

RUSSIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN 2010

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Introduction

The dominant theme in Russian identity discourse is ‘conservative modernisation’. It defines Russia first and foremost by relating it to the hegemonic Western modernity and constantly questioning the country’s belonging to Europe. As a consequence, it advocates cautious reform while emphasising political stability as the primary value. The only significant counter-discourse is centred around the concept of class: it problematises social inequality, corruption and the power of bureaucracy. The other distinct features of the national identity discourse are the relatively low prominence of foreign policy themes and historical Others.

1. Text selection and classification of sources

Our archive includes leadership speeches, newspapers, high school history textbooks, films and novels (see Sources for the list and selection criteria).

While processing the data for 2010, we had to deviate from the procedure outlined in the Annex to the MIC Oxford book. Firstly, as described in the source selection section, major Russian newspapers in 2010 published neither editorials nor letters to editor. We sampled full issues of *Argumenty i fakty*, which is a popular tabloid that attempts to react to the readers’ interests and answer their questions. Their style is certainly much less formal than that of high school textbooks. We therefore positioned newspaper materials between textbooks and novels on the elite–popular discourse axis.

Our second problem was a strong quantitative bias in favour of textbooks. Both textbooks selected for this year were over 300 pages in size and both were written from a certain ideological position (almost explicit in the case of Danilov et al., but clearly discernible in the case of Shestakov, too). This resulted in more than 1000 raw identity codes harvested from the textbooks. The novels and films, on the contrary, all belonged to popular genres and contained relatively few identity-related codes.

To avoid excessive bias in favour of textbooks, when selecting aggregated categories for analysis we used percentages normalised by genre rather than the raw count. To do that, we first created a table showing the relative prominence, by genre, of all 71 aggregated categories that we created on the basis of raw codes. We then eliminated those categories whose average prominence across genres was below 0.60%, which left us with 41 categories for further analysis. Having done that, we created another table showing percentage counts for these 41 categories only.

Table 1. Raw counts

Category	Total codings	Speeches	Textbooks	Newspapers	Novels	Movies
modernity	211	21	118	43	23	6
democracy	193	10	120	38	23	2
West	189	8	118	41	19	3
strong state	162	6	64	60	27	5
traditional lifestyle	124	5	17	24	63	15
essentialist identity	115	15	54	24	11	11
Europe	110	13	25	40	24	8
Great power	99	10	80	6	1	2
Perestroika/1990s	95	2	71	6	15	1
USSR	93	4	59	16	12	2
stability	86	6	43	10	26	1
Russian/Soviet personality	74	4	19	21	13	17
Stalinism	66	1	56	9		
non-West	65	4	21	23	13	4
market economy	60	1	27	12	19	1
Eastern Europe	52	4	24	20	1	3
class hierarchy	55	3	21	20	15	6
corruption and grey business	47	4	5	13	22	3
Orient	35	1	1	9	6	18
reforms	27	3	16	7	1	0
periphery	25	4	7	9	3	2
near abroad	22	2	5	14	0	1
Russian Westernisers	10	4	4	1	1	0
	2015	135	975	466	338	111

2. Raw identity categories

Table 1 summarises identity categories that we have inductively recovered from the sampled texts and audio-visual sources. This section will explain the meaning of these identities in detail.

Western modernity and the idea of civilisation

The dislocated external Other of Europe/the West was the pivot of Russian national identity in 2010. It is dislocated in two important ways: firstly, the overarching category of the West includes other identities, such as Europe and the US. Europe, in turn, is sometimes seen as a whole, yet other times dissipates into individual countries and regions. Among the latter, Eastern Europe is most prominent and includes the Baltic countries as an important Other. Among the countries, Germany, the UK, France and Italy seem to be most important, along with certain individual East European countries (Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia). In our raw coding, all these elements of Western identity are registered separately. However, when it comes to consolidated categories, there emerge three characteristic patterns of identification: Russia identifies itself with **Europe** (as a whole and with individual Western European countries) but has a much more ambiguous identity relationship with **the**

West (including the US) and **Eastern Europe**. The creation of broader categories is further justified by the fact that references to individual countries often function as metonymies signifying Europe as a whole, as in this quote lamenting Russia's inability to learn from the Western experience: 'In a case of cigarettes we repeat the same mistakes the Americans have done 50 years ago. In a case of alcohol, we ignore the experience of Finland and Sweden where strong alcohol is sold by state owned shops, and their managers receive awards for decrease of sales.' (*Argumenty i fakty*, 13 January, no. 2).

