TITLE: REMYTHOLOGIZING THE RUSSIAN STATE

AUTHOR: MICHAEL URBAN, University of California, Santa Cruz

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EURASIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE VIII PROGRAM

1755 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
LEGAL NOTICE

The Government of the District of Columbia has certified an amendment of the Articles of Incorporation of the National Council for Soviet and East European Research changing the name of the Corporation to THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EURASIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH, effective on June 9, 1997. Grants, contracts and all other legal engagements of and with the Corporation made under its former name are unaffected and remain in force unless/until modified in writing by the parties thereto.

PROJECT INFORMATION: 1

CONTRACTOR: University of California, Santa Cruz
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michael Urban
COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 812-28g
DATE: November 6, 1997

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Individual researchers retain the copyright on their work products derived from research funded by contract or grant from the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. However, the Council and the United States Government have the right to duplicate and disseminate, in written and electronic form, this Report submitted to the Council under this Contract or Grant, as follows: Such dissemination may be made by the Council solely (a) for its own internal use, and (b) to the United States Government (1) for its own internal use; (2) for further dissemination to domestic, international and foreign governments, entities and individuals to serve official United States Government purposes; and (3) for dissemination in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act or other law or policy of the United States Government granting the public rights of access to documents held by the United States Government. Neither the Council, nor the United States Government, nor any recipient of this Report by reason of such dissemination, may use this Report for commercial sale.

1 The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, made available by the U. S. Department of State under Title VIII (the Soviet-Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author(s).
CONTENTS

Executive Summary .................................................. 1
Introduction ............................................................ 1
Methods and Model ..................................................... 2
The Democrats: Objection Reconsidered? ......................... 6
The Communist-Patriotic Retort ................................... 10
The State Responds ..................................................... 14
Irresolution as a Result .............................................. 17
REMYTHOLOGIZING THE RUSSIAN STATE

Executive Summary

Political discourse in post-communist Russia has been freighted with the categories of national identity drawn in various ways according to the particular ideologies that contend to define the nation. Inasmuch as this contention means that identity constructs for the nation both valorize the political identities of their makers—democrats, communists and patriots, along with all manner of permutations among those primary terms—and discredit those of their opponents, the respective political forces advancing these ideologies stand to gain (or to lose) as their definitions find (or fail to find) broader resonance in political society.

This study takes a skeptical attitude toward the content of all of the identity constructs reviewed, bracketing the would-be referents of elements in the various discourses and establishing the significance of those elements on the basis of their associations with, and oppositions to, other terms in their respective discourses. As such, the following definition is advanced: The Russian national idea is that which arises on a discursive field constructed by objection to the present state and by objection(s) to that objection.

In the contemporary period, the initial objection was advanced by the democrats articulating categories associated with the West (rule-of-law, civil society, democracy, and so on) against which they compared, and found sadly wanting, the actions of the Soviet state. Although effective in their struggle against the communist regime, this discourse—which made small room for the "nation"—has suffered a certain deficit of signification in the post-Soviet period. With this in mind, ideologues such as Vitalii Naishul' and Igor' Chubais have set about crafting national-democratic identities. Their efforts to date have yielded wooden constructs which—although advertised as "national"—recycle their previous themes of anti-communism while acknowledging in passing the value of certain traditional institutions such as Orthodoxy.

The reply to this objection and its putative association with the West typically has thematized Russian culture as a superior mode of life, stitching together the categories of spirituality, sobornost', great-power state and others. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation—along with its allies—has become the largest and most influential force purveying that credo today. Its discourse is manifestly pathological, not because it advocates things that some in the West would find objectionable (although that would certainly be true), but because it endows its key terms with a mythological agency that has no way to enter into the world of practical affairs. It is an outstanding example of auto-communication: hyperbolic accounts of the world addressed to their collective sender who receives them as (1) confirmation of their beliefs and (2) commissions to act (which are interpreted to mean engaging in more expressive behavior).

Finally, with Boris El'tsin's July 1996 summons to his advisors to "give Russia an idea", the state
has entered this contest. As of this writing, the commission formed for that purpose has not completed its work. However, judging by the content of the winning essay in the competition sponsored by the government daily, Rossiiskaya gazeta, and interviews with members of the presidential commission, the final product is likely to emphasize an ideology of "small deeds" and "individual dignity" which backgrounds the epic features of patriotic lore so dear to the communists. Not only is it most improbable that the official national idea, when formulated, will be received positively by all major constituencies, but the exercise in developing it appears to violate constitutional strictures against establishing a state ideology and to set a dangerous precedent for a return to past practices in this area.
REMYTHOLOGIZING THE RUSSIAN STATE

MICHAEL URBAN
University of California, Santa Cruz

Introduction

Fresh from his resounding re-election as Russia's president, Boris El'tsin gathered his top campaign aides on 12 July 1996 and set them a new task. "In Russia's history in the twentieth century," he told them, "there have been various periods—monarchism, totalitarianism, perestroika and, finally, the democratic path of development. Each epoch had its own ideology. [But] now we don't have one. And that's bad." Accordingly, they were instructed to "give Russia an idea", returning with their first formulations in a year's time. Subsequent elaborations on it would lead to installing some fixed and official version by the end of the millennium. As a consequence, the Russian state has entered that fervid struggle waged by the three principal forces in political society—democrats, patriots and communists—ostensibly to provide a defining set of concepts for the nation itself. But since these definitions have been invidiously constructed in such a way as to discredit opponents while validating as authentically national the political agendas of their respective purveyors, Russian political society continues to experience chronic and acute instability at the root level of communication. Each discourse authorizes itself by asserting: (1) that Russia has lost its way in the present because vital connections with its past have been severed; and (2) that the blame for this debilitating condition belongs to nefarious opponents (those participating in the opposing discourses). Collectively, then, these competing discourses both create an intolerable situation—the nation requires an identity but does not have one—and anticipate 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.

To date, the bulk of Western scholarly attention trained on the crisis in Russia's national-political identity has considered the problem from the point of view of "consumption". That is, those symbolic structures that collectively constitute Russia's political culture have been investigated by means of mass opinion and/or attitude surveys in which "democratic" or "authoritarian" traits are commonly singled out for special attention. Whereas the "production" side of the equation had received considerable attention during the communist period, the same has not been true since the USSR's collapse. This imbalance presents a problem, for as long as survey responses alone are used to indicate the presence, absence or intensity of some cultural trait or another, social processes attendant on the formation and reinforcement of those traits escape our view. Accordingly, culture tends to be detached from the very human beings who embody it and conceptualized as something "causing" them to think or to behave in certain ways. Were the production side included in the frame, we would have a much more complete picture of
cultural processes, one that included the manufacture of new "technologies of discourse" which shape the social world by establishing the ensemble of words, expressions and symbols that can meaningfully be communicated about it. These, when consumed on a mass scale, eventually show up as the attitudes or opinions recorded in our surveys.

Method and Model

The contemporary struggle for a national idea waged at the levels of both state and political society is the focus of this study. We can begin by responding to the objection likely to be voiced by one stream of thought within comparative political science that there is nothing extraordinary or particularly remarkable about the process of national identity formation transpiring in Russia today. Inasmuch as all nation states appear to require some symbolically mediated identity, and intellectuals often compete with one another in order to provide it, the Russian case would simply be another version of universal political practices. While there may be truth in this generalization, the problem is that it elides the issue of agency. We argue that rather than a functional scheme whereby an abstraction, the nation, is provided with that which it is purported to need, the agents of this provision, the producers of a would-be national idea, are in fact politicians locked in bitter struggle with one another. They are not so much delivering a benefaction to the nation as they are deploying their respective national ideas against one another as ideological artillery. Indeed, the way in which each contender portrays the situation—as a deficit of national identity, as a void in national consciousness that needs to be filled—is testimony to this idea. From the point of view of production, the national identity market has already been saturated by innumerable competing narratives claiming to describe just who the Russians are and what they should be about. Each narrative established its importance by confecting a "lack" or "absence" of national-political identity that it has been summoned to fill.

