

THE RUSSIAN IDEA AND THE DISCOURSE OF VLADIMIR PUTIN

Gavin Slade

University of Oxford, Graduate student
at the Centre for Criminology,
gavin.slade@linacre.ox.ac.uk

Abstract

Ideology analysis is important for understanding how weak states stay in tact and strengthen themselves. During the chaos of the 1990s Russia had lost a coherent ideology and unifying discourse of state and society. Vladimir Putin sought to begin his reign as president by recreating one. His Millennium Manifesto is deconstructed here to show a process of re-mythologizing the Russian state by overcoming the political divisions within society. The historical conception of the Russian idea, based on the concepts of Russian uniqueness (samobytnost'), statehood (gosudarstvennost'), and community (sobornost') form the basis of Putin's narrative of the Russian state. This is mixed with aspects of Western liberal ideas, borrowed from Gorbachev's "New Thinking" era. The result is to create a rich inter-textual discursive episteme that forms an ideological backdrop to Putin's first term state-building reforms. The Millennium Manifesto was a basic building block in filling out the dimensions of an ideology that Putin has expounded throughout his time in office and which is crucial to understanding the resurgence of the Russian state today.

1. Introduction

How can discourse and ideology analysis be used as an approach for studying post-communist states? During the transitions of the 1990s, in many cases in the former Soviet Union, the state went through processes of plunder and predation having been captured by rent-seekers of varying stripes. This created an archipelago of weak or dysfunctional states. In the event of state weakness and a lack of capacity, state-building projects must utilise a vital remaining, yet very powerful, resource – the symbolic and the psychological. The state can become an internalised part of consciousness as much as it corresponds to some objective structure in reality. "Where states have tapped into the creation of shared meaning in society, they have become naturalised and the thought of their dissolution or disappearance unimaginable".¹ An established order is maintained not by rational calculations of state and subject but through a naturalising process where the recognition and prestige, or symbolic capital, endowed in state institutions and figures makes for an embedded and internalised orthodoxy in the perceiving of the social world; this is essentially

¹ Joel Migdal, *State in Society* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001), 167.

symbolic power. Thus, in post-communist regimes facing a crisis of capacity where the state has started to break down in its major function of distributing public goods, the discursive and ideological aspects of state-building can be crucial factors in whether a state survives or goes into meltdown.

Here, I apply discourse analysis to partially explain the resurrection of the Russian state under Vladimir Putin. Below, I give some background to the publication of a manifesto written by Putin on the eve of his taking the role of acting president of the Russian Federation; I then go on to do a discourse analysis of four extracts of this text before drawing some conclusions.

2. Background to the Millennium Manifesto

On the 12th July 1996, following a closely fought election victory, Boris Yeltsin called his advisors to him. "In Russia's history in the 20th century...each epoch had its own ideology. [But] now we don't have one. And that's bad," he said². The goal was set to have a unifying "Russian idea" developed before the next election in 2000.

"The Russian idea" was first coined by Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyev in 1889. It was a Slavophilic conception emphasising Russian culture as occupying a special place in the history of civilisation and a unique Russian identity that could lead Russia on a separate path to the modern world. It was particularly anti-Western and emphasised ideals and practices that were the antithesis of Europe's individualistic, formal modernising project. It has comparisons in other cultures in the world at this time that also felt threatened by the expanding empires emanating from Europe - in the Arab world it was Islamism, in China Confucianism, and in Japan *kokutai*³. And this was still the backdrop for the discursive field in the 1990s as Russia sought to find its identity and re-establish its place in the world. That this concept was explicitly invoked by Yeltsin in 1996 shows the position Russia was in at that moment. Its economic reforms had failed - it had tried to follow the West in modernising and democratising but the country was now disintegrating along the fractious lines of diametrically opposed political visions, breakaway territorial boundaries, and diverging ideals. Russia's political discourse was framed

² Boris Yeltsin quoted in Urban, M. 1998, "Remythologising the Russian State", in *Euro-Asia Studies* 50/6. (University Of Glasgow: Routledge), 969.