The second way in which the European Other is dislocated is due to the fact that it is not purely external: Russia's identity is often articulated through belonging to Europe. However, this trend appears far from dominant in 2010. The total number of raw codes where Russia's identity is articulated as unambiguously belonging to Europe is in single digits. We have therefore added all such codes to the broader category of 'Europe'.

Even though explicit articulations of Russia's identity as belonging to Europe are rare, this dimension is more widely expressed in an indirect way. Firstly, there is an enormous pool of statements where Russia is positively identified with Western/European external Others as providing aspirational identity. This is evident in widespread comparisons between Russia and the West, usually not in Russia's favour. This quote from the generally anti-Western textbook by Danilov et al. illustrates the point: 'At that moment Russia stopped to be one of the states representing the highest achievements of the economic and social developments in the contemporary world. Russia's total GDP is 10 times less than the US GDP and 5 times less than China's' (Danilov *et al.* 2009: 307).

Secondly, identification with the hegemonic core happens through more general concepts, which we have synthesised in the category of **Modernity**. This includes such raw codes as 'civilisation' and 'progress', sometimes explicitly articulated in the texts, while in other cases implicitly suggested. Thus, the film *Kandahar* depicts the plight of Russian pilots held hostage in Afghanistan as representatives of Western civilisation, having to answer not just for Russian and Soviet prior policies, but also for those of the US (see, in particular, Kavun 2010, 00:58:40). This category also contains references (predominantly positive) to modernisation, technological progress, economic growth, quality of life, innovation and the like. Even though one could discern a distinction being made in the discourse between the values of 'classical' modernity (economic achievement, decent standard of living, good governance) and those of post-industrial society (innovation, self-fulfilment, information society, environmental protection etc.), the latter current is not strong and distinctive enough to warrant separating it into a separate category. The opposite pole is represented by a wide array of statements decrying Russia's backwardness (often in comparison with the West).

Modernity vs. Tradition

The category of Modernity is located at one end of two related axes, with one embodying the classical opposition between modernity and tradition and the other centred on the category of class.

The importance of the relationship with the hegemonic Western core contaminates the Russian understanding of tradition. The fact that modernity is closely associated with the West is illustrated by the notion of **Orient**, rather widespread in popular sources, is almost inevitably associated with backwardness and the lack of civilisation. This category is particularly strongly present in the movies, mostly due to the fact that two Central Asian guest workers figure as main protagonists in the popular comedy *Our Russia: The Balls of Fate*. They are depicted with some sympathy, but still as completely uncouth and full of superstition. The category **Non-West** is different: it includes primarily references to China

and Japan (there are also some mentions of the BRIC, Iran, Brazil etc.) and represents the idea of alternative, non-Western modernity. As evident from the raw count, it is not very prominent in the 2010 identity discourse.

The other dimension of tradition is more directly related to the Russian Self. It includes the idea of Russia as an Orthodox Christian country, and as a country of ethnic Russians, as well as traditional values relating to family, gender roles and sexual orientation. There is little differentiation between the first two ways of defining Russianness, so we put all such codes together in one category, **Essentialist Identity**. There is also a set of markers that represent the opposite of the essentialist Russian Self, which emphasise Russia's internal diversity and celebrate the multi-confessional, multi-ethnic nature of the Russian society, with identity-related references to ethnic republics, minorities etc. We singled out Chechnya as a separate category due to its multifaceted character, which includes elements of Oriental, peripheral, Islamic and threatening Other, but it was not important enough in 2010 to be included in the final matrix.

The set of identity markers related to the lifestyle is much more difficult to pin down in one category: it has a very strong core around the idea of traditional family, surrounded by a loosely structured field of meaning which includes elements of homophobia, biopolitically motivated concerns about demographic decline, praise for Russia's spiritual virtues, but also such mundane elements of the Russian/Soviet tradition as New Year's *olivy*e (Russian salad) or the admiration for Vladimir Vysotsky. None of these themes would be raised frequently enough to justify being put in a separate category. We have merged all such codes into a broad and rather contradictory category **Traditional Lifestyle**, which, for all its broadness, indicates a certain range of codes associated with standard social roles and practices, as opposed to anything considered as progressive, alien or otherwise defying the tradition. To illustrate the idea, here is an example from Marinina's novel, describing a type of stupid rapacious young women looking out for an old wealthy husband:

'They tried hard and Rostislav strenuously encouraged them, responded to flirtation, ogled, kissed hands, then invited to restaurant, and when birdie became absolutely sure that the deal had been done and she would be invited to classy apartment he politely thanked for pleasant evening and ordered the car driver to take lady where she asked to.' (2010: 251)

