, even in some accounts, the alternative international system of states. (Laruelle, 2004, Shlapentokh, 2007, Sokolenko, 1999:21)

But there are different variants, and Chapter Five outlined specific geopolitical representations of Russia as Eurasia: the isolationism of *Russia as an "island"* which nevertheless argues for Russia's "assimilation of the Eastern (trans-Ural) regions"; the exceptionalism of *Russia as Eurasia* with Russia as "the only one of its kind as a cultural-geopolitical Slavonic-Turkic complex, knit together with the system of the continental bordering areas, but also opposing them both for economic reasons as well as through its special spirituality"; and the missionism of *Russia as the main part of heartland*, the core of Eurasia, with Russia as having a special role in being the key to global stability, "a Great Power, called to serve as a bridge between the East and the West." (Kolosova, 2003:60-62)

Often these variants are mixed together in mainstream political discourse, for example with various political parties and movements subscribing to the political vision of a four-axis alliance Moscow-Teheran-Delhi-Beijing justified by the social argument of Russia's 'harmony of cultures, peoples and religions.' Among the semi-elite, all these different variants of Eurasianism were brought up in different interviews, typically heavily overlapping with the discourses on Empire and Great Power, indicating a successful dissemination of mainstream political discourse into these strata of society.

The idea of Eurasia in some form as constituting Russia's main mission was advocated by a handful of the 30 semi-elite interviewees, compared to only a couple of the 130 ordinary interviewees. More broadly viewed, the mission could be

anything from taking care of small, dependent countries, being an example of harmonious multi-culturalism, standing against America and saving the world from globalisation to simply 'being different' – often articulated in terms of Eurasianism and Russia as being Eurasia (C1-F37e*, C9-M34e, C15-M38e, C29-F36e, C8-F31e*).

Asked the age-old question of whether Russia is a Western or Eastern country, a whole 14 of the 30 semi-elite interviewees chose to define Russia as something different from both East and West (compared to five who said 'Western' – the remainder would not answer, were not sure or said 'both', and only ordinary Russians said 'Eastern'.) Though not a majority view, it was recurrently expressed that 'someone' has to take on the task to counterbalance to, or compete with, the West: "As far as at present the most developing [as in progressive] countries are located in Asia, and Russia can soon be counted to them, then together, having united, these countries will be able to overtake the leading countries." (C25-M42e) Another interviewee, a businessman, hadn't heard about the concept of Eurasia as such but thought the idea of Russia uniting with the ex-republics of the Soviet Union and with some Asian countries was possible; the question is just to find the right forms for it. (C18-M39e)

Another interviewee explained: "We cannot at all relate to Europe, even though in Eurasia sixty percent of the population live there. I consider it to be a very big question." (C20-M48e) The mainstream exceptionalist arguments of the organic complex of cultures and symbiosis between Russian, Turkic and Muslim worlds, and of Russia as a bridge between civilisations, surfaced in quite a few of the semi-elite interviews, including with interviewees that were cynical about other variants of Eurasianism (e.g. C30-M75e).

In the interview with another owner of a PR-company, the idea of Eurasia as the main part of heartland, the bridge between the Eastern and Western civilizations was the key theme, but accompanied neither by the typical celebration of Russia's spirituality, nor of praise for Putin's regime. He explained Russia's mission as follows: "I think that Russia can be a real bridge between the East and the West. This is according to its mentality, and because you Europeans apprehend of us as

Europeans; yet the Asian mentality is quite comprehensible to us: I bear in mind China, the Near East, Japan, Chorea etc. I find it rather easy to relate to Japanese colleagues, or Chinese."

Later he described that "Russia is a multi-cultural and multi-confessional country, which is why it is rather easy for us to conduct negotiations with Muslim governments, because we have a Muslim community, which I believe is second only to the Christian Orthodox. Which is why our relations can be absolutely friendly and understandable." He was however reluctant to discuss the West – asked about how he thinks Russia's relations to the West will unfold he said that it depends on the personalities of politicians and from real political forces both there and here. (C9-M34e) Resonance of discourses on Eurasia are thus not necessarily linked to official discourse or the messianism in public discourse.

Less pragmatic, more utopian Eurasia-based visions for Russian statecraft were also represented by a couple of semi-elite interviewees. The first one, a young, wealthy female estate agent, was quoted in the previous chapter. She based her apparently newfound ideas on a popular book series of fiction (*Sokrovishcha Val'kirii* by Sergey Alekseev), and likened the world to a magnet with two poles – the East and the West – explaining at length how every magnet is held together by a centre which acts as its neutraliser:

> I consider that it certainly is not logical, with the existence of a certain magnet where there is polarity between East and West, that there is an absence of middle, as is the case with the present magnet. There must be some kind of centre, which neutralises and holds the magnet together. To be honest, I was only recently acquainted to this idea; although I had thoughts [before] that there was something that did not add up. And the thought of Russia as of a third civilisation straight away filled this gap, and a number of historical events became clear to me. (C2-F26e)

The world and its two poles believe they can do without the centre which Russia/Eurasia constitutes. But logically, the magnet will split without the centre.[86]

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[86] Similar narratives abound in public discourse. Here for example Serguei Oushakine quotes sociologist Subuetto: ""As the Eurasian civilization, Russia is the center of world stability and instability. If the mondialist strategic plan to confederate Russsia were to succeed,…instability would settle here. The

The interviewee described how Russia/Eurasia as the centre of the magnet is subject to attempts by both poles, East and West, to make it forget 'its own' [*rodnoe*], to forget its spirituality and mission. The discourse implies that neither Asianism nor Europeanism is viable: both imply assimilation for Russia. As in the discourse *Russia as an "island,"* Russia must instead hold fast to 'its own', withstand the forces from the poles which do not comprehend that their own survival depends on the spiritual abilities of the centre they seek to subordinate, and isolate itself.

It is interesting to note that the interviewee feels that these ideas have helped her understand various historical events - the transcendental concept Russia as a third civilisation thus appears here to answer both the spatial and the temporal questions of Russian identity (for a summary of these questions, see Tsygankov, 2007:380).

A more optimistic variant of the East/West spiritual dichotomy and Russia's role within it was provided by the previously quoted businesswoman, one of those whose interview epitomised the polyphonic contemporary Russian messianic discourse. She managed to infuse the traditional Eurasianism with an ambitious messianic project:

> We have both the Eastern wisdom and the Western pragmatism, and such a desire to do business. These are necessary to combine, as the West is more practical and less spiritual. The East is too spiritual – they have forgotten about the material there and they are in poverty. I think it has been so destined, that Russia should unite both in her. She lies between the East and the West, between Europe and Asia – Eurasia. The whole continent of Eurasia lies in Russia. This must all be united and some new product given to the world. To competently convert all there is in the West and all there is in the East. And my sincere conviction is that we are able to do this. So that the world became united, and, sometime in the golden millennium of humanity, we got one world government. (C8-F31e*)

West and the East would clash [. . .] A geopolitical havoc (*smuta*) of grand proportions is to happen, then." To stop a potential worldwide catastrophe [. . .] one needs to understand that the model of personality developed throughout the course of Russian history is "opposite to the liberal" model". (Oushakine, 2007:191)

Russia as Eurasia is thus not just an unchanging feature of Russia's energetic-geographical position, but also a particular mission for a particular time. The previous extract (C2-F26e) stresses Russia-Eurasia's particularism (Russia must retain its 'own'), whereas this one stresses its universalism – which can pave the way for a united world government. In both extracts, Russia's messianic Eurasian role is of global importance, but the latter interviewee, the businesswoman, argued that active engagement with both East and West, not isolationism, must be the way forward – preferably beginning with a unification with Europe.

While the discourses on Russia as Eurasia did not resonate among all semi-elite interviewees, it nevertheless appeared that there is considerable support some aspects of Eurasianism. The appeal of Eurasianist discourses relate to the perennial question of Russia's ambiguous relation to the West. The above quoted businesswoman's optimism about Russia's unifying world mission was not unambiguous – later on in the interview she revealed strong doubts about the desired unification: "I understand perfectly well that the world will never unite with Russia. Not in the nearest future. Because I cannot yet imagine that Europe would like to be together with Russia. Because Europe is so much smaller than Russia [. . .] Europe would feel very small in comparison to such a large territory as Russia." (C8-F31e*) Russia as an international actor was in this interview partially constructed as large, spiritual, having a lot to offer to the world, wanting even to unite the world and especially be friends with Europe, but is misunderstood by the world and scares away Europe by its sheer size.

We must note that 'the West', etc, was also in the interviews – as in public discourse – used ambiguously, to loosely represent both America and Europe, sometimes together (often as in a wider sense a civilisation and value-system), but also sometimes as distinct from one another. Since the rise of the United States there has of course been two 'Wests', and on the whole in official and public discourse, Russia wants to compete with one and be close to the other: to rival America in size and power, and as a civilisation, but be part of Europe and European culture (for a useful discussion, see Gvosdev, 2007:134-36). Various aspects of the contradictory notion of

the West are illustrated further in the case studies, from the distinction between Europe and America, to the extremist amalgamation of globalisation, Americanism and zionisation.

Another, more sophisticated than in C8-F31e*, but similarly ambiguous representation of Russia's relation to Europe was given in the interview with a young, prominent Old Believer priest from Moscow:

> Europe does not want Russia to become part of her, which is why the relations will unfold with difficulties. You see, it is like an adopted child in the family. The parents took an alien child to bring up at their home. Maybe [the child] wants them to love him, maybe he wants to become completely theirs – but there is a certain barrier that hinders this from taking place. [. . .] Russia is trying; and the parents kind of smack her hands to keep her off - which is why the relations will be difficult. If Europe does not catch the fact that Russia is just as European as her…you understand? [. . .] Europe loves Russian artists, and Russian ballet. So all we have that is European, Europe loves, but she does not count us to be part of her, see? And when Turks will walk the streets of Stockholm and Swedes will hide so as not to be killed – then they will finally understand what a mistake they made rejecting Russia as a friend because Russia is historically a buffer between East and West. One should not ignore this buffer or despise it, spitting on it, it will be really bad.
>
> (C6-M29e)

The use of family analogues to define Russia's relation to Europe is common practice in the Russian tradition – for the Slavophiles, Russia was the cousin from the countryside, 'just a bit broader in the beam. The idea of Russia as a rejected child that grows up into a resentful, problematic teenager corresponds well to contemporary Western media representations of Russia as a rebellious or at least unpredictable state in the international system.[87]

There is also a relation here to the perennial representation of Russia as always being in transition, always young, always *just* about to become 'normal', a

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[87] For example Tony Halpin (2007) 'President Putin rattles nuclear sabre at Nato', *The Times*, 2007-11-27, available at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article2910112.ece [Accessed 2008-08-22].

democracy, *just* having joined the West. The discourse on Europe and the West continued in the following way in this interview:

> Globalisation is the standard of European thinking that after the war came also to us in Russia. It is of course very dangerous to Russia, it destroys our roots. [. . .] In a few years time we will be turned into Americans that don't speak English. It will be a horrible catastrophe   [. . .] If you don't want to one day wake up in a faceless country where all speak English, where the Vikings are forgotten, where the runes are forgotten, where Astrid Lindgren is forgotten, where they watch cartoons with Mickey Mouse and chew chewing-gum; then all should unite against this. It is horrific, all should fight against it. (C6-M29e)

As can be seen, these two interviews exemplify the ambiguity of the relation to 'the Wests'. In the businesswoman's account, similar to much of public and official discourse, Russia would like to – but cannot – unite with Europe, yet must oppose America. In the priest's account, there are furthermore different Europes – globalisation as "the standard of European thinking" is defined as the main threat to Russia's civilisational existence, yet Russia is defined (but simply not recognised) as 'just as European as Europe'. There is also again the tension between the representations of Russia as normal, or European as Europe, and Russia as exceptional, the buffer between East and West. As the priest implicitly warned not to spit upon Russia-the-sacrificial-historical-buffer, the businesswoman too hinted at a darker side of the otherwise so benevolent Russia, warning that "if the Russian bear wakes up, it will be bad for all." (C8-F31e*)

Chapter Five noted how globalisation now holds a central position in the traditional framework of Russia-good/West, as the common signifier of all evil, the anti-thesis of spirituality and Russianness (see e.g.Troitskii, 2002:14), and many of these interviews support our view that globalisation as a signifier is useful precisely because of its ambiguity: it can be used both with and without the face of a specific state. In representations of Russia as a civilisation, not only a state, globalisation, rather than a specific state, functions effectively as a threat or enemy against which Russian identity is defined.

For example the young female estate agent in C2-F26e, who discussed Russia as a third civilisation, considered globalisation to be a definite threat to Russia, twice using the word *strashno* (terrifying) when relating to it. In total, 10 of the 30 semi-elite interviewees said they consider globalisation to be dangerous to Russia (a further 7 said it depends). Among these generally highly educated people, globalisation's threat to Russian culture, civilisation and economy was typically discussed at length, as in C6-M29e above, using the more moderate narratives available in public discourse (i.e. not the radicalist discourses involving the Antichrist).

But globalisation was not perceived to be the main danger to Russia. When asked the broader question to say what or who poses the greatest danger to Russia, only one of 30 picked something related to globalisation. Four out of 30 picked corruption, rulers or bureaucrats; another four terrorism or Islam; and 11 said, often without any hesitation, that Russia itself or the Russians themselves poses the greatest danger to Russia. This will be discussed in section 7.4 of this chapter.

In sum, we find that the ambiguous uses among many semi-elite Russians of the notion of 'the West' – representing Europe, America and globalisation – in many respects are similar to those in public discourse, and go hand in hand with the equally ambiguous representations of Russia as both normal and exceptional.

7.3.0   Ordinary Russians

How do ordinary Russians today define Russia as a spatial-political entity? Our interview material suggests that dreams of restoring Russia as an empire unite Russians from very different strata of society: from elite to ordinary people, from the educated to unskilled labourers, from old to young generations.

Not all ordinary interviewees longed for Russia to step out as a mighty empire – but many did, and there was a clear sense that this would serve as a compensation for the humiliation of losing the Cold war, and the low status of Russia in the first post-Soviet decade. Well over half of the Russians interviewed in

our study believed that Russia either is an empire or will step out to be an empire or great power, as is shown in the table below.

"Will Russia become a mighty empire on the international arena or give up its imperial ambitions?" **(Moscow, St Petersburg, Aug-Oct 2005, N=160)**

TABLE 7-1	
Russia is already an empire	5%
Yes, Russia become an empire	40%
Will become a great power, not empire	8%
Russia will keep imperial ambitions but won't make it	14%
Will decline/has already declined imperial ambitions	17%
Not sure	13%

Believing that Russia objectively will become an empire doesn't automatically mean supporting or desiring that. However, in the interviews a large number of ordinary Russians, including young and educated people clearly expressed their desire for Russia to become a mighty empire.

Similarly, as Chapter One noted, an opinion poll from 2003 asking 1600 Russians if they would *"like to see Russia first and foremost a great power, respected and feared by other countries, or a country with a high standard of living, even if not one of the strongest countries in the world?"*, showed 54% stating they preferred high standard of living to great power status, and 43% who would prefer Russia to be a great power, respected and feared. (*New Russia Barometer XII*, 2003) One many holding this view of our interviewees was a sociology student, with liberal views, from a wealthy family: "I would really, really like that – Russia to be a mighty empire. And I'm sure those in authority really want that as well. Because it would allow that mission, of which we are speaking, to be formulated, and it would be clearer to people what they are able to do. Pride is a sin according to the Bible, but pride is a very serious motive for action – one must only keep feeding it all the time." (C83-M21*, C95-M26 also similar)

The interviewee argued that the idea of a mission would bring purpose to the Russian people so that they would know their function in society. As in public discourse, empire often goes hand in hand like this with the idea of a mission. Around 1/5 of all interviewees believe both that Russia has a mission and that it will step out as an empire. The mission is a broad notion and can encompass anything from survival of the nation to Saviour narratives, as in the extract from the interview with retired female Communist Party worker:

> Russia certainly has to be a powerful empire because if not then other countries will simply crush us. I mean Germany, America and the rest. Being a powerful empire is an absolute necessity. When the mighty Soviet Union existed the US didn't meddle in other countries affairs and wage wars. And now we have changed, disarmed, and allowed others to come and look here and there[88] – here you go: Iraq. There were no nuclear weapons there, but they destroyed it. And how do the people live there now? If only Russia were stronger, like before, then the Americans would never have touched Iraq. (C156-F60)

As among some of the semi-elite, an image of a benevolent protector-empire emerges: Russia, as the Soviet Union during the Cold War, needs to be empire to be able to protect vulnerable states from American hegemony.

Among the ordinary interviewees, it was common for pensioners to talk about how Russia is always there to help other countries. A man in his sixties, defending the legacy of the Soviet Union, concluded that "at the end of the day, were it not for the Soviet Union, then fascism would not have been defeated worldwide, and this is not just German fascism […] But most importantly, both Asia and Africa would still be in the cage of colonialism." (C151-M60) Here Russia's role of a saviour is extended from just saving Europe from fascism to liberating the dependent world from colonialism, a theme typically recurring in pan-Slavist writings. (See for example Troitskii, 2002:96-99)

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[88] It refers to a change of policy for foreign visitors: before they were restricted as to what they could and could not visit on the territory of USSR. Now foreigners not only travel freely, but delegations of foreign officers visit the Russian military bases. All this is considered a weakness by many Russians.

Though a longing for the restoration of empire (and, as the previous chapter showed, in many cases the Soviet Union) could be discerned among a significant part of both the semi-elite and ordinary interviewees, there was a certain difference between the two categories as to which aspects of empire they related to. Asked what unites the different peoples in Russia of different nationalities, religions and cultures; many more ordinary than semi-elite interviewees would claim economic factors such as 'money', 'work' or even 'poverty', as opposed to cultural or historical factors, as well as more than ten percent stating 'nothing at all'.

The idea of empire among ordinary people appears then to resonate more strongly in its international aspects (with missionist discourses of saving Europe or the world, etc) than in its domestic aspects, whereas semi-elite interviewees often invoked Eurasianist arguments about Russia's long-standing multicultural realities.

The ambiguity of Russia's civilisational belonging and relation to 'the West' was evident across the whole interviewee sample. This was noted for example in attitudes towards Ukraine – the so-called Orange revolution had taken place only months prior to the interviews, and a large part of the ordinary interviewees felt very negatively about Ukraine's "turning away from Russia to the West." But there was also a longing to know how the Russian self was reflected in the Other: "How do they perceive of us there in the West?" many asked their 'Western' interviewer.

The common distinction, discussed in the previous section, between Europe and America, with Europe much more positively represented that America, was evident, but for some, 'the West' undoubtedly meant Europe but not America; whereas for others it was the other way round; and for some it was both Europe and America and even including Japan. And as to what Russia herself is – Western, Eastern, Eurasian, or something different – there was, as ever, even less agreement. Asked whether Russia is an eastern or western country, the largest group, around 35% of the total sample, perceived Russia to be western, or becoming more western; around 28% that Russia is just 'Russia' – neither eastern nor western, 'Eurasia', or a 'northern

country'; 18% that it is an eastern country; and 15% that she is part eastern, part western.

As an 80-year old female explained: "As far as I see it, we still do not understand who we are: Europe or Asia. It seems like it has not been settled yet, we can't say who we are." (C159-F80) Another Soviet female interviewee explained: "We are not the West. It is this spirituality, soul, that hinders us from being the rational West. And some kind of constraint of ours hinders us from being Asians. We are neither." (C155-F67) Despite, or perhaps because of the uncertainty of Russia's civilisational belonging, there was at this time (2005) a relatively limited resonance of discourses on Eurasia among the ordinary interviewees, especially in comparison with the semi-elite.

Have you heard anything about the concept of Eurasia?
(Moscow, SPB, Aug-Oct 2005, N=151)

TABLE 7-2	Total	Post-Soviet (age 15-29)	Soviet (age 30+)	Elite, semi-elite (N=27)
Has heard about Eurasia	42%	32%	52%	77%
Has heard little or nothing about Eurasia	58%	68%	48%	23%
Generally positive towards the idea*	25%	22%	30%	30%
Matter of fact*	15%	18%	13%	26%
Generally negative*	25%	16%	35%	30%
Not sure*	32%	44%	23%	15%

* Interviewees who said they had heard little or nothing about the concept were given the following outline: "The idea basically suggests that there is a special civilization – Eurasia – between East and West. Eurasia is not only a continent, but also a harmonic unity of the former Soviet republics in which Russia is the centre. Possibly, this includes some Islamic countries and some Asian countries. What do you think about this idea?"

220

As can be seen in Table 7-1, there was little awareness among ordinary people, particularly the younger generation, even of the concept of Eurasia. Many thought it referred to unification between Russia and Europe. Of others who were positive to the idea of Eurasia, and specified why, many talked about how good it was when all were together. Unity/disunity was a constantly recurring binary opposition in the discourses of both young and old: 'it was better when we were all together,' 'nobody wants to unite anymore' and similar expressions were repeated in many interviews. If Europe won't unite with Russia, Eurasia is the second best option, seemed to be a conclusion to draw among many ordinary interviewees. Unsurprisingly, those that had heard about the idea of Eurasia were typically people with higher education, and they would often mention Gumilev, Trubetskoy and the early Eurasianists.

Around 14% of all respondents equalled Russia with Eurasia, and they typically drew on the traditional narratives of the historical mix of European and Asian values; Russia as the bridge between Asia and Europe; and variants of the East-Spiritual/West-material dichotomy. As for the latter, it was not always with East-good/West-bad connotations typical of public discourse: for example one interviewee explained that when he sees anything rational or progressive, he associates it with Europe, and when there is some craziness of some sort, or something destructive, like the disregard for human life, he emotionally associates it with the Asiatic. (C107-M38) It is possible that this negative variant of the East/West dichotomy is part of the explanation for much of the negative or irresolute attitudes, with fears of isolationism from Europe, and the desire to be European.

As can be seen above, when presented with the idea of Russia as a third civilisation in alliance with Eastern countries, the vast majority did not know what to say. Similarly, the conception of Eurasia as a harmony of cultures and peoples appeared to have a fairly small resonance among the ordinary interviewees.

Answering the question "Russia is a multi-national country where peoples of different cultures, religions and traditions coexist. What, in your opinion, unites them all?" around 10% said that nothing whatsoever unites them and another 10% did not know at all. Only 4% mentioned some kind of Eurasian or spiritual idea and another 7% gave answers like 'patriotism', 'love', 'humanity' or 'friendship'. Most

people (30%) answered 'territory', 'statehood', 'Russia', 'Russian language' or 'life here'.

A certain number of post-Soviet Russians were however positive towards these ideas of Eurasia. For example, a 26-year old optician (C95-M26*) had not heard anything about the concept as such, but when presented with the idea of 'a harmonious unity between the former Soviet republics with Russia as centre, possibly also with some Islamic countries and some other Asian countries in union with Russia' was most positive about it. Russia is neither Eastern nor Western, he stated, and expressed hope that Russia will one day become an empire. "The state, situated on the other side of the ocean" posed the greatest danger to Russia in his opinion. Here he used the word *protivopolozhniy*, 'contrary' or 'opposite' which in Russian conveys a meaning of polarity and negativity. Cold war imagery was evoked of two states facing each other, diametrically opposed. (East-West)

When asked, later, what relations would be desirable with the West for Russia he answers with the formal "I struggle to answer." He was not representative of the majority of young Russians in our sample, but of the significant group who desire for Russia to become an empire, are interested in the general ideas of Eurasia and want Russia to rival the West.

Another interviewee of the same age group, a computer programmer, explained: "As far as I understand, at the moment there are active negotiations with China and India, and a large triangle [*troika*] of the three most powerful Eastern states is being organised. The three together form a very important power, which can stand against the US and Europe." When asked if this would be desirable for Russia, he says: "Yes, undoubtedly. You have to make friends with somebody [*nado s kem to druzhit'*]" (C70-M27*) Again: if the West doesn't want to accept Russia, Russia will find other friends. Interestingly, only post-Soviet interviewees considered 'America' or 'the US' as the greatest danger to Russia at present.[89] This is notable as it could have been expected that more Soviet interviewees would cling on to a Cold War framework with the US as the main threat, not the younger generation.