³ See McDaniel, T, 1996, *The Agony of the Russian Idea*, (Princeton University Press, 1998) for a full description of the Russian idea's main features and its modern relevance.

in black and white, good and evil.⁴ Elections were “plebiscites on the nature of the system”.⁵ There was little compromise or synthesis. What Yeltsin realized was that a common political language was urgently needed. He was aware that “the historical changes and crises of legitimacy experienced by communist and post-communist regimes in Russia are linked to a positional conflict within the community of discourse,”⁶ and that “collectively [this conflict] create[s] an intolerable situation...and anticipate[s] some moment at which victors and vanquished in the struggle for state power will be declared along with the acceptance and/or imposition of a single definition of the Russian nation.”⁷ I suggest here that this declaration was made on the 29th of December 1999 in the *Millennium Manifesto*, placed on

⁴ For example, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, during the 1996 election campaign, told a stadium-full of supporters how the devil was trying to destroy Russia. He had sent two beasts of hell, anti-Christ, who wear the mark of the devil. He suggested that it was prophesied that one would come bearing the mark on his head followed by another, more destructive, wearing the mark on his hand. This was referring of course to Gorbachev’s prominent birthmark and Yeltsin’s mutilated little finger!

⁵ Sakwa, R. 2004, *Putin: Russia’s Choice* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 23.

⁶ Batygin, G.S., ‘The Transfer of Allegiances of the Intellectual Elite.’ in *Studies in East European Thought* 53 (Springer: 2001)

⁷ Urban, M. 1998, 969.

the internet and published in *Izvestia* newspaper a day later. The author was one Vladimir Putin who was just about to assume the role of acting president of the Russian Federation following the sudden resignation of Boris Yeltsin.

Extract 1: The Post-Industrial Society

1 *“Humankind lives under the sign of two signal events: the new millennium and the 2000th anniversary of Christianity. I think the general interest for and attention to these two events means something more than just the tradition to celebrate red-letter dates.*

5

It may be a coincidence – but then it may be not – that the beginning of the new millennium coincided with a dramatic turn in world developments in the past 20-30 years. I mean the deep and quick changes in the life of humankind in connection with the development of what we call the post-industrial society.

10

Here are its main features.

15

Changes in the economic structure of society, with the diminishing weight of material production and the growing share of secondary and tertiary sectors.

20

The consistent renewal and quick introduction of novel technologies and the growing output of science-intensive commodities.

The landslide development of information science and

telecommunications.

25 *Priority attention to management and the improvement of the system of organisation and guidance of all spheres of human endeavour. And lastly, human leadership. It is man and the high standards of his education, professional training, business and social activity that are becoming the guiding force of progress today.*”

We observe in the beginning (lines 1-4) a clear narrative framing the discussion to come. Here the starting point is the birth of Christ and the start of the new millennium – both are given equal importance. This narrative leads to the post-industrial society, an important concept for understanding Russia today. This is framed almost metaphysically by the suggestion that the onset of the post-industrial society exactly now may not be a coincidence (6). This invokes Marxist ideas of historical determinism and unavoidability. The narrative building that this engages sets the frame for defining the problem in this introductory part of the text. The description of post-industrial society (12-25) seems to emphasise what “is” but in fact implies what “ought.” Putin is in fact describing an ideal civilisation here that is a Russian goal. Within intellectual circles it is the post-industrial society which is seen as the alternative for Russia today. “The Russian idea today is the idea of construction of a post-industrial society as an alternative to the Western-style

consumption-oriented society.”⁸ Thus this from the outset frames the explicit discussion of the Russian idea later on. Yet in the speech there is a complete blurring of the universal and the particular so that we are unsure if any of these post-industrial features actually pertain to Russia as yet.