Class

Another key dimension through which the Russian Self is related to modernity is the issue of class. It is most visible in the category of **Class Hierarchy**, which includes direct references to groups of workers (such as miners), but predominantly consists of negative references to the privileged groups ('Recently we were driving along the Rublyovo highway to my friend's dacha to Zvenigorod. So, we were going and there were neither fields, nor forests, there were only 6-meter-high fences on both sides of the road', (*Argumenty i fakty*, 15 September, no. 2). The other dimension is very visible in textbooks, which, on the one hand, traditionally describe the workers' movement in tsarist Russia in an approving way, but on the other often contain disparaging references to uneducated masses: 'Due to purges in the party, nominations of workers 'from the very plant' the old party guard was being eroded with people who easily accepted the simple ideas of the 'bright communist future' and also easily became zealous performers of the orders from above. This stratum was a social base for Stalin's raise to power' (Shestakov 2010: 144).

The class dimension is also central to how the sources frame the idea of **Market Economy** (which includes such themes as capitalism and entrepreneurship), and make it distinct, in the Russians' eyes, from other elements of Modernity. A very central theme of **Corruption and Grey Business** also has an important class dimension, as it is often framed as the question of privileged elites versus disadvantaged masses. The description of the ethnically uncoloured periphery, especially that of the Russian countryside, is also predominantly framed as an issue of relative backwardness and structured around the opposition between urban and rural populations. However, the category **Internal Other: Periphery** enjoys significant presence only in the speeches, where it is presented as a positive element of Russia's identity, whereas for other types of sources its significance is rather low.

Stability vs. reform

The opposition between stability and reform is relatively independent from the key modernity-related axes. There is, however, a category that connects these two domains: the notion of **Democracy** links Russia's identity with the idea of civilisation and thus with the European/Western Other, while at the same time emphasising the dimension of political pluralism and, more generally, the value of progress and development. Central for the discourse on democracy are, however, institutional and normative issues: free and fair elections, political pluralism, separation of powers, as well as their opposites – authoritarianism, dictatorship, police state and so on. This category also includes the idea of Russia as open to the world. The Russians in 2010 mostly appreciate (but sometimes feel uneasy about) the fact of open borders, being able to spend vacation in Turkey or shop in Milan, the presence of foreign brands, but also the role that currency exchange rates and foreign capital play in their everyday lives. One very particularly noteworthy example is that of education abroad, especially in the UK, which is considered as highly desirable both in Marinina's novel and in the newspaper sample.

The existence of the core cluster around the concept of **Stability**, as one might have expected, consists of mostly negative references to the threats of terrorism, extremism, civil war, disintegration of Russia. Our analysis suggests that there is a thin but rather stable line in the discourse separating the fear of ethnic conflict as a threat to political stability from emphasising Russia's internal cultural diversity as a basis for stronger political unity. This distinction emerges, for instance, from a comparison between two codes taken from the same textbook, both referring to the Chechen Wars. The first quote describes the outcome of the first Chechen War by putting the emphasis on the devastating consequences of separatism: 'During the war campaign it was proved not only that secession... was possible but also that the payment for exit was war' (Danilov et al. 2009: 277). Less than thirty pages later, the textbook features a picture of a Muslim woman holding a gun with the following caption: 'Director Madrash from Dagestan who joined the militia to fight against the [Chechen] militants' attack' (2009: 290). In the second case, even though the extremists are still presented as a threat, the message is on the Islamic element of Russian identity and thus on internal diversity rather than stability per se. The idea of **Reform** in 2010 can be considered as the opposite of stability only with some reservations: it is mostly promoted by the elites, who embrace both stability and cautious reform, while the masses do not feel strongly about it. Characteristically, **Russian Westernisers** are rather strongly antagonised in the official discourse as agents of the external Other (the West) and as a threat to stability.

The category of **Strong State** broadly converges on the idea of stability but needs to be kept separate due to the important nuance in the discourse that it represents. It emphasises the idea of Russian statehood but has important connotations of the state being intrusive and non-responsive to citizen's needs. The most characteristic ways to bring up the idea of a strong

state are, firstly, by invoking its opposite (Russia as a weak state, either in reality or in potentiality, especially when adverse modality is observed) and by criticising the officialdom (чиновничество). The latter discursive form is particularly prominent in the newspaper sample (e.g.: ‘The direct result of these attempts is an overstuffed bureaucratic apparatus. Not officials are for people, but people are for bureaucrats’, *Argumenty i fakty*, 15 September, no. 26). This category also includes closely related references to Medvedev, Putin, the ‘vertical of power’ and the ruling party.