But several young people embraced various Cold War discourses; for example a 19-year old male who affirmed that Russia has a mission and that it

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[89] 11 interviewees out of 160 in total: C37-F19, C44-M18, C54-F17, C65-M18, C67-F18, C77-M21, C80-F20, C86-F24, C95-M26, C97-M23, C103-M28.

consists in Cold War, as "in the world there ought to be parity. There can't be one country that leads and commands – someone needs to restrain it." (C48-M19). Later he added that Russia together with the EU should restrain America. A 15-year old male claimed that Russia can become a mighty empire as "we have our cool [*krutye*] rockets, which leave the Americans quiet, and we can show Bush our fists." (C63-M15)

Yet another young male, an 18-year old from Moscow, stated that America poses the greatest danger to Russia today, thought that Russia should oppose the West; also believed that Russia has a mission - "so that there was peace everywhere" - and affirmed that Russia will be a mighty empire. (C65-M18)

As we have emphasised, the United States as a state is only one incarnation of 'the West' as Russia's negative Other. This broad signifier also incorporates globalisation and internal Others such as the Jews and at times even other ethnic minorities in public discourse. As among the semi-elite, globalisation as a discourse of danger resonated strongly among the post-Soviet respondents. 35% of them considered globalisation to be dangerous to Russia, and of these, many showed, like many among the semi-elite, that they equal globalisation to Americanisation.

One 18-year old female explained that the danger lies in that many young people dream of living somewhere in the West or in America and that she disagrees with these dreams; a 15-year old male said he sees a great danger in that people forget about Russian culture, and that Moscow is like a real Los Angeles with Mc Donald's everywhere. An 18-year old male from St Petersburg: "I hate this Americanisation, all this stupidity. It is better to be oneself than to try to appear like someone else." Quite a few explained that they do not fear the economic aspects globalisation at all as much as the ideological war they perceive globalisation really is about. (Similar cases were C31-M18*, C39-M19, C68-F22)

The radical danger representation of 'the West' from national-patriot discourse as 'the Judeo-American Anti-Rome' was only marginally represented in the interviews. A handful of interviewees explained how Russia's problems are due to the Jews being in power and having all the money. A 76-year old male concluded: "To cut it

short: there are too many Jews in power. Putin could be a Jew too; he can't do anything against them. All power is with the Jews and the money as well." (C160-M76) When asked about the levels of anti-Semitism in Russia, a male teenager replied: "I am actually very worried about it, and I think it is something we don't need. The Jews have become very numerous in Moscow; they are in the leadership and everywhere." (C64-M15) Lastly, a 55-year old male lawyer of Caucasian origin stated that with "Zionism as the founding politics of this state, Russia is doomed to fail." Asked to define Zionism, he explained:

> It is when a handful of Jews acquire all wealth, though the population consists of other nationalities as well. Without giving anything in exchange, they collect everything for themselves and create for themselves a separate state – what we just talked about – *globalisation*. This means the establishment of international forces, the establishment of political forces, international banks from which they will control and increase in the name of this their Zionist, Jewish nightmare. (C147-M55*)

He went on to explain that Russia fears the Muslim factor not because of her own fear, but because of the fear of those Zionists who take the capital and thereby create so called conflicts between Muslims, Orthodox and other confessions. This further reflects the radical neo-Eurasian view of the Jews as an anti-people, which here disturb the Eurasian harmony between Orthodox and Muslims.

Many interviewees perceived that anti-Semitism has risen over the last years. Protestant leader Riakhovsky described the scape-goating of the Jews common in Russian discourse:

> Who has plundered Russia? The Jews. And all this is cultivated and propagated in the press, in mass media, that the Jews have plundered Russia, that Putin, or Yeltsin, was put by their governors and so on. The politics in Russia, unfortunately, is very immoral, and the corruption and infinity of bureaucracy has already reached its peak. I believe that if the president doesn't do something soon…people cannot go on like this. Nothing is done without bribes, such corruption. And the Jews are very successful, they are

intelligent, they are artists, writers singers; and then it is asked: 'Who is to blame?' (*kto vinovat*). The Jews. (C26-M49e)

Not only anti-Semitism appears to be rising among Russians, but also general racism and Islamophobia (Karpov, 2007), and this is consistent with the persistent official production of terrorism as a main danger to Russia. Among ordinary people, this danger construction has been relatively successful: 19% of all interviewees considered terrorism, Islam, or the two conflated, as Russia's greatest danger.

In sum, resonating the messianic framework of Russian public discourse were the mainly semi-elite and post-Soviet interviewees who perceived of globalisation as being dangerous to Russia and Russian identity, and the small group of people who perceived 'the West', 'America' or 'the Jews' as Russia's enemy; and resonating both official and public discourse were the large group of people seeing terrorism and/or Islam as Russia's main threat. But, quite contrary to their glorious, messianic and Anti-Western role of Russia in much of unofficial discourse, the most central danger representation in the interviews came from within, as the next section will show.

7.4.0   The Other side

Answers to the open question 'What or who poses the greatest danger to Russia at present'were quite evenly spread between men and women, and over generations, especially in most popular answer. According to 21% of the interviewees, it is neither the West, nor the Jews nor globalisation that poses the greatest danger to Russia. Rather it is Russia itself, or the Russians themselves – answers were literally and unhesitantly given in these terms (the 21% excludes answers of 'corruption' or 'bureaucracy'. Terrorism, the Muslim world and Islamic fundamentalism came next with 19%.) The fact that 1 out of 5 respondents (1 of 3 of the elite interviewees) see the country itself or the own countrymen as the main danger to the country (and that they tell a foreigner this) is remarkable.

This takes even further the rift between ordinary people and the political elite that Piirainen noted in his study. He found that, in general, ordinary Russians do not share the strong anti-Westernism of the right-wing elite nor subscribe to the right-

wing theories of a "global struggle between 'Eurasianist' and 'Atlantist' forces". "The antagonists – the corrupt bankers and politicians – are more likely to be found inside Russia instead of being powerful and aggressive outer enemies." (Piirainen, 2000:192)

In 2005, the enemy is not only found inside Russia – it is Russia itself. So side by side there is an increasingly stronger political discourse in which Russia is the solution for the world, and an increasing tendency among the population to see Russia as a threat to itself. Russia is indeed, as many pointed out in the interviews, a country of stark contrasts.

In for example one semi-elite interview, with the female manager of one of Russia's major marketing agencies, two very different Russia's emerged. On the one hand was the true Russia, strong, beautiful, helping others (e.g. taking care of ungrateful republics) with loads of potential, on the other, was a very conflict-ridden country of lazy Russians and corrupt politicians, its own greatest enemy. This appears a new variation on the traditional Russian distinction between the state, embodied in the ruler, and the nation, constituting the Russian people in symbiosis with the soil and the land. (C1-F36e*)

Dichotomies of this kind are useful in that they provide at the same time an explanatory locus for all kinds of negative conditions and happenings of the country – 'it's the fault of this bad regime' – and a locus for positive self-representation, e.g. in 'the suppressed Russian nation'. But few interviewees elaborated on why they see Russia as its own greatest danger. Of those that did was a young female student who explained her answer by describing post-Soviet Russia as an empty room from which one could drag away anything, and now this room is being crammed with quick things, with no room for reflection. Because there has been no reflective moment in this period, Russia now poses a danger to herself, as it is incomprehensible where Russia is going. (C102-F22) Another interviewee, a Soviet male, explained his answer in the following way:

> Russia herself poses the greatest danger to herself, in my opinion. Russia still
> has not learnt to speak openly about the things that are bad here. In Russia, if
> someone gains power, he considers that he finally somehow has become tsar.
> There is probably a strong remembrance of monarchism in Russia. Each of

226

them becomes tsar. And each who stands nearby, and further down, and further down…they all want to become tsars. And therefore, when they get there, they reckon that they can receive everything from this country that is due. (C21-M42e)

Part of the mentality described here are, in a sense, Russia's 'imperial ambitions', an expression well known in Russia today, which also had its counter-discourse. The rift between the ruling powers (often described as in the quote above as corrupt and power-hungry), and the people was illustrated by the fact that many, 14% in total, predicted that Russia will not let go of imperial ambitions, yet they will come to nothing. As this ex-diplomat explained: "Russia, with her current politicians, will attempt to preserve the imperial way in the international relations with other countries, but economic weakness and the greed of the ruling politico-financial group are leaving little room for this" (C27-M58e).

Similarly, a Jewish editor argued that Russia lags behind too much economically to yet again become a superpower: "Russia is no longer a superpower, even though some in the leadership, in the establishment would very much want it to be. But that's impossible. It doesn't matter that we have nuclear arms, because it is not about weapons but about economic power. (C17-M39e)

Another female Jewish journalist described: "So we will shake our fists but our bottom will be naked." (C23-F41e) In Western media from 2006 and onwards, similar pictures have been painted, of Russia as a rebellious teenager (obviously dependent on the parents but refusing to admit it), and, as we noted, of Putin as engaged in empty 'sabre-rattling' to please the masses at home.[90] Indeed, many of these interviewees noted the popularity of empire discourses around them:

Russia is no longer an empire, and neither will she become an empire for many, many years, in my opinion. But she will not refrain from imperial ambitions in the nearest future. Because people think somehow, that Russia is the strongest, mightiest country. They just think so, but it's nothing like that in reality. (C21-M42e)

Similarly, many explicitly pro-Western interviewees, noted a growing anti-Westernism such as this editor predicting Russo-Western relations: "I hope that they

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[90] Halpin (2007) 'President Putin rattles nuclear sabre at Nato',

will be revived in a positive direction and that there will be no confrontation. Although at the same time I can see that very many people desire precisely confrontation." (C17-M39e) (Among these he mentioned certain parts of the Orthodox leadership.) Of these interviewees, discussing Eurasia and empire, many jokingly said they had not heard about Eurasia but were familiar with *Aziopa* ('Asiope'). Tatyana Zonova, head of diplomacy at MGIMO is another of the few contemporary "Westernisers" who did not support the imperial ambitions:

> I hope that she will decline the imperial ambitions, because, to begin with, the very imperial structure itself is an anachronism in the contemporary world, and one country cannot today become an Empire, as the world is so interdependent and the processes are becoming global, where there are so many different actors; and even such a powerful state as the US, I believe, is not on its own capable of dealing with all problems existing in the contemporary world. [. . .] As for Russia – it is complete nonsense. It is a country which is in a difficult enough economic situation, unstable, and has complex relationships with all former USSR republics that it has borders with. What empire are we speaking about here? (C28-F60e*)

Several interviewees expressed the wish that Russia should decline its fruitless imperial ambitions, its greed, and seek to become an 'ordinary country' (many gave Norway as an example) instead, as this Soviet female: "I would like, regardless of whether she is Eastern or Western, that she were a state that is not only powerful but also just, that she created [good] conditions for people, for every person, not just for those who have money or power. That Russia strived towards and arrived at this. I hope." (C121-F43) Another interviewee, a Soviet male explained that if "people didn't fill their pockets with goods, money and useful contacts, if they only thought about the country, then everything would happen a lot faster." (C142-M59) A young male journalist expressed similar hopes ('I think people deserve to live well, receive pensions and so on') and wanted Russia to abandon exceptionalism and embrace the (western) universalism:

> I consider globalisation to be Russia's salvation. By yielding to globalisation, she becomes stronger. She becomes more competitive, and comes at last closer to the world's life standards. The quicker Russia forfeits her specifics,

the better off people in Russia will be. I wholly and fully support globalisation and am ready to be its agent; to produce globalisation in life: to walk around and tell people: "Drink Coca-Cola!" I am not joking. (C5-M26e, also C19-M37e)

Another pessimistic yet hopeful interviewee, in his time a leading physicist, predicted that Russia will decline its imperial ambitions and that the question today is rather whether Russia will remain in the number of leading states of the world or glide down to the third or fourth line of the most "left over" states.[91] Yet, he countered later with some optimism: "The very worst has past. Of course, there are still many difficulties. [. . .] But it will rise up – I am an optimist. And believe! If we do not believe, what is then the point of living?" (C29-M71e*)

7.5.0   Interpretation

How do Russians today define Russia as a spatial-political entity, as something in space? Was there a resonance among the Russian interviewees of the images from public national-patriot discourse of the messianic empire of Eurasia? And how can we summarise the function and role of messianic discourse in the interviews in the context of Russian spatial-political identity? We have seen how a few of the semi-elite interviewees speaking about Russia as Eurasia used representations very similar to those in public discourse, but how among the majority of the ordinary interviewees, messianic ideas of Russia as Eurasia were little known and on the whole not very popular.

However, many both ordinary and semi-elite interviewees drew messianic-relating images of Russia as (mainly) benevolent protector-empire, with a mission to protect vulnerable states from American hegemony and from globalisation; and there was on the whole strong longing for the restoration of empire. The interviews reinforced the notion that messianic discourse representing Russia as having a special geopolitical role and mission functions as a sort of psychological compensation for the humiliating breakup of Soviet Union and the rapid erosion of

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[91] Another interviewee, a male teenager, also defined Russia, twice, as "backward" (*otstalaya*), choosing not to use any of the available, traditional categories like East/West or the alternative Eurasia. (C53-M17)

its real geopolitical status, giving in Bassin's words the false hope that "Russia would regain the status of a great power without special efforts, on the basis of its geographical position alone." (Bassin, 2006:112) This compensatory function reiterates our basic theoretical assumption that identity is relational and defined in difference, i.e. self versus Other, and that messianic discourse is based on a radicalised self-Other framework where the Other is 'the West' defined broadly. And, as one interviewee succinctly noted, the function of the idea of a mission for Russia as an empire would precisely 'to bring purpose to the Russian people so that they would know their function in society' (C83-M21*).

This again reiterates our basic tenet that messianic discourse can be understood as a form of story-telling particular to multicultural states – such as Russia and the United States – with complex social and geo-cultural conditions where more traditional identity markers such as ethnicity fail to unify the population and create a sense of collective identity. And, as discourses of danger and Otherness are central to identity construction and state legitimacy, it is not surprising that just as the vague, faceless yet demonised enemy in the 'War on Terror' functions as an effective Other for the United States, so does the vague, faceless but radicalised construction of 'globalisation' for Russia, represented as a civilisation – as this chapter noted, this discourse of danger resonated strongly among both post-Soviet and semi-elite interviewees, alongside with terrorism and Islam. On the whole, as in the previous chapter, views resonating the messianic framework from public discourse tended to come from post-Soviet and semi-elite interviewees rather than Soviet, ordinary interviewees.

How do the representations of Russia as a spatial-political entity relate to those of it as temporal-social entity? Tsygankov has stated that "until Russia knows what it is and until it clearly defines its post-Soviet values, it cannot successfully pose, let alone solve, the question of its larger civilisational identification." (Tsygankov, 2007:380) And yet, judging from the interviews, Russian spatial-political identity in some senses is more defined than its temporal-social identity – the longing, across the sample, for the restoration of Russian empire or great power status in the world appeared much more unifying than for example the popular but somewhat uncertain

temporal-social identity marker in Orthodoxy. Of course, the temporal-social and spatial-political cannot be divorced from one another – the emerging representations in Chapter Six of a long, unbroken Russian history of glory and greatness, together with the rehabilitation of the Soviet Union are very much connected to Russia's geopolitical role and international status – but the concern with empire and Russia's international status simply seemed stronger and more deeply anchored, despite distinct counter discourses.

And yet, ambiguity and contradictions are central also to the spatial-political representations of Russian identity. Across the sample of interviewees, recurring in many different questions, was a tension between on the one hand, traditional, exceptionalist Russian ideals of statehood, and on the other, modern Western ideals of what is acceptable or "normal" among states, reflecting the central dilemma for Russian identity outlined in the previous chapter of "how to reconnect with its European roots while remaining a distinctive cultural entity" (Tsygankov, 2007:380); and what can be referred to as Russia's oscillation between messianic hubris and utter dejection. In some sense we can actually understand this tension as being between the temporal-social identity, defined by particularity, and the spatial-political, a dimension mainly governed by Western universalistic norms of statehood.

This tension was particularly evident in the questions of Russian empire. While many expressed a longing for restoration of empire, there was a clear awareness that "imperial ambitions" are perceived as negative according to the modern Western model, leading many to say that 'we are a *great power* not an *empire*'. And interviewees from the 'the Other side' saw imperial and messianic ambitions, in some senses like Putin as he appears in the Annual Addresses, as the main obstacle to Russia's modernisation, represented as the prerequisite for 'real' great power status.

But the question is not solely a choice between on the one hand a Russian model, presumably defined by exceptionalism and empire, and on the other a Western model, defined by universalism and modernity. Much of the ambiguity of Russian contemporary identity and relation to the West as Other stems from the contradictions in American identity, defined both by empire and exceptionalism on

231

the one hand, and universalism in the model it exports globally on the other. (There were even in the interviews many comparisons between Russia and America, and some implicit questions of why America or the West can set out the norms for international society, and be quick to condemn perceived Russian imperial ambitions, yet show many of the characteristics of an empire itself.) We argued in previous chapters that Russian messianism cannot be understood apart from Western messianisms, and discussing the West and Russia's role in the world with Russians, this notion was reinforced.

To use analogies offered by interviewees, Russia wants to be accepted in international society (defined by Western universalism) – like an alien, adopted child – and therefore agrees to reject imperial and messianic ambitions. But at the same time Russia constantly compares itself with America, with its imperial role, mission, messianic Manifest Destiny and civilisational model, and thus produces new and reproduces old versions of itself as having an alternative world leading role, mission and sometimes even civilisational model. [92] Many interviewees thus wavered precisely between wanting Russia fit in political space as a 'normal' state, *and* to compete with America in its different roles. The tensions between representations of Russia as a state or spatial-political entity and Russia as a civilisation or temporal-social entity, present across the sample of semi-elite and ordinary interviewees, should therefore be partly understood through its ambiguous relation with America (and the West in general).

Our perhaps most notable finding was these starkly contradictory representations of Russia within single interviews, which clearly reflects the same phenomenon in both official and public discourse. While Russia is great, becoming stronger and more powerful, there is also looming sense of danger from within, as the country itself, and the Russians themselves, are seen to pose its/their own greatest danger. These contradictory self-representations flow together in an almost schizophrenic way, testament to the relative success respectively failure of Russian statehood.

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[92] See the Shevtsova's chapter 'Russia and the United States: In search of a new paradign' for a discussion on the Russian elite's ambivalence towards the messianic America. (2007:220-31)

8.0.0 Russia as Messianic

In fact people in Russia constantly talk about spirituality indeed and strive to formulate a so called Russian national idea – and this idea is a spiritual one. But somehow it is something difficult to formulate, its pursuit results in nothing. (C26-M49e)

"Everyone says that some kind of spirituality is hidden in the depths of our consciousness, I don't know." (C148-F57)

"It is clear that there are two nations chosen by God: the Jews and the Russians. That's what they say." (C100-M20)

8.1.0   Introduction

The previous two chapters have highlighted Russians' use of discourses related to the messianic framework in the contexts of Russian temporal-social identity (e.g. the rehabilitation of Orthodoxy, of the Soviet Union and glory and greatness) and spatial-political identity (e.g. empire, discourses of danger and the East-West question). But do ordinary Russians actually embrace and use explicitly messianic discourses? Or is this done only, as our introductory chapter asked, by intellectuals living, so to speak, in a world of their own, detached from everyday Russian life? We seek to find out if messianic discourses resonate at all among ordinary (and semi-elite) Russians, and if so, what their relation to them is, and how their messianic representations converge with and diverge from those in public and official discourse.

Chapter Five noted how the overtly messianic narratives sometimes appear to transcend core contradictions of Russian collective identity: between Russia as social, historical entity and as a geopolitical entity; between Russia as particularistic, an *empire* and/or *civilisation* and as 'normal' or universal, in the Westernised sense of the word, a modern state and international actor. Chapters Six and Seven pointed to

these and other contradictory representations of Russia being present in many individual interviews with ordinary and semi-elite Russians.

This chapter will explore the manifestations and resonance among ordinary and semi-elite Russians of the explicitly messianic narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse, compared to public and official discourse; and seek to explore further how messianic representations among Russians function in relation to the temporal-social and spatial-political aspects and other contradictions of Russian identity. We endeavour to seek to answer the following questions for this specific chapter:

o How, if at all, do Russians today define Russia as a messianic entity, as something beyond time and space, and themselves as a messianic people?

o In which ways and how strongly do explicitly messianic notions and discourses such as Russian spirituality, faith, exceptionalism, mission, sacrifice and suffering resonate among Russians today?

o How do messianic representations among Russians relate to, and function in relation to, the temporal-social and spatial-political aspects of Russian identity?

o What do the findings in the interviews tell us about contemporary Russian messianism?

We find the same pattern as in the previous chapters: the messianic-related discourses which abound in public discourse and are present in official discourse resonate among many both semi-elite and ordinary Russians, but with much more varied evaluations. The messianism which appears radical, clear and dichotomised in national-patriot public discourse is generally vague and ambiguous among ordinary people.

8.2.0 Semi-elite Russians

As has been evident in the previous two chapters, messianic-related notions had strong resonance among many of the semi-elite interviewees – more than among ordinary people. This was so also for some of the explicitly messianic notions and discourses, which appeared as central to many semi-elite Russians' understanding of

themselves and their country, even though their deployment often was different from in public discourse. One interviewee, a journalist, explained that messianic narratives are popular among the Russian intelligentsia (to which many of our semi-elite interviewees belong) because of a common self-identification with a peculiar, exceptional Russia: "That is, they consider themselves to be Russia itself, to which refers the phrase "The Russia that we lost", the Russia that somewhere in the depths, in the villages, has been preserved. But it is not so." (C5-M26e) In the interviews, we used a widely known verse from a poem as basis to explore Russian exceptionalism (the first question in each interview, apart from personal details), and further on also asked interviewees to define what makes a Russian Russian.[93]

Tyutchev writes:

Russia cannot be understood with the mind,

Nor can she be measured with the ordinary yardstick.

There is in her special stature:

You can only believe in Russia.[94]

Do you agree with this expression?

Fedor Tyutchev's (1803-1873) poem is so well known that it has become a cliché – the Russian advertisements for *Slavyanskaya Vodka* in 2005, the year of the interviews, read "Russia cannot be understood with the mind – but one can give it a try."[95] But even as a cliché – or perhaps because of it – the lines have powerful ideological content. "I believe in Russia" was the title of on of Communist party leader Zyuganov's key books (1995). Tyutchev's famous verse is powerful because it epitomises the exceptionalism of Russian messianism, and Russia's relation to the West: Russia cannot be understood by the [rational] mind [but by the heart and soul],

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[93] *Chto, po vashemu, delaet russkogo russkim?*

[94] *Umom Rossiyu ne ponyat'*
Arshinom obshchim ne izmerit'
U nei osobennaya stat' –
V Rossiio mozhno tol'ko verit'

[95] *Umom Rossiyu ne ponyat' – a mozhno poprobovat.'*

nor can she be measured by the ordinary [Western] yardstick.[96] It reproduces the stereotypical yet powerful representation of the West or Europe as rational, organised, soul-less and *the norm*; and Russia as mystical, spiritual, and *different*, even somehow as an object of religious worship.

As such, it served as a useful springboard from which interviewees, both semi-elite and ordinary people often talked at length about their perceptions of their country, of the West as Other, and of their identity. As one interviewee summarised, "this is the epitome of our culture, our national culture, which cannot be easily understood." (C27-M58e)

Of the semi-elite interviewees, 18 out of 30 agreed with the lines. Their messianic claims resonated strongly for example with the businesswoman quoted in the previous two chapters who responded to them with a long monologue in which she managed to include the majority of the most typical messianic narratives: Russia as ordained by God; Russia as a special empire, with missions and responsibilities, taking care of the world and of the weaker nations; Russia as Eurasia, and the East-West dichotomy with the East as spiritual and the West as material yet Russia overcoming it by uniting both, even uniting the whole world; Russia suffering sacrificially for others; and the Russian soul. (C8-F31e*) The sheer concentration and intermingling of messianic discourse in this monologue – by a businesswoman, not an intellectual – was very similar to the merging of overlapping and contradictory messianic narratives which is taking place in public discourse, and which evidently had begun to be disseminated in popular discourse.