Lastly, on line 23, Putin brings in the ultimate factor of human leadership. This in effect brings Putin himself in as the new acting head of state, this last factor being a crucial aspect of post-industrial society; the need for a leader. It is also evident here that Putin, of necessity, employs a liberal discourse in the sense of placing the responsibility for progress with the individual. With statist discourse discredited, new forms of power emerge in discourse of liberalism as the state withdraws. Society should be controlled through the self-regulating rational individual. Foucault defined the art of statehood that creates self-regulating individuals as “governmentality”. This neo-liberal conception seeks to govern not through society (as in the welfare state) but directly through autonomous, free agents. Nikolas Rose warns: “the freedom upon which such modes of government depend....is no “natural” property of political subjects, awaiting only the removal of constraints for it to flower forth in forms that will ensure the maximization of economic and

⁸ Bazhanov, V.A., ‘A note on Panarin’s Revansh Istorii’ in *Europe-Asia Studies* 51/4 (University of Glasgow: Routledge, 1999)

social well-being.⁹ The self-regulation required of the subject in a liberal, capitalist society is a historical one, moulded out of a legacy of various modes of government. When the state semi-abdicated in Russia in 1991 the individual was to bear a responsibility for law, order, stability and progress that she was not ready for. Here (23-25), Putin clearly states that it is the individual in the abstract “man’ that can only bring Russia forward. As we see below, there is constant blurring of statist discourse with a liberal politics of the individual which characterises the tensions at the heart of the Russian idea.

After producing figures and statistics meant to indicate Russia’s weaknesses, Putin goes on to identify “the lessons Russia has to learn’ in order to transform itself into the post-industrial society:

Extract 2: The Discursive Field

1 *“For almost three-fourths of the outgoing century Russia lived under the sign of the implementation of the communist doctrine. It would be a mistake not to see, and even more so, to deny the unquestionable achievements of those times. But it would be an even bigger mistake not to realise the outrageous price our country and its people had to pay for that*

5 *Bolshevist experiment.*

10 *What is more, it would be a mistake not to understand its historic futility. Communism and the power of the Soviets did not make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people. Communism vividly demonstrated its inaptitude for sound self-development, dooming our country to a steady lag behind economically advanced countries. It was a road to a blind alley, which is far away from the mainstream of civilisation.*

15 *Russia has reached its limit for political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms and radical reforms. Only fanatics or political forces which are absolutely apathetic and indifferent to Russia and its people can make calls to a new revolution.*

20 *Be it under communist, national-patriotic or radical-liberal slogans, our country, our people will not withstand a new radical break up. The nation’s tolerance and ability both to survive and to continue creative endeavour has reached the limit: society will simply collapse economically, politically, psychologically, and morally.”*

Putin positions himself within the field of discourse here. Firstly, he frames his narrative with reference to the new millennium and the communist period (1-5). There are three sentences here, the first neutral, second positive, third negative. This is a key feature of Putin’s discourse. He does not frame the opposing ideology of communism

⁹ Rose, N, ‘Government, authority and expertise in advanced liberalism’. in *Economy and Society* 22/3 (Routledge, 1993), 94.

as wholly negative. Putin is careful not to paint the political picture in black and white. Yeltsin used up the discourse of anti-communism, effectively devaluing the Soviet past and making this an ineffective discursive tool to establish hegemony of the field.¹⁰ Instead Putin understates his anti-communism through the metaphor (4-5) of price paying and the labelling of communism as an “experiment.’ Furthermore, Putin again makes use of the idea of historical determinism to frame Russia’s communist past (7), and once more a hidden liberal equation of economic development with the development of free individuals is present (9-11).

The metaphor of the road and the blind alley (11-12) is one that Putin often makes use of. At another point he talks of the “highway that the rest of humanity is travelling on’ and these types of metaphors are becoming equated with him. The United Russia party, that has a majority in the Duma and is supported by Putin, has a youth movement whose members wear t-shirts bearing Putin’s face and the slogan “Everything is on the Way,’ (*Vsyo Putyom*) in the sense of “coming along’ or “developing’ towards some goal. It is a clear play on Putin’s name and the word for “way’ or “path,’ (*put’*).