One more distinct element of this category is references to the police, the security services and the military. The characteristic feature of this category is that most identity-related statements are polarised: the discourses feature either the positive figure of a brave and selfless patriot or its opposite, a corrupt and cynical ‘махинатор из охраны’ (manipulator from the special police, (Akunin 2009: 72)), expensive and unprofessional military (‘Our military launched Bulava 12 times but unsuccessfully every time’, (*Argumenty i fakty*, 13 January, no. 41)) or dysfunctional law enforcement (‘I think it is a failure for entire law enforcement system’, Putin’s reaction to the gang killings in Kushchevskaya the south of Russia, (Putin 2010)).

International status

Apart from the very visible presence of the Western Other as both antagonistic and enviable, 2010 sample yields surprisingly few foreign-policy related themes. To be sure, Russia’s identity as a **Great Power** is asserted as a matter of course, sometimes explicitly, and at other moments by references to Russia’s leading role in the post-Soviet space and in the Eurasian integration project, which was already taking shape at the time. Due to a limited number of codes that our sources yield, we also included in this category articulations of Russia’s identity clustered around the idea of international order and its most significant institutions, such as the UN. Most of these statements contain either negative assessment of US unilateralism and interventionism (e.g. the mention of Russia’s opposition to the US 1999 intervention in Yugoslavia in *Our Russia*, (Orlov 2010, 00:43:00) or emphasise Russia’s role in international institutions, such as the UN Security Council (a typical example is the list of news headlines mentioning UNSC and Russia’s position in connection with the Beslan hostage taking in Marinina’s novel, (2010: 229)). In other words, concerns with Russia’s global status are the most common link between national identity and foreign policy.

The category **Near Abroad** was introduced to differentiate between articulations that emphasise Russia’s leading role in the post-Soviet space (coded as Great Power) and other identity-related references to the states and territories that Russia considered as part of its sphere of influence (first of all Belarus, but also Kazakhstan, Abkhazia and the like). It is present in all sources but does not demonstrate any strong pattern of identification: the fact that negative attitude is slightly predominant in the newspapers is due to the frequent conflicts with Belarus and its President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Historical Others

Despite memory conflicts between Russia and its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe that had already been in full swing by 2010, the prominence of historical Others in our sample is surprisingly low. **Stalinism** inevitably comes up as a central category for textbooks, which cannot avoid formulating a normative position vis-à-vis that period and often end up struggling with identity-related questions. Historical Others of **the USSR** and **Perestroika/1990s** are significant, but not overwhelmingly important, also for other genres. The Russian Empire and World War II have even lower prominence, the former often serving as a benchmark with which to evaluate the present (although far less frequently than the

comparisons with the West), and the latter routinely mentioned in the context of the appropriation of the victory over Nazism. They both, however, fall below the limits of statistical significance.

Russian character

The category of **Russian/Soviet personality** stands alone in being very prominent but rather incoherent. At one extreme, it includes such characteristics as heroism, endurance and pioneering spirit, while the other is filled by qualities such as boorishness, lack of self-control and, of course, propensity to alcoholism. There is no way to consistently organise these codes into two or more categories, since the line between admiration and aversion is extremely thin. To take alcoholism as a prominent example, *Kandahar* starts with a seemingly negative image of a pilot drinking heavily before flying but continues with alcohol being an important element of comradeship during hard times. Patience and endurance could figure as positive categories while describing the heroic deeds of the past, but easily turn negative when applied to Russian political culture ('Long time before the era of Stalinism our people have swallowed in silence insults and humiliations from the power and have beard, one can say, to the bitter end. May be, is it about the very nature of the Russian soul?', (Akunin 2009: 15) N1014).

To avoid imposing artificial deductive mappings on the materials, we have decided to lump all these codes together in one category, whenever we sensed that a particular quality is being described as typical of Russians.

3. The predominant discourse and its challengers

The dominant Russian national identity discourse in 2010 is **Conservative Modernisation**. The meaning of being Russian is centred around key values of European Modernity: high standard of living, economic growth, technological progress, rule of law and democracy. These values are shared by elite and mass discourses alike: modernity, democracy and quality of life figure as decidedly positive elements of Russia's identity, although they are more explicitly invoked by the elite discourse. This also corresponds with a rather strong European identity and, more broadly, the view of the West as a model to emulate, or at least as setting the standards against which Russia's progress is to be measured. The experience of the non-West (China and Japan, in particular) is also viewed in a mostly positive light, although the non-Western/Asian Other is by far less important and more difficult to identify with.

It must also be emphasised that even though Dmitry Medvedev's policy of modernisation is thematised in speeches and newspapers, its impact is not overwhelming: the image of Russia as a modern or modernising nation has much deeper roots in the discourse.