A for the interviews more typical example among the semi-elite was the sales manager of a tobacco company, who agreed with Tyutchev's lines and said that it is certainly very difficult for non-Russians to understand Russia, as life in Russia is not "schematic" and explained that: "Russia is developing without laws, which is to say without defined mechanisms of development. But she still develops somehow." (C21-M42e) This is a Russia which defies the norm, with success. A similar response

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[96] As Groys argues, Russian philosophy and thought has seen as its calling to restrict Western aspirations to the universality of thought and reason. (Groys, 1992:185)

came from a businessman who illustrated the extremes, both the irritant and the awesome, of Russia's exceptionalism:

> Because the simplest decisions or simplest tasks are in Russia frequently solved in incredibly complicated ways, where it could be done so easily. And on the other hand, impossible things, which are practically unrealistic to achieve, these take place in Russia. So of our exploits we have…turning Siberian rivers to run the opposite way, well you have to stumble on some serious idea to do that; or fly to outer space – there are many things on a similar level. So, we have difficulties solving simple tasks, in my reasoning, but solving difficult tasks we probably do better than everyone else. (C18-M39e)

These extremes hark back long in Russian discourse, from Gogol's depiction of the incomprehensible Russian bureaucracy to Fedorov's plans to literally resurrect the dead. As previous chapters have made clear, the customary self/Other dichotomy with Russia as the exception and the West as the norm was evident in most interviews, particularly so in the answers to the questions on Tyutchev and Russianness.

The difference between interviewees lay primarily in how they related to the West – the traditional Russian dilemma. For many, being different from the West and other countries was perceived as a positive attribute. One interviewee, a business director, chose to define Russianness explicitly by difference from Others, by "knowledge of Russian traditions and *not striving towards imitating some other countries*, and a corresponding way of life: Russians have more spirituality and are more attentive to what surrounds them." The same interviewee also believed that Russia is both a source and example of spirituality to the rest of the world; that it is possible that Russia's spiritual potential is greater than other countries' thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church; and that Russia has a mission, which – again – consists in "not becoming like the rest of the world." (C25-M42e)

And also, dissimilar to the many grand claims of this Russian exceptionalism in public discourse, many interviewees provided their own, much less positive, interpretation of it. An ex-diplomat of the Soviet Union linked the exceptionalism to the suffering of the Russian people: "Yes I agree. The particularity of Russia lies in

her tragic fate, in the poverty of the people to the background of great riches, in the survival of the wide, free Russian soul under the conditions of the harshest despotism and centuries of serfdom." (C27-M58e) Another, a female Jewish evangelical pastor, also agreed: "It is certainly the case that one cannot understand what is going on in Russia. It is a peculiar country, with a peculiar path, and all our hope is just for one thing: that the Lord will deal with all that goes on here." (C24-F47e)

But as is evident here, even the more critical, negative representations of Russian exceptionalism contain different elements of Russian messianism: the notion of the suffering of an enslaved people with a wide, free soul, and a hope that God will intervene in Russia. The idea of Russia as being different and exceptional thus appeared as central to the self-understanding of most of the semi-elite interviewees, even though it did not always have the same positive and grand connotations as in public discourse.

As Chapter Four showed, Russian exceptionalism has traditionally been closely related to the elusive notion of Russian spirituality, and spirituality likewise appeared as central to the self-understanding of many of the semi-elite interviewees: a whole eight out of 30 defined Russianness explicitly in terms of spirituality or faith.[97] Notions of spirituality, and of spirituality as defining Russianness, were not only invoked by those who consider themselves to be religious.

One semi-elite interviewee, a cinematographer, explained that while he considers himself to be an atheist, not a believer, he is still a spiritual person and holds that those who are religious ought to be supported, "because one of the first things is spirituality for a Russian person – if through this the general climate in the country is improved, then I consider that to be useful." (C20-M48e) The sales manager of a tobacco company, who noted that it is very hard to find a spiritual person among Russian church-goers, provided a very reflective discussion on spirituality based on the conventional East/West dichotomy:

> [T]here is spirituality in the West and from the point of view of a Western person it is a high spirituality. To me it seems more like higher morals. And

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[97] Cases C3-M26e, C6-M29e, C8-F31e, C20-M48e, C21-M42e C25-M42e, C26-M49e, C27-M58e.

in Russia, spirituality…It seems to us that we are very spiritual people, that we are not pragmatists, that we think according to the heart, according to the soul. It is possible that it is just terminology – I don't know, it is hard for me to say. Generally speaking, intellectual Russian people consider themselves to be spiritual, and that their spirituality is rather higher than that of a Western person. It's harder to compare with the East. Historically we assess it this way: the East, it seems to me, has the greatest spirituality. Russia is something intermediate between the West and the East. The West is mentality, it's reason, it's mind. Probably something like that. (C21-M42e)

Some interviewees acknowledging the stereotypical status of Russian messianism typically disagreed strongly with it; but some, as this interviewee (see also e.g. C70-M27* in Appendix III), neither rejected nor fully embraced the messianic discourse discussed, holding both a certain distance both from it and from the Russian collective represented, using expressions like "*it seems to us* that we are very spiritual" and reflecting, in Prozorov's apt words, "slightly sympathetic scepticism" (2008:227).

The discourse on Russian spirituality has both traditionally and in contemporary Russia incorporated a 'spiritual mission' or a mission to be spiritual – as we have seen, since the Slavophiles, a dominant mission narrative has been for the backward but spiritually superior Russia to lead the modern, materialistic and decadent Europe to spiritual redemption. Archbishop Chaplin in Moscow, often interviewed and cited as a spokesman of the Patriarchate, dwelt at length in the interview on the world's need for the spiritual Russia and on the Russian mission:

The world overall does not understand that it needs a source of spirituality. So far Europe considers that she lives well and that she will always live like that. On the other hand, both the economic contradictions, the social contradictions and much of what goes on around us in the sphere of international relations – the challenge of Islam – permit us to think that the stable and peaceful life in Europe will not be for ever, not even continuous. It is possible that many eyes, in the search of spiritual and fundamental ideals, will be turned towards Russia then. Already now many separate people are

drawn here: intellectuals, believers and others. I believe that the West is still to understand that it needs spiritual influence. (C14-M37e)

Again we see the theme of Russia as the source of spirituality being misunderstood by Europe/the West which does not recognise its urgent need of Russia's spiritual influence (also outlined by C6-M29e). The idea of Russia as the protector of Europe from Islam also recurred in other interviews with Orthodox clergy and believers, often with explicit reference to the Mongol Yoke and the notion of Russia as Europe's sacrificial Saviour. Chaplin like many other interviewees made explicit the stereotypical Russia-spiritual/West-material dichotomy which defines the Russian messianic framework:

I think that this mission above all is spiritual – to be a source of spiritual energy, to be a source of spiritual outburst in the life of many nations. This mission, in my opinion, is rather more important than military, political and similar tendencies, which relate only to the earthly world and to pragmatic interests. At the end of the day, it is not the pragmatic interests that define the interests of the world today. The conflicts that are going on are conflicts of ideas. Of course, they are related to oil, to geopolitics and to military influence, but there is no way they would be so serious were it not for their being conflicts of ideas. On the other hand, of course, this spiritual mission must be inflamed in us. Russia will perish if she becomes a machine to produce money and goods, even more so oil and gas. It is very hard for a Russian to live without higher purposes: be it mastering outer space, saving Africa, establishing a just world order, or something of the kind. (C14-M37e)

Similarly, the businesswoman quoted previously stated that the "greatest danger to Russia [. . .] is to forget one's roots and be oriented towards the material alone [. . .] it is dangerous to forget about spirituality."[98] (C8-F31e*) So Russia as a messianic entity must take prevalence over Russia as a material, pragmatic geopolitical entity. In other words, if Russia becomes like the West she will perish. As the business director quoted previously explained, Russia has a mission not to become "like the rest of the world." (C25-M42e)

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[98] The same interviewee, elaborating on spirituality, described a balance between the cosmic world and the material world which is upheld by Russia alone, because of the [undefined] qualities endowed upon her by nature. Together with reviving its spirituality and allowing others to be drawn towards these peculiar spiritual gifts, this is what Russia's mission consists in.

This obviously is quite contrary to the much of official discourse which repeatedly has represented as a main danger to Russia not a decreasing spirituality, but rather its failure to efficiently produce money and goods.[99] But Russia as a spiritual, messianic entity still needs the pragmatic state to be able to fulfil certain missions: mastering outer space, saving Africa, establishing a just world order.

Archbishop Chaplin during the course of the interview explicitly talked about the Russian *state* as the historical bearer of a distinct mission, developed in relation to other centres of political power (the Golden Horde and the West) and religious power (Byzantium); at the same time as defining Russianness by the search for a higher mission which must supersede the pragmatic state. Having a higher mission thus appears at times as something which, at least in theory, joins spiritual, temporal-social Russia and its people with the state as a spatial-political entity.

8.3.0   Ordinary Russians

A vast majority of the ordinary interviewees - 74% - answered that they agree with the expressions of the Tyutchev's famous verse (a whole 84% of all teenagers); and their various responses suggest that despite the cliché like status of the verse, notions of exceptionalism form part of ordinary people's self-understanding. Some, typically post-Soviet interviewees, stating things like: "Russia is large, and nobody understands what is going on in it" (C57-F17) related Russia's incomprehensibility and uniqueness to its vast territory; others to its position between East and West, mixture of diverse peoples and mentalities, describing it as "a country of contrasts" (C75-F22), often using the traditional Eurasia narrative: "You also have to consider that Russia is located on the border between Europe and Asia, and she is both one and the other. This is why she is difficult to understand. One has to find this balance, probably." (C101-M22)

Another young male student explained that he agreed with Tyutchev "because Russia is a civilisation, that is, we are located between West and East.

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[99] "The economic weakness of Russia continues to be another serious problem. The growing gap between leading nations and Russia pushes us towards becoming a third world country. The figures of current economic growth should not be any cause for comfort: we continue to live in conditions of progressing economic lag." (Putin, Annual Address, 2000)

Therefore we do neither fall under the Western value system, nor under the Eastern value system. So all our history, our whole development went in zigzags". (C100-M20) Again we see the views of younger interviewees being more similar to those of the semi-elite, more strongly resonating messianic-related discourses than ordinary interviewees of the Soviet generation.

And conventional variants of the Russia/West self/Other opposition – such as soul versus reason and spirituality versus materialism – were deployed by many very different interviewees across the sample in response to Tyutchev's verse: "We don't get things through the head, but through another place." (C59-M18) "Well yes, you can't understand us Russians. The soul is wide, Russians make decisions not with the mind but with the soul." (C113-F38) "Because we all still live by emotions, not by reason. A Russian person, as far as I know, lives without any good sense. For us, the emotional is the main thing, emotions rule over reason." (C105-F29) "Well yes, Russia can't be understood with the mind. [. . .] I am very patriotic, and I think, that in our people we have that spirit that Americans cannot understand." (C63-M15) "We are not the West. It is this spirituality, soul, that hinders us from being the rational West." (C155-F67)

But while the exceptionalism of the Russia/West self/Other opposition resonated very strongly among ordinary people, it was often with variations from the traditional narratives, with much more ambiguity than among the semi-elite and in public discourse – for individual case studies, see Appendix III. Many referred to poor Russian living conditions and the inefficiency and incomprehensibility of its state system and structures. One young female student affirmed: "Well, the Russian people are definitely uncommon compared to America. The Americans work, work and work to get money to live a good life, while the Russians also work, but live badly all the same, and it's incomprehensible why that is. […] Yet the Russians live, and don't want to leave, because somehow it's still Russia, one's own." (C82-F20)

A middle-aged man in the same way described Russia as "an irrational country as opposed to the Western world. The Western world is pragmatic. There people trust that if you work hard, you will have success in life. In this country it is

somehow not like that." (C124-M47) (See section 6.4 for more examples of exceptionalism defined negatively.) Many defined the positive characteristics of an open Russian soul, hospitality and generosity as the positive side of the coin of the negative incomprehensibility of the state (also e.g. C27-M58e among semi-elite).

For good or for bad, Russia is distinct from the West through its soul and spirituality; and precisely this spirituality as a vague but overarching identity marker recurs in and ties together most messianic discourses. It is a cliché insofar as many Russians acknowledged the prevalence of this discourse but distanced themselves from it – see the next section – but a large number of Russians also drew upon this discourse, reproducing it and sometimes transforming it.

Answering the question *"What makes a Russian Russian?"* 15% of the ordinary interviewees answered literally in the terms of 'spirituality', 'soul' or 'faith' (18% if we include 'Orthodoxy' among the answers). This was considerably less than among the semi-elite, with the figure of 27% (33% with 'Orthodoxy') and reiterates our notion that messianic discourse is more strongly resonant among the semi-elite or intelligentsia – but is still notably high.

Similarly, of those that believe that Russia has a mission (28% of the whole sample, 31% of ordinary people), 1 in 4 specified that the mission consists in spirituality – being spiritual, making the world more spiritual, which shows that the representations from semi-elite cases quoted above of Russia's higher spiritual mission are not completely uncommon among ordinary people.

In what ways did ordinary people resonate narratives of this spirituality? As among the semi-elite, notions of spirituality were not necessarily linked to religion and the Orthodox Church, and often explicitly distinguished there from. A male teenager, one of many saying the same thing, explained: "I do not consider that it is particularly thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church [that Russia's spiritual potential is greater than that of other countries], it seems to me that there is inherent to Russia itself, that people here are more spiritual than in other countries. But this does not depend on religion but is something inherent." (C31-M18*)

The engineer and aspiring astrologist, quoted above, said similarly that "in any of our people, even of the most hopeless cases, you find a drop of our spirituality. And the right relation to religion in anyone." (C119-M45) Russians, by virtue of their being Russian, born in Russia, are thus represented as being naturally endowed with this mystical spirituality. Sometimes this connoted the historical messianic idea of Russia as the God-bearing nation (*narod Bogonoset'*), outlined in Chapter Four, as with a female lorry driver claiming that "faith was born only with Russia" (C161-F37)[100]; and a young male student who concluded, tongue in cheek: "It is clear that there are two nations chosen by God: the Jews and the Russians. That's what they say. [. . .] There are people who believe in the so-called Russian idea, in Russia's special mission." (C100-M20)

On the whole, Russian spirituality and messianism among ordinary people were typically present in exceptionalist, particularistic variants: Russians are *different* because they are spiritual, and have a mission to be so.

But grander, universalistic variants of messianism were also reflected among some ordinary people, both directly and indirectly. Indirectly, as one post-Soviet male interviewee noting that "there exists this assumption that Russia ought to save the world and make it more spiritual" (C70-M27); and directly as and an unemployed builder affirming that in Russia "you find people whom God has chosen, through whom God will save the whole world. [. . .] Here there still is a spiritual channel, from which one can draw revelations from God and bring to other countries and help other countries." (C138-M40)

Another interviewee, a female pensioner and ex-Communist party member quoted above agreed that Russia has a mission towards the rest of the world, and provided an interesting response: "First there was the socialist [revolution], now with time these revolutions will take place in other countries, including America; and we will do something more spiritual, and later all the others will follow us." (C156-F64) Russia as a messianic entity is here represented as a universal model– not the sacred, isolationist, suffering Holy Russia, but the strong Third Rome, the leader whom the whole world must follow. Historical mission after mission is completed – and yet here too spirituality is next on the agenda. This example reinforces how the

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[100] This interview was aborted half-way through and has not been counted in the statistics.

temporal-social and spatial-political aspects of Russian collective identity sometimes are fused through the messianic discourse of a historical world mission relating to spirituality.

Closely related to the questions of a Russian mission are long-standing notions of sacrifice, suffering and patriotism, and these echoed among many of our ordinary interviewees, in various contexts – very often in relation to the Great Fatherland War and Russia's general history of sufferings and hardships. Russia as a country was often described as sacrificial in the interviews, and its people too were often defined by their patriotism and readiness to sacrifice, as these examples, on male and one female Soviet interviewee, indicate: "I consider that a true Russian doesn't think twice about giving his life for his Motherland." (C142-M59)

> Surely we have got a mission, certainly. Do you know what it is about? It is a spiritual, orthodox one. [. . .] A man is ready to sacrifice his life, to defend his children, his country, his Motherland. For example he can fall on an enemy machine gun to block it in order to give a chance to comrades in arms to break through and to achieve a victory – as people did in times of the Civil war. A Russian man is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of something, and in such a case he has no fear of death at all. (C161-F37)

Apart from patriotism, sacrifice was also referred to in more general terms. What cannot be 'understood by the mind' – such as, described above, Russians' low living standards in comparison with the West despite their hard work, – can be justified through the sacrificial mission, or Saviour, narrative. As described by a female pensioner from Moscow: "There is [a mission], but for some reason all other peoples, it seems to us old people, hate us. But why? You know, our government always helps everyone; our pensions are low, maybe, because of this, but there you go." (C157-F65*)

From another generation, two male teenagers described that "Russia is the most generous country, always seeks to help people in catastrophes and all that" (C53-M18) and "someone always depended on Russia; she was always needed by someone." (C53-M17*) Russia always helps others, and her people pay the price both

materially for it – low pensions etc – and emotionally, as 'all other peoples' are ungrateful and hate them.

This type of narrative – 'we are behind but only because we saved Europe from the Mongols/ Napoleon' or 'we are suffering but because we are building world Communism/ saving the world from fascism' thus still serves among many ordinary people as an explanation for Russia's perceived backwardness compared to the West, and for the many miseries the country has undergone. [101]

8.4.0   The Other side

The above sections suggest that there is a strong resonance of messianic discourses among semi-elite and ordinary people: spirituality, exceptionalism, missionism, sacrifice and suffering appear as central to the self-understanding of many Russians. However, it must be noted that not everyone agrees with the various messianic narratives – in fact, many strongly disagree with them, people from all levels of society, people who are, in Merridale's apt words, "tired of dissecting their own souls." (2003:14) Yet, their responses are testament to the popularity precisely of the messianic discourses. A young manual labourer put it succinctly: "I'd say that half of all Russians think that Russia has a special mission, but in reality it's just nonsense." (C84-M27) A 40-year old female French teacher elaborated on the same theme:

> How much did we not want, how much did we not say, that we have some particularly spiritual roots (which, possibly, even exist), yet at this moment Russia is not any source of spirituality. My view will contradict the view of the vast majority of people, because the vast majority consider that we are terribly spiritual […] They will tell you, that Russia is a special country, and our task is to conquer America. It is like that at all levels [of society].
> (C125-F42)

We find in this single quote alone explicit references to both spirituality ("we have some particularly spiritual roots") and exceptionalism ("Russia is a special country") as well as the self/Other dichotomy ("our task is to conquer America"). This shows –

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[101] The idea is that thirteenth century Russia had rescued Europe from the Mongols 'by absorbing the enemy into her own flesh and blood' and from Napoleon, portrayed as the Anti-Christ. As Chapter Four showed, these idealized versions of Russian history were especially popular in the dissident movement of the 1970's, see Brun-Zejmis (1991).

even though they are referred to derisively – how different messianic discourses go hand in hand also in popular discourse, and indicates the gradual, successful dissemination of the contradictory messianic master narrative from public discourse, discussed in Chapter Five.

Many interviewees explained that Russia had at some point in its history been spiritual but that this could not apply anymore. A young student explained: "There is this view that all of the sacred, spiritual Russia left for Europe in 1917. So at this point in time it is difficult to talk of some spirituality." (C100-M20, see also C86-F24) Others pointed out the elusiveness of the famous Russian spirituality, as Sergey Riakhovsky, leader of one Russia's main Protestant unions: "In fact people in Russia constantly talk about spirituality indeed and strive to formulate a so called Russian national idea – and this idea is a spiritual one. But somehow it is something difficult to formulate, its pursuit results in nothing. " (C26-M49e)

In the previous section we suggested that messianic narratives of mission and sacrifice can function as compensation and explanation for Russian low living standards. Interviewees of the Other side would not be satisfied with being a messianic country with a special standing. As noted in Chapter One as well as the previous chapter, an opinion poll from 2003 indicated that 43% of Russians would prefer Russia to be a great power, respected and feared, while 54% preferred high living standards to great power status. (*New Russia Barometer XII*, 2003) The views from Other side thus represent this silent majority. As one interviewee put it: "I would like, regardless of whether she is Eastern or Western, that she were a state that is not only powerful but also just, that she created [good] conditions for people, for every person, not just for those who have money or power. That Russia strived towards and arrived at this. I hope." (C121-F43, similar views also in C5-M26e)

Another, quoted above, was one of many explaining that any grand messianic ideals have to take a backseat to more pressing pragmatic concerns: "There exists this assumption that Russia ought to save the world and make it more spiritual. But at the moment Russia is concerned with how to survive and economical issues – how to develop the economy and come to a more civilised level." He also

disagreed with Tyutchev's famous lines saying that "it is possible to measure [Russia], it's rather the Russian people that want to consider themselves special." (C70-M27*) Interestingly, a handful of unrelated interviewees mentioned Norway as the country of their ideals: small (and happy to be small), quiet, pragmatic and wealthy, the opposite both of the messianic, sacrificial suffering of Holy Russia and the grandiosity of the Third Rome.

Those that disagreed with Tyutchev's lines on Russian exceptionalism and messianic discourse in general could, as interviewees in Chapter Seven, broadly be categorised into optimists and pessimists, those critical both of messianic pretensions and of the state, and those positive about Russia's present and future and uncritical of the state.

The optimists were concerned about Russia's image and less willing to bring to the fore any negative representations of their country. They typically appeared at least partly in favour of westernisation and pragmatism, complained about the longevity of the messianic stereotypes and were eager to show that Russia is comprehensible, well on the way to modernisation, strong and capable of competing or cooperating with Europe and other international actors. Not surprisingly, two of these were staff at MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations). The first, a co-ordinator, disagreed strongly with Tyutchev and with the notion of Russian spirituality:

> Russia in the contemporary world is now a country subject to world common laws of development and economics. And that we would consider some kind of exceptionalism – in the contemporary world it is not quite like that. [. . .] This disturbs us a lot. [. . .] I disagree with this view [Russia as spiritual] because the role and place of any country in the contemporary world no longer depends just on spirituality, but of development of its society and economy. (C22-M45e)

This Russia is modern and *normal*, with its times and not behind in some past era, subject to universal laws, the same as everyone else, not exceptional. Note however that the interviewee acknowledged the presence of exceptionalist discourse by saying that it "disturbs us a lot".

Secondly Professor Zonova, quoted previously, said that if one wants to it is actually possible to understand Russia: "If you know her historical development, her location, present, the stages of establishing her statehood, culture and so on and so forth, you will be able to make draw some conclusions about Russia." (C28-F60e*) As discussed in the previous chapter, the entire interview with Zonova contained the tension between representations of Russia as normal, part of the contemporary world, and as a unique cultural (Orthodox) civilisation. Even starker contrasts were present in the much quoted interview with a PR-company manager, which drew on a whole range of messianic-related narratives (see also C8-F31e*). Yet below the interviewee strongly rejected messianic stereotypes:

> It's not our task to prove that our path is better, something different. Nobody thinks about these things. There are some certain stereotypes, making out that we do. Russia thinks only about these things when she finds herself under very difficult economic and political conditions and has to somehow compensate for her weak position in domestic or foreign politics, for that sake allowing ideas of some kind of different path. But there has never been anything [real] about this. […] We are on a well-trodden road and Russia does not harbour these ideas, Russia doesn't need to prove anything to anybody. We live, develop and solve our tasks. (C7-M31e*)

Russia as a state and international actor here and now, disturbed by clichés from the social, organic, historical Russia. As in C2-M45e, the interviewee acknowledged the presence of the messianic discourse, and even touched on a traditional explanation for the phenomenon: psychological compensation for economic or political 'backwardness'.

Archbishop Chaplin, who previously in this chapter outlined Russia's high spiritual mission to the West, nevertheless disagreed with this variant of exceptionalist discourse: "I disagree with the idea that Russia is such an irrational existence, which does not let herself be understood by a thinking person" and explained that Russia is a country which has always lived according to spiritual, evangelistic ideals, but that there is nothing inconceivable about this, "it can be both understood with the mind and felt with the heart." (C14-M37e) What these contradictory interviews show is the deep Russian conflict between wanting to be

249

different and between wanting to be normal; and between wanting to be beyond understanding, and to actually be understood.