Second, the 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 in part in the act of joining battle with evil, represented at various times by sectors of the population alleged to engage in improper or deviant behaviors (the list of which from Soviet times would be a long one, indeed) and, as is especially true today, by political opponents whose discourses would render these same cultural categories in different (mistaken or heretical) terms. The state has, of course, historically been central to these struggles to realize "the good", thereby generating didactic practices whereby officials do more than merely govern or regulate: they are there to instruct society to insure compliance with some moral-cultural code. Accordingly, it is today as commonplace to find, say, the Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission on television instructing voters on the "correct choice", as it is to
observe a regulatory body—for instance, the Judicial Chamber on Mass Media—going far beyond its formal mandate in order to scold and lecture those coming before it, "holding them up to public ridicule and condemnation...using each dispute as a point of departure to interpret and explain overall constitutional and legal guarantees...and their legal and moral limits." In the eyes of many in the political class, the (alleged) peculiar nature of Russian society—for which faith, conscience, truth, morality and other virtues associated directly with religion count for so much more than the material world as to make Russia unique—manifestly requires a state with corresponding moral responsibilities toward it.13

Third, we exclude from our sample consideration of so-called "extremist" forces in Russian political society: fascists of various stripes, Stalinists, neo-Bolsheviks and anarchists.14 To be sure, the language often employed in Russian politics would not readily signal clear distinctions between "extremists" and their more "moderate" counterparts. Rather than surface characteristics of their respective narratives, a more suitable dividing line between "extremists" and "moderates" would be their relative success in public politics. From this vantage, successful political parties and movements can be seen as participating in the same discourse as their less successful competitors who—lacking the resources, memberships, access to government and so on—as "outsiders" compensate for these practical shortcomings by intensifying their rhetorical commitment to their respective discourse's valorized categories, thus leveling recriminations such as "traitors", "compromisers" and so forth against their "moderate" competitors. So, for instance, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) would find its "extremist" counterparts in the Russian Communist Workers' Party or the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, while patriotic groups such as the Congress of Russian Communities or Aleksandr Lebed's Popular Republican Party would be shadowed by dozens of smaller organizations such as the National Republican Party of Russia and the Russian National Legion. This approach would encounter one serious difficulty, namely, its method of classification would include Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) among the "moderates". In our view, the combination of practical success and manifestly extremist rhetoric evinced by the LDPR (and, especially, its leader) would count as a deviant case that is explicable on the basis of the LDPR's eight-year history.15 We shall therefore exclude it from our sample.

Fourth, we should not overlook the counter-tendency present in this contention over the issue of defining the Russian nation, the palpable drawing together of the discourses exhibited by the principal contenders. In part, this appears to be due to experience in common legislative work in the State Duma and to a certain "responsible" posture struck by opposition candidates—especially those of the CPRF, but also by those associated with the current party of power, Our Home is Russia (NDR)—in recent gubernatorial elections. As rhetoric has begun to thematize more practical concerns, the overall values of democracy, a market economy, and an enlightened patriotism, have surfaced as a common coin among all major political forces, even while intense disputes remain as to how these values should be translated.
into practice. Complementing this tendency toward finding common ground in common work would be the self-representations of ideologists formulating one or another version of a new national idea. That is, the adjectival watchword among all leading contenders has become "integrative", thus paying at least lip service to the existence of "others" whose values and aspirations need to be taken into account in devising that idea. Although this counter-tendency will not be considered in the body of this paper, it is worth noting here and returning to in conclusion.

Finally, since our task involves the interpretation of texts generated within a cultural milieu, at least ostensibly different from our own, we need to situate ourselves with respect to the object of our analysis. The first point here would be a refusal to take at face value the content of the texts themselves. We therefore assign from the outset zero validity to all claims concerning the world; we neither accept that Russia or Russians reflect the qualities ascribed to them in some narratives nor do we regard as true or accurate descriptions of others, in particular, the West. In all cases, we bracket references to the "real world" and 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. In thus analyzing texts propounding a national idea, we note, in advance, that these texts characteristically contain ample measures of reification, hypostatization, essentialist, sometimes mystical and usually mystifying, formulations. In short, the tendency is to invest individuals and social or national groups (reified) with one or another set of (essential) qualities or characteristics (hypostatized and sometimes mystical) that are valorized 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 essences. Not only is the empirical world thus converted into vehicles for the prevailing categories of the various discourses but since the discourses are themselves opposed (often as mirror-images), signification tends to heighten or exaggerate the opposing categories, producing what one observer has called "hyper-fundamentalism". This feature of the texts under consideration is reminiscent of Iurii Lotman's concept of auto-communication, an anti-dialogic form of expression in which messages are encoded against the other—who has been constructed negatively in the respective discourse, usually as some form of enemy—and addressed, in fact, to their collective sender.

For our purposes, one other important consideration follows from the prevalence of these discursive practices: narratives are commonly both confused and confusing. Language is abused by encoding esoteric meanings into words, converting them into the chattels of their users, thus retarding their capacity to communicate. Security Council Chairman Ivan Rybkin's recently published statement on a new national security doctrine for Russia would be a case in point. There, the noun "nation" and its adjectival form "national" enter into illicit relations with other terms, especially "state" and "minorities". As a consequence of the resulting confusion, for instance, we find that "national interests" are threatened by "nationalism", (because "national interests" is actually functioning for "state preferences") while physical and symbolic markers such as frontiers, emblems or popular assemblies are assigned to the
category "state" (which thus usurps signifying capacity from the category "nation"). Vladimir Ivanitskii has demonstrated that comparable pathologies have enfolded the word "order" (*poryadok*), such that it functions as a vessel containing the apparent intentions of its user rather than as an inter-subjective concept. In the same way that El'tsin regularly referred to waging a brutal war against Chechnya as "the introduction of constitutional order" there, so his prime minister, recently charged to introduce order into the government—especially by raising more revenues—could direct his cabinet "to step up the struggle against legal [sic] means of avoiding taxes." Following the provisos on method that we have set out, above—particularly those regarding a refusal to consider as self-evident the surface content of narratives or taking as authentic a text's purported relation of its signifiers to referents in the practical world—we can develop here a model to frame our competing discourses regarding a "national idea" for Russia. Specifically, we aim to bracket the appearance of (national) unity connoted by the term "national idea" itself, thus preserving the notion that our object of investigation is, in fact, opposing discourses seeking to define the nation in partial ways for partisan advantage. As the concepts of "hyper-fundamentalism" and "auto-communication" suggest, we need also to bracket empirical references in these narratives, remaining completely skeptical about the alleged correspondence between terms in the narratives—either those that are situated proximately to the empirical world (such as, say, "the West", "civilized countries", "normal societies") or those more remote from direct inspection ("spirituality", "historic mission" and so on)—and things in the world. Accordingly, our focus falls on the production of discourse on the political field.

Since this field is one in which, by definition, competition prevails, we orient our model to that fact, abstracting from the particular representations expressed by the parties to this competition and placing at the center of attention their mutual interactions that make up the field of political discourse. Schematically, this field is constructed by two factors: an objection to the present state and objection(s) to that objection. The first objection employs the image of an "other" against which the present state is compared and found to be deficient. This "other" has historically been "the West". We, again, make no assumptions about the authenticity of this objection. For our purposes, "the West" functions in discourse as an invidious category which authorizes the objection. The common sub-text can be rendered as: "Things are much better there; our state is utterly failing us and should be replaced."