The general emphasis on progress, however, is qualified in a number of ways. The most obvious is a strong preference for stability over change. Explicit references to stability are positive almost across the board, and while the elite discourses seem to promote reform, it is about incremental and technical improvements rather than radical change. The memory of the major transformation (Perestroika and the 1990s) is predominantly negative, and while revolution is not a very prominent marker, it is a negative one, especially in the mass discourse. Individual rights and freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom of expression, human rights) are present as positive markers in the elite discourse, but the mass discourse contains very few such references and treats these values as ambivalent at best. The elite discourse emphasises the need of a strong state and political unity and, while being pro-democracy overall, expresses scepticism with regard to political pluralism and oppositional politics.

The conservative nature of this discourse is also evident in its overall support of an essentialist view of Russia's identity. The elites and the masses share the preference for defining Russian identity as ethnic Russian and Orthodox Christian. There is a pronounced difference between the elite and mass discourses on the issue of internal diversity: while the elites (especially the political leaders in their speeches) strongly, and positively, emphasise Russia's identity as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society, much more ambivalent attitudes seem to prevail among the masses. The mass discourse also seems to gravitate towards Orientalism, especially in the way it views guest workers from Central Asia, traders from the Caucasus and other similar representations of the Oriental Other.

The predominance of conservative attitudes is most obvious, however, in the attitude to the traditional lifestyle. Elite and mass discourses converge in highlighting, first of all, traditional family as the cornerstone of Russian identity. At the same time, there is a significant difference between the two levels when it comes to the emotional content of family values: the official discourse tends to emphasise the need to improve the demographic situation by increasing nativity and promoting healthy way of life. One more significant aspect of Russia's identity that is present mostly in the elite discourse is the great Russian culture. Both production and consumption sides seem to be equally important, i.e. Russia is a country of great writers, composers etc., and common Russian people are expected to appreciate this legacy as part of their way of life. However, this relates only to high, classical culture: contemporary artistic trends are hardly ever mentioned as important, identity-wise.

The mass discourse, on the contrary, views family, heterosexual love and traditional gender roles as key to the individual's emotional and existential stability and even, one could say, ontological security. The mass discourse is also openly homophobic (while the novels tend to be politically correct, homophobic humour is very prominent in the films, especially in *Our Russia*).

Finally, the dominant discourse contains a strong element of self-Orientalisation in how it constructs a typical Russian/Soviet personality. The Russians imagine themselves as tough, steady people who can survive any hard times and defeat any enemy. At the same time, the Russian personality is seen as an obstacle on the way to modernisation: the Russians are prone to all sorts of excesses. Self-limitation and abiding by the rules are not exactly typical of them, and alcohol abuse is a constant theme but, as pointed out above, can be interpreted both as a weakness and a social glue. The representations of unruly Russian character sometimes correlate with the calls on the state to promote discipline, thus increasing the prominence of the strong state discourse.

Somewhat unexpectedly, a major alternative to the dominant discourse is centred around the theme of **class**. This is obvious in the rejection of class hierarchies, which is very visible in the mass discourse but is also present to some extent in the elite sources. While individual rights and freedoms as such are not exactly craved for by the Russian public, it seems to be very sensitive to inequality when it has a social, as opposed to purely legal, dimension. Thus, rights violations, if they are noticed, are typically interpreted along the class lines, as committed by the wealthy and the powerful against the common people. While the state as such is revered, and its leaders are rather popular, the officialdom is seen as corrupt and inefficient, and also as abusing its privileges against the interests of the people. Corruption is a major concern at all levels, but newspapers and especially novels portray this as one of the most fundamental, and extremely problematic, aspects of Russian existence.

It seems that the lack of trust in the state institutions, rather than the abstract idea of statehood (also as personified by Vladimir Putin), is the main reason why the idea of strong state struggles to find significant support among the masses (this is particularly obvious in the case

of the newspapers). Another telling illustration is the case of strong polarisation of the discourse on the *siloviki*: while the speeches refer to them approvingly, other sources feature two opposing images, with the figure of the noble servant of the people overshadowed by the corrupt policeman (and, in the case of the textbooks in particular, of security services being one of the key elements of Soviet totalitarianism).

Market economy, and capitalism in general, are viewed by the masses with suspicion, although the novels also emphasise the benefits of living in an open society and economy, such as capitalist consumption, travels abroad, career opportunities. Consumerist values also seem to be the main reason why the masses, as opposed to the elites, seem to strongly prefer a Russia that is open to the world. It seems that largely for the same reason the memory of the Soviet past is also ambivalent: instead of overwhelming nostalgia that one would expect to see based on the vector of the political change under Putin, we have observed a much more contradictory attitude. The movies constitute an exception by containing only positive references, but in fact their absolute number (2 codes) is only statistically significant due to a low number of codes that the films yield, in general.