The pessimists pointed both to Russia's spiritual and economic decline, representing Russia as a backward country "worse than Zimbabwe", whose only mission left is survival; and mocked the messianic pretensions. A retired senior physicist, who in Chapter Six complained about everyone becoming bandits overnight with Yeltsin, had no particular opinion on Tyutchev's statement, but added: "But all know that Russia consists of fools and has bad roads. See *this* statement I am in complete agreement with." (C29-M71e*, see also C53-M17* in Appendix III)

Similarly, an alternative statement was provided by the previously quoted Jewish journalist: "I agree in principle, but I think that this should be changed. As our contemporary poet Igor Guberman rephrased Tyutchev (I beg your pardon – it has indecent words) "It's high time, you motherfuckers / To understand Russia with the mind" [*davno pora / ebena mat' / umom Rossiyu ponimat'*]" (C23-F41e) If Tyutchev's verse epitomise the discourse on Russian exceptionalism, the above alternative statements epitomise the sentiments among the pessimistic or critical Russians from the Other side. A female teenager summarised: "I agree, in principle, and there is this idea about the enigmatic Russian soul – which to some extent is true – but you can't account for whatever stupidities go on in this country by the enigmatic Russian soul." (C40-F17) And for some agreeing with Tyutchev's verse, it had deeply pessimistic connotations: "Yes, it is all we have left now – to believe." (C130-M40)

As discussed in the previous section, many agreed about Russia's having a distinct mentality, but for them this had definitively negative connotations: Russians are lazier, poorer, unhappier, work differently, think differently, and Russia is because of this different from the efficient, rational West where things function well:

> The most significant, probably, is that we want to be worse than everybody else. "The worse – the better" it's called. Somebody will say: "Nothing grows for me in my allotment" and another grandma will say: "Yes, yes, but I am even worse off." And one must never, ever, show oneself to be better off than somebody else. Nobody ever praises anything, all just complain. And that is

poverty. Another thing is that we never act; we always look for excuses not to act. If there is a problem: the American will define the problem and formulate steps and methods to solve it, and then follow this gradually. And at the same time the solved problem becomes some kind of system. Here, if there is a problem, discussions will begin about why it is impossible to solve this problem. (C114-F31)

This statement can also be seen as a cynical variant of the narrative of suffering and sacrifice: instead of suffering sacrificially, as a Christ to the nations, Russians in this variant just like to whinge. Chapter Six outlined similarly cynical counter narratives to the common representation of Russia and Russians as highly religious, moral, and defined by various Orthodox traits; and of the Russian Orthodox Church as exceptionally strict and spiritual: rather than having exceptionally high moral standards, the ROC is defined by compromise, hypocrisy and political ambitions, its priests blessing cigarette- and vodka factories and its supposedly pious followers decadent, hypocritical and ignorant – even the Muslims are more righteous.

What must be noted, however, is that many of these voices from the Other side which are critical of Russia as a state, critical of the Soviet period, critical of the present day Russia with its immorality, lack of spirituality, etc, and deride the popular messianic pretension, still ring from within the messianic framework – see again section 8.2 of this chapter.

Even the most extremely pessimistic discourses are often in some way messianic: Russia as messianic, the divinely chosen nation with a mission, has a very distinct antithesis, voiced by two semi-elite interviewees, both protestant leaders. As all messianic narratives it joins Russia as a state and a geopolitical mission with Russia as temporal entity – here a nation not only of ancient history but of divine destiny.

In this narrative, Russia is represented as the Biblical northern country Magog, or its prince Rosh, which, following its divine mission, sets out to destroy the nation Israel in the end-times, joined by Persia and other nations. But as God in this account is against them from the beginning, he sends confusion upon them, and their

army is destroyed completely, the bodies of its soldiers left to rotten. After this the Messiah is supposed to return (C24-F47e, C26-M49e).

It is this failure, even of severe critics of Russia, to escape from messianism which has warranted our definition of Russian messianism as a dominant discursive framework, holding a range of kaleidoscopic, sometimes complementing, sometimes contesting narratives.

8.5.0 Interpretation

How, if at all, do Russians today define Russia as a messianic entity, as something beyond time and space, and themselves as a messianic people? And in which ways and how strongly do explicitly messianic notions and discourses such as Russian spirituality, faith, exceptionalism, mission, sacrifice and suffering resonate among Russians today?

This chapter has seen many stereotypical Russian messianic discourses reproduced, earnestly and derisively, positively and negatively, in various forms and contexts, and often in ways unconventional compared to public discourse. We have seen a small but articulate group of mainly semi-elite interviewees who would draw upon a whole range of typical messianic and related narratives from public discourse, using the same style and concepts, thus illustrating a certain dissemination of the new kaleidoscopic master discourse from public to popular discourse. The majority of the interviewees however had more diverse and balanced views and would often reject several of the typical messianic and related narratives, but embrace perhaps one or two others, or framing their disavowal of the Russian present and/or of messianism in terms of apocalypse or sacrificial suffering, i.e. messianism in another form.

What is important to note thus, is that messianic and related discourses *are* reproduced, over and over again, by Russians of different generations, from very different strata of society, testifying to their centrality in post-Soviet Russian identity production – precisely many of the negative renditions of messianic ideas were made by interviewees recognising their popularity in society in general. The messianic

framework is thus certainly in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse.

Many academics have noted the enormous popularity in post-Soviet Russia of various notions of spirituality and millenarian forms of messianism (Merridale, 2003:24) alongside with religion in various forms (Agadjanian, 2001a:473-74,77). Spirituality appeared more widely accepted as Russian identity marker than the also popular Orthodoxy discussed in Chapter Six. This reiterates that Russian messianism as an identity framework goes far beyond the confines of national Orthodoxy and religion.

As we have seen, the idea of Russia as being *different*, exceptional also appeared as central to the self-understanding of most of the semi-elite and many of the ordinary interviewees, illustrated in recurring comparisons by diverse interviewees between Russia and 'the West'.

However, for a number of interviewees, Russian exceptionalism did not have the same – for Russian identity largely positive – connotations as in public discourse; the messianic discourses on the whole do not resonate well among all Russians, many of whom would prefer higher domestic living standards than messianic greatness.

In some senses, the negative exceptionalism could be seen as framed by the internal opposition between the state as a spatial-political entity, and the Motherland, or the people, as a temporal-social entity. As the previous chapter showed, a very significant number of both semi-elite and ordinary Russians perceive Russia to be its own greatest danger. The state was often represented in these interviews as the source of the negative incomprehensibility (poverty, corruption, bureaucracy, inefficiency) but for which social, historical, organic Russia, the nation, compensates with its – also unfathomable – open soul, generosity and patriotism.

The essence here is still that Russia is not like the West, only with negative connotations. If in the tradition there is a marriage between the Father Tsar (*Batiushka Tsar'*) and Mother Russia (*Matushka Rus'*), this union today appears like an abusive

relationship, with the martyr like wife suffering yet still believing that the violent husband might one day change.[102]

Vladimir Pozner, a popular talk show host, is one of few in public discourse who voices the questions asked by the Russians from 'the other side', those who are tired of dissecting their souls and would prefer better living standards to great power. He asks: "Why is there so much dirt around? Why are the rubbish bins so badly collected? Why does it smell so bad in many doorways? Why are people's shoes so badly polished? Why is there such disgrace in public toilets? You could ask many questions like that. Why do people drink so much? Why, why and why? And at the same time – why do some people consider us to be above others, to be more spiritual? Why?"[103]

Pozner's answer is that the Russians have a colossal inferiority complex, and describes how only Russians complain with so much pleasure about their own people, but also that only Russians talk with such scorn about all other peoples. As Chapter Four noted, one key function of Slavophile discourse on Russian spirituality, etc., appeared to be precisely compensation with regards to Europe as Other. And in the previous chapter, Bassin noted that the idea of Russia's messianic geopolitical role functions as a sort of psychological compensation for the breakup of Russia (2006:112). This long-standing inferiority/superiority complex towards the Other thus appears as key to of explaining the persistence and revival of messianic discourse with its compensatory functions.

Another key aspect of Russian exceptionalism and its compensatory functions are the narratives of suffering and sacrifice of the Russian people. These themes, as argued previously in this thesis, have for long been central to Russian discourse (see e.g. Serbinenko, 2001:6) and it should thus not be surprising that suffering, sacrifice and

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[102] This gendered state/people opposition often extends to the realms of precisely religion and spirituality. A masculine God (*Gospod, Bog*) sides with the state, the Tsar, the Fatherland (*Otechestvo*) and organised religion; and the feminine Mother-of-God (*Bogomatery*) sides with the Motherland, (*Rodina*), associated with a range of feminine signifiers such as the soil (*zemlia*), and various ancient, mystical spiritual rituals. The masculine and feminine spiritualities with all what they entail can coexist despite conflicts. (Baehr, 1991:10) Interesting in this context is that Russianness was defined by manifold interviewees in terms of 'thinking with the heart' etc.

[103] '*Vremena*' with Vladimir Pozner, Channel One Russia, broadcast Sunday 2006-11-26, 18.00, transcript available at www.1tv.ru/owa/win/ort6_main.print_version?p_news_title_id=87933

patriotism, or the idea of a higher purpose or mission, appeared also in many of our interviews as markers of Russian identity. We have suggested that Russian messianism can be understood in terms of its legitimising, justificatory function for the existence, policies and indeed failures of Russia as a state, including things which 'cannot be understood with the mind' but only believed in, and many of our interviews support this hypothesis – e.g. the female pensioner concluding that perhaps their pensions are below existential minimum because of the Russian state always helping others (C157-F65*).

In sum, the uses among ordinary and semi-elite Russians of discourses of Russian exceptionalism, spirituality, mission, etc, reiterate the relativity of identity, the centrality of the Other in the perceptions of the collective self: Russia can only be exceptional because 'the West' is the norm. Correspondingly, Russian spirituality and soulfulness as markers of Russian identity do not function without Western materialism as their antithesis. This, one could argue, is why Russian spirituality, and messianic discourse on the whole, generally appears so elusive and indistinct: it is defined by a negation. Protestant leader Riakhovsky emphasised in his interview that the searches for a spiritual, national idea often lead to a deadlock precisely because of Russia's uniqueness as "a country of many spiritual searches, many religions, many confessions, many nationalities, nations and peoples". (C26-M49e)

But as we have suggested previously, precisely because of this elusiveness and ambiguity, spirituality is very functional as an identity marker: while it is often deployed in implicitly ethno-centric and particularistic terms, it can just as well be associated with the supra-national Eurasianist discourses, or be the merger of the temporal-social and spatial-political aspects of Russian collective identity through a salvific spiritual world mission.

In short, it can be anything to anyone, which helps explain its persistence, revival and centrality to Russian identity reproduction at all levels of discourse in a diverse, complex society where there is little to unite people but an inferiority complex towards the West nostalgia for the past, uncertainty with the fledgling stability of present, and absence of visions for the future.

9.0.0 Conclusion

9.1.0   Back to the beginning

Our introduction noted various curious tendencies in Russian discourse of the first decade of the new millennium: despite various proclamations that only pragmatism should guide Russian politics and foreign policy, politicians and writers kept on referring to a Russian historical mission, along with more general claims to Russia's peculiarity and spirituality; and even Putin began to 'fuse' traditional Russian ideas with pragmatism. Despite many ordinary people apparently being tired of grand messianic ideology and longing to live in a 'normal' country, there was a shift of popular attitudes pointing towards a longing for the restoration of Russia as a great power at the expense of living standards; as well as a revival of religion and esoteric spirituality; and the persistence of the ambiguous idea of Russian messianism was located within these trends. We asked if these tendencies in post-Soviet Russian society and discourse could be linked with each other, and if so if we could usefully conceive of them as a single phenomenon. All of this led us to examine the elusive but persistent notion of Russian messianism, questioning whether it is somehow a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.

As was argued in the introduction, Russian messianism is a problematic subject of study, especially given its populist reproduction and its elusive and never quite tangible character. But, we argued, it is nevertheless a highly relevant subject due to the Russian crisis of identity following the collapse of the Soviet order; as well as being representative of a the wider crisis of collective identities under globalisation. We asked whether perhaps we could better understand the wider issues of the post-Soviet Russian state and collective identity by studying the phenomenon and concept of Russian messianism. The aims we articulated were: firstly, to provide a conceptualisation of Russian messianism which would help us understand some of its key functions and forms; secondly, to increase our understanding of contemporary Russian collective identity at different levels of discourse; and thirdly, to enhance our understanding of contemporary Russia as a

state and international actor. In order to achieve these aims we developed a number of hypotheses and research questions which were addressed throughout the chapters of this study. This chapter will now conclude the thesis by looking at each research question and summarise how we addressed the question; what answers are available according to the research findings and how that relates to the hypotheses. We also hope to offer some contribution to discussion of the wider implications for IR and Russian studies of the findings.

9.2.0   Discourse and collective identity

The first part of the thesis – the theory and methodology chapters, and the historical overview – endeavoured to provide a comprehensive conceptualisation of Russian messianism from an IR perspective. We argued that all definitions of Russian messianism essentially fall under the broad and functional category of *discourse*, which has the function of incorporating the various domains of social interaction in which collective identities, as social realities, are produced. From this conception we set out to investigate how the study of discourse in its different forms could enhance our understanding of Russian collective identity and statecraft, examining messianism as discourse, ideas, identity and their relation to politics from key perspectives of International Relations theory. We concluded that neither mainstream constructivism, assumed to be concerned with identity, nor neo-realism, assumed to be concerned with the political, were helpful to apply to our problem and questions, as both ultimately fail to take into account the politics of identity. Instead we argued that the shared emphasis on interest, discourse and power, defined in broad social terms, of classical and culturalist realists, poststructuralists and other related approaches would form a more useful theoretical basis for our study.

Some of the simple but fundamental insights about discourse, identity and statecraft from these approaches were that opposition, contradiction and incoherence are inherent to language, discourse and identity. Collective and state identity is thus problematic, without given foundations. A state has to be justified and legitimised, and furthermore, the state's specifics, roles and interests are anything but given,

requiring continuous negotiation between complex interests to uphold political stability. States are thus in constant reproduction, and this reproduction is ordered through telling essentialising 'stories' of a collective identity, given meaning through binary oppositions, so that the Self is defined not only by what it is but also what it is not, and constructed in discourse as it is defined and situated in relation to various Others or signifiers. In disguising the incoherencies and contradictions of collective identity, story-telling (or more broadly speaking, discourse) in the form of stereotypes, ideas, narratives and ideology thus has a crucial political function.

These insights led us to propose an inclusive conceptualisation of Russian messianism as constituting a historically dominant discursive (interpretive and narrative) framework, based on a radicalised logic of opposition and holding a range of both contesting and complementing narratives and signifiers. These narratives represent different interests but overall, function to legitimise the state through the continuous construction, contestation and reproduction of Russian collective identity in relation to Others; thus creating a system of intelligibility, making sense of the world for the state as well as for ordinary people.

Addressing Hypothesis H1, we located different broad aspects within which Russian messianism can be understood, according to the new conceptualisation of a discursive framework, as a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity. These were categorised as the *universal* aspects (in the sense of being common to all states) such as the oppositional character of discourse and identity and the overall ambiguities and complexities of political and social life; and the both historically and structurally *specific* aspects and conditions, notably ideas of 'empire' and 'civilisation' as exceptionalist types of political entity, within Russian discourse on its own and as part of wider social, cultural and intellectual movements.

Using our conceptualisation of messianism as global idea having resonance throughout the history of Russia as people, place and state, we proceeded to trace Russian messianism and its key characteristics, narratives and categories in history and the secondary literature of diverse disciplines, in order to be able to identify and locate contemporary narratives and themes, and their functions, within the historical tradition. This was part of investigating hypothesis H3 – that one of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discursive

258

framework for the existence and policies of Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other. This was addressed by research question Q4, on how we should understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West. We showed how the production and reproduction of messianic narratives has been persistent across centuries, but taking place in different contexts, for different purposes, centring on inherently ambiguous, vague notions such as 'spirituality' and 'mission'; and how, as such, it was impossible to define messianism as a single ideology.

Our brief review of the literature showed a broad consensus on the centrality of the ambiguous-dichotomous relationship to the West as signifier for Russian identity. Our exploration of Russian messianism in different contexts and at various levels of discourse across the centuries affirmed the usefulness of the concept of a Self/Other framework that defines Russia in relation to a 'significant Other', and has been organised by reference to a longstanding religious framework of good vs. evil, with a range of connoted binary oppositions. A particularly important insight, explored at length in Neumann's work (1996) is the continued *ambivalence*, and not only logic of opposition, in the Russian relation to Europe as Other. We concluded that the relation of the Russian self to the Other in messianic discourse is thus one of intense ambiguity which can be conceived within a continuum from radical opposition and superiority, to equality or inferiority; a relation where not only the West, but earlier also Byzantium and Israel, played the role of Other.

Evidence of a radical self/Other opposition was found in a number of contexts and discourses, including Byzantium and Israel as rejected, godless messianic states/peoples; in the 'geography of good and evil' inherent in the paradise myth; in the great schism in Russian Orthodoxy triggered by the Petrine reforms, with Peter the Great represented as the Antichrist; in Panslavism and early Eurasianism as well as in the doctrine of world revolution, pitting a superior Russia against a decadent Western civilisation; and later in the Soviet Cold war discourses.

How did these findings help us understand the functions of Russian messianism, defined within this framework, in relation to Russian statecraft?[104]

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[104] We had already we suggested in the theory chapter that the messianic framework as a dichotomising 'geography of good and evil' legitimates the state (and earlier the church) through 'discourses of

Drawing on the works of diverse scholars, we found that messianic and religious narratives, including the paradise myth and the image of Russia as a "perfected theocracy" functioned precisely to legitimise the Muscovite state and the status quo (Baehr, 1991:ix, 18-19); that the Biblical framework as a whole functioned to give meaning to events and define and legitimise the Muscovite state (Rowland, 1996); that the function of the original Holy Russia discourse was counter-hegemonic in nature, aimed at "the reigning doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome" (Neumann, 1996:8-9); that messianic discourses, Slavophilism and other ideologies, had a compensatory function in Russia's relation to Europe; and finally that messianism in different contexts has been intimately linked both to Russian empire, in terms of a diverse, multicultural political entity needing ideological assimilation, as well as Russian imperialism, in terms of geopolitical expansionism, in need of justification.

Chapters Two and Four thus pointed both to a centrality of Russian messianism as a discursive framework for Russian statecraft and identity, and to its historical persistence at different levels of discourse. Applying these findings to contemporary discourse, we formulated hypothesis H2: that the messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia.

Based on the insights from Chapter Two about discourse and collective identity formation, Chapter Three outlined a qualitative methodology based on discourse analysis for selection and analysis of contemporary Russian messianic discourse. The chapter assessed and detailed the best methods for studying Russian messianism. We introduced and justified our intellectual and evidence categories, and outline a methodology based on strands of discourse analysis and self/Other studies. We developed three broad intellectual categories to structure the presentation and analysis of each of the seven presidential annual addresses in Chapter Five, and to each form the basis for the three interview-based chapters. These categories were based on the distinction between the temporal and the spatial dimensions of Russian identity: 'Russia: History, Present and Destiny' has sought to explore Russia as a temporal-social entity; and 'Russia and the world: Self and Other(s),' has looked at Russia as a spatial-political entity. Finally, 'Russia as

danger' or 'evangelism of fear' (Rieber, 1993); justifies expansionism (Arbatov, 2006); and ideological assimilation of a diverse population in a country of complex geocultural realities (Prozorov, 2008:220).

messianic,' looked at resonance of explicit messianic discourse, based on the assumption that in it, the temporal-social and spatial-political dimensions at times often converge.

9.3.0   Messianism among ordinary Russians

Our introduction suggested that what ordinary people in Russia think, feel and perceive is important for, and reflective of, state and collective identity as a whole, particularly so in terms of state stability; and that the role and functions of messianic and related narratives in relation to the crisis of social and political relations are likely to be better understood by also studying their 'common sense' deployment and resonance among ordinary Russians. Certainly, the interviews, with their breadth, depth and diversity, provided unusual insights into views and perceptions of people in contemporary Russia, showing both convergence and divergence of this popular level with public and official levels of discourse.

While the categories we used to separate the chapters – 'Russia as history, presence and destiny' (Chapter Six), 'Russia and the world: self and Other(s) (Chapter Seven), and Russia as messianic (Chapter Eight) – all overlapped, they nevertheless helped us navigate between different and complex issues of Russian collective identity, from finding a coherent Russian historical identity, to establishing Russia's place in the globalising world, to the ever-present tensions between universalism and exceptionalism.

We will first provide a very brief summary of the findings each of the three interview-based chapters provided to research question Q3, on the manifestation and resonance at this level of discourse of the messianic and related narratives. Then we will outline the general tendencies across the chapters, with reference both to research question Q3 and the hypotheses of messianism as a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity (H1) and as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia (H2). Section 9.5 will then conduct a discussion of the overall findings of the thesis with regards to the broader hypotheses, and research question Q4, on how we can understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West.

Chapter Six explored contemporary narratives of Russia's past and future. It revealed an absence of, and longing for, a cohesive historical identity. We highlighted some of the narratives and techniques deployed to construct the image thereof, including the rehabilitation of the Soviet period, and Orthodoxy, with its identity markers of *sobornost'*, morality, religiosity, spirituality; both often woven together in narratives of ancientness, religious historical determinism, and empire; as well as the demarcation of 'true' versus 'false' periods of Russian history. But despite these deployments of discourse, there appeared still to be a widespread social fragmentation and lack of discursive tools with which to makes sense of the collapse of the previous order of things, reflected in very ambivalent, uncertain representations of past, present and future. And, as we stressed, narratives of Orthodoxy do not form an unequivocally accepted model for Russian collective identity, with many expressing cynicism about the church and its followers. So, Chapter 6 revealed a disavowal of the Yeltsinite 1990s and, by extension, the West, and a gradual rehabilitation of the Soviet period function to unite many – but there is uncertainty about the present and no vision of the future.

Chapter Seven explored the messianic and related narratives that are part of defining Russia's place in the world, or its spatial-political identity. The Eurasia representations that are so central in public discourse were not resonating strongly among ordinary people, only among a few of the semi-elite interviewees. But many both ordinary and semi-elite interviewees drew messianic-relating images of Russia as a benevolent protector-empire, with a mission to protect vulnerable states from American hegemony and from globalisation; and there was on the whole strong longing for the restoration of empire which appeared much more unifying than for example the popular but somewhat uncertain identity marker in Orthodoxy. Across the sample of interviewees, recurring in many different questions, was a tension between on the one hand, traditional, exceptionalist Russian ideals of statehood, and on the other, modern Western ideals of what is acceptable or "normal" among states, reflecting the central self/Other dilemma for Russian identity.

Chapter Eight saw many traditional Russian messianic discourses reproduced – spirituality, mission, suffering, sacrifice and patriotism – by Russians of different generations, from very different strata of society, testifying to their

centrality in post-Soviet Russian identity production. We showed how exceptionalism appeared as central to the self-understanding of most of the semi-elite and many of the ordinary interviewees, illustrated in recurring comparisons by diverse interviewees between Russia and 'the West', reiterating the relativity of identity and the centrality of the Other in the perceptions of the collective self: Russia can only be exceptional because 'the West' is the norm. But the exceptionalism and other messianic discourses did not have solely positive connotations among the interviewees, many of whom would prefer higher domestic living standards of e.g. Norway rather than messianic greatness. Nevertheless, many of the negative renditions of messianic ideas were made by interviewees who recognised their popularity in society in general, and who often instead would use *other* messianic narratives to frame their views and make sense of the world, such as the suffering Russian people pitted against the corrupt – and implicitly foreign – state. So, while there are still many diverse and contradictory representations of Russia among ordinary and semi-elite Russians – some defined, some vague, some reflecting official and public discourse, some critical of them – many are still somehow framed within the pervasive traditional framework.

A key conclusion that must be drawn from analysing the interviews regards the great diversity of views, across generations, class and gender *and* individual interviews, rendering most generalisations (save about the general fragmentation of views in society) quite difficult. The messianic-related discourses which abound in public discourse and are present in official discourse do resonate among both semi-elite and ordinary Russians, but with more varied evaluations and more ambivalence, and often in ways very different from in public discourse.

We have nevertheless identified some broad trends. There was a tendency among many of the semi-elite to construct a cohesive historical identity for Russia by using messianic-related markers of identity, whereas among ordinary people there appeared still to be a widespread fragmentation and lack of tools with which to makes sense of the past, present and future. Interestingly, messianic and related narratives from public discourse resonated more strongly among post-Soviet (born after 1975) *and* semi-elite Russians than among ordinary people from the Soviet generation, which could be attributed to the semi-elite, or the Russian intelligentsia,

being more politically aware and closer to circles public discourse, and to the attempts at political or 'patriotic' mobilisation of young people through youth movements such as NASHI.