Once mediated, this objection solicits a rebuke historically associated with one or another form of Slavophilism. The substance of the Slavophile sub-text can be read as: "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...." The ellipsis would then be filled by some complement of terms valorized in the discourse: "spiritual", "all-human", "collectivist", "chosen by God" and so forth. While it is beyond the scope of this study to trace out these objections and counter-objections that have characterized the Westernizer/Slavophile debate for some two centuries (if not more), we take very seriously Aleksei Kara-Murza's observation that it has been precisely this discursive struggle that more than anything else has
constituted the Russian intelligentsia.25

Heavy repression had, of course, closed this debate during the Stalin period. But with its partial lifting in the mid-fifties, the debate resumed in the form of dissidents objecting to the Soviet state on the basis of categories associated with the West (rule-of-law, human rights and political liberties) and neo-Stalinist and patriotic forces reacting to that criticism with a flurry of hyper-fundamentalist tracts, many of which managed to appear in official publications.26 Perestroika witnessed an extension and intensification of this conflict; and while its parameters have changed since the collapse of the USSR and many of those taking part have modified or even abandoned entirely their previous rhetorical stances, it has by no means subsided.

At present, the field of Russian politics can be portrayed along the lines of the relationships set out in Figure 1. It has been the interaction among these four parties to the dispute that has led to two

![Figure 1](image)

Russia's Discursive Political Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>Patriots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

important considerations for this study. First, both those associated with the state and with the democratic camp have been attempting to repair their earlier lack of interest in a national idea by developing one. Second, the CPRF and associated groups have been forging a synthesis of communist and patriotic discourses (largely at the expense of the former) in order to amplify their objection to the democrats and the state allegedly under their control. We now turn to these discourses, pausing here to underscore the frame that we have built around the Russian national idea. Stated as succinctly as possible, the Russian national idea is that which arises on a discursive field constructed by objection to the present state and by objection(s) to that objection.

The Democrats: Objection Reconsidered?

Even while some of their central desiderata—democracy, rule of law, human rights and political liberties—have become commonly accepted principles in the country's politics (leaving aside entirely, here, the issue of corresponding practices), Russia's democrats have already exhausted their potential to fire the popular imagination with the rhetoric that they had honed in their campaign against the former communist regime. The fact that liberal-democratic ideology has been broadly associated with the "reforms" enacted by El'tsin's governments would constitute one factor discrediting this political orientation. The economic collapse, social chaos and political corruption occasioned by the enactment of "democratic reforms" rather quickly consumed the stock of political capital that the democrats had accumulated during their struggles against communism. But of equal importance in this respect would
be the manner in which the democrats constructed their identity and, by implication, the standards of performance against which the results of the reforms with which they were associated would be measured.

The democrats' principal ideas all but occluded the category "nation". Until the 1990 elections in Russia, democrats seemed loathe even to identify their political-geographic coordinates. When "place" appeared in their narratives, they generally refrained from using terms such as "the USSR", "the Soviet Union" or "the Russian Federation", instead referring obliquely to "the country". It appeared that anti-communism—expressed "positively" by allusions to the imperative of joining the "civilized world" (the West)—and the celebration of individualism always provided sufficient wind to raise their rhetorical sails. As a consequence, communism's collapse represented a crisis for democratic discourse. It now had no "other" on which to lean, despite efforts to revive the corpse by repeated references to some imminent "communist revenge". And, worse, the democrats had developed no national purpose that might psychologically absorb some of the shocks visited on society beginning in 1992. There was no larger good to justify the sacrifices and the suffering. If anything, liberal democratic ideology's focus on the individual, its formal preference for instrumental-rational forms of thought and its preoccupation with Western standards—themselves easily vulgarized to mean simply a society enjoying high levels of material consumption—all invited the public to assess its situation both materially and as individuals, with predictably disastrous results for the popularity of liberal-democratic ideas.

Having put forward their objection to the communist state in terms of an ideology from which the category "nation" was all but absent, democrats have been hard pressed to defend themselves and their project against the trenchant criticisms leveled at them by communists and patriots. Some stick to their guns. For instance, Egor Gaidar lays the blame for Russia's problems on the nation itself, its outmoded and "pathological" forms of state and society which must be destroyed if the country is ever to enter the civilized world. His former advisor, Leonid Gozman, has recently replied to the criticism that today's liberals practice a philosophy of "state nihilism" with the bromide that the twentieth century has shown that "there exist for all humanity unified economic and social laws [zakonomernosti] unaffected by national-cultural particularities". Although "this is an obvious fact, naturally, it is ignored by people who have less education and intellectual development or by those who have their own pragmatic interests or, more often, by those whose psychological peculiarities do not want and do not enable them to deal with reality."

But others in the democratic quarter have begun to recognize a need to answer their opponents with more than recitations of the old credo cum recriminations of ignorance, stupidity, bad faith and mental illness. Vitalii Naishul's work represents one approach to the issue of formulating a new national idea. Naishul' drafted Aleksandr Lebed's second economic platform (the first was simply discarded) during the 1996 presidential elections, although he later admitted that "Lebed hasn't any economic doctrine whatsoever. He simply needs to bring order to the country and those programs that appear..."
functional for introducing order he will apply." It was during this same period that he composed a long essay on a new Russian national idea attempting a comprehensive, armchair synthesis of definitive national traits (culled from folklore) with militant free market ideology (the role models among contemporary political figures listed are Margaret Thatcher and Augusto Pinochet). Naishul’s essay is an extremely effective caution against any grand synthesis seeking to marry the irrational elements associated with putative Russian cultural practices to the requirements of a modern market economy.

Having laid out much of the Slavophile litany regarding the former—"God-bearing nation" in search of "absolute truth [istina]", united in sobornost' behind its autocrat—Naishul' searches for the political formula that will channel these national-cultural proclivities toward the creation of a modern market economy. He finds his solution in the form of an elected autocrat who appoints an advisory legislature, using the power of office to convert today's multi-national federal state into a "unified mass common-national culture [that] to a significant degree [has been] artificially worked out by the intelligentsia on the basis of a vulgarized high culture of the educated stratum of society and elements of traditional moral culture." The resulting "unified popular will" thus provides, in his opinion, the necessary basis for democracy (although "democracy" in his account is confined to regular elections of, and yearly referenda on, the autocrat). This order, he opines, will enable Russia to move forward socially and economically as the state divests itself of any obligations toward society—save promoting national culture, national order and national defense—while that same society (somehow) correspondingly develops "a feeling of collective self-discipline" manifest in such things as voluntary taxpaying, a practice that he sees as equivalent to direct democracy.

A somewhat more modest, and therefore more promising, approach to the task of developing a national idea for Russia that is linked to democratic norms can be found in the work of Igor' Chubais (elder brother of Anatolii Chubais, currently the First Deputy Premier). Although Chubais retains his militantly anti-communist posture—a fact that turned a recent roundtable on his ideas conducted by Sergei Filatov's All-Russian Union of People's Houses and Yurii Petrov's Club, Realists, into a full-scale row when he insisted that all former communist officials be purged from public life—his feel for ideology has a much gentler touch than that of synthesizers such as Naishul'. In an interview on his conception of a new national idea, Chubais eschewed grand themes, emphasizing instead everyday cultural, and self-validating, notions of patriotism. "It is a shame", he remarked, "to see our leaders on television, seated at tables behind bottles of Coca-Cola. Now, that is a very fine drink and I have nothing against Americans. Americans are fine people. But these are our leaders and they should not appear in public with American drinks, they should have Russian ones. There should be kvass on the table." Like Naishul', Chubais assembles the components of a new national idea largely from Russia's past. However, his scope includes a wider range of sources—belle lettres as well as folklore and folk aphorisms—and he treats them far less mechanically, setting cultural values in context wherein they appear as the rationale behind corresponding practices aimed at solving extant state and economic
tasks. Moreover, his is a dynamic model wherein historical change—especially the advent of capitalism—untethered cultural forms from their practical bases, rendering some obsolete and others in need of fundamental revision if they are to contribute to a "new idea for Russia".