Putin refers explicitly to the Russian discursive field (19) but this is actually

a reformulation of lines 15-17. There is a clever use of “metadiscourse,’ or semantic engineering here where these “indifferent political forces and fanatics’ (15-17) become indirectly identified (19-20) according to their ideological creed. Putin goes on to negate all these through an apocalyptic prognosis. All three ideological stances are equated with a future annihilation (19-23) which is grammatically stated as a real possibility denoted by the modal auxiliary verb “will’ (*budet’*) instead of a hypothetical conditional construction which takes “would’ (*bi*). Putin is effectively trying to establish a discourse focused on unity and stability knowing that the binary oppositions of Communist rhetoric and of that used by Yeltsin had created a situation where “the state [was un]able to muster a critical mass of leaders who articulate[d] one or another political discourse that resonate[d] in political society...as Yeltsin himself...co-opted progressively more of his opponents’ political rhetoric.’¹¹ Putin is establishing autonomy in this extract, rejecting all worldviews on offer in order to create a new discourse for the state itself intended to suture the rifts of political society, to “assuage the more liberal communists and traditional nationalists and pre-empt the extremist Red-Brown ideologues...to heal or pacify the whole nation.’¹²

¹⁰ Urban, M. 1998, 982.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 981.

¹² Hoffman, E.P. ‘Conceptualising State-Society Relations in Russia in Brown,’ G

Extract 3: Unifying the Field - Russian Uniqueness

- 1 *“The experience of the 90’s shows vividly that our country’s genuine renewal without any excessive costs cannot be assured by a mere experimentation in Russian conditions with abstract models and schemes taken from foreign textbooks. The mechanical copying*
- 5 *of other nations’ experience will not guarantee success, either.*

Every country, Russia included, has to search for its own way of renewal. We have not been very successful in this respect thus far.

- 10 *Only in the past year or the past two years we have started groping for our road and our model of transformation. We can pin hopes on a worthy future only if we prove capable of combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with Russian realities.”*

This follows the logic of presenting Russia as a special, unique case to be saved by a coming together of the political community, the state and society. It displays aspects of inter-discursivity as it borrows the philosophy of Eurasianism, a school of thought popular with many political groupings on left and right, that Russia’s special geographic position requires a special policy direction with a view to expansion towards Asia. It also smacks of the similar ideology that

holds Russia “as a civilisation...[representing] a world in itself, a microcosm that follows its own destiny and develops its own rules.’¹³

The “Unique Russia’ idea is one that has been around since the nineteenth century. It is a powerful emotive discourse, as Tim McDaniel puts it, “no matter how complex and plural the cultural and political undercurrents of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, until Gorbachev the victory was always to those who advocated a special Russian path.’¹⁴ Once more the metaphor of the road is invoked (7 & 9) here as if Putin is very aware of McDaniel’s observation. Interestingly neo-liberalism finds itself interlocked in a hybrid with the Russian idea (11-12). But this mixing of Western ideas with Russian ones is also a dominant discourse that Putin is borrowing from. Baranovsky suggests that, “combining in a unique way a traditionalist mentality and an openness to innovative thinking – Russia may represent an ideal laboratory for developing a viable alternative to...values associated respectively with the West and East.’¹⁵

We have a unifying discourse then which avoids using binary oppositions and instead sets up a reference point around which the political community can unite. This reference point is also the end point of

(ed.) *State-Building in Russia. The Yeltsin Legacy*, (Armonk NY: Sharpe, 1999), 134.

¹³ Baranovsky, V. ‘Russia: a part of Europe or apart from Europe?’ in *International Affairs* 76/3 (Chatham House, 2000), 444.

¹⁴ McDaniel, T, 1996, 30.

¹⁵ Baranovsky, V., 2000, 444–445.