Perhaps the most notable finding was these starkly contradictory representations of Russia within single interviews: one person could draw upon several different and often contradictory discourses, categorising interviewees according to their worldviews and ideas was quite impossible. Russia could, as we saw, be represented as great, becoming stronger and more powerful, and defined by various messianic identity markers, and yet at the same time be defined as its own greatest danger; it could be the natural continuation of the communist Soviet Union, and at the same time owe its destiny to God of the Bible; it could be an exceptional and special Great Power, and at the same time 'a country like all others' – each contradiction within single interviews.

On a universal level, this reiterates our general claim that collective identity, as an extension of discourse through which it is constructed, is inherently contradictory –and this type of dialogism can also explained in terms of the basis for intelligent, constructive thinking (Billig, 2001). Further than that, this tendency appears clearly to be a context-specific reflection of the 'polyphony', not just pluralism of contemporary Russian political discourse with its various dualisms.[105]

This showed a clear convergence of this popular level with public and official levels of discourse. However, in political discourse, the dualistic representations of Russia tend however to be more much more positive, if yet contradictory – not like the interviews' often deeply pessimistic views of Russia and its people; the representations of Russian society as amorphous and apathetic; distrust as to official representations of the past; and disillusionment with corrupt bureaucracies and government; all paradoxically mixed – in single interviews – with extremely positive representations of a Russia defined by *sobornost'* and various other positive and messianic-related traits. These contradictory self-representations in popular discourse flow together in an almost schizophrenic way, testament to the relative

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[105] Chapter Five outlined a number of dualistic representations of Russia in both public and official discourse: as both a multi-ethnic, multicultural, supra-national Great Power (Third Rome) *and* a single nation with its ethnocentric and mono-religious connotations (Holy Russia), and with Russia as Byzantium somewhere in between; as a successor to the Soviet Union *and* a modern, civic, democratic state; as Eurasian and Slavonic, *and* European (but not Western); and both being special or having 'special interest' *and* being 'normal,' like all states.

success respectively failure of Russian statehood, as well as reflecting the ambivalence towards the West as Other, i.e. the paradoxical self/Other framework with the discussed 'inferiority-superiority complex' towards the West.

Hypothesis H2 – that the messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia – was formulated to help us understand the wider problem of post-Soviet Russian state- and collective identity, i.e. the crisis of social and political relations in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet order. Russian messianism, we argued, needs to be understood in its wider discursive social and political contexts, and at the same time its study can help us understand those contexts better.

The analyses of the interviews, treated both as survey material and individual discourses, suggest strongly that the growing popularity of messianic discourse in Russia should be understood precisely against the backdrop of social fragmentation and lack of discursive tools with which to make sense of the collapse of the previous order of things. And here the role of the Other in the discursive framework has been illustrated in various contexts, across social- and age categories of interviewees.

We have shown how even the quiet nostalgia for the Soviet past among the 'Other side', or the less ideologically enthusiastic Russians, also implicitly links to the ambivalent self/Other: The narratives of a past when 'all took care of one another' and 'there was no hatred', and the disappointment with the present where 'it's all about money, money, money', and with the West – 'in Western countries money always played the key role' reflect the traditional narratives of the Other with its negative values of materialism, secularism and individualism and implicitly attribute the perceived deterioration of social relations in society to the westernisation which followed the fall of the Soviet Union. As Oushakine for example pointed to in Chapter Eight, the genres and discourses of Russian tragedy, Christological suffering and sacrifice, or 'ethnohistories of trauma,' seek to demonstrate the non-Russian (i.e. Western) character of its national/state institutions, and as such function as an effective cultural apparatus through which people in post-Soviet Russia can conceptualise the sudden collapse of the order of things, the "unmaking of Soviet life". (Oushakine, 2007:178) This reiterates the key function of messianic discourse of creating systems of intelligibility.

On the whole, the diverse resonances of messianic discourse, and the 'polyphony' and fragmentation of views across Russian society, showed that pragmatism and striving for state stability alone would not suffice to resolve the Russian crisis of identity.

9.4.0   Messianism, official discourse and the crisis of identity

The Russian crisis of identity following the collapse of the Soviet order was enormous. It had been no means been resolved during the 1990s – certainly not for a lack of identity representations available from public discourse, but rather because that state under Yeltsin, while trying out various identity options did not fully adopt any of them. In light of having just discarded one world-historical ideological project, embarking on and consistently pursuing any specific ideological project indeed turned out difficult. And the ambiguous end of ideology in many senses continued with Putin, who in essence had said that there was no need to resolve the Russian crisis of identity: what Russia needed was pragmatism, stability and modernisation, not grand ideology.

Indeed, the regime had posited and legitimised itself as the negation of the intense 1990s as a 'time of troubles' – as we saw also in the interviews, often represented as a 'lost' decade.[106] But even though Putin has been hailed – as we have seen also in the interviews – as the provider of stability and restorer of the strong state; pragmatism, efficiency and stability alone would not – as the interviews *also* clearly showed – suffice to unite society. Many Russians still perceive society as being fragmented – one in five interviewees either perceived that 'nothing at all' unites Russia's peoples of different cultures, religions and traditions, or didn't know, and many contrasted the unity, cohesion and stability of the Soviet Union with the disunity and fragmentation of the present. Remizov has captured the essential problem of the 'end of ideology' under Putin:

> The fractured society clumsily asks [the President] how to become whole, and
> he answers that it must become wealthy. Strictly speaking, the president's

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[106] We argued that the narrative constructed over the eight years of Putin's presidency – of rebuilding the state; rescuing Russia from various dangers; rejecting the false and finding the true way; uniting divergent political positions against one enemy; and restoring greatness and strength – could be interpreted in terms of messianism in the sense of the completion of a big mission by a Saviour.

response is tautological: he refers to efficiency, while the question is about charting that very social unity, which subsequently may be found efficient or inefficient. […] To declare pragmatism as the ideology of power in today's Russia is merely to put the cart before the horse. (Remizov, quoted in Prozorov, 2008:220)

Our interviews pointed to the popularity of the idea of a mission in Russian society. As one young student explained, people need to know their purpose and function in society, and a mission, if it was formulated and made clear, especially in relation to Russia as a mighty empire – would help them to do so (C83-M21*).

This study revealed that the official position has gradually abandoned the proclaimed pragmatism, moving closer to public discourse and its incongruent yet powerful master discourse. The messianic and related discourses drawn on – but also modified – in the annual addresses included spirituality, sacrifice, patriotism, Russian uniqueness and distinctiveness from the West, conspiracy theories and discourses of danger, glory and greatness, Russian history as an organic whole, the rehabilitation of the Soviet past, missionism and Russia as a global mediator, the Eurasianist 'harmony of cultures' as well, increasingly, various Russo- and Slavo-centric narratives; and we have seen the then President co-opting them and navigating around their inherent dualisms and ambiguities.

Our study asked how we can understand the functions of official discourse of these messianic and related narratives in relation to the Russian crisis of identity (research question Q3). First of all, this gradual change in official discourse can thus be explained in terms of a response to the persisting crisis of identity in a fragmented Russian society. Gradually acquiescing to developments from public discourse where messianism had become mainstream, the state could tap into this assortment of compelling ideological themes and narratives which, much better than the pragmatism alone would create the ostensible appearance of a 'whole' society. This development is in a sense a repetition of the 1990s where, as Chapter Five noted, the state, though ostensibly having adopted Western liberalism striving, gradually was transformed by, and modified, the national-patriot position (Neumann, 1999:169). Secondly, we argued that the official deployment of these loose, flexible notions, and the co-optation of the various dualistic discourses in Russian contemporary

discourse as a whole, becomes in essence a monopolisation of ideology and an effective evasion of the political.[107] By taking over all positions through co-optation, accommodating national-patriots as well as ordinary people wanting decent living standards rather than ideological grandeur, no room is left for opposition. These thus appear as the key functions of official discourse of the messianic and related narratives in seeking to resolve the Russian crisis of identity and achieving social consensus.[108]

In sum, our exploration of popular discourse through the interviews with ordinary and semi-elite Russians, and of official discourse through Putin's annual addresses compared with various texts from public discourse, thus affirm Hypothesis H2, that the messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia.

9.5.0   Messianism, Russian statecraft and the West

i)   The broad conceptualisation of a complex phenomenon

No academic enquiry can ever be objective, but is always theory- and value-laden (Shapiro, 2002). Nevertheless, the starting point of our study was relatively open – our aim has not been to vindicate a particular theory – either about Russia and the Russians, or Russian messianism, or about IR. Rather, we have genuinely sought to understand the curiosities of messianism in Russian identity: both the contemporary deployments of messianic notions in a state supposedly defined by the negation of ideology (Hypothesis H2 [109]), and their historically persistent reproduction

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[107] For Putinism and the 'end of ideology' as the evasion of the political, see Prozorov (2008:224); and for cultural fundamentalism as a way of avoiding politics, see Laruelle's conclusion (2008:221-22).

[108] An IR note: in a way not too dissimilar of the simplified messianic framework in contemporary Russian discourse, so constructivism and neorealism as theories of international relations become evasions of the political by ignoring the complexities and contested nature of identity formation. The social consensus and stability Putin has been striving to achieve through his co-optation of ideologies, including messianic discourses, is a balance of power which truly matters in IR.

[109] H2: The messianic framework is in place at different levels of contemporary Russian discourse as a response to the crisis of social and political relations in Russia.

(Hypothesis H1[110]). And rather than to ask the common and unhelpful question on whether Russian messianism has directly informed Russian foreign policy, we have asked more broadly how we can conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in Russian statecraft and, by extension, foreign policy.[111]

The result of this theoretically open approach has been a very broad multi-disciplinary conceptualisation of Russian messianism as a broad discursive framework through which Russian identity is constructed, contested and reproduced. We have argued that it by no means can be seen as a single ideology, given its diverse range of both contesting and complementing narratives, themes and signifiers, but that it nevertheless has key characteristics which warrant this overarching term: a core logic of opposition and an ambiguous-dichotomous relation to the West as broad Other, both reflected in a range of interrelated binary couples such as good/evil, spiritual/materialistic, Messiah/Antichrist, East/West, nation/state, etc; central and persistent themes of spirituality, mission, the idea of being 'chosen,' Christological suffering and sacrifice; and the master narratives Moscow Third Rome and Holy Russia, parallel to (yet intertwined with) a tension between exceptionalism and universalism.

Focusing on one narrow aspect of Russian messianism, from a singular theoretical framework, would undoubtedly have led to a simpler, more manageable conceptualisation. But by drawing on diverse academic disciplines – international relations based on social theory, history and philosophy of history, geography, anthropology – we have been able to both identify non-particular characteristics of Russian identity construction functioning across different levels of discourse and periods of time; as well as contingent manifestations which must be understood in their particular social, historical, political and intellectual contexts, both those particular to Russia and as broader intellectual and social movements, helping us understand the persistence of the reproduction of messianic ideas, themes and narratives in relation to Russian identity and statecraft.[112]

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[110] H1. The persistence, and contemporary revival, of messianic ideas in Russian public discourse suggests it is a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.

[111] The question is unhelpful, because direct causal relationships between ideas and foreign policy are notoriously hard to establish.

[112] E.g. Slavophilism as the Russian variant of European Romanticism; Russian thought as a whole as criticism of and resistance to the Western claims to universality of reason; the original Holy Russia narrative as a contestation of the hegemonic Third Rome narrative.

The very basic insights about general collective identity formation and statecraft from social theory are furthermore important for Russian, and formerly Soviet studies, where Russian messianism has for long been represented as something peculiarly and uniquely Russian – a representation which as a self-fulfilling prophecy arguably has reinforced a host of negative stereotypes and increased the alienation of Russia from the West. The thesis has thus identified and explored several aspects of Russian messianism and of its functions and roles in relation to Russian statecraft, particularly towards the West, and will here briefly summarise them and some of their different spatial and temporal contexts, finally, discuss their wider implications both for Russia as a state actor.

ii)   Russian messianism conceptualised in terms of discourse, general identity construction and state legitimisation

As summarised in section 9.2 of this chapter, based on our theory exploration we argued that frameworks of the type with which we equate Russian messianism are in one sense normal and indeed necessary to any state as a collective identity. Any state needs to legitimise its own existence and actions; any state faces the need to mask the ontological impossibility of a 'collective self' and the complexities and ambiguities of politics in its widest sense, the intricate balancing of multiple interests. And in all states, this is done through telling essentialising stories about the self in the form of discourses of danger, national myths, political ideologies etc, stories containing different types of signifiers, locating the self in relation to Others – symbolic, threatening, inferior, etc – stories which may vary over time, and which are contested in nature, but whose central logic is replicated over and over again as their crucial political functions remain.

Chapter Four too pointed both to a centrality of Russian messianism as a discursive framework for Russian statecraft and identity, and to its historical persistence at different levels of discourse. Our findings through exploring discourse and identity in IR theory, and Russian messianism from a historical perspective, thus affirm hypothesis H3: that one of the core explanations for the persistence of Russian Messianism is as a legitimising discursive framework for the existence and policies of

Russia as a state actor in ambiguous relation to a broad Western Other. This hypothesis was further affirmed by our explorations of official and popular discourse, showing how an abundance messianic-related discourses, even conspiracy theories, from public discourse at times have been drawn upon even by Putin, and resonate among both post-Soviet and semi-elite interviewees.

iii)   Messianic story-telling as a necessary for a complex, multicultural state

Our review of secondary sources from geography, history and international relations theory led us to identify a second, closely related to the above, key aspect of this broad conceptualisation. Russian messianism, as a type of discourse or story-telling particular to large multicultural political entities with complex geo-cultural conditions – i.e. empires and/or civilisations – where more common identity markers such as ethnicity fail to legitimise the state, unify the population and create a sense of collective identity.

Many interviewees stressed the complexities of Russia as an exceptionalist political entity, describing it as "large, and nobody understands what is going on in it" (C57-F17); "a civilisation located between West and East" which "neither falls under the Western value system, nor under the Eastern value system" but whose history and whole development went in zigzags" (C100-M20); and "a country of contrasts" (C75-F22). Certainly, Russia's geographical vastness and diversity, complicated history, and heterogeneous social fabric all contribute to a continuous risk of internal tensions and social disorder. Messianic identity constructions, we argued, affirming hypotheses H1 and H3, can thus be understood as a necessary part of Russian cultural and political identity, functioning to legitimise the existence, policies and indeed failures of Russia as an exceptionalist state; and to divert attention from the ambiguities, contradictions and problems of its statecraft and identity by simplifying complex realities – i.e. what 'cannot be understood with the mind' – into appealing and unifying narratives of based on constructed dichotomies.

Furthermore, our exploration of both official and popular discourse noted, though did not explore in depth, structural similarities between Russian and American identity construction, with both having a contradiction between

exceptionalist and universalist master narratives; as well as a radicalised opposition between self and Other, characteristic of states defined by the 'universalistic nationalism' that was a central concern for the theorist Morgenthau (1967). The interview-based chapters showed for example how globalisation as a discourse of danger, often framed in messianic terms, resonated strongly among both post-Soviet and semi-elite interviewees, and argued that as the vague, faceless yet demonised enemy in the 'War on Terror' functions as an effective Other for the United States, so does the vague, faceless but radicalised construction of 'globalisation' for Russia, represented as a civilisation.

iv) Understanding contemporary deployments of Russian messianism: the post-Soviet context

Because the aims of this thesis have been not only to conceptualise Russian messianism generally, but also to enhance our understanding of contemporary Russian collective identity and of Russia as a state and international actor, the focus of the core of the research has been on contextualising contemporary Russian messianism. Though, as we noted above, Russia is a complex state to start with, the collapse of the Soviet Union obviously made identity construction even more complex, leading us to investigate the functions of messianic discourse in relation to the crisis of Russian political and cultural identity (hypothesis H2).

As discussed above, the analyses of the interviews on the whole suggest strongly that the growing popularity of messianic discourse in Russia should be understood precisely against the backdrop of post-Soviet social fragmentation, i.e. that messianic stories for example about a glorious past and a great mission are deployed both as a kind of escapism from the dysfunctional present, where there is little to unite people but an inferiority complex towards the West, nostalgia for the past, uncertainty with the fledgling stability of present, and absence of visions for the future. We also conceptualised the official contemporary co-optation of the various dualistic messianic discourses in terms of a monopolisation of ideology and evasion of the political, specific to the post-Soviet context.

v)   Understanding the functionality of messianism as story-telling

Why do precisely messianic narratives, with their particular characteristics, have such an important role in these different contexts of Russian identity construction? We have suggested that most messianic themes and notions are very functional as identity markers because of their elusiveness and ambiguity, showing for example how the famous Russian spirituality can connote ethnocentric Orthodoxy just as well as a multicultural Eurasian 'spiritual harmony'. Spirituality, mission, sacrifice are thus flexible notions which can be deployed in very different contexts, by different actors, for different purposes, yet create the appearance of a coherent identity.

This flexibility due to ambiguity helps explain the persistence, revival and centrality of messianic narratives discourses to Russian identity reproduction at all levels of discourse, and their subsequently important role also in Russian statecraft, constructed and legitimised in discourse. For example, as we noted above, the elusiveness of the near-hegemonic contemporary Russian messianic master narrative with its co-optation of contradictory political positions renders impossible *any* concrete political goals – and yet (or therefore) it is highly political precisely in its evasion of politics and difference.[113] But as we have stated, one thing is required for the messianic narratives and markers of identity, with all their elusiveness, to function.

vi)   Russia, messianism, and the West as broad Other

Just as the word 'light' is brought meaning by the word 'darkness', 'exception' by 'norm', 'good' by 'evil', so the 'Russian soul' is brought meaning only by the 'Western soullessness', 'Russian spirituality' by 'Western materialism', and Russia as 'chosen' only by the West as 'rejected'. Research question Q4 asked how we can we understand and conceptualise the functions and role of Russian messianism in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West. 'The West' is

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[113] This brings us back to Morgenthau, who, as Williams argued, developed his defence of political realism and politics as a sphere of contestation and difference much in response to the danger of universalistic nationalism – or messianism – as being the monopolisation of truth and identity (Williams, 2004). While Russia under Putin largely appears to have disavowed grand messianic universalism in favour of civilisational particularism alongside with state stabilisation and restoration, universalist narratives tendencies could also be noted, such as in the creation of *Russkii Mir*.

paramount to Russian statecraft and identity, and we have argued that Russian messianism functions as a framework through which Russian identity, is produced, negotiated, and produced in ambivalent relation to the West as broad Other. The dichotomous structure of this framework forms the compelling core of the Russian messianic framework and explains its historical persistence as a legitimising discursive framework (Hypothesis H3), and the ambiguous-dichotomous self/Other in multiple ways transcends and connects the various different aspects within which we have sought to conceptualise and contextualise Russian messianism.

We have used the term 'broad Other', given the inclusive, ambiguous uses of 'the West' as a concept, incorporating a civilisation, states as the U.S.A and/or Europe, Atlanticism, globalisation, and even the Jews in terms such as 'the Judeo-American Anti-Rome'. (Sidorov, 2006) From a historical perspective we have argued that Russian messianism must be understood in relation to and as an emulation *and* rejection of Judeo-Christian variants of messianism: of Judaism and the first 'chosen nation' and Western Christianity; of the Western concept of universalism and progress (Walicki, 1994:82); and that the more recent ambiguous relation to America follows this pattern. We have highlighted the tendency at various levels of Russian discourse to represent the United States and the West in terms of aggressive messianism, universalism, absolutism, imperialism; and to subsequently define Russia/Eurasia/ Orthodox civilisation in opposition and as an alternative to this civilisation. Russian messianism must *also* therefore be understood as forming part of the wider global discourse of anti-Westernism, anti-globalisation and exceptionalist, culturalist fundamentalism.[114]

So, both in the contemporary context of globalisation, as well as the in the Enlightenment, centuries back, Russia continues to be exceptional because Europe and/or the West is the norm. We have shown how the tensions between universalism and exceptionalism, between representations of Russia as a state or spatial-political entity and Russia as a civilisation or temporal-social entity, are present across the different levels of discourse: popular, public and indeed official. This ambivalence

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[114] Laruelle, for example, notes how Eurasianism – as we have shown, one of the key contemporary Russian messianic discourses – can be understood both as "a short-term psychological compensation for the disappearance of the Soviet Union" *and* as being on par with Islamism, the Christian fundamentalism of American evangelical movements, and European calls for ethnic and religious communitarianism, all as part of "the great backlash against eighteenth century theories of progress" (2008:220-21). See also Shevtsova (2007:42-43).

was, as we noted in the interview chapters, particularly evident in the questions of Russian empire, with many Russians expressing a longing for the restoration of empire, yet aware that 'imperial and messianic ambitions' do not fit in with the also desired modern Western model. And interviewees from the 'the Other side' saw imperial and messianic ambitions, in a way similar to Putin, as the main obstacle to Russia's modernisation, represented as the prerequisite for 'real' great power status.

However, the study revealed that few Russians see the question as a choice between on the one hand a Russian model, presumably defined by exceptionalism and empire, and on the other a Western model, defined by universalism, modernity and state sovereignty, due to the contradictions in American identity, defined both by empire and exceptionalism on the one hand, and universalism in the model it exports globally on the other. Many interviewees thus wavered precisely between wanting Russia to be accepted in international society as a 'normal' state, with decent living standards, *and* to compete with America with its imperial, messianic and superpower role, mirroring the very same tendency in official and public discourse.

Chapter Eight heard Vladimir Pozner, the popular talk show host, voiced the common question why, with so much dirt around, such smelly doorways, such disgrace in public toilets, people drinking so much, some people consider Russians to be above others, to be more spiritual. Our study has shown how the functions and role of Russian messianism in relationship to Russian statecraft can also be conceptualised in terms of an inferiority-superiority complex towards the West as Other, exacerbated with humiliating breakup of Soviet Union, and manifest at all levels of discourse from ordinary people to the state. This ambivalent relation to the Other is thus a core explanation for the persistence and revival of messianic discourse with its compensatory functions.

vii)   A messianic Russia in the world?

What then are the implications for Russian as an international actor of our findings of the deployment of messianic discourse in official discourse? Are we to predict that Russia will seek to take over the world by becoming a spiritual empire, a modern Third Rome? We have mainly stressed the key domestic functions of the messianic

discourses: to legitimise the state, assimilate the population domestically, and create systems of intelligibility, making sense of what doesn't make sense, whether the collapse of the Soviet Union or identity in a globalised world.[115] But, we have also argued that Russia and its messianic discourses have been not only 'imperial,' with empire as a permanent Russian geocultural condition necessitating messianic discourse for assimilation and legitimacy, but also in some contexts 'imperialist,' legitimising Russian and Soviet expansionism.

In sum: our introduction showed how Putin sought to avoid Russian messianism and the traditional Russian pastime of searching for a national idea. Our thesis has sought to demonstrate why this has been impossible, and why Russian messianism continues to constitute a persistent, necessary, if never quite tangible part of Russian identity.

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[115] Our theory chapter pointed to a number of constructed truisms in International Relations theory, a key one being the opposition between domestic and international politics, or inside/outside, following Walker's seminal work (1993). Though we noted a tension between the temporal-social and spatial-political aspects of Russian identity, there is no doubt that one cannot be divorced from the other, and that 'domestic Russia' cannot be divorced from Russia as an international actor.

Appendix I - Interview Schedule

Used in Moscow and St Petersburg, August-November 2005

      i)   Background and formulation

The interview questions were developed and piloted with assistance from native Russians with sociology and psychology backgrounds. The interviews were thus structured: the same questions were given, in the same order, to each respondent, though for some questions there were different follow-up questions depending on the answer. While it is usually considered bad scientific practice to have clearly value-laden questions (Silverman, 2001:232-34) this practice was a conscious choice made during the piloting of the interview questions. When the pilot questions were shorter and more neutral, the interviewees tended to either ask for the question to be more concrete, or answer in monosyllables. For example, when the pilot question "Is Russia spiritual?" was changed into "Is Russia today a source or example of spirituality for the rest of the world?" it immediately generated more and clearer response. In order to make abstract concepts like 'Eurasia' and 'globalisation' graspable for non-educated respondents, and to provoke answers in either one or another direction, many questions were allowed to be of a more journalistic character, subjective and containing generalizations.