As is customary among ideologists advancing their respective conceptions of a new national idea, Chubais frames the task in urgent terms. He regards today's crisis as "the deepest in the entire history of the country" and claims that the calamity befalling Russia is the direct result of the ideational disorientation experienced with the collapse of the communist national identity and the "vacuum" left in its wake. Rummaging through the ideas of the past and using his historical "vectors" as a decision-making device he separates those that are obsolete (e.g., sobornost' and kollektivnost', which no longer correspond to modern economic realities) from those that are enduring (e.g., the Orthodox religion). The usable past should then be wedded to the present (market economy) and emergent future (political liberalism) to achieve that synthesis that will sustain Russia in the coming century.

In addition to the eclectic, if not desultory, quality of Chubais's vision, two serious problems attend it. First, Chubais numbers among those who view the Soviet period as a complete aberration in Russia's history from which nothing of use can be salvaged. On questioning from interviewers about those 70-odd years and some possibly positive things that can be taken from them, Chubais replies with the example of postwar Germany, bringing foremost the need to confess all the crimes and to repent. In a practical sense, then, the new Russia for which Chubais has cobbled together a new idea is one in which former or practicing communists have no place at all. They are to be removed from all public offices by means of what he calls "de-nomenklaturization". Consequently, his writings serve as a textbook example of a partisan political orientation masquerading as a unifying national identity.

Second, and related to the partisan edge of his work that is concealed by its nationally-oriented narrative, Chubais has painted himself into a political corner. That is—and here we anticipate communist-patriotic ideologues who represent far more egregious examples of this tendency—Chubais has laid out his recipe for a new national identity in which incommensurable ingredients belonging to separate spheres of existence—public/private, state/society, collective/individual—have been tossed together. Like those surveyed below, this problem grows directly out of a method that attempts to abstract a collection of cultural values from the past and, on the basis of these, to synthesize an abstract conception, a national idea. Presumably, the nation would then be expected to live up to, to realize, this idea. But when the question is posed concretely—How will this come about in practice?—the very breadth of the idea would indicate that only one agency is available for accomplishing it: the state. Apparently mindful of the pitfalls besetting that path, Chubais shies away from prescribing any concrete role for the state in this respect. But the question remains: Then how? In a recent interview, Chubais seems very ambivalent on this score. He begins by gently chiding the presidential commission, that "group of experts, official bureaucrats [chinovnikov] who sit at a government dacha...and who are working out a world view or who are doing something around the problem of this new world view". He
ends this same interview by lamenting the fact that although he wishes to contribute to their work and had even informed their leader, Georgii Satarov, of his readiness to participate, they have politely ignored him.43

The Communist-Patriotic Retort

Although opposition to democrat-Westernizers—and, currently, to the state that they are said to have captured—has generated two distinct political discourses in Russia, it has often been the case in the past thirty years that their exponents have found much common ground on which to make common cause against opponents.44 During the 1990 elections, this conviviality was manifest as the Bloc of Public and Patriotic Movements of Russia, an ill-fated electoral coalition that failed to capture a single seat in the national legislature. After the collapse of communism—and with their ranks now replenished by a number of erstwhile leaders of the democratic forces, disappointed and disillusioned by what the victory of the democrats had meant for the country as well as for their own political careers—they joined together in the Front of National Salvation,45 one of whose leaders, Gennadii Zyuganov, now heads not only the CPRF but also its larger front organization, the Congress of Popular-Patriotic Forces.

At present, a host of conjunctural factors and tactical considerations define the positions of the communist and patriotic oppositions on the field of Russian politics. First, the CPRF has sought to forge a communist-patriotic synthesis, an ideology and program that features attention to both some of the core features of Marxism-Leninism and a large complement on Russian nationalist and traditionalist notions. The result is a very strange brew, indeed, that we review, below. For the moment, however, it would be important to note that neither logical consistency nor personal authenticity appears to play much of a role in this quarter of the political field. What we meet again and again is bombast, strong but shallow representations of the world that recall the concept of autocommunication. Accordingly, rhetoric appears as an extremely imprecise indicator of action. Viktor Aksyuchits, for instance, a prominent patriotic ideologue, can publish an essay excoriating the present government for anti-Russian policies and raise its removal from office to the level of "a policy of all-national salvation"46 and then, within weeks, join that same government as an advisor to First Deputy Premier Boris Nemtsov. Similarly, the CPRF's most prominent ideologue, Aleksei Podberezkin, while never flinching in his resolve to rid the country of those "anti-popular", "anti-national" elements that have seized and are wrecking the Russian state, can find time to pen the political program of the "party of power", the NDR.47

It may not be amiss, in this regard, to consider communist-patriotic narratives as both performative and non-practical. On one hand, the act of signifying is performative inasmuch as it regularly summons various entities into existence that play pivotal roles within their discourse: "the people", "the occupation regime in the Kremlin" and so forth.48 As Francois Furet and others have shown in their path-breaking studies of the French Revolution, such terms do not actually represent one or another aspect of some extant reality; rather, they establish a reality in which political leadership is assumed by its authors.49 On
the other hand, however, leadership thus constituted falls victim to its own creations. It finds itself trapped without an opening toward practice because the entities that its discourse has conjured are themselves invested with agency of a higher order than that attributed to actual individuals. They exist "above" the plane of mundane matters. So, for instance, "the people demand" or "will no longer tolerate" and so forth, thus mythically commissioning actual political actors to take one or another step to meet these "demands".50 But since the demands themselves reside on the plane of eschatology—"national salvation" and the like—they bear no discernable relationship to any specific courses of action other than the cathartic release of more expressive behavior. This relationship between the performative and the practical constitutes a particular instance of those pathological discursive practices discussed, above.

Second, the particular synthesis of communism and patriotism achieved by the CPRF may in part explain why it has come to dominate the political landscape of the opposition. But that very success has triggered reactions among competitors (both communist and patriotic groups), who would poach on its territory, and among elements inside the CPRF itself. With respect to the former, the Russian All-People's Union—a group which, while formally non-communist, sports an ideology and a program effectively indistinguishable from that of the CPRF51—has terminated its alliance with Zyuganov's communists, advertising itself as the authentic opposition to the current government.52 From the orthodox Marxist-Leninist flank, the same holds true, especially for the Russian Communist Workers' Party.53 Moreover, CPRF efforts to play a larger role in the governmental process by seeking cooperation on key issues such as the budget and by advertising its willingness to join it in a "historic compromise"54 has introduced serious fissures within the party,55 including a public statement by more orthodox Marxist-Leninist elements in late 1996 lambasting the party's most prominent ideologues for displaying (bizarrely) a pro-American and Zionist orientation.56 Aleksei Podberezkin, the principal target of this attack, shot back from his side of the looking-glass with the Marxist-Leninist reminder that "any social revolution (among them a socialist one) goes through stages [constituting] an objective process that can [only] be interrupted by the revolutionary interference of subjective factors."57

The confusing character of this exchange—in which professional patriots are branded as pro-American Zionists while their Marxist-Leninist accusers are taught to suck the proverbial egg—might serve as a general point of departure to the communist-patriotic discourse of the CPRF. We take as our sample a number of the works published by the party's leading ideologues: General Secretary Gennadii Zyuganov and Chairperson of its de facto think tank, Spiritual Heritage58, Aleksei Podberezkin. In these writings we observe an aggravated form of pathological communication stemming from the practices (noted, above) to invest collectivities with individual qualities and, thus reified, to "record" their thoughts, desires and actions; in short, to interpret the world on the basis of the mythology that has in fact replaced the world within discourse. Whereas in the writings of Naishul' and Chubais we noted how these practices resulted in certain communicative difficulties, the intensified forms of same that we review here are manifest as "civil wars" that break out in the respective texts as signifiers struggle against
their respective signifieds, littering the verbal battlefield with contradictory nonsense. To take one example, the word-as-weapon is turned against liberal-democratic opponents whose espousal of "all-human values" is said to be a treacherous imposition of false and corrupting categories because only nations and civilizations can create values. But, what allegedly distinguishes the Russian nation from others is the fact that its values are valid for all humanity.69 Apparently, the ideologue has shown—at least to his own satisfaction—that the glass cannot be half-empty precisely because it is half-full.