Yeltsin's project – a new Russian idea that emphasises Russia's uniqueness whilst accommodating a certain acceptance of Western values in creating a post-industrial society.

Extract 4: The Russian Idea as the Solution to the Problem of Ideology

1 "I am convinced that ensuring the necessary growth dynamics is not only an economic problem. It is also a political and, in a certain sense, I am not afraid to use this word, ideological problem. To be more precise it is an ideological, spiritual and moral problem. It seems to me that the latter is of particular importance at the current stage from the standpoint of ensuring the unity of Russian society.

...

10 Russians want stability, confidence in the future and the possibility to plan it for themselves and for their children not for a month but for years and even decades to come. They want to work in a situation of peace, security and a sound law-based order. They wish to use the opportunities and prospects opened by the diversity of the forms of ownership, free enterprise and market relations.

15 It is on this basis that our people have begun to perceive and accept supra-national values which are above social, group or ethnic interests. Our people have accepted such values as freedom of expression, freedom to travel abroad and other fundamental political rights and human liberties.

20 *People value the fact that they can have property, be engaged in free enterprise, and build up their own wealth and so on and so forth.*

Another foothold for the unity of Russian society is what can be called the traditional values of Russians. These values are clearly seen today.

25 *Patriotism. This term is sometimes used ironically and even derogatively. But for the majority of Russians it has its own and only an original and positive meaning. It is a feeling of pride in one's country, its history and accomplishments. It is the striving to make one's country better, richer, stronger and happier. When these sentiments are free from the tints of nationalist conceit and imperial ambitions, there is nothing reprehensible or bigoted about them. Patriotism is the source of the courage, staunchness and strength of our people. If we lose patriotism and national pride and dignity, which are connected with it, we will lose ourselves as a nation capable of great achievements.*

35 *Belief in the greatness of Russia. Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence. This determined the mentality of Russians and the policy of the government throughout the history of Russia and this cannot but do so at present.*

40 *But Russian mentality should be expanded by new ideas. In the present world the might of a*

45 *country as a great power is manifested more in its ability to be the leader in creating and using advanced technologies, ensuring a high level of people's well-being, reliably protecting its security and upholding its national interests in the international arena than military strength.*

50 *Statism. It will not happen soon, if it ever happens at all that Russia will become the second edition of say, the US or Britain, in which liberal values have deep historic traditions. Our state and its institutions and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and initiator and main driving force of any change.*

55 *Modern Russian society does not identify a strong and elective state with a totalitarian one. We have come to value the benefits of democracy, a law-based state, and personal and political freedom. At the same time, people are alarmed by the obvious weakening of state power. The public looks forward to the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state to a degree which is necessary, proceeding from the traditions and present state of the country.*

65 *Social solidarity. It is a fact that a striving for cooperative forms of activity has always prevailed over individualism. Paternalistic sentiments have struck deep roots*

in Russian society. The majority of Russians are used to connecting improvements in their own condition more with the aid and support of the state and society than with their own efforts, initiatives and flair for business. And it will take a long time for this habit to die.

70 *Do not let us try to answer the question whether it is good or bad. The important thing is that such sentiments exist. What is more, they still prevail. That is why they cannot be ignored. This should be taken into consideration in social policy first and foremost.*

75 *I suppose that the new Russian idea will come about as an amalgamation or an organic unification of universal general humanitarian values with traditional Russian values which have stood the test of time, including the test of the turbulent twentieth century.*

Here the Russian idea is giving a full and clear exposition. Yet this is set up as a question of ideology (3), there is a clear example of manifest intertextuality (2-3) where through negation (2) Putin anticipates some future criticism of him for employing the concept of ideology. Furthermore, that Putin might be afraid to use this word is a reference to the Russian Constitution which outlaws the implementation of any state ideology. It seems that Putin is directly addressing Russian society in this passage as opposed to any political elite, and he employs the negation

technique later on (70) as if to pre-empt the future discussion arising from the speech.