The **foreign policy dimension** of the discursive field seems to be rather distinct, but we see no significant contradictions in comparison with other findings. The idea of Russia being a great power (which theoretically could also be associated with Soviet nostalgia) is viewed positively but is strongly present only in the speeches. None of the typical external Others are treated antagonistically: the attitudes to New Europe (Eastern European countries) is neutral or slightly negative, while the West and even the US are far more important as defining the standard of modernity than as a geopolitical foe.

The only exception is textbooks, which illustrate the fact that the Russian society has not been able to work out a new historical narrative in this field. History of Russian/Soviet foreign policy is still described in terms of geopolitical rivalry with the West (with the US being the main protagonist on the Western side), and there is little attempt at redefining the national interest compared to the Soviet vision.

The opposite seems to be the case when it comes to the memory of Stalinism. It is treated as a major identity-related issue in textbooks, but other sources contain next to nothing on the subject. The situation is even worse with the memory of deportations and other repressions against particular ethnic groups: these are mentioned only in the textbooks, and not necessarily in a way that would warrant coding them as relevant for national identity. This indicates that the official condemnation of Stalinist crimes did not really take root in a wider society, which might suggest an explanation for the ease with which the legacy of Medvedev's modernisation was dismantled in the subsequent years.

Table 2. Topography of Russian national identity

	<i>Speeches</i>	<i>Textbooks</i>	<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Novels</i>	<i>Movies</i>
<i>Modernisation</i>					
Modernity	+++++	++++	+++	++~	++
Democracy	++~-	++++	+++	++~	~
Market economy		+	-	+/-	
Europe	+++-	+	++/-	+/	+/
Russian/Soviet personality	-	+	+/-	-	+++~- -
IO: periphery	+				
<i>Stability vs reform</i>					
Reforms	+	+	+		
Stability	++	++	+	++	
Historical Other: Perestroika/1990s	-	+~- -		/-	
<i>Essentialist identity</i>					
Traditional lifestyle	+	+	++	+++~--	++++~
Essentialist identity	+--	+/-	+/-	/	+~
Orient				+	~-- - -
<i>Class</i>					
Class hierarchy	-	-	-	-	--
Corruption and grey business	-		-	--	/
Strong state	+/-	+/-	+~-- - -	+~-- - -	+/-
<i>Great power and its Others</i>					
Great power	++	+++			
the West	++~	+/- - -	++/~-	+/-	
Russian Westernisers	~-				
Non-West	+		+/-	+~	~
Near abroad			-		
Eastern Europe	/	-	+/		-
<i>Historical Others</i>					
USSR	~	+~-	-	~	+
Stalinism		- - -	-		

4. Conclusion

Our findings seem to indicate that Dmitry Medvedev's modernisation, although far from being an idiosyncratic project of a temporary and insignificant political leader, resonated to some extent with the wider society. The ground was prepared by the centuries-old Russian

tradition of self-Orientalisation (mostly by constantly comparing the Russian realities with the idealised image of the West), combined with the fundamentally modern self-understanding of most Russians. The Russian people also appreciated the prospect of further improvements in their quality of life while continuing to live in an open country. There was a consensus regarding the need to maintain stability; the programme of gradual reform promoted by the government was not reflected in the mass identity discourse in either positive or negative way.

The dominant discourse also emphasised unity and the strong state. These aspects were, however, challenged by the alternative discourse, which re-articulated Russia's identity in terms of class difference and widespread social injustice. Corruption and the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the ruling elites were major elements of the mass discourse in 2010. The Soviet past was still an important element of national identity, but we did not find any strong predominance of either negative or nostalgic attitude. This is particularly relevant to the memory of Stalinism, which was not a major element of national identity discourse outside of history textbooks.

SOURCES

1. Leadership speeches

- 1) President Medvedev's Address to the Federal Assembly (<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/speeches/9637>)
- 2) Prime Minister Putin's annual press-conference (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=414412>)

These are two of the most important political interventions of any year; a major plus is continuity of the format (since 1994 and 2001, respectively).

2. Two most circulated newspapers, according to most ratings, are:

- 1) *Argumenty i fakty* weekly
- 2) *Rossiiskaya gazeta* daily

AiF was no. 1 in the Ex libris rating of popular newspapers (<http://www.exlibris.ru/rejting-izdanij/>); it had by far the largest readership according to the TNS Russia rating (average issue readership 7,540.8 thousand for March–July 2010; all data cited below are for the same period; other periods spanning 2010 yield similar results).¹ The only weekly that surpassed *AiF* was *Antenna-TeleSem* (AIR 10,937.8k). The latter, however, was essentially a printed schedule of TV broadcasts and thus of a much narrower scope.