The discourse of the CPRF—much like that of its predecessor, the CPSU—can be regarded as a folktale and analyzed on that basis.60 From this vantage, the tale is set in motion by some lack or misfortune: here, by the collapse of the USSR and the consequent exsanguination of the Russian state and the disintegration of Russian culture and society. This collapse and its disturbing aftermath have been brought about by forces both outside (the West, especially the USA) and inside the country (ambitious and treacherous politicians said to have "sinned" against the nation).61 This calamity and the sinister nature of the evil doers propel the narrative forward along two lines: elaborations on the hero-victim, the Russian nation; and excursus on those dark forces set on extinguishing it entirely. With respect to the former, Zyuganov supplies his account with the sweep of an historical epic in which Russia has appeared for centuries as that singular force capable of stopping the spread of evil from the West.62 Russian culture—which is regularly regarded as representing Slavic cultures in general—is portrayed as embodying those traits and values uniquely suited to the flourishing of human life on earth. Principal among these are: "spirituality", a selflessness enabling the individual to search for the true and the good;64 sobornost', a mystical notion of harmonious communion of the people based on the Orthodox faith;65 and certain "instincts" that this nation has to form and support a great power state (derzhava) that rules a temporal order corresponding to the true nature of this nation, namely, an empire that, indeed, is the Third Rome.66 The righteous nature of this empire consists in its realization of the values of Russian spirituality and sobornost'. It is the selflessness of the people that gives it flesh and blood, just as it is state-builders who have transcended all personal ambitions that serve as its head.67

Zyuganov's version of this tale includes a rich and extended plot line wherein the protagonists are not classes but nations.68 The dynamic of the plot is the Russian nation—and, in particular, its state—tested by and ultimately triumphant over the attacks launched against it by the forces of an antimoral, aggressive and militaristic West.69 As such, the Russian Revolution which weakened the state appears as either a sad mistake or an unavoidable tragedy that, thanks to the insights of Lenin and, especially those of Stalin, was quickly turned from the false and destructive path of international proletarian revolution back toward the purpose of building the Russian nation and state.70 It was during the Stalin period that Russia realized its potential as a civilization based on patriotism, religion and a great power state.71 Subsequent degeneration is dated from Stalin's death, as de-Stalinization witnessed an erosion of the party's patriotic ethos, a "de-nationalization" of part of the population (the liberal intelligentsia) and the substitution of false idols of material well-being for the sacred mission of the
Historically, the Russian people have taken up their burden, evinced by the fact that "in the struggle for the liberation of humanity from social and national oppression in the twentieth century, Russia has lost about 100 million of its citizens". And with that image of the hero-victim before society, it would follow that "to be a Russian today means to feel with your heart, confessing with word and deed your participation in the deep culture of the Fatherland with an unquenchable thirst for righteousness and a readiness to willingly be a victim, [to display] that which over the course of long centuries has helped Russia to stand, surprising the world with its greatness, heroism and longsuffering."

The second line of plot elaboration must construct a villain sufficiently nefarious and powerful to account for the calamity that has befallen the hero-victim, the Russian nation. Here, two axes intersect: one representing a maleficent West which now sends its religious missionaries to accomplish Goebbels's work, destroying the nation's true religion and thus its spirituality and culture; the other, personified by those who have been possessed by the alien creed of liberal-democratic ideology and who have acted as a "fifth column" in the country, seizing power as a "Vlasovite regime", polluting minds and souls with a "satanic" mass media that aims to extinguish the culture of the Russian nation in the interests of the world oligarchy (the West) run by Jews. Since the CPSU was the only organized political force until the very eve of the USSR's disintegration, Zyuganov must provide some agency for the country's internal forces of evil in order to account for the tragedy itself. He therefore spins a theory of the CPSU as two parties. "In the ranks of [one] party stood Stakhanov and Gagarin, Sholokhov and Leonov, Panfilov and Zhukov, Korolev and Kurchatov, [and] millions of honorable communists—laboring people and patriots. But there is also another bureaucratic party of national treason, the party of Trotsky and Vlasov, of Gorbachev and El'tsin, always having looked on Russia as their own booty." During his presidential campaign in 1996, Zyuganov went farther. Rather than merely serving as the henchmen of the world oligarchy directed by Jews, the last two named figures in the "bureaucratic party of national treason" had become the hounds of hell. Accordingly, he told a mass rally at the Luzhniki sports complex in Moscow that "Satanism is in every crevice. [But] God will mark the rogue. Two beasts sent by the devil will come out of the abyss. The first with a mark on his head. The second beast, the anti-Christ, with a brand on his hand."

In the face of these enemies—foreign and domestic, natural and supernatural—Russia must recover its proper religion, statehood and culture. Since "the most important element in the struggle for power and the security of the country is the struggle among the various political forces to embody the most precise and true expression of the Russian idea", the principal task of the moment is to complete the formulation of a state "doctrine" that will cement the communist-patriotic alliance and propel it into power. Once in possession of the state, these morally healthy forces will act as a father bearing responsibility for the welfare of his family, promoting their freedom "within the framework of traditional spiritual-moral values and rights" that the state will promote by revamping the education system along the lines of the new "state-patriotic ideology".
This prescription would appear to be fully congruent with the character of the foregoing analysis. Absurdities aside, that analysis is a totalizing effort that enlists not just bodies and minds but souls for its purposes. It deals only in absolutes: good vs evil, selfless sacrifice vs treasonous ambition, patriots and culture bearers against satanic agents sowing confusion and chaos. It makes no distinctions between spheres of action—state/society, public/private—and norms appropriate to each. But, as noted, it is these very characteristics that confine the communist-patriotic discourse to the plane of eschatology. Against that backdrop, efforts to engage the world of practical affairs appear as either betrayals of principle or as signals that those same principles are fine for rhetorical purposes but actually have no bearing on real life politics. One indicative example of this would be the collection of photographs featured in Podberezkin’s book. Interspersed with a portrait of the author and a few snapshots showing him with his academic colleagues, with Zyuganov, with Belarusan president Aleksandr Lukashenka and other notables, are two photos depicting him receiving an award from the European Community in Brussels and five more in which he is shown amiably meeting with top officials in the US foreign and defense establishments and the leadership of NATO. The effect of these last seven photographs decodes the accompanying catechistic text on spirituality and the like, injecting a visage of practical matters, real world politics, in which the eschatology has been profaned.

The State Responds

Both Zyuganov and Podberezkin have pronounced themselves vindicated by El’tsin’s call to formulate a national idea for Russia, observing that even he has been forced to face the fact of its necessity and confidently proclaiming that his "anti-national regime" is absolutely incapable of providing it. There appears to be much truth in their observations. As Liliya Shevtsova has pointed out, the practice of co-opting leaders of the opposition into state organizations has included the proviso that they serve as individuals rather than as representatives of any political current. Therefore, those conforming to this ground rule—for instance, Nikolai Travkin, Aman Tuleev, Ivan Rybkin and Egor Stroev—have continued to pursue their careers in government while those who have violated it, such as Aleksandr Rutskoi or Aleksandr Lebed, who continued to articulate some inchoate political ideology while in office, have been marginalized and dismissed. As a result, the state has not been able to muster a critical mass of leaders who articulate one or another political discourse that resonates in political society. Rather, it has been able to mount no more than a vapid technocratic reassurance whose credibility has already steeply declined. Its "positive" projections either have acquired a bitterly ironic ring ("reform" or, since Boris Nemtsov joined the government as First Deputy Premier, "young reformers") or have served as dispiriting reminders ("stability") that, indeed, things could be even worse.