      The main point, however, is that most generalizations and values expressed in the questions are not those of a Western academic, but such that are common in present Russian culture and every-day language. They are biases that most Russians recognise and can relate to, and they have been a consciously used tool for stimulating response, as in for example the following question: "Seventy years of Soviet rule: do you consider it a mistake and lost time, or an important part of Russian history?" Of course, as many interviewees have pointed out, an historical period cannot be a called a mistake, however tragic – yet the expression of 'mistake and lost time' is commonly used for the Soviet period and the question has in most cases stimulated clear, unambiguous answers to how the interviewees relate, or want to show that they relate, to their Soviet past. The question "Was it bad that the Soviet

Union collapsed?" was tried out as a less provocative alternative, but the answers then were mostly related to the *way* the Soviet Union collapsed, which for most people was a painful way, whatever they thought of the Soviet era as a whole. The question on Ukraine, "Ukraine: after the last events there it seems as if Ukraine has turned away from Russia and has taken a pro-Western path. How do you feel about this?" presupposes that Ukraine has turned away from Russia, that Russia is not on a pro-Western path, and that the interviewee feels something about this. This formulation has, as was intended, provoked the interviewees to either agree or disagree with the statement and then explain what his or her view is on the matter. So asking leading and even provocative questions has been a conscious step in order to get people to talk. The great variety of answers should testify that if the questions are leading, they certainly are not leading in a single direction.

ii)   **Translated into English**

1.   What is your name?

2.   a) Are you Russian?

        b) (If not) Of which nationality are you?

3.   How old are you?

4.   Where were you born?

5.   Where do you live?

6.   Do you have higher education?

7.   What is your occupation?

8.   Tyutchev writes:

        "Russia cannot be understood with the mind

        Nor can she be measured with an ordinary yardstick

        She has a special stature:

        In Russia one can only believe"

        a) Do you agree with this expression?

        b) (If so) Why, what makes Russia special?

9. Is Russia today a source or an example of spirituality for the rest of the world?

10. a) It is said that on Russia has befallen a mission in relation to the rest of the world. Do you agree with this?
b) (If yes) What does it consist of?
c) (If no) What do you think, is this idea popular at some levels of society?
d) (If yes) At which levels?

11. What, in your opinion, poses the greatest danger to Russia?

12. a) What do you think: seventy years of Soviet rule: is it a mistake and lost time, or is it an important part of Russian history?
b) What in your opinion do most Russians think about this? (Are there generational differences?)

13. In your opinion, which historical periods can Russia be proud of: Imperial Russia, Soviet times, the Eltsin era, or other periods?

14. What period of history was especially tragic for Russia?

15. a) Have you heard anything about the concept Eurasia?
b) (If yes) What do you understand by this concept?
c) (If no or very hesitant) The idea basically suggests that there is a special civilization – Eurasia – between East and West. Eurasia is not only a continent, but also a harmonic unity of the former Soviet republics in which Russia is the centre. Possibly, this includes some Islamic countries and some Asian countries. What do you think about this idea?

16. Do you consider Russia to be a more Eastern or more Western country?

17. What do you reckon: will Russia in the near future become a powerful empire on the international arena, or decline imperial ambitions?

18. What line of policy towards the Muslim governments would in your opinion be more desirable for Russia?

19. a) Do you consider that thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church, the spiritual potential of Russia is greater than of other countries?
b) (If yes) What is the role of Russia: to stand against the West or to become for it a source of spirituality and true faith?

20. a) In Europe many talk about the danger of globalisation. Countries become more and more alike each other, people wear jeans, eat at McDonald's and watch Hollywood films. It becomes impossible for local producers to compete with for example Coca-cola and Adidas. Do you think that globalisation is dangerous for Russia? Or is the Russian culture stronger?
b) (If yes to danger) Can Russia counter pose globalisation on a world scale?

21. In the nearer future, how do you think that Russia's relations to the West will unfold?

22. What, in your opinion, makes a Russian Russian?

23. Russia is a multinational country: in her territory live many peoples of different cultures, religions and traditions. What, in your opinion, unites them all?

24. In your opinion, can the Russian Orthodox Church play a significant role in the creation of a harmonious union between the Orthodox and representatives of other religions (Muslims, Jews, Buddhists) in the territory of the Russian federation?

25. The Muslim population of the Russian federation is growing fast. In what ways, in your opinion, does this affect the future of Russia?

26. a) What do you think: is there any significant anti-Semitism in Russia today?
     b) (If so) Is there more or less than in Soviet times?

27. Ukraine: after the last events there it seems as if Ukraine has turned away from Russia and has taken a pro-Western path. How do you feel about this?

28. Do you believe in the unity of the Slavonic republics – Russia, Ukraine and Belarus?

29. a) Did you vote in the last presidential elections?
     b) (If so) Would you mind telling me if you voted for Putin or another candidate?

iii) **Original version in Russian**

1. Как Вас зовуг?
2. a) Вы – русский?
    b) (если нет) Вы какая национальность?
3. Сколько Вам лет?
4. Где Вы родились?
5. Где Вы живете?
6. У Вас есть высшее образование?
7. Кем Вы работаете?

8. Тютчев пишет:
    «Умом Россию не понять
    Аршином общим не измерить

У ней особенная стать

В Россию можно только верить»

a) Вы согласны с этим выражением?

b) (если ла) Что в ней особенное?

9. Является ли Россия сегодня источником или примером духовности для остального мира?

10. a) Считается, что на долю России выпала миссия по отношению к остальному миру. Вы с этим согласны?

b) (если ла) В чем она заключается? (Или Россия уже выполнила свою миссию?)

c) (если нет согласны) Как Вам кажется, эта идея популярна в некоторых слоях общества?

d) (если ла) В каких?

11. Кто по-Вашему представляет сейчас главную опасность для России?

12. a) Как Вы считаете: 70 лет советской власти – это ошибка и потерянное время или это значимая часть Российской истории?

b) Что по-вашему думает большинство русских по этому поводу?

13. Какими историческими периодами, по Вашему мнению, может гордиться Россия: Имперской Россией, советскими временами, эпохой Ельцина?

14. Какой период истории был особенно трагичен для России?

15. a) Вы что-нибудь слышали о концепции Евразии? Как Вы понимаете эту концепцию?

b) (Если нет) Идея в основном предполагает, что существует особенная цивилизация – Евразия - между Западом и Востоком. Евразия – не только континент, а гармоничное единство бывших советских республик в котором Россия является центром. Возможно, это перерастет в союз России, некоторых мусульманских стран (как Иран) и некоторых азиатских стран. Что вы думаете об этой идее?

16. Как Вы считаете, Россия западная или восточная страна?

17. Как Вы считаете: в ближайшей перспективе Россия будет выступать на международной арене как мощная империя или откажется от имперских амбиций?

18. Какая *линия поведения с мусульманскими государствами по-Вашему была бы наиболее желательной для России?*

19. a) *Считаете ли Вы, что благодаря Русской православной церкви духовный потенциал России больше, чем у других стран?*
b) (если да) В чем по-Вашему роль России: противостоять Западу или стать для него источником духовности и истинной веры?

20. a) В Европе много говорят об опасности глобализации. Разные страны становятся похожи друг на друга: люди носят джинсы, едят в МакДональдсах и смотрят голливудские фильмы. Местным производителям невозможно конкурировать с Кока-Колой или Adidas. *Опасна ли глобализация для России? Или русская культура сильнее?*

b) Может ли Россия противостоять глобализации в мировом масштабе?

21. В ближайшей перспективе как по-вашему будут складываться взаимоотношения России с Западом?

22. Что, по-Вашему делает русского русским? (По каким признакам Вы отличаете русского от других национальностей?) (Россиян)

23. Россия – многонациональная страна: на ее территории живет много народов разных культур, религий и традиций. Что, по-вашему, их всех объединяет?

24. Как, по-вашему, может ли русская православная церковь сыграть значительную роль в создании гармоничного союза православных с представителями других религий (мусульманами, иудеями, буддистами) на территории Российской Федерации?

25. Количество мусульман в Российской Федерации быстро растет – как, по-Вашему это влияет на будущее России?

26. Как Вы думаете, существует ли значительный антисемитизм в России сегодня?

27. Украина: после последних событий складывается впечатление, что Украина оторвалась от России и стала на прозападный путь. Что Вы чувствуете по этому поводу?

28. Вы еще верите в единство славянских республик (Россия, Белоруссия, Украина)?

29. a) Вы голосовали на последних президентских выборах в России?

b) (Если да) За Путина или за другого кандидата?

Appendix II – List of Interviews

Case	Sex	Age	2	29 b)	8a)	9	10a)	10 b)	11
.C1-F37e	F	30-39	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Mission not exceptional	Eurasia	Russia, the Russians
.C2-F26e	F	20-29	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Mission not exceptional	spirituality	Materialism
.C3-M26e	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C4-M28	M	20-29	Russian	-	Not sure	No	No	-	Doesn't know
.C5-M26e	M	20-29	Russian	-	Yes	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C6-M29e	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C7-M31e	M	30-39	Russian	Yes	No	Yes	No	-	Nothing
.C8-F31e	F	30-39	Russian	No	Yes	No	Yes	Eurasia	Communist generation
.C9-M34e	M	30-39	Russian	-	Yes	No	Mission not exceptional	Eurasia	Russia, the Russians
.C10-M34e	M	30-39	Russian	-	No	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C11-M34e	M	30-39	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	spirituality	Russia, the Russians
.C12-F36e	F	30-39	Russian	-	Not sure	Not sure	Not sure	-	Nothing
.C13-F36e	M	30-39	Russian	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	spirituality	Drugs, alcohol
.C14-M37e	M	30-39	Russian	?	No	Yes	Mission not exceptional	spirituality	Russia, the Russians
.C15-M38e	M	30-39	Russian	No	Yes	No	Mission not exceptional	oppose West	Economy / poverty
.C16-M39e	M	30-39	Georgian	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	-	Nothing
.C17-M39e	M	30-39	Jewish	No	Yes	No	No	-	Corruption
.C18-M39e	M	30-39	Russian	-	Yes	No	Mission complete	-	Economy / poverty
.C19-M37e	M	30-39	Russian	Yes	Not sure	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C20-M48e	M	40-49	Russian	No	Yes	No	Mission complete	Saviour	Disunity etc
.C21-M42e	M	40-49	Russian		Yes	Not sure	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C22-M45e	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	No	No	Mission complete	Eurasia	Terrorism, Islam
.C23-F41e	F	40-49	Jewish	No	Not sure	No	Mission not exceptional	-	Russia, the Russians
.C24-F47e	F	40-49	Jewish	-	Yes	No	No	-	Fascism, extremism
.C25-M42e	M	40-49	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Mission not exceptional	be different	Terrorism, Islam
.C26-M49e	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	Not sure	No	Yes	example of survival	Russia, the Russians
.C27-M58e	M	50-59	Russian	No	Yes	Not sure	Yes	warning example	Rulers, bureacrats
.C28-F60e	F	60-69	Russian	Yes	No	Yes	Mission not exceptional	influence the world	Russia, the Russians
.C29-M71e	M	>70	Russian	Yes	No	No	No	-	Corruption
.C30-M75e	M	>70	Jewish	-	No	No	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C31-M18	M	15-19	Russian	-	Not sure	Yes	Yes	spirituality	Russia, the Russians
.C32-F17	F	15-19	Russian	-	Yes	No	Yes	independence	Doesn't know
.C33-F19	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	No	No	Not sure	improve the world	-
.C34-M15	M	15-19	Mixed	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	improve the world	Fascism, extremism
.C35-M15	M	15-19	Russian	-	Yes	Not sure	No	-	War
.C36-M17	M	15-19	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C37-F19	F	15-19	Russian	-	Yes	No	No	-	The US
.C38-M18	M	15-19	Greek	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C39-M19	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	Western ideology
.C40-F17	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	spirituality	Russia, the Russians
.C41-F19	F	15-19	Russian	-	Not sure	No	No	-	Doesn't know
.C42-F15	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Not sure	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C43-F19	F	15-19	Ukrainian	-	Yes	Yes	Mission complete	Saviour	Nothing
.C44-M18	M	15-19	Korean	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	The US
.C45-M18	M	15-19	Russian	No	Yes	No	Not sure	-	Russia, the Russians
.C46-M19	M	15-19	Russian	?	Yes	-	Mission not exceptional	-	Russia, the Russians
.C47-M19	M	15-19	Mixed	No	Yes	Yes	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C48-M19	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Yes	oppose West	Terrorism, Islam
.C49-M19	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C50-F18	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C51-F19	F	15-19	Russian	No	Not sure	Yes	Mission complete	Saviour	Economy / poverty
.C52-F20	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C53-M17	M	15-19	Russian	No	No	No	Mission complete	influence the world	Russia, the Russians
.C54-F17	F	15-19	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	No	-	The US
.C55-F16	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	Doesn't know
.C56-M18	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Not sure	-	Other
.C57-M17	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C58-F15	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C59-M18	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Saviour	Nothing
.C60-F18	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C61-F16	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C62-F16	F	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C63-M15	M	15-19	Russian	?	Yes	No	Yes	preach gospel	Nothing
.C64-M15	M	15-19	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Not sure	-	Doesn't know
.C65-M18	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	multiculturalism	The US
.C66-M18	M	15-19	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure	-	Chechnya
.C67-F18	F	15-19	Russian	No	Yes	No	No	-	The US
.C68-F22	F	15-19	Russian	?	Not sure	Yes	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C69-M26	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C70-M27	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	No	No	Yes	spirituality	Rulers, bureacrats
.C71-M26	M	20-29	Russian	?	Yes	No	Yes	improve the world	Drugs, alcohol
.C72-M27	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	Not sure	-	Russia, the Russians
.C73-F21	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	War
.C74-M21	M	20-29	Russian	-	No	Yes	Yes	-	Nothing
.C75-F22	F	20-29	Russian	-	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C76-M25	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	-	No	-	-
.C77-M21	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	The US
.C78-M28	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	No	Yes	influence the world	Terrorism, Islam
.C79-F20	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Economy / poverty

Case	12 a)	12b)	15 a)	15 b,c)	16	17	19 a)	20 a)	20 b)
.C1-F37e	It's history	differently	Yes	matter of fact	Eastern	Yes	No	Yes	Not yet
.C2-F26e	Important	-	not much	matter of fact	other	Not sure	Yes	Yes	No
.C3-M26e	It's history	-	Yes	matter of fact	other	Yes	Yes	No	Not sure
.C4-M28	Mistake, lost time	differently	Yes	negative	not sure	Yes	Yes	No	Not yet
.C5-M26e	It's history	differently	Yes	not sure	not sure	Yes	No	No	No need
.C6-M29e	Mistake, lost time	differently	Yes	negative	-	Decline	No	Yes	Yes
.C7-M31e	It's history	-	Yes	matter of fact	-	Great Power only	Yes	No	No need
.C8-F31e	Both	-	-	-	other	Great Power only	No	Depends	Not sure
.C9-M34e	Important	differently	Yes	positive	other	Yes	No	Depends	No need
.C10-M34e	Mistake, lost time	differently	Yes	negative	Western	Yes but will fail	No	No	No
.C11-M34e	Mistake, lost time	-	Yes	-	other	-	Yes	Yes	Not sure
.C12-F36e	Important	-	not much	negative	other	Already empire	Yes	No	-
.C13-F36e	Important	differently	Yes	positive	other	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
.C14-M37e	It's history	-	Yes	matter of fact	-	Great Power only	Yes	Depends	No
.C15-M38e	Important	-	Yes	matter of fact	other	Yes	No	Depends	-
.C16-M39e	It's history	same	-	positive	-	Great Power only	No	No	No need
.C17-M39e	It's history	same	Yes	positive	Western	Yes	No	No	Yes
.C18-M39e	Important	-	not much	-	-	Yes	No	Yes	No
.C19-M37e	Important	-	not much	not sure	other	Yes	No	No	No need
.C20-M48e	Not sure	-	Yes	positive	other	Yes	No	Yes	No
.C21-M42e	It's history	-	not much	matter of fact	other	Yes but will fail	No	Depends	.
.C22-M45e	It's history	not sure	Yes	not sure	Western	Great Power only	-	No	No need
.C23-F41e	Both	-	Yes	negative	Western	Yes but will fail	No	No	No need
.C24-F47e	Important	differently	not much	negative	other	Yes	No	Yes	No
.C25-M42e	Both	not sure	Yes	positive	-	Great Power only	Yes	Yes	Not yet
.C26-M49e	Important	-	Yes	negative	other	Yes but will fail	Yes	Depends	-
.C27-M58e	It's history	-	Yes	-	other	Yes but will fail	No	Yes	No
.C28-F60e	It's history	-	Yes	negative	Western	Decline	No	Depends	-
.C29-M71e	Both	-	Yes	positive	-	Decline	Not sure	Yes	No need
.C30-M75e	Important	-	Yes	matter of fact	both	Great Power only	Yes	No	No
.C31-M18	Both	-	not much	positive	Eastern	Great Power only	No	Yes	No need
.C32-F17	Important	same	not much	not sure	not sure	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
.C33-F19	Not sure	same	not much	positive	other	Decline	Not sure	No	Not sure
.C34-M15	Mistake, lost time	differently	not much	positive	Western	Yes	No	No	Yes
.C35-M15	Important	not sure	Yes	positive	other	Decline	Yes	No	Not sure
.C36-M17	Important	not sure	not much	positive	Western	Not sure	No	Yes	Yes
.C37-F19	Mistake, lost time	-	Yes	-	other	Yes but will fail	Yes	Yes	No
.C38-M18	Both	same	Yes	-	other	Yes	Yes	Depends	Yes
.C39-M19	It's history	differently	not much	negative	other	Yes	No	Yes	No
.C40-F17	It's history	-	not much	not sure	other	Yes but will fail	Yes	No	No
.C41-F19	Both	-	not much	not sure	Western	Decline	Yes	No	No need
.C42-F15	Important	same	not much	not sure	Western	Not sure	Yes	No	Yes
.C43-F19	Important	same	not much	positive	other	Decline	No	No	No
.C44-M18	Important	same	Yes	positive	Western	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
.C45-M18	Both	differently	not much	matter of fact	Western	Decline	Yes	Yes	No
.C46-M19	It's history	same	Yes	negative	Western	Yes	Not sure	Yes	No
.C47-M19	Both	same	not much	matter of fact	Western	Yes	No	No	Yes
.C48-M19	Important	same	Yes	-	Western	Great Power only	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C49-M19	Mistake, lost time	same	Yes	matter of fact	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
.C50-F18	Not sure	-	Yes	not sure	Western	Decline	No	Not sure	No
.C51-F19	It's history	-	Yes	matter of fact	Western	Great Power only	No	Depends	-
.C52-F20	Important	not sure	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Yes
.C53-M17	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	not sure	other	Not sure	No	No	-
.C54-F17	Important	same	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C55-F16	Important	-	not much	-	Eastern	Yes	Not sure	No	-
.C56-M18	It's history	differently	not much	not sure	Western	Yes but will fail	Yes	Depends	Not yet
.C57-M17	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	not sure	both	Already empire	Yes	No	Yes
.C58-F15	Not sure	-	not much	not sure	other	Decline	Yes	No	No need
.C59-M18	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Yes	No	No
.C60-F18	Not sure	not sure	not much	not sure	both	Decline	Yes	No	Yes
.C61-F16	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	not sure	Eastern	Decline	Yes	No	No
.C62-F16	Important	differently	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
.C63-M15	Mistake, lost time	differently	not much	negative	Western	Yes	Yes	No	No
.C64-M15	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	negative	Western	Decline	-	Yes	No
.C65-M18	Not sure	-	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
.C66-M18	Not sure	not sure	not much	positive	-	Not sure	Yes	No	No
.C67-F18	It's history	same	not much	negative	other	Yes but will fail	Not sure	Yes	No
.C68-F22	Important	differently	not much	negative	both	Yes	Yes	Yes	No need
.C69-M26	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	matter of fact	Western	Yes	No	No	No need
.C70-M27	Important	same	not much	positive	Western	Yes	Not sure	No	Yes
.C71-M26	It's history	same	not much	positive	Eastern	-	No	No	Yes
.C72-M27	Important	same	Yes	matter of fact	both	Not sure	Not sure	No	No need
.C73-F21	Important	same	not much	negative	Eastern	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure
.C74-M21	Mistake, lost time	differently	not much	not sure	both	Decline	No	No	No
.C75-F22	It's history	-	not much	positive	other	Yes	No	Not sure	Not sure
.C76-M25	Both	differently	not much	not sure	-	Already empire	No	No	No need
.C77-M21	Mistake, lost time	differently	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
.C78-M28	Important	same	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
.C79-F20	Important	same	Yes	positive	both	Great Power only	No	No	No need

Case	21	22	23	28
.C1-F37e	Positively, normally	mentality etc	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C2-F26e	Negatively	roots, birth	Eurasian or spiritual idea	Yes
.C3-M26e	Positively, normally	patriotism	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C4-M28	Pragmatically	not sure	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Partly
.C5-M26e	Pragmatically	nothing	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C6-M29e	Negatively	spirituality, soul	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Partly
.C7-M31e	Pragmatically	Orthodoxy	nothing	No
.C8-F31e	Unification	spirituality, soul	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C9-M34e	Not sure	mentality etc	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C10-M34e	Pragmatically	Russian language	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C11-M34e	Positively, normally	Orthodoxy	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C12-F36e	Positively, normally	Russian language	life: territory, statehood, language	Not sure
.C13-F36e	Pragmatically	patriotism	other	Yes
.C14-M37e	Pragmatically	missionism	-	-
.C15-M38e	Positively, normally	good citizenship	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C16-M39e	Pragmatically	patriotism	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C17-M39e	Pragmatically	Russian language	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C18-M39e	Positively, normally	undescribable	other	No
.C19-M37e	Positively, normally	roots, birth	nothing	No
.C20-M48e	Pragmatically	spirituality, soul	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C21-M42e	.		.	.
.C22-M45e	Positively, normally	undescribable	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C23-F41e	Positively, normally	Russian language	hiistory, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C24-F47e	Not sure	Russian soil	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C25-M42e	Not sure	spirituality, soul	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C26-M49e	-	spirituality, soul	life: territory, statehood, language	-
.C27-M58e	Pragmatically	spirituality, soul	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C28-F60e	Positively, normally	sense of history	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C29-M71e	Pragmatically	undescribable	not sure	Yes
.C30-M75e	Pragmatically	-	economy, work, poverty	-
.C31-M18	Unification	mentality etc	Eurasian or spiritual idea	Yes
.C32-F17	Not sure	patriotism	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C33-F19	Positively, normally	cultural	other	Yes
.C34-M15	Positively, normally	patriotism	other	Yes
.C35-M15	Positively, normally	Russian language	other	Yes
.C36-M17	Positively, normally	undescribable	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C37-F19	Positively, normally	material welfare	nothing	No
.C38-M18	Pragmatically	patriotism	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C39-M19	Negatively	patriotism	other	Yes
.C40-F17	Pragmatically	patriotism	nothing	Partly
.C41-F19	Positively, normally	love	other	No
.C42-F15	Pragmatically	vodka	not sure	Yes
.C43-F19	Positively, normally	mentality etc	Eurasian or spiritual idea	Yes
.C44-M18	Positively, normally	cultural	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C45-M18	Positively, normally	not sure	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C46-M19	Positively, normally	cultural	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C47-M19	Positively, normally	love	Eurasian or spiritual idea	Yes
.C48-M19	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	not sure	Yes
.C49-M19	Positively, normally	not sure	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C50-F18	Positively, normally	sense of Russianness	other	No
.C51-F19	Unification	spirituality, soul	other	Partly
.C52-F20	Positively, normally	laziness etc	economy, work, poverty	No
.C53-M17	Pragmatically	patriotism	economy, work, poverty	Yes
.C54-F17	Positively, normally	hospitality etc	not sure	Yes
.C55-F16	Not sure	cultural	not sure	Partly
.C56-M18	Pragmatically	Russian language	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C57-M17	Positively, normally	patriotism	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C58-F15	Positively, normally	mentality etc	economy, work, poverty	Yes
.C59-M18	Positively, normally	vodka	nothing	Not sure
.C60-F18	Not sure	intellectualism	not sure	Yes
.C61-F16	-	faith, general	economy, work, poverty	No
.C62-F16	Positively, normally	not sure	not sure	Yes
.C63-M15	Unification	spirituality, soul	economy, work, poverty	Yes
.C64-M15	Pragmatically	intellectualism	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C65-M18	Not sure	-	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C66-M18	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	nothing	No
.C67-F18	Not sure	not sure	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C68-F22	Positively, normally	irrelevant	other	Yes
.C69-M26	Negatively	not sure	not sure	No
.C70-M27	Pragmatically	not sure	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C71-M26	Not sure	mentality etc	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C72-M27	Positively, normally	undescribable	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C73-F21	Not sure	spirituality, soul	not sure	No
.C74-M21	Positively, normally	vodka	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C75-F22	Negatively	hospitality etc	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C76-M25	Positively, normally	unpredictability	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C77-M21	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	economy, work, poverty	Yes
.C78-M28	Positively, normally	hospitality etc	not sure	Yes
.C79-F20	Positively, normally	cultural	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No