RG was no. 1–2 (depending on the quarter) in the rating of 'socio-political' newspapers in Ex libris and had the highest rating (AIR 1,395.4k) among the dailies according to TNS Russia, except for *Iz ruk v ruki* (AIR 3,690.2k), which, however, mostly publishes private ads and, again, is much narrower in scope.

The problem with the newspapers in the case of post-Soviet Russia, however, is that not a single one of them publishes letters to editor on a regular basis, and very few run regular

¹ The same data are used in the official report by the Federal Agency for the Press and Mass Media in its annual report (see *Российская периодическая печать. Состояние, тенденции и перспективы развития. Отраслевой доклад*. М: Федеральное агентство по печати и массовым коммуникациям, 2011, pp. 18–23).

editorial articles. The closest genre to the latter is opinion pieces, which are currently common in *Izvestia* (also a relatively popular daily), but not in the two papers listed above. A possible alternative for 2015 could be taking opinion pieces in *Izvestia* together with reader's online comments. However, in 2010 the paper published much fewer opinion pieces, and there are no comments saved in the online archive (if they ever existed at all). There is thus a problem of insufficient representation of the popular discourse in any of the printed newspapers, except may be for local ones with very narrow circulation.

TNS makes available ratings of various web-portals (such as Yandex and Mail.Ru) and radio stations. However, there is no way to retrieve the archived materials from these sources, and neither of these formats involve the audience to a sufficient degree. Retroactively sampling social networks also proves to be technically difficult, since there is no way to retrieve posts for a particular time period.

Having encountered these problems, we attempted to sample popular TV shows. TNS Russia publishes weekly ratings of TV shows which can be grouped in various ways. We have analysed the listings of most popular programmes in two genres: entertainment and socio-political shows. These two genres were selected because these shows, unlike news, sports or analytics, can be expected to deliberately adjust their contents to the expectations and tastes of the audience. Most entertainment shows even feature people who claim to be ordinary citizens as main protagonists (even though there are strong reasons to suspect that these are actors playing people from the street). In other words, they can be expected to reproduce the common-sense worldview, and it might be argued that the more popular the show is, the more successful it is in reaching that goal.

In order to select the most popular shows, we have looked at the TNS weekly ratings for every other month (January through November), for the week of the 15th. The leaders are easy to identify: *Pust govoriat* topped the ratings for 5 out of 6 sampled weeks with the rating between 7.4 and 9.5 per cent of the potential audience, while *Russkie sensatsii* were the most popular among the socio-political shows for 4 out of 6 sampled weeks (rating 4.0 to 6.5 per cent).

We conducted test coding on one issue of *AiF* and both shows (*Pust govoriat* and *Russkie sensatsii*). The results for the newspaper are excellent: the first three materials, out of 52 contained in the 13 January issue, yielded 34 codes (see the Excel file for documentation). As we expected, even though the weekly mostly publishes texts written by the staff, along with interviews, it stays as close to mass common sense as one can possibly get, and its wide circulation confirms that this effort is successful. For that reason, *AiF* is part of our sample also for 1990 and 2000, which ensures continuity.

Test coding of TV shows, on the contrary, was not very productive: the sample part of *Pust govoriat* (aired on 16 June, 48 min) contained several analogous mentions of 'fascism' and 'concentration camps' but nothing else to sample; *Russkie sensatsii* (18 September, around 55 min) yielded 13 codes, most of which were poorly articulated.

We thus decided to leave the TV shows out and to include *AiF* (federal edition). In our view it makes no sense to select any particular genre or section of the paper, since that might result in selection bias. Since each issue is rather large (over 50 individual items, mostly short; at least 16 tabloid pages), we decided to include four issues in the sample, with publication dates 13 January, 12 May, 15 September and 15 December. To compensate for the absence of a newspaper publishing letters to editor, we included an extra film in our sample.

3. Two high school history textbooks:

- 1) История России, 1945-2008. 11 класс : учебник для учащихся общеобразовательных учреждений : с вкладышем / [А. И. Уткин и др.] ; под ред. А. А. Данилова, А. И. Уткина, А. В. Филиппова. М.: Просвещение, 2009.
- 2) История России. XX - начало XXI века. 11 класс : учебник для общеобразовательных учреждений : профильный уровень / В. А. Шестаков; под ред. А. Н. Сахарова. М.: Просвещение, 2010.