Another reason for this deficit of signification stems from the regime’s profligate use of anti-communist ideology and the consequences attending it. As knowledgeable observers have noted, El’tsin’s re-election campaign may well have exhausted this political resource, thus initiating the state’s current
search for a national idea. But long reliance on anti-communist ideology has already taken another toll in this respect. As Tim McDaniel has argued, the overall result of this state propaganda and corresponding government policies has been to devalue the Soviet past along with all those who had contributed to it. Moreover, he notes, this devaluation continues in the present as state workers, scientists, educators, medical personnel and others are denied wages and facilities while the state proclaims that it is creating "capitalism", the particular variety of which is unknown outside the pages of old Soviet textbooks. Others have observed that in the same way that the dismantling of the old command system did not create a modern market economy but led instead to a grotesque aberration, so the blanket rejection of values associated with the Soviet order has not released modern normative structures thought to have been present, but repressed, under communism; rather, the results in this respect more resemble mass anomie and a resurgence of fundamentalist impulses and dark superstitions.

With respect to symbols of national identity and purpose, the same story can be told. In Moscow the authorities have canceled the significance of two sites with tremendous semiotic potential: the White House where Russia and democracy were defended by an unarmed citizenry during the fateful coup d'état of August 1991; and Manezh Square, where since early 1990 until the victory over the coup the democratic forces had staged a dozen or so mass rallies. The cannonade of October 1993 destroyed the capacity of the White House to signify a new Russia. The multi-story shopping center under construction beneath Manezh Square has done the same for that site, inasmuch as its former empty expanse served to invite the onlooker to fill that void with the memories of masses of enthusiastic citizens gathered to proclaim their freedom and nationhood. Now, that provocative emptiness—including its mythic potential—has been filled in by the grassy hills, benches and other accouterments of an ordinary city park. While erasing the physical markers of its own genesis and early history, the present Russian state appears to be singularly unsuccessful in providing effective surrogates. Their new monuments—for instance, the rebuilt Church of Christ the Savior and the massive statue of Peter the Great in Moscow—seem to inspire raillery and contempt more than awe or reverence. In a particularly absurd gesture toward national unity, El'tsin has redesignated the anniversary of the October Revolution as the Day of National Reconciliation, an obvious affront to that large section of the population for whom the previous anniversary had counted as one of the most important holidays on the calendar.

The same problem arises with the state's attempt to develop a new national idea. The commission that El'tsin directed to produce it seemed to have altered its course sometime in early 1997, quietly dropping its original intention of drawing up a preliminary sketch for public discussion and substituting a long-term research project, according to which it would catalogue and evaluate the national ideas put forward by democrats and centrists, the communists, the patriots and—leaving no stones unturned—the historical development of national ideas around the world. As one member, Aleksandr Rubtsov, flatly remarked with respect to eschewing the task of formulating a new idea for Russia: "I don't want to be a
Consequently, the first report from the presidential commission, issued in July 1997, categorizes, excerpts and analyzes nearly 200 articles appearing on the general theme of a Russian national idea in the liberal and centrist press between September 1996 and January 1997. Since the bulk of these pieces appeared in government publications—particularly Rossiiskaya gazeta which launched a nationwide competition in July 1996 that ran through the following winter, complete with 10 million rubles in prize money for the winner—the state authorities have been "searching" for their idea more among themselves than among autonomous civil subjects. Indeed, it may have been the hostile reception to their very project that appeared in sectors of the non-governmental press—where its purpose and likely consequences have been impugned and its constitutionality called into serious question—that contributed to the commission's reframing of its task. Recent reports, however, would indicate that El'tsin is intent on formulating an explicit and official state ideology much sooner than would be suggested by his commission's (extended) timetable. But whether this occurs sooner or later, the broad outlines of El'tsin's national idea (or "state ideology", a term with which it has become more or less interchangeable in practical parlance) have already become apparent.

In order to trace these outlines, we can piece together a variety of sources on the subject:

interviews with members of the presidential commission and with those serving as consultants to it; their published writings on the topic; the commission's first report and a comparable volume published by Club "Realists" whose chairperson, Yuriii Petrov, is a longstanding associate of El'tsin, having served with him in the Sverdlovsk obkom and later as head of the Administration of the President (1991-1992). Among all of these parties—and this, as well as anything else, might distinguish democrats and centrists in contemporary Russia from their communist and patriotic counterparts—there is an appreciation that grand national ideas and messianic purposes have historically paved the road to national calamities and that such a project would be particularly out of place, if not downright dangerous, in today's world. At the same time, there is a recognized need—not to mention a presidential directive—to formulate a new idea that would (somehow) unite the nation, giving it direction and purpose. As a result, all of the sources, here, have favored a two-part strategy that foregrounds certain values and characterizations thought to be salutary for society—principally, the dignity of the Russian individual, his or her high regard for justice, and an "ideology of small deeds" that would valorize the concrete contributions made in everyday life (such as hard work or displays of propriety)—and leaves in the background or treats ambiguously the eschatological themes so dear to the communist-patriotic opposition.

Commission advisor Aleksei Kara-Murza has likened the use of ambiguity here to the actual role played by Marxism-Leninism in the past, namely, formulating things in such a way that any number of differing viewpoints can find themselves represented in the text whose common phraseology would enable them to exist as a discursive community, with all thus enjoying the right to a full non-articulation of their actual, respective, communal-identity preferences. The overarching identity to be established would transform that hero-victim Russia celebrated in communist-patriotic discourse into "a more peaceful,
calm form... a non-aggressive country of happy people." 113

Regardless of intentions, there are a number of issues embedded in the state's project that would belie its innocent appearance. First, would be the fact that the project itself violates the country's constitution which proclaims that "no government or official ideology shall be established". 104 Thus a critical threshold has already been crossed, and disclaimers along the lines of the country's manifest need for ideology 105 or the purely salutary brand to be provided by the state function rhetorically as authorizations that override the constitutional restriction. Second, its would-be composers are candid about the political capital to be acquired by those associated with it, framing its development as both necessary for the nation and advantageous for its state sponsors. 106 Finally, there is the issue of the idea's propagation. The strategy advocated by Petrov's Realists in this respect is nothing short of a return to Soviet practices sans CPSU, featuring ideological training for all higher state officials, a specialized propaganda apparatus to be formed within the state itself and the extensive use of all mass media in order to implant and cultivate the new state ideology among the population. 107 Although not as openly ambitious as the Realists, members of the presidential commission plan to disseminate broadly their national idea through the mass media as well, envisaging a television series — "Ideas in People" — to be produced by Denis Evstigneev (who headed El'tsin's 1996 television campaign) that will be designed to instill patriotism and a sense of personal dignity in viewers. 108 Given the way in which the mass media operate today in Russia—which means "expressing above all the state interests of Russia and being subordinated to those interests" 109—it seems quite probable that the responses aired on television or featured in the press will not disappoint the authors of the new national idea. But it seems equally likely that the appearance of the idea itself will represent another stage of, rather than a conclusion to, the ongoing battle over national identity.