Case	Sex	Age	2	29 b)	8a)	9	10a)	10 b)	11
.C80-F20	F	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	spirituality	China
.C81-F20	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mission not exceptional	-	Other
.C82-F20	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	be different	Corruption
.C83-M21	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	Mission not exceptional	-	Russia, the Russians
.C84-M27	M	20-29	Mixed	No	No	Not sure	No	-	Nothing
.C85-F21	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	No	-	Doesn't know
.C86-F24	F	20-29	Russian	No	Not sure	Yes	Mission complete	spirituality	The US
.C87-F24	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Not sure	-	Doesn't know
.C88-M22	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C89-M22	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Yes	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C90-M23	M	20-29	Artunets	Yes	Yes	No	Mission complete	-	Russia, the Russians
.C91-F22	F	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	cultural influence	Russia, the Russians
.C92-F20	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Yes	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C93-F22	F	20-29	Jewish	-	Yes	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C94-F24	F	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	warning example	-
.C95-M26	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	No	-	The US
.C96-M22	M	20-29	Russian	-	Yes	No	No	-	Ecological problems
.C97-M23	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	No	Yes	evil empire	The US
.C98-M28	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	No	-	Nothing
.C99-M25	M	20-29	Armenian	Yes	Not sure	No	No	-	Nothing
.C100-M20	M	20-29	Russian	No	Yes	No	Mission complete	warning example	Nothing
.C101-M22	M	20-29	Russian	Yes	Yes	Not sure	No	-	The US
.C102-F22	F	20-29	Russian	No	No	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C103-M28	M	20-29	Ukrainian	Yes	Not sure	No	Not sure	-	The US
.C104-M25	M	20-29	Mixed	-	Yes	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C105-F29	F	20-29	Russian	?	Yes	No	Not sure	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C106-M32	M	30-39	Mixed	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	Eurasia	-
.C107-M38	M	30-39	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Corruption
.C108-M35	M	30-39	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	be different	Russia, the Russians
.C109-M31	M	30-39	Mixed	Yes	No	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C110-F31	F	30-39	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	-
.C111-F37	F	30-39	Russian	-	Not sure	No	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C112-F37	F	30-39	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	Corruption
.C113-F37	F	30-39	Russian	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Mission not exceptional	-	Nothing
.C114-F31	F	30-39	Russian	?	Yes	No	Not sure	-	Russia, the Russians
.C116-M30	M	30-39	Russian	-	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	Doesn't know
.C117-F30	F	30-39	Russian	-	No	No	No	-	Disunity etc
.C118-F32	F	30-39	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	improve the world	Terrorism, Islam
.C119-M38	M	40-49	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	influence the world	Rulers, bureacrats
.C120-F40	F	40-49	Mixed	-	Yes	No	No	-	Disunity etc
.C121-F43	F	40-49	Korean	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C122-F45	F	40-49	Mixed	No	Yes	Yes	Not sure	-	-
.C123-M41	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C124-M47	M	40-49	Russian	?	Yes	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C125-F42	F	40-49	Russian	No	Yes	No	Mission complete	warning example	Terrorism, Islam
.C126-M46	M	40-49	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C127-F43	F	40-49	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Not sure	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C128-M48	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	No	-	Other
.C129-M43	M	40-49	Russian	-	Yes	Not sure	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C130-M40	M	40-49	Russian	-	Yes	No	No	-	Drugs, alcohol
.C131-F47	F	40-49	Russian	No	No	No	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C132-F45	F	40-49	Russian	No	Yes	Not sure	No	-	Nothing
.C133-F47	F	40-49	Russian	?	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C134-M42	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	Not sure	No	Not sure	-	Russia, the Russians
.C135-M43	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Not sure	-	Doesn't know
.C136-F42.	F	40-49	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C137-F46	F	40-49	Mixed	Yes	Not sure	No	Yes	preach gospel	Sin
.C138-M40	M	40-49	Jewish	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	preach gospel	Fascism, extremism
.C139-M48	M	40-49	Russian	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Yes	multiculturalism	Terrorism, Islam
.C140-F59	F	50-59	Russian	Yes	Not sure	Yes	No	-	-
.C141-F54	F	50-59	Russian	Yes	Yes	-	No	-	Disunity etc
.C143-F55	F	50-59	Russian	No	Yes	No	Yes	-	Nothing
.C144-F51	F	50-59	Russian	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	Russia, the Russians
.C145-M50	M	50-59	Tadjik	-	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	-
.C146-M55	M	50-59	Russian	-	No	No	No	-	Corruption
.C147-M55	M	50-59	Caucasian	-	Yes	No	No	-	Zionism
.C148-F57	F	50-59	Russian	Yes	Not sure	No	Mission not exceptional	-	Disunity etc
.C149-F52	F	50-59	Russian	?	Not sure	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C150-M60	M	60-69	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Rulers, bureacrats
.C151-M60	M	60-69	Russian	No	Yes	Yes	No	-	Russia, the Russians
.C152-F68	F	60-69	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	warning example	Russia, the Russians
.C153-F67	F	60-69	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Doesn't know
.C154-M67	M	60-69	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C155-F67	F	60-69	Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	improve the world	War
.C156-F64	F	60-69	Russian	No	Yes	Not sure	Yes	spirituality	Terrorism, Islam
.C157-F65	F	60-69	Russian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Saviour	Terrorism, Islam
.C158-F70	F	>70	Russian	-	Yes	Yes	Not sure	-	Doesn't know
.C159-F80	F	>70	Russian	No	Yes	No	No	-	Terrorism, Islam
.C160-M76	M	>70	Russian	No	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	-	Corruption

Case	12 a)	12b)	15 a)	15 b,c)	16	17	19 a)	20 a)	20 b)
.C80-F20	Important	differently	not much	negative	other	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
.C81-F20	Important	differently	not much	not sure	Eastern	Yes	Not sure	No	Yes
.C82-F20	It's history	differently	not much	not sure	other	Yes but will fail	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C83-M21	It's history	-	Yes	positive	both	Yes	Yes	Depends	Not yet
.C84-M27	Important	differently	not much	negative	Eastern	Yes but will fail	Not sure	No	No need
.C85-F21	It's history	differently	not much	not sure	other	Not sure	No	No	No
.C86-F24	Important	-	Yes	negative	Eastern	Yes but will fail	No	Yes	No
.C87-F24	Important	-	not much	not sure	Eastern	Decline	Yes	No	No
.C88-M22	It's history	differently	not much	not sure	Eastern	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
.C89-M22	It's history	-	Yes	not sure	Western	Yes	Not sure	No	Not yet
.C90-M23	Important	same	not much	-	Western	Yes but will fail	No	Yes	No
.C91-F22	Important	-	not much	positive	both	Yes	No	Yes	Not sure
.C92-F20	It's history	differently	Yes	positive	both	Yes	No	Yes	No
.C93-F22	Important	same	not much	not sure	both	Not sure	No	Yes	Not sure
.C94-F24	Important	-	Yes	matter of fact	-	Not sure	Yes	No	No need
.C95-M26	Important	same	not much	positive	other	Yes	Yes	No	No
.C96-M22	Important	not sure	Yes	matter of fact	Western	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C97-M23	Important	same	Yes	not sure	other	Yes	No	No	Yes
.C98-M28	It's history	-	not much	not sure	both	-	-	No	No
.C99-M25	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	not sure	Western	Yes	No	No	Yes
.C100-M20	Both	not sure	Yes	matter of fact	other	Decline	Not sure	No	Yes
.C101-M22	Both	-	Yes	matter of fact	Western	Decline	No	Depends	No
.C102-F22	Both	-	Yes	negative	Western	Yes but will fail	Yes	No	No
.C103-M28	Not sure	-	not much	not sure	Eastern	Decline	Yes	No	Yes
.C104-M25	Important	-	not much	matter of fact	both	Great Power only	No	No	No
.C105-F29	It's history	-	not much	negative	both	Already empire	No	Yes	No
.C106-M32	Both	differently	Yes	negative	Western	Yes but will fail	No	Depends	No
.C107-M38	It's history	same	not much	not sure	both	Decline	No	No	No need
.C108-M35	Important	differently	not much	negative	Western	Yes	Yes	No	No
.C109-M31	It's history	differently	not much	negative	Western	Already empire	No	Yes	No
.C110-F31	Important	differently	Yes	negative	-	No	No	No	-
.C111-F37	Important	-	not much	positive	Western	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
.C112-F37	Important	-	not much	not sure	other	Not sure	No	Yes	No
.C113-F37	Both	-	not much	negative	Western	Yes	Not sure	No	Yes
.C114-F31	Mistake, lost time	-	Yes	negative	Eastern	Yes	No	Yes	No
.C116-M30	It's history	-	not much	positive	not sure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C117-F30	It's history	-	Yes	negative	other	Yes but will fail	No	-	No
.C118-F32	Important	-	not much	negative	not sure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C119-M38	Important	same	not much	negative	both	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C120-F40	Important	-	not much	not sure	Eastern	Decline	No	No	-
.C121-F43	It's history	-	not much	negative	-	Not sure	No	No	-
.C122-F45	Important	same	Yes	matter of fact	-	Decline	No	Yes	No
.C123-M41	It's history	-	not much	positive	-	Yes	Yes	Depends	No
.C124-M47	Both	differently	not much	positive	Eastern	Yes	No	No	No
.C125-F42	Important	same	Yes	matter of fact	Western	Yes but will fail	No	Yes	No
.C126-M46	Important	differently	not much	negative	other	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
.C127-F43	Mistake, lost time	same	not much	negative	Western	Not sure	Yes	No	No
.C128-M48	Important	same	Yes	not sure	Western	Yes	No	No	Yes
.C129-M43	Important	differently	Yes	positive	Eastern	Decline	No	Yes	No
.C130-M40	It's history	-	Yes	negative	both	Yes but will fail	Not sure	No	-
.C131-F47	Mistake, lost time	-	not much	positive	Western	Yes but will fail	No	-	-
.C132-F45	Mistake, lost time	differently	not much	negative	Western	Yes	No	No	-
.C133-F47	Important	not sure	not much	negative	Western	Not sure	Not sure	No	Yes
.C134-M42	It's history	-	Yes	not sure	both	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
.C135-M43	It's history	differently	not much	not sure	Eastern	Already empire	Not sure	Not sure	-
.C136-F42.	Important	-	not much	not sure	other	Yes	Yes	No	Not yet
.C137-F46	Important	not sure	Yes	not sure	other	Not sure	No	No	-
.C138-M40	Mistake, lost time	differently	Yes	positive	Eastern	Not sure	No	Yes	Not sure
.C139-M48	Mistake, lost time	same	Yes	positive	Western	Decline	No	No	-
.C140-F59	Both	same	not much	not sure	Western	Yes but will fail	No	Depends	-
.C141-F54	Mistake, lost time	differently	Yes	-	both	Yes but will fail	No	No	-
.C143-F55	Important	same	not much	positive	Western	Decline	Not sure	Not sure	No
.C144-F51	Important	not sure	not much	not sure	-	Yes but will fail	Yes	Not sure	No need
.C145-M50	Important	-	not much	not sure	not sure	Not sure	Yes	No	Yes
.C146-M55	Important	same	Yes	positive	Western	Yes	No	No	No need
.C147-M55	Mistake, lost time	-	Yes	negative	other	-	No	Yes	Yes
.C148-F57	Mistake, lost time	not sure	Yes	matter of fact	both	Not sure	Not sure	Depends	No
.C149-F52	Important	-	not much	not sure	other	Yes	No	No	No need
.C150-M60	It's history	differently	not much	negative	-	Decline	No	Yes	Yes
.C151-M60	Important	not sure	Yes	matter of fact	both	Great Power only	No	Not sure	Not sure
.C152-F68	Mistake, lost time	differently	not much	negative	other	Decline	No	No	No need
.C153-F67	It's history	differently	not much	negative	other	Yes	No	Yes	Not sure
.C154-M67	Mistake, lost time	-	Yes	positive	other	Great Power only	No	No	No
.C155-F67	Important	same	not much	positive	-	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
.C156-F64	Important	same	Yes	positive	Western	Yes	Yes	No	No need
.C157-F65	Important	same	not much	not sure	not sure	Not sure	Yes	Not sure	Not sure
.C158-F70	Important	differently	not much	not sure	other	Already empire	Not sure	No	Yes
.C159-F80	Mistake, lost time	same	Yes	not sure	both	Not sure	Yes	Yes	Not sure
.C160-M76	Important	-	not much	not sure	both	Decline	No	No	No

291

Case	21	22	23	28
.C80-F20	Positively, normally	patriotism	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C81-F20	Positively, normally	patriotism	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C82-F20	Positively, normally	mentality etc	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C83-M21	Positively, normally	mentality etc	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C84-M27	Pragmatically	Russian language	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Partly
.C85-F21	Not sure	sense of history	economy, work, poverty	Yes
.C86-F24	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	nothing	Yes
.C87-F24	Not sure	Orthodoxy	other	No
.C88-M22	Pragmatically	vodka	other	No
.C89-M22	Positively, normally	undescribable	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C90-M23	Not sure	nothing	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C91-F22	Pragmatically	not sure	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C92-F20	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C93-F22	Pragmatically	mentality etc	Eurasian or spiritual idea	No
.C94-F24	Not sure	mentality etc	nothing	Yes
.C95-M26	Not sure	spirituality, soul	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C96-M22	Unification	not sure	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C97-M23	Negatively	vodka	not sure	No
.C98-M28	Not sure	lifestyle	nothing	No
.C99-M25	Positively, normally	not sure	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C100-M20	Pragmatically	mentality etc	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C101-M22	Positively, normally	roots, birth	nothing	Yes
.C102-F22	Pragmatically	cultural	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C103-M28	Positively, normally	faith, general	economy, work, poverty	Not sure
.C104-M25	Pragmatically	life here	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C105-F29	Not sure	vodka	hiistory, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C106-M32	Positively, normally	lack of culture	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C107-M38	Positively, normally	Russian language	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C108-M35	Pragmatically	not sure	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Partly
.C109-M31	-	spirituality, soul	nothing	No
.C110-F31	Pragmatically	intellectualism	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C111-F37	Positively, normally	sense of history	other	Yes
.C112-F37	Positively, normally	not sure	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C113-F37	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	not sure	Yes
.C114-F31	Pragmatically	poverty mentality	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C116-M30	Pragmatically	not sure	other	Yes
.C117-F30	-	not sure	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Partly
.C118-F32	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C119-M38	Pragmatically	undescribable	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C120-F40	Positively, normally	cultural	other	Yes
.C121-F43	Positively, normally	-	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	No
.C122-F45	-	hospitality etc	not sure	Yes
.C123-M41	Positively, normally	patriotism	other	Yes
.C124-M47	Positively, normally	cultural	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C125-F42	Positively, normally	fascination with West	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Partly
.C126-M46	Positively, normally	Orthodoxy	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C127-F43	Positively, normally	Russian language	not sure	Yes
.C128-M48	Positively, normally	love	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C129-M43	Pragmatically	unpredictability	economy, work, poverty	No
.C130-M40	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C131-F47	-	-	nothing	Yes
.C132-F45	Positively, normally	roots, birth	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C133-F47	Positively, normally	spirituality, soul	economy, work, poverty	Yes
.C134-M42	Positively, normally	unexisting idea	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C135-M43	Positively, normally	Orthodoxy	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C136-F42.	Positively, normally	Orthodoxy	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C137-F46	Not sure	faith in God	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C138-M40	Not sure	Russian language	Eurasian or spiritual idea	Yes
.C139-M48	Positively, normally	undescribable	-	Yes
.C140-F59	Negatively	spirituality, soul	not sure	Not sure
.C141-F54	Pragmatically	-	nothing	No
.C143-F55	Positively, normally	roots, birth	other	Partly
.C144-F51	Positively, normally	mentality etc	life: territory, statehood, language	Partly
.C145-M50	Not sure	not sure	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Partly
.C146-M55	Pragmatically	mentality etc	other	Yes
.C147-M55	Not sure	poverty	nothing	No
.C148-F57	Positively, normally	cultural	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C149-F52	Positively, normally	roots, birth	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C150-M60	Positively, normally	not sure	life: territory, statehood, language	No
.C151-M60	Positively, normally	patriotism	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C152-F68	Not sure	unpredictability	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C153-F67	Positively, normally	mentality etc	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C154-M67	Positively, normally	undescribable	history, nostalgia, Soviet rule	Yes
.C155-F67	Positively, normally	cultural	life: territory, statehood, language	Yes
.C156-F64	Positively, normally	faith, general	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Yes
.C157-F65	Positively, normally	life here	economy, work, poverty	No
.C158-F70	Positively, normally	love	other	Yes
.C159-F80	Not sure	cultural	nothing	Partly
.C160-M76	Pragmatically	not sure	patriotism, friendship, love, humanity	Partly

Appendix III – Interview Case Studies

We have selected fourteen case studies from the interviews on the basis of their contribution to answering three of the research questions (Q4 is omitted as it concerns a different level of discourse). They constitute a varied sample of interviewees from different social and age backgrounds, and with very different views, to illustrate the nuances and diversity in perceptions of Russian identity and manifestation of messianic discourse.

i) **Q1. How can the study of discourse (as ideas and narratives) enhance our understanding of the collective identity of Russians?**

Interpretive analysis of the interviews based on strands of discourse theory makes possible the identification of themes and narratives that appear as central to the interviewee and their possible relation to each other and to other levels of discourse; and representations of Russia and of other actors in relation to which Russia is defined. Through the semi-structured interview format interviewees are able to talk at length, and when they want to diverge from the exact question to talk about what is important to them, drawing on and constructing different narratives in the process. These 'texts' provide an opportunity to identify and understand complex issues of Russian collective identity which opinion polls and surveys are unable to grasp. These cases of semi-structured interviews, with interviewees from extremely different backgrounds, all illustrate common ambiguities and dualisms of post-Soviet Russian identity construction with various internal contradictions in the – often deeply pessimistic – representations of Russia, the Russians, Putin and the government, indicating that the crisis of social and political relations is not yet over.

C1-F36e*: Svetlana, 36, manager of PR company, Moscow

Svetlana draws a lot upon the Eurasia discourse: as Russia is situated between East and West she has both the Asian and European mentalities, and her mission lies in uniting these mentalities and spiritualities. But Svetlana's image of Russia is not unproblematic: Russia is a source of spirituality for the rest of the world but as a

nation it is ridden by a deep, inner conflict. For Svetlana, the Russians themselves pose the greatest danger to Russia. She describes that many are so used to having someone else make decisions for them that they have become incapacitated, lazy and poor, feeding on nostalgia. Few, including the politicians, think long-term; all want quick gains. Svetlana expresses deep resentment against the idea of Russia as being democratic – the presidential elections, she explains, is a farce, a theatre and already pre-arranged. Nobody's voice changes anything. She admits that there was a lot of negative things during the Soviet period, but argues that there also was a lot of good points and achievements that ought not to be forgotten and suggests that there must have been a higher reason for what happened. The discourses on Slavonic brotherhood and civilization have little resonance with Svetlana as she openly admits that she even loves "Jews more than Ukrainians." She uses analogues of prostitution to describe Ukraine, and other derogatory terms about the former Soviet republics; whereas Russia, on the other hand, is described in the terms "strong, beautiful and very original." The discourse on Russia helping others and sacrificing herself is drawn upon as Svetlana describes how Russia took care of the republics that were only ungrateful. Now they regret leaving Russia but it is too late for them. But as for Russia, she both has potential and future. She admits that there was a lot of negative things during the Soviet period, but argues that there also was a lot of good points and achievements that ought not to be forgotten and suggests that there must have been a higher reason for what happened. In Svetlana's account two different Russia's are constructed: on the one hand the true Russia, strong, beautiful, helping others, with loads of potential, whose native soil is pulling back the Russians who left for America during the perestroika; on the other, the conflict-ridden Russian nation of lazy Russians and corrupt politicians.

C53-M17*: Sergei, 17, unemployed, Moscow

Sergei, who was interviewed in a park in central Moscow where he was hanging out with a group of prostitutes and skinheads, paints a gloomy, far from heroic, picture of Russia. Only money counts for influence, he argues, and many political and scientific people that should be influential are not because they don't have money. Asked whether Russia is a source or example of spirituality, Sergei responds: "No.

She never was, and for another twenty-five years won't be either. *We still haven't understood what it's like to be civilised*." This echoes the Western discourse on the uncivilised Orient in relation to which the civilised (and civilising) West is defined, as analysed by Edward Said. Again we see a young Russian resorting to Western discourses on Russia to criticize it. Russia might have a mission though, even if she is not civilised: in the textbooks, Sergei explains, someone always depended on Russia, she was always needed by someone. So neither civilised, nor a source or example of spirituality, but always needed and depended on by someone. Yet Sergei, like so many others, sees the Russian people itself as the main danger to Russia. He picks the Chechen war of 1998 as one of the most tragic periods in Russian history. When asked about Eurasia, Sergei responds that neither membership of a Eurasian Union nor of the EU will change Russia – Russia will still be "left-over" (*otstalaya*). And asked whether Russia is a Western or Eastern country, he says the same: "Rather left-over." Sergei chooses not to use any of the available, traditional categories like East/West or the alternative Eurasia but creates his own Russia, left-over even by categorisation. Yet he believes that Russia will, in a distant future, become a mighty Empire – not in his own lifetime though. "Russia has always sought to rule everyone, but with her brains that's impossible." When asked about globalisation, Sergei states that Russia is dependent upon Europe and America. He says jokingly that there are more McDonalds's than shops in Russia which he sees as positive, "since our industry is dead already, the kolkhozes broke up under Eltsin and are not needful to anyone." Sergei does not trust any of the political parties in Russia, saying that they are all financially dependent. "They promise a lot but when they get power it's all the same." Does Sergei believe in Russia? "I believed, but now, no. She's dying. She's comparable to South Africa."

C29-M71e*: Igor, 71, physicist and engineer, Moscow

Asked about Tiutchev's famous lines, Igor says that he had heard them often but that he has no opinion on them. "But all know that Russia consists of fools and has bad roads. See *this* statement I am in complete agreement with." Asked whether Russia is a source or example of spirituality for the rest of the world he answers "In no case whatsoever. Opposite." He doesn't think that Russia has a mission, or that the idea of

295

a mission is popular. The greatest dangers to Russia, he says, is that part of the Russian people that has access to state resources and steal them. He is neither wholly negative nor positive to the Soviet era. Instead, "the most terrifying in the history of Russia is the Eltsin rule. Overnight all became bandits." The concept of Eurasia appears good to Igor and he credits Putin for the recent dynamics in the discussions about it and the concrete steps that have been made. He believes however that Russia will decline its imperial ambitions and that the question today is rather whether Russia will remain in the number of leading states of the world or glide down to the third or fourth line of the most "left over" states. He sees the Russian Orthodox Church as a positive factor that should be discussed more and given more significance. As ethics is an infected question in Russia, he explains, precisely the Church could play a large and significant role here. Igor believes that globalisation is dangerous for Russia but that it is not for Russia to stand against it. A key theme for Igor is the revolution of 1991 – "this thuggish revolution", since which he believes all has gone downhill for Russia, and people began to show their very worst characteristics – it is so serious that he is pessimistic even about defining traits of Russianness. This is without in any way glorifying the Soviet era. He criticizes some aspects of Putin's regime but is on the whole very positive towards Putin and says that "it's scary" to think about what will happen after 2008, who will come after Putin.