However, it is evident that despite his audience, Putin's discourse on the micro-level is not a democratic one. The sentence construction shows processes emanating from a distinct group in the position of the subject, Putin constructs this group abstractly and impersonally as "Russians" (10), "people," "modern Russian society," (56) "the public," (59) "the majority of Russians," (65) and "they" (11-12). Sometimes this group appears as the indirect object of a sentence again showing some possession or feature of the group (e.g. 27 & 52). At times the collective pronoun "we" or the possessive "our" is used which appears to close the distance between the speaker and the audience (33-34). However this is not necessarily the case; there is no usage of the word "you" which in Russian has a universal form (*vy* as opposed to *ty*). Also missing from this extract is a "deictic centre," at no point is the self, I (*Ya*) used. "The more a speaker avoids the first-person singular in favour of other pronouns, the more distancing the speaker becomes."¹⁶ Instead of an I-Thou relational meaning between people and elite, a dialogue of sorts is constructed amongst an abstract

collectivity ("we") who at times is presented as absent ("they") and Putin would appear to be addressing a different audience (11-12). Furthermore there are clear examples of indirect representation where what this collectivity wants, says, or thinks is attributed to them by Putin (10, 17-20, 25-26, 57-60, 65-66). Again these are examples of iconic distancing where the consumption of the text and the identity established by the consumers is at issue. What is more, the identity of the group is at times defined negatively (52, 56-57) and on lines 36-40 the invocation of historical inevitability and determinism further creates an essentially negative construction of identity. Through this negation, it is possible that Putin is trying to preserve two distinct identities, that of the ruler and the ruled, as opposed to one shared identity; this is common in despotic discourse.¹⁷ The Russian citizenry take both informational meaning about the social world from this text and also relational meaning; such text cues the understanding of whether they share an identity with the elite or not. By telling the narrative of the great state (*Derzhava*) (48-61) it seems plausible that Putin wants to keep some distance between state and society and future developments since this speech have borne this out. Mass survey data shows that mass behaviour in Russia is very much influenced by elite behaviour, showing that a clear dividing line between rulers and ruled is a social

¹⁶ Anderson Jr., R, 2001, 'The Discursive Origins of Russian Democracy,' in *Post-Communism and the Theory of Democracy* (Princeton University Press), 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

feature in Russia.¹⁸ In any case there is a definite reification and essentialization of a group which is then given a role to be played out according to its qualities.

This extract displays overt features of inter-discursivity also. The central concepts of the Russian idea build the narrative for achieving social accord. These concepts are *samobytnost* – the idea of Russia’s originality and independence (e.g. 23-24); and *Gosudarstvennost* which means literally “statehood” but with an emotional sense of Russia’s spiritual collective interests (48-61). *Gosudarstvennost* is a socio-psychological phenomenon – collective and individual characterisations of Russia’s physical and spiritual essence and assessments of its accomplishments and potentials.”¹⁹ And lastly *sobornost* – collectivity, or more expressively, a “symphonic unity among individual, family and society in which all elements [contribute] to the development of each other,”²⁰ (63-68). These pillars of Russian identity are exactly the sort of reference point that Yeltsin needed. These concepts were borrowed by players across the discursive and ideological field, all three are present in Communist

discourse, the nationalist Eurasianists emphasise *samobytnost*, and while the liberal-democratic rhetoric tends to negate such ideas by borrowing from Western discourses, Putin still makes allusions to Westernising concepts (16-21) that had not been part of the Russian idea in the past. In this way, it seems that Putin is establishing hegemony through a certain amount of co-optation of the competing ideological visions, whilst leaving the style and rhetoric of the producers of these discourses well alone.