Irresolution as Result

Returning to one of the issues broached in the first section of this study—Is there evidence that the various contending political discourses have been drawing together, forming some common vernacular for public life?—we can hazard a qualified "yes". In addition to the synthesis of communist and patriotic discourses forged by the CPRF, we can call attention to a structural similarity obtaining between the discourse of those groups, and that displayed in the recent effort by democrats and state scribes to construct a national idea. Despite differences in surface content, all of these discourses today hinge on the issue of gemeinschaft which they seek explicitly to formulate and, ultimately, to encode as an official state ideology. The fact that some versions might appear to us as more odious and distressing than others should not obscure the fact that this very desideratum has become the common focus of political struggle. The CPRF provides the most obvious example of this tendency among the discourses reviewed here. Zyuganov's notion of the defense of Russia, for instance, includes above all the excision of "alien" ideas and mores, a task explicitly assigned to the state and its obligations to the nation in the sphere of
But the starkness of this example serves to remind us that the implications of the other projects—regardless of the intentions of their authors—run in the same direction, as a number of observers have pointed out.

The common purpose of formulating a national idea has manifestly not abated the conflict over its ultimate content, just as it has apparently not reduced the hostile distances that separate the contending voices articulating their respective versions of it and the separate constituencies in society to which their ideas appeal. At this stage, there seem to be two points of agreement among the opposing forces: (1) that the formulation of a national idea is both necessary and possible; and (2) that "their" rendition of it is anathema. This overarching hostility and mutual suspicion likewise informs ostensibly efforts at reaching a consensus on more practical issues. For instance, both Podberezkin and Vyacheslav Kostikov (El'tsin's former press secretary) published in early April 1997 nearly identical programs for achieving a national consensus and forming a coalition government of national unity. However, Kostikov explicitly excluded the communists from participation in this endeavor on the grounds that they remain "silent on one of the most dangerous postulates of Leninism—the government's right to coercion, including against its own people". For his part, Podberezkin spoke of the necessity of forming a coalition between two of the three forces on the field of politics—"reformers", "the left" and "traditionalists" (patriots) — in order to turn back that "dark force" of marginalized lumpens and new Russians that he sees "growing out of the very dirtiest corners of the human soul in the past ten years". At the same time, the specifics of his text—which, for instance, uses the Nazi-Soviet Pact as a positive illustration of how much can be accomplished when secondary differences have been set aside — is scarcely conducive to attracting many partners to his would-be consensus.

Given the constellation of forces in domestic politics, there appears to be no end in sight to the struggle waged over national identity, even as that struggle has entered a new phase marked by state intervention. It therefore seems reasonable to consider in conclusion the possible effects of exogenous factors and how they might alter that constellation itself. From that vantage, the matter of NATO's eastward expansion looms very large, indeed. Superficially, there is the appearance today that Russia has been "brought on board" because of El'tsin's de facto acquiescence to the idea of including three former Soviet satrapies in the alliance. But on the field of Russian politics things are more ramified. There, the issue plays itself out on a number of levels—national security, strategic doctrine, the trustworthiness of the West—but most of all as a matter of national pride and the blow thereto sustained by yet another rejection, another exclusion of Russia from Europe. While we would expect the communist-patriotic opposition to capitalize rhetorically on this rejection, portraying it as further confirmation of the central tenets of their ideology and as indisputable proof of the correctness of their military-patriotic program, the reaction from others associated with the democratic camp and/or with the present government has been one of disappointment, dismay and quiet desperation. Sergei Kortunov has already written of a national consensus on NATO expansion that excludes those political analysts who, like former foreign

18
minister Andrei Kozyrev, have endorsed NATO's enlargement, stating that "these people are irresponsible, irresponsible in the direct sense of the word—they don't answer for anything". Similarly, Andrei Ryabov of the Gorbachev Foundation sees NATO's expansion as providing a cynical basis for elite consolidation in Russia whereby consensus could be cemented around the twin poles of a new leader personifying the state's protective role vis-a-vis society and the scapegoating and sacrificing of some members of the present elite.

Both Deputy Chairperson of the Security Council, Boris Berezovskii, and Vyacheslav Nikonov, President of the Politika Foundation, have called attention to the precedent of Versailles in this respect and the tragic train of events set in motion by Russia's ostracism from Europe at that time. Nikonov feels that this new exclusion represents a particular problem for Westernizers in Russia whose political identities would be shattered by another slamming of the door to Europe. Kara-Murza put the matter thusly during an interview:

> We consider ourselves as part of Europe in a cultural sense. But Europe does not consider Russia to be European. That's the problem. They fear us. We [are treated as] a guest of Europe. There's a saying: "The uninvited guest has already been here for a generation" [making everybody, especially the guest, uncomfortable it would seem—M.U.]. [Ivan] Silaev [ambassador to the European Union] was right when he said to NATO that you are only stimulating Zyuganov.

It would appear that while the fundamental principles of national identity remain bones of fierce contention in Russian politics, state authorization for drafting an official national ideology is fraught with the disturbing prospect that the single, visible factor conducive to a unity of national purpose is a perceived threat from, and rejection by, the West; and all that is darkly implied by it.
ENDNOTES


2. Lantsman, supra.


13. Statements along these lines appearing in the contemporary Russian press alone are legion. A measured and more or less representative example of this view can be found in the remarks of film maker Nikita Mikhailkov made at the founding congress of the Orthodox Russian Movement—a group enjoying the official imprimatur of both the Russian Orthodox Church and the sponsorship of the government—on 9 February 1997. His speech has been published as “Kultura - ne nadstroika!”, Nezavisimaya gazeta (14 February 1997), p. 2. On the founding of this organization itself, see Rossiiskaya gazeta (11 February 1997).

14. On these groups, excellent descriptions and analyses can be found in: Aleksandr Verkhovskii, Anatolii Papp and Vladimir Pribylovskii, Politicheskii ekstremizm vRossii (Moscow: Institute eksperimental’noi sotsiologii, 1996); Aleksandr Dreiling, “Politicheskaya mifologiya sovremennogo russkogo radikal’nogo nationalizma”, Politicheskii monitoring, No. 11 (November, 1996), pp. 1-10.


18. In addition to the texts that are examined, below, good examples of these characteristics can be found in: A.A. Silin, “Podnimetsya li Rossiya?”, Predstavitel’naya vlast’, no. 8 (1996), pp. 23-32; and Gurii Sudakov, “Shest’ printsip rossiyanosti”, Rossiiskaya gazeta (17 September 1996), p. 4.


21. His statement appears in Nezavisimaya gazeta (29 April 1997).


25. Kara-Murza, Mezhdu “Imperiiei i Smutoi”, p. 12. For a similar analysis of the sources of this “objection to the objection” with particular attention to the current situation, see Aleksei Malashenko, “Gosudarstvo v poiskakh ravnovesiya”, NG-STSENI, No. 7 (June, 1997), pp. 1-2.


28. This point has often been made to me in conversation with Russian political activists and observers who have been associated with the democratic camp, most forcibly by Vyacheslav Igrunov (19 September 1994) and Igor’ Chubais (9 July 1997).