C157-F65*: Vera, 65, pensioner, Moscow

Vera has been a pensioner since 1994 – she used to work with technical documentation for a State Bureau. She continuously talks about "us old people", "the people from our area" and answers in plural: "we don't like…" and so on, constructing the image of a cohesive group identity. She wouldn't call Russia spiritual ("that idea is about something entirely different") but her rather sacrificial Russia does have a mission: "There is, but for some reason all other peoples (it seems to us old people) hate us. But why? You know, our government always helps everyone; our pensions are low, maybe, because of this, but there you go." She thinks that those who steal and kill, and the terrorists, pose the greatest danger to Russia. Asked whether she considers the seventy years of Soviet rule to be a mistake and lost

time or an important part of Russian history, she answers: "I don't know. I cannot answer. I am uneducated, therefore I don't know." Asked instead whether it was good or bad that the Soviet Union fell, she says: "Bad, of course. And overall this break-up… It seems to me: as people used to live they should have been left to live. You see, there was no hatred of anyone, but now, it seems to me, we have those things. [. . .] People don't like it. Everything was normal, and it's not understandable why, what for. On the contrary, we, the people, live peacefully and do not divide anything. It seems that it is our government [that does]." But even if the government is guilty of causing divisions and disunity, Putin favourably described: "We are very happy now, that Putin is so young and all [*chto u nas Putin takoi: molodoi, ne takoi*]. But we are a little bit unhappy, that even though they are increasing our pensions they are still barely sufficient. If they would only give us at least the existential minimum. Apart from that we are so pleased with Putin." On most other questions - of empire, Eurasia, Ukraine and others - she says that she doesn't know. She notes that people are going to church much more now and agrees that Russia's spiritual potential to be greater than other countries. Finally, asked for whom she voted, she says: "We voted for Putin, all our area."

ii) **Q2. What is the manifestation and resonance among ordinary Russians of the messianic and related narratives deployed in Russian public and official discourse?**

The first case is representative of a relatively small but vocal group of interviewees who in the course of their interviews managed to draw upon the whole range of typical messianic and related narratives from public discourse, using the same style and concepts, thus illustrating a certain dissemination of the new kaleidoscopic master discourse from public to popular discourse. The following four cases are more illustrative of the more diverse and balanced views of the majority of the interviewees, who would often reject several of the typical messianic and related narratives, but embrace perhaps one or two others, yet do so in ways and contexts unconventional compared to public discourse – such as be strongly pro-Western and

liberal, yet desire Russia to become a mighty empire. The second and fourth cases indicate a widespread (among educated interviewees) awareness of precisely the popularity of messianic notions in Russia. The sixth, last case is very different and reflects the in Russian messianic discourse radicalised representation of the Other as the both internal and external 'Judeo-American' enemy. It also shows a near apocalyptic representation of contemporary Russia.

C7-M31e*: Oleg, 31, owner and manager of PR company, Moscow

Oleg is young, educated and rich – and very eager to prove that neither he nor Russia harbours any messianic ideas or ambitions but that it can be understood rationally. Below Oleg explains the function of messianism in Russia, and at the same time declares that there is no need for it in Russia now:

> It's not our task to prove that our path is better, something different. Nobody thinks about these things. There are some certain stereotypes, making out that we do. Russia thinks only about these things when she finds herself under very difficult economic and political conditions and has to somehow compensate for her weak position in domestic or foreign politics, for that sake allowing ideas of some kind of different path. But there has never been anything [real] about this.

In the course of the interview, Oleg builds on various messianic narratives: Russia is a moral haven, America is amoral: "at present, in the sense of spirituality, Russia's potential is a lot bigger, from the point of view of moral-ethical principles and norms"; Russia is different and "not simple" (even though he also states that Russia is just a 'normal' country); as well as Eurasianist ideas. As many of the elite interviewees, Oleg believes in Russian Orthodoxy and a recurring theme in the interview is the Russian *sobornost'* (conciliarity or communality), the particular mentality ascribed to Russians by virtue of their Orthodoxy. Discussing the concept of mission, Oleg argues that it is not the least popular in Russia – but shortly after outlines a specific mission for Russia (on whom "everything depends") based on Russia's rich resources and very specific location between Western Europe and China, and subsequent ability to "counterbalance these sides, interact, and be a terrific mediator in disputes and solving conflicting situations." The interview is an

298

informative example of a tendency noted in several interviews: attempts to reject stereotypes of Russian messianism contradictorily mixed together with clear embracement of precisely messianic narratives and ideas, suggesting that in some senses Russian messianism, for all its stereotypical status, is a necessary part of Russian political and cultural identity.

C70-M27*: Sergei, 27, computer programmer, St Petersburg

Sergei belongs to the still relatively small Russian middle class and enjoys economic freedom without renouncing the Soviet past. Throughout the interview, he shows sophisticated awareness of the persistence of many stereotypical messianic discourses in Russia, rejecting them, but embracing empire, Eurasia and a degree of anti-Westenism. Sergei disagrees with Tyutchev and says that "it is possible to measure [Russia], it's rather the Russian people that want to consider themselves special." We Russians are special in what we like to do, he says, that we don't like to work. He doesn't believe that Russia is a source or example of spirituality for the rest of the world but recognises the popularity of the idea of a mission: "There exists this assumption that Russia ought to save the world and make it more spiritual. But at the moment Russia is concerned with how to survive and economical issues – how to develop the economy and come to a more civilised level. But aside from that – yes, this idea has been preserved." He says that quite a few people consider Russia to have a 'special standing' [*osobennoe polozhenie*] though not necessarily a mission. Sergei likes the idea of Russia, China and India uniting as an alternative power to the US and Europe. He hasn't heard anything of the concept of Eurasia but when presented with the idea as formulated in the questionnaire, he says that:

> it doesn't lack sense, as Russia is situated between Eastern and Western countries, and despite the fact that it with all its strength strives towards the West (we have always, since the time of Peter I, been striving westwards) we cannot escape our Eastern characteristics, which is why they need to, insofar as it is possible, somehow harmoniously be combined in ourselves (I mean in Russia).

As for Russia stepping out as an empire he says "she will, of course. Because since the time of the USSR we have been used to consider ourselves… The USSR was as a

mighty power, ruling a seventh of all dry land, and now, doubtlessly, no-one wants to yield the position, and Russia will do all possible so that she was taken into account in the international society." Sergei thinks that the seventy years of Soviet history are important, hopes that they will have taught them something, and cherishes his happy USSR childhood, but does not regret the break-up of the Soviet Union: "Life was hard. As far as freedoms are concerned, Russia has moved far ahead in comparison with the USSR. People can travel all over the world, freely work together money, own private property – it's all very good." He finds it hard to say what makes a Russian Russian and what unites peoples of different cultures, traditions and religions in Russia, himself elaborating on the great diversity of people in Russia, from nomads to city-dwellers, but says it would probably be desirable if some common national idea united them other than the insufficient top-down attempts to use sport as a national idea. Sergei thinks it's bad that Ukraine has turned away from Russia and explains that Russia ought to exercise its influence, including through gas and oil ultimatums, in order for Ukraine to be oriented not towards the West or America but towards Russia.

C12-F36e*: Alexandra, 36, 'New Russian,' St Petersburg

Alexandra travels extensively to the West, enjoys the "Westernisation" of Russia and is at the same time quite happy with Russia being "a pretty serious empire." Alexandra says that the Soviet period was rather an important part of Russian history than a mistake, but asked whether the break-up of the Soviet Union was positive or negative, responds: "Depends who you ask – personally, I'm not against living in New Russia." Alexandra says that Russia can be proud of all her periods of history as she has always been strong, and an empire. The positive valuation of Russia as a strong empire is restated later on in the interview where Alexandra states that: "We are already stepping out as a pretty serious empire," then adds, "And why not?" Alexandra hasn't heard much about the concept of Eurasia and appears little keen on the idea of a union between Russia and some Asian and Islamic states. She thinks that Russia's relations with the west are improving, in that the West's attitude to Russia has changed for the better. She agrees that Russia is both an example and source of spirituality for the rest of the world but doesn't know what kind of mission

Russia could have. Alexandra appears open and inclusive in her views on ethnic difference, indicating that there is so much mixing that there is no point to use ethnicity as a diacritic of Russianness, but rather accurate Russian language. And she is not bothered about Ukraine's turn away from Russia: "Let them live as they want." The interview with Alexandra shows how the discourse on Russia as a strong and mighty empire is not always accompanied by the anti-Western and pro-Eurasia discourses.

C83-M21*: Mikhail, 21, St Petersburg, sociology student, marketing agent

Mikhail comes from a wealthy background and is happy with the fact that someone is asking this kind of questions about Russia. The key theme in the interview with Mikhail is the break between Soviet Russia and New Russia – he keeps stressing that society today is totally different from 15 years ago, and the contemporary Russia he portrays is modern. Throughout the interview he thoughtfully analyses Russian society and the issues facing it, using various modern sociological theories. Mikhail says that the history of Russia certainly is an example of spirituality, but that it difficult to say about today. As for a mission, it certainly exists and is very important but is "completely incomprehensible." The idea of a mission is popular he says, and likens Russia to a company in which people need to know their purpose and function. There are those who seek to find the mission, formulate and bring it out, but for various reasons of which social fragmentation is one, the mission remains unformulated and incomprehensible. As many of his compatriots, Mikhail sees the greatest danger in the Russians themselves, in their own "careless decisions and actions." He is hoping for Russia to step out as a mighty empire:

> I would really, really like that – Russia to be a mighty empire. And I'm sure those in authority really want that as well. Because it would allow that mission, of which we are speaking, to be formulated, and it would be clearer to people what they are able to do. Pride is a sin according to the Bible, but pride is a very serious motive for action – one must only keep feeding it all the time.

He answers "yes" to the question whether Russia has a greater spiritual potential than other countries thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church. He later, however,

discusses its politicisation and concludes that the Church is always about power. Mikhail enjoys today's Russia, it fits him and he fits into it. In the presidential elections he voted liberal, for Khakamada. As can be noted, having liberal views, high education and already a starting career within marketing can without apparent conflict be combined with "really, really" wanting Russia to become a mighty empire and believing that Russia's spiritual potential is greater than other countries'.

C31-M18*: Alexander, 18, student, St Petersburg

Alexander lives with his family in one of the slightly better areas of St Petersburg. He appears a bit nervous and gives short answers, but relaxes as we talk. He believes that in some sense Russia is a source or example of spirituality, and though he can't give an example of it he says that compared to the US, it seems to him that Russia's level of spirituality is higher. He's not sure about Russia having a mission, but thinks it could be that each country has a mission and that Russia's is to raise the level of spirituality. On the question of spiritual potential, he answers: "I do not consider that it is particularly thanks to the Russian Orthodox Church [that Russia's spiritual potential is greater than that of other countries], it seems to me that there is something lain inside of Russia itself, that people here are more spiritual than in other countries. But this does not depend on religion but is something lain inside."

The most important for Russia, in terms of dangers, in Alexander's opinion is to not err in the choice of path of development. He admits however that he doesn't know which path this should to be. He reckons that Russia is both Eastern and Western but closer to the East and he also considers Russia to a large extent to be a Muslim country, which is why Russia should have good relations with other Muslim countries – but he hasn't heard anything about the concept of Eurasia. He thinks, however, that unification, if it enhances the development of inside relations between peoples and of society as a whole, is good in any case.

He reckons that Russia in the future, when it is stronger economically, will play a pretty important role internationally, but not as an empire, rather as a conciliator. Globalisation he sees as harmful and dangerous to Russia. As for Russia's relations with the West he can't see opposition but rather a tendency towards unity. Making Russians Russian is their peculiar style of behaviour in society. Uniting all

different peoples in Russia is again spirituality and also their relation to and role in the world, and the consciousness of belonging precisely to Russia. Alexander does believe in a unity of the Slavonic republics. The Soviet period, he argues, can be seen as an important experience both for Russia and other countries.

C147-M55*: Marshan, 55, Moscow, lawyer

The interview with Marshan, from Caucasian, is dominated by three interrelated themes: the poverty of the Russian people, the near end of Russia as a state, and zionisation. He agrees with Tiutchev's lines, saying that Russia is peculiar in that despite many riches there are so many poor people. "People are good, but they are hungry, cold and poor and it's shameful." He does not believe that Russia is a source or example of spirituality, and to the question of whether or not she has a mission he answers "What mission?! I don't know, and I don't agree. How can Russia fulfil a particular mission when the people starve, and live badly?"

On the questions of Russianness and what unites the peoples in the Russian federation he continues to talk about the poverty and the bad relation of the state towards the people, and says that the only thing uniting people is [trying] not to die by starvation. On what poses the greatest danger to Russia, he initially answers Zionism and Wahhabism, and later adds more detail, drawing a near apocalyptic vision of Russia:

> There is a complete corruption of power. Deceit, poverty, devastation, lack of culture, immorality, drugs, debauchery. There are very many drug addicts and AIDS-bearers, homeless children, alcoholism. These phenomena do pose a danger to the Russian state. This is why my prognosis is that Russia will disintegrate. There will be some administrative-territorial formations, where they will sit as lords and rulers, competing about who has the biggest wallet. If the people consciously will not understand where we are heading - either towards disaster or towards normal life – then Russia will be doomed to destruction, because I can't see anything good here now.

He sees globalisation, furthermore, as very dangerous: "It's a very bad tendency. I consider both McDonalds and globalisation to be very bad phenomena. It's the politics of Zionism." Zionism, he explains, is "when a handful of Jews acquire all

wealth, though the population consists of other nationalities as well. Without giving anything in exchange, they collect everything for themselves and create for themselves a separate state – what we just talked about – *globalisation*. This means the establishment of international forces, the establishment of political forces, international banks from which they will control and increase in the name of this their Zionist, Jewish nightmare." On the seventy years of Soviet rule he says that "it was probably a group of Zionists that seized power and created a state like that."

Yet, out of various periods of Russian history, he says that Russia can be proud of the Soviet times. He says that he has heard of the concept Eurasia, and defines it as when "five percent of the rich people unite their capital, and without thinking about their people, increase their riches. Rich people play cards, receive big money and put them in their pockets." On whether Russia belongs to the East or the West he says that "Russia is both Eastern and Western, from the point of view of geography. From the point of view of political thinking, Russia has no relation whatsoever neither to the East nor the West. It is a rich country with poor people."

iii) **Q4. How can we understand and conceptualise Russian messianism, its functions and role in relationship to Russian statecraft, especially towards the West?**

The first case illustrates how Russian messianism can be understood as a discursive framework, holding a kaleidoscopic range of both complementing and sometimes contradictory narratives. The representation of Russia as large, spiritual, misunderstood, sacrificing itself for others, with a mission to unite the world in general and specifically to become a partner of the West, coexists both in this interview and in Russian discourse as a whole – with the more threatening representation of the Russia that should not be disturbed or messed about with, the Russia that needs to stand against America. Through and in this framework, Russia is defined and appears to be legitimised as a state actor with special roles and responsibilities in ambiguous (here varyingly oppositional and positive, both inferior and superior) relation to the West as Other.

The following two cases show a more clearly dichotomised self/Other framework, typical among many young people, where the Russians as a people with a rich culture who have "always been with God" and Russia as a state has a mission to restrain or stand against America, as in Soviet times – but move closer to Europe – and with resentment against Ukraine for turning away from its Slavonic heritage and turning towards the West.

In the last case, the Europeanist interviewee explicitly denounces messianism in the form national-patriot visions of Eurasia and imperial ambitions as being 'anachronisms in the contemporary world', showing how Russian messianism are often perceived as hampering Russia's image as a 'normal' international state actor. Yet the interview also illustrates very strongly the tension in both Russian messianism and discourse as a whole between exceptionalism, in the form of culturalist fundamentalism, and the 'universalism' of western international relations.

The semi-structured interview format allows us not only to simply measure attitudes towards other state actors, but to explore how particular narratives and metaphors are deployed in the process of constructing Russian state identity in relation to Others, and how these deployments compare to other levels of discourse.

C8-F31e*: Irina, 31, business woman and project manager, Moscow

Irina, a very wealthy, educated and fashion-conscious businesswoman, the manager of a large building project called *Russkaya Britannia* – Russian Britain – could be described as a typical post-modern Russian messianist. She picks Eastern spirituality but leaves the asceticism ('in the East they are too spiritual'). She classifies herself as Orthodox, but is involved in various New Age practices – the interview began with her explaining the necessity of having a Rose quartz - the stone of unconditional love – to secure love and eternal happiness. Spirituality is a key theme in her discourse and is much elaborated on later in the interview, with constant comparisons to the secular West (e.g. 'in Britain they convert churches into houses').

Answering the first question on Tyutchev's famous lines on Russia's peculiarity, Irina in the course of two minutes, manages to draw the whole range of typical Russian messianic discourses: Russia as chosen by God; Russia as an empire, with special missions and responsibilities, taking care of the world (as the lion of the

savannah) and of the little ones (Russia is now more prepared for a mission having gone through the stages of both tsarism and communism); Russia even uniting the whole world; Russia because of this suffering for the sake of others; the Russian soul; Russia as Eurasia, and the East-West dichotomy with the East as spiritual and the West as material yet Russia overcoming it by uniting both (the whole extract is unfortunately too long to be included). God is a master signifier in Irina's discourse, and the other key actors are the West, the East and Russia, also Eurasia.

The sheer concentration and mixing of messianic discourse in this first answer alone is reflective of the gradual formation of a messianic master discourse in public discourse, as are the dualistic representations both of Russia itself and of the West. Russia is constructed as large, spiritual, having important things to offer to the world, but the world does not understand it. Russia wants to unite, be friends, but scares away Europe by its sheer size.

Russia is both quite old (though not as old as Greece and Italy) and relatively young; Russia both *is* Eurasia already, uniting the spirituality of the East and the practicality of the West, and *must*, in the future, "competently convert all there is in the West and all there is in the East" and "give some new product to the world"; Russia is large, friendly, spiritual and misunderstood, and at the same time the dangerous, sleeping bear (which Ukraine should watch out for, having become strangers to Russia by going to the West): "If he sleeps, don't bother him, because if he wakes up, it will be bad for everyone."

The great ambivalence to 'the West' – sometimes meaning Europe, sometimes America, sometimes Western civilization as a whole in Russian identity discourse is epitomised in this interview – Irina on the one hand emphasises the positive values Russia has got from 'the West' hopes for closer relations, even a unification, between Russia and Europe, yet believes that Russia must stand against America, and believes that the materialism and Americanisation of Russia's youth is a key danger to Russia. That the stories we tell about ourselves are not necessarily coherent becomes clear listening to Irina.

C48-M19*: Vladislav, 19, student, Moscow

Vladislav, studying economics, agrees with Tyutchev's lines, "because the Russian nationality is not comparable to any other, it has its own take. The Germans are an older nation, but in our thousand year old history we have had many different wars, and that has given us a certain experience and certain traditions. They are uncommon, peculiar only to the Slavs, not only the Russians."

He feels bitter about Ukraine's turn-away from Russia but still believes in the unity of the Slavonic republics. Vladislav believes that Russia has a mission and that it consists in Cold War: "In the world there ought to be parity. There can't be one country that leads and commands, someone needs to restrain it. It used to be the Soviet Union; though there were extremes, it was very powerful." Later he adds that Russia together with the EU should restrain America, and also considers that Russo-European relations will get closer and closer. Russia will step out as a source of power internationally, he believes.

He considers the seventy years of Soviet rule to be an important part of Russian history, and thinks that most people think the same, and also thinks that Russia can be proud over the Imperial and the Soviet past. He understands "Eurasia" as the fusion of European and Asian ideals. He answers "yes" to the question on Russia's spiritual potential being greater thanks to the Orthodox Church; and explains that "the Orthodox are in favour of uniting many nations. Catholicism has similar traits, but there it's more stress on money. If a person is successful – it means God is helping him. In Russia it's not like that." He doesn't think that globalization is dangerous to Russia. Asked what makes a Russian Russian, he answers that "if we look purely historically, then the Russian person has always been honest, always ready to help others, and has always been with God."

C95-M26*: Sergei, 26, optician, Moscow

Sergei gives short but affirmative answers. He believes that Russia certainly is a source and example of spirituality for the rest of the world, as she has such a rich culture. Seventy years of Soviet power is according to Sergei not lost time but a very important part of Russian history, and he believes that most Russians feel the same. Russia can be proud of her history, he says, "up until 1917, and from 1917 to 1991."

Sergei has not heard anything about the concept of Eurasia, but when presented with the idea of 'a harmonious unity between the former Soviet republics with Russia as centre, possibly also with some Islamic countries and some other Asian countries in union with Russia' he is very positive towards it. Russia, in his opinion, is neither Eastern nor Western. He says that he is hoping that Russia will one day become an Empire. "The state, situated on the other side of the ocean" poses the greatest danger to Russia in Sergei's opinion. Here he uses the word *protivopolozhniy*, 'contrary' or 'opposite' which in Russian conveys a meaning of polarity and negativity. Cold war imagery is evoked of two states facing each other, diametrically opposed. When asked, later, what relations would be desirable with the West for Russia he answers with the formal "I struggle to answer." He does not believe that globalisation poses any danger to Russia.

Sergei says that 'the soul' makes a Russian Russian. As for the other nationalities, ethnicities, religions and cultures, he says that what unites them in Russia are the common territorial borders. He agrees with the statement that Ukraine has turned away from Russia and thinks it is bad, but believes however in the unity of the Slavonic republics. There is significant anti-Semitism in Russia according to Sergei. And he voted for Putin. In sum, Sergei appears to accept much of the discourse on Russia as spiritual and soulful at the same time as expressing his desire for a Russian Empire and being positive to the idea of a Eurasian Union (though not perceiving any particular unity between different peoples and nationalities in Russia at the moment). The US for him functions as a main enemy and other, and he would rather have Russia move closer to the Islamic world.

C28-F60e*: Tatyana, 60, Head of Department of Diplomacy at MGIMO, Moscow

The main discourse in the interview with Tatiana Zonova is about the European roots of Russia, about culture and international relations in the contemporary world. The macro-proposition could go: 'We [states] are all different, we are all special and we are all the same.' Throughout the interview there is a tension between on the one hand the celebration of cultural and civilisational specificity and on the other the adherence to civic diacritics, secularism and joint international 'objective' responsibilities.

She stresses difference between countries, in terms of culture and civilization e.g. talking of "this Eastern Christian civilisational model." What makes a Russian Russian is for Tatyana "his own history, the history of his civilization, his worldviews – correspondingly, orthodoxy, Christianity, the culture he is brought up with." What unites all peoples of different cultures and religions is their common history, and the Russian influence – as example she mentions that what is taught in Russian schools is mainly based on Russian and Christian culture. Later she states that whether one is Muslim, Jew or Orthodox doesn't matter at all as Russia has got a secular state – each group can have their own organisations inside Russia.

Tatyana rejects the idea of Russia as being a Eurasian civilization, on the basis of Russia's Christian foundation. She says that national-patriotic 'Eurasianist dreams' appear to her anachronistic in the contemporary world, as does the imperial structure – she hopes that Russia will decline imperial ambitions. A concern about the negative stereotype-making of Russia and other countries is another theme that runs throughout the interview.

Tatyana stresses similarity, in terms of states' international roles and responsibilities. "The Americans reckon that they have a certain mission, and the French have a certain mission, and the Italians have a certain mission, and so, evidently Russia too has her mission. So each occupies its own place in the world, seeks space, and seeks itself friends, and attempts to somehow influence the development of events. In this, I suppose, consists this mission: to take active part in international relations, in my opinion. To play one's role in the contemporary world, to understand the contemporary tendencies of development, to bring one's own input to this development." What characterises this contemporary world? "The world is so interdependent and processes are becoming global in which there are many different actors, and not even such a mighty power as the US, I believe, is capable of managing by itself with all the problems that exist in the contemporary world." She sees globalisation as an objective process, a fact of everyday life with both good and bad, which it would be absurd to try to oppose.

Relations with the West, she reckons, are unfolding very positively, as Russia is "quite a predictable partner, which is important." There is some discrepancy in her discourse between Russia as an international actor – a predictable partner – and

309

Russia from within, as she believes the greatest threat to Russia is the situation in Russia itself and describes the dangers of quick transitions from one system to another, including destabilisation and extremism.

Appendix IV – Transliteration Table

Russian letter or letter combination	English transliteration
А (а)	A (a)
Б (б)	B (b)
В (в)	V (v)
Г (г)	G (g)
Д (д)	D (d)
Е (е)	E (e)
Ё (ё)	E (e)
Ж (ж)	Zh (zh)
З (з)	Z (z)
И (и)	I (i)
Й (й)	I (i)
К (к)	K (k)
Л (л)	L (l)
М (м)	M (m)
Н (н)	N (n)
О (о)	O (o)
П (п)	P (p)
Р (р)	R (r)
С (с)	S (s)
Т (т)	T (t)
У (у)	U (u)
Ф (ф)	F (f)
Х (х)	Kh (kh)
Ц (ц)	Ts (ts)
Ч (ч)	Ch (ch)
Ш (ш)	Sh (sh)
Щ (щ)	Shch (shch)
ъ (твёрдый знак)	"
Ы (ы)	Y (y)
ь (мягкий знак)	'
Э (э)	E (e)
Ю (ю)	Yu (yu)
Я (я)	Ya (ya)

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