Overall, this is a centralising and unifying discourse which seeks to deny “the abyss between elite and mass interests and ideologies, the amorality of the new elites and the alienation of urban and rural masses”.²¹ Hoffman suggests that the idea of a “national interest” was “virtually inoperable” in 1998, and it is with this in mind that we can understand Putin’s purpose in bringing in a new Russian idea. And it is new through its cooptation of liberal discursive features. Putin borrows from the 1980’s and the glasnost “New Thinking” era which has been called an “ideology of renewal”²², the latter a word Putin cites throughout his text. Lines 42-46 are revealing in this inter-discursive respect, Putin is manipulating and transforming the concept of statehood and “great power” within the structure and circumstances of the present day, it is a re-working to

¹⁸ Levada, Y. of the Russian Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), ‘Russian Double-Think’ in Brown A. (ed) *Contemporary Russian Politics – A Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 319.

¹⁹ Hoffman, E.P., 1998, 139.

²⁰ McDaniel, T. 1996, 41.

²¹ Hoffman, E.P., 1998, 138.

²² *ibid.*, 129.

fit within the framework of a discourse of human rights and universal values. Compare those lines with these from 26th of April 1990 when Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze made the following speech:

*“The belief that we are a great country and that we should be respected for this is deeply ingrained in me as in everyone. But great in what? Territory? Population? Quality of arms? Or the people’s troubles? The individual’s lack of rights? In what do we, who have virtually the highest infant mortality rate on our planet, take pride? It is not easy to answer the questions: who are you and who do you want wish to be? A country which is feared or a country which is respected? A country of power or a country of kindness?”*²³

Whether Putin is really dedicated to Western values is subject to much debate, but certainly they find inclusion in this new conceptualization of the Russian idea and there is no absolute break with the discursive changes brought on by the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras.

3. Conclusion

In summary, I have shown here that Putin employs a discourse of renewal in moving Russia towards what he calls the post-industrial society, where this is understood as change and development towards a distinctively Russian modernism. His text is rich in inter-discursivity, appropriating elements from competing ideologies in order to win the war of position within the discursive field, in regard to this it is also a discourse of unity and stability, creating “an all-national spiritual reference point that will help to consolidate society, thereby strengthening the state”.²⁴

Deconstructing the text presented above shows the interlinking of discourse with social practice. It is possible to see many aspects of the changes in Russian society in the discourse here. The tightening of state power, the creation of a power vertical, and the removal of some democratic freedoms make sense in the undemocratic constructions of Putin’s text. The unification of elite groups around the President is also understandable from the changing perceptions and relational meanings created by the cues in this text as to the position that the new President would adopt. Lastly, the text is clearly aimed at certain interpellations of subjects who would consume it. It seeks to create answers to deep questions of identity and meaning in a post-

²³ Shevardnadze, E. quoted in Herman, Robert, "Identity, Norms and National Security: The Soviet Foreign Policy Revolution and the End of the Cold War," in Peter Katzenstein, Editor, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), chapter 8., 320.

²⁴ Hoffman, E.P. 1998, 135.

communist world in which the economic traumas of liberalisation had left the nation facing the questions put by Alexander Solzhenitsyn: “what exactly is Russia? Today, now? And – more important, tomorrow? Who, today, considers himself part of the future Russia? And where do Russians themselves see the boundaries of their land?”²⁵

Finally, a comment on the legacy of the *Millennium Manifesto*: In the years since it was written Putin has remained rather consistent in expounding the components of what has become a distinct ideology. As Russian power and influence increases on the world stage Putin’s values and vision for Russia have become all the more pressing to understand. The *Millennium Manifesto* is instructive on this point: Putin accepts some of the basic tenets that ground Western values yet these must be understood in terms of Russian realities and in the context of the historical narrative of the Russian nation. With elections in 2008 upcoming we might expect the heir to Putin’s throne to be the one who best personifies Putin’s adapted version of the Russian idea and his vision for a strong Russian state.

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²⁵ Solzhenitsyn, A. ‘Rebuilding Russia’, quoted in Theen, R., ‘Quo Vadis, Russia? The Problem of National Identity and State-Building’ in Brown, G (ed), 1999, 41.

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