33. Quoted in Segodnya (25 June 1996), p. 2. It seems that by this juncture, Lebed had embraced another economic program sharply at odds with the free-market hosannas that Naishul had penned for him. Nezavisimaya gazeta (29 June 1996), pp. 1, 3.
34. I am relying on a somewhat abbreviated version of Naishul's extended essay, published as "O normakh sovremennoi rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti", Nezavisimaya gazeta (23 May 1996), pp. 4-5.
35. Along these same lines, Chubais seemed enthusiastic during an interview (9 July 1997) about all manner of little things—the fact that the Russkoe Bistro fast-food firm seems to be out-competing McDonald's in the capital, middle-aged women singing folk songs a-cappella in the metro where previously Western or classical music was about all to be heard there, or simple conversations overheard on public transport containing phrases such as "we [should do things] in our own way" [nashi po-nashemu]—that to his mind indicated that national self-consciousness was spontaneously growing in society.
37. Ibid., pp. 69-97; interview given by Igor' Chubais to Aleksandr Shchuplov and Evgenii Lesin, Knizhnoe obozrenie, no. 27 (8 July 1997), pp. 16-17.
38. Chubais, Ot Russkoi idei..., p. 3.
39. Ibid., pp. 4-7; Chubais in Knizhnoe obozrenie, no. 27 (8 July 1997), p. 8. Interestingly when confronted during an interview (9 July 1997) by the present writer with the counter-argument that the problem could be regarded as a plethora of competing national ideas rather than a dearth of same, Chubais smiled and replied: "That's debatable" (in a way indicating that he was not of a mind to do any debating about this).
40. For thoughtful analysis depicting the Soviet period as organically joined to Russia's national history, see Pastukhov, Tri vremeni Rossii..., pp. 16-36, Kara-Murza, "Nuzhen li Rossi...", p. 2.
41. Interview with present writer (9 July 1997); Chubais in Knizhnoe obozrenie, no. 27 (8 July 1997), p. 17.
42. Chubais, Ot Russkoi idei..., pp. 69-78.
43. Chubais in Knizhnoe obozrenie, no. 27 (8 July 1997), pp. 8, 17.
48. See, for a clear example, Gennadii Zyuganov's remarks at the Third Congress of Spiritual Heritage in April 1997 in which he refers to the "spiritual war" being waged against Russia by El'tsin and his government who do the bidding of their "Western masters". Reported in Kommersant-daily (10 April 1997), p. 3.
51. The ideology and program of the Russian All-People's Union can be found in Za edinuyu velikuyu Rossiyu: istoriya rossiiskogo obshchenarodnogo soyuza v dokumentakh (Moscow: Novator, 1995).
58. On Spiritual Heritage and Podberezkin, see Zhuravlev, "Partiinyi portret...", pp. 16-17; Yevgeny Krasnikov, "Podberezkin: Communist and/or Nationalist", Moscow News, No. 30 (7-13 August 1997), p. 3.
62. Zyuganov, Veryu v Rossivu, pp. 5-13; idem, Rossiva - rodina nova, pp. 50-51, 55.
64. Podberezkin, Russkii put', pp. 6-31; Zyuganov, Rossiva - rodina nova, p. 220.
66. Zyuganov, Rossiva - rodina nova, pp. 271-, 222-225; Podberezkin, Russkii put', p. 41
67. Podberezkin, Russkii put', p. 34.
69. Ibid., pp. 5-12, 50-51.
70. Ibid., p. 65; Zyuganov, Rossiva - rodina nova, pp. 55-58, 222.
71. Zyuganov, Veryu v Rossivu, p. 46.
72. Ibid., pp. 49-50, 110.
73. Zyuganov, Rossiva - rodina nova, p. 55.
74. Ibid., p. 221.
75. Zyuganov, Veryu v Rossivu, p. 349.
77. Zyuganov, Veryu v Rossivu, p. 171.
79. T. Pushai, quoted in Podberezkin, Russkii put', p. 36.
81. Podberezkin, Russkii put', p. 42.
82. Zyuganov, Rossiva - rodina nova, p. 283.
85. Zyuganov, Rossiva - rodina nova, pp. 24-26; Podberezkin, Russkii put', p. 4.
88. McDaniel, The Agony of the Russian Idea, pp. 162-186. Boris Kagarlitskii has also called attention to the correspondence between features of the particular version of capitalism that has taken shape in Russia and the fact that its architects had all been amply schooled on the nature of capitalism by the Soviet educational system. See his "Pyat' let v poiskakh rukovodyashchei idei", Nezavisimaya gazeta (29 January 1997), p. 2.
89. Valentina Fedotova, "Vozmozhno li modernization bez rusofobii", p. 7. For some disturbing data on the resurgence of superstition—particularly among the young—which is apparently eclipsing faith in religious doctrines, see Tat'yana Varzanova, "Vo cbto veryat rossiyane", NG-RELIGII, No. 2 (February, 1997), p. 3.

90. In addition to the cases mentioned above—the rebuilding of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the statue erected of Peter the Great—another example taken from Moscow in the summer of 1997 bears mention. This involves an exhibit at the Malyy Manezh organized by the government of Moscow as part of the commemoration of the city's 850-year anniversary. The fact that the exhibit—entitled Orthodoxy, Army and Fleet—had nothing whatsoever to do with Moscow itself, along with its blend of religious and martial images, indicated that its apparent purpose was to instill patriotic feelings. In that respect it has been a resounding failure. The writer visited the exhibition on 11 July 1997, finding himself in the company of only two other patrons (one of whom was an artist painting copies of some of the exhibits). In reply to my question about the frequency of visitors, an attendant informed me that the number of as there at the time was representative, although often the exhibition was completely devoid of guests. Most visitors, she said, seemed to drop in by chance and stayed but a few minutes.

91. Author's interview with member of president's commission (21 December 1996).


93. Quoted in Pinsker, "Devyat' mesyatsev...", p. 18.


95. Rossiiskaya gazeta announced its competition in "Konkurs 'Idea dlya Rossii'"—in its 30 July 1996 number, under an unusual headline reading "Who are we? Where are we going?" that topped a large photo of an II'ya Glazunov painting—depicting in background a bevy of churches atop a ring of hills from which descends into foreground a mass of historically prominent religious and cultural figures over whom towers a massive crucified Christ. Throughout the autumn and winter, its pages featured dozens of essays and scores of letters on this topic. First prize was awarded to Gurii Sudakov, a deputy of the Vologda regional legislature, for his piece entitled "Characteristics of a restless [or "troubled"] Russian soul" ("Svoistvo bespokoinoi russkoi dushi", Rossiiskaya gazeta [11 February 1997], p. 4). The judges were apparently especially taken by his turn of phrase—"Russia is for me, I'm for Russia"—using it as the title for the article announcing their award (ibid. [18 January 1997], p. 1). Sudakov's essay—however banal—is emblematic of the orientation among those on the presidential commission. Specifically, it features a reverential bow to old Russia, an acknowledgement of the crucial importance of faith for the Russian soul, and an effort to redirect the satisfaction of that need away from its previous objects—the official religion, the empire—and toward new outlets. Sudakov renews the mythology of the national idea's origins, claiming that its pre-Soviet version—faith, tsar and fatherland—was born spontaneously in the bosom of the people. Officials and intellectuals only hastened its propagation among the masses. And so it is today, as the people have begun to respond to their new situations, shedding messianism in favor of more mundane, but all the more vital, purposes such as living together as a nation based on the interlocking, harmonious networks of family and friends (a diluted sobornost'). The apprehension of this "collective", the whole nation, leads him to affirm that "Russia is not above the rest, it is simply the best place on earth. Russia is not a great derzhava (major power), it is simply the best derzhava".


97. "Russian 'Experts' Preparing Ideological Development" (Moscow, Interfax, 23 September 1997).


100. This term was used by a commission member in an interview (21 December 1996). See also Pinsker, "Devyat’ mesyatsev...", p. 18.

101. For an extended treatment of this current in the thinking of the presidential commission, see Alekseeva, Kapustin and Pantin, "Integrativnaya ideologiya: priglashenie k razmishleniyu", pp. 23-20.

102. A.A. Kara-Murza, "Nuzhna li Rossii novaya ideologiya, i cslu nuzhna, to kakaya?" (typescript of address delivered to the club, Svobodnoe slovo, 13 September 1996).

103. Interview with commission member (21 December 1996).


109. This comment was made by Vitalii Ignatenko, deputy premier in charge of the mass media, on 1 March 1996 at a meeting of local media personnel in Krasnodar. It was quoted in Segodnya (2 March 1996), p. 2.

110. Zyuganov, Vervu v Rossivyu, pp. 52-54; Rossiva - rodina mova, pp. 178-179.


112. For a similar argument, see Nataliya Kalashnikova's essay in Russia's most Western-oriented daily, Segodnya (25 February 1997), p. 1.