The Federal List of Textbooks for 2010/2011 academic year, approved by the Ministry of Education in December 2009 (http://www.edu.ru/db/mo/Data/d_09/m822.html), contains 27 titles in subsection 'History', section 'Secondary (Complete) Education' (the latter is equivalent to high school, 10–11 grades). In addition, 9 titles were listed as 'permitted'.

World history and Russian history are traditionally taught as separate subjects, although three textbooks on the list do not follow this separation. In addition, according to the federal educational standard, history is taught at either basic or advanced (*profilnyi*) level. It is also important to keep in mind that not every textbook on the list has 2009 or 2010 editions.

There are no open data on the actual use of particular textbooks at schools: this information is protected as trade secret even by the Ministry of Education. Indirect data suggests that textbooks published by the state-owned *Prosveshchenie* press have been used most widely: this publisher had the largest share of the market and enjoyed the support of regional and federal authorities.² According to an insider expert, up until 2012 the unchallenged leader of the market was *Rossia i mir* by Danilov, Kosulina, Aleksashkina and Brandt (two different basic-level textbooks for the 10th and 11th grades). The 10th grade textbook authored by Danilov, Kosulina and Brandt is especially recommended by the expert. These two textbooks, however, deal both with Russian and world history; the one for the 10th grade does not satisfy our chronological criteria by focusing on the period before the twentieth century.

By searching the catalogue of the Russian State Library (<http://aleph.rsl.ru>) for items with the title 'History of Russia' and 'History of Fatherland' published in 2009 and 2010, we have been able to narrow down the potential selection to 13 titles (search results saved as screenshots).

Our first choice was the famous 'Filippov's textbook', which was produced in an attempt to bring the teaching practices under tougher ideological control and reduce pluralism. It was not included in the list of 'recommended' textbooks, because it was not part of a full set covering the entire duration of secondary and high school history course.³ However, since this textbook was itself at the centre of a heated debate, we decided to include it as representative in several important respects.

The second title is an advanced-level textbook for the 11th grade edited by Andrey Sakharov. The main reason for the selection is the fact that in 1993–2010, Sakharov was the director of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

4. Top two bestselling novels by Soviet and Russian writers:

- 1) Борис Акунин. Весь мир театр. (Pro books rating: 22310)
- 2) Александра Маринина. Взгляд из вечности. Книга 3. Ад (Pro books rating: 9524)

² Aleksei Boyarsky, 'Uchebnik chistoi pribyli', *Dengi*, 2011, 10 October, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1773074>; *Knizhnaiia industria*, 2013, no. 10, p. 25.

³ See Filipp Chapkovsky, 'Uchebnik istorii i ideologicheskii defitsit', *Pro et contra* 51(1), 2011, p. 123.

Our selection is based on the quantitative rating of market research portal Pro books (<http://pro-books.ru/rating/chart/hud/period=01.01.2010:31.12.2010>), which is double-checked against qualitative reviews of the 2010 book scenes. The absolute leader of 2010 is *All the World's a Stage* by Akunin, but Marinina is also one of the leading authors in terms of popularity.

5. **Top three most watched movies** by Russian directors. Currently, three films are being considered:

- 1) «Ёлки» (Yolki), Тимур Бекмамбетов (total audience in Russia: 4.03 million)
- 2) «Наша Russia. Яйца судьбы» (Nasha Russia), Глеб Орлов (3.94 million)
- 3) «Кандагар» (Kandahar), Андрей Кавун (2.64 million)

We have added a third film to our sample to compensate for the lack of letters to editor and opinion pieces.

The box office data comes from the website Kinopoisk.ru, which is ranked 20th the most popular website in Russia (<http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/kinopoisk.ru>) with more than 5 mln users up to January 2016 (<http://www.kinopoisk.ru/docs/join/>). The 2010 data is available at <http://www.kinopoisk.ru/box/year/2010/type/rus/cur/USD/top100/list/> and <http://www.kinopoisk.ru/top/lists/54/filtr/all/sort/year/country%5B2%5D/2/>. The data on the size of the audience is for the total screening time, but *Yolki* still came second in the calendar year of 2010, in spite of being released as late as 16 December. Both *Yolki* and *Nasha Russia* are comedies, and *Nasha Russia* is based on a popular TV. *Kandahar* is a thriller dated 2009 but released in February 2010.

Speeches:

1. Medvedev, Dmitry. 2010. 'President Medvedev's Address to the Federal Assembly'. 30 November. (<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/speeches/9637>)
2. Putin, Vladimir. 2000. 'Prime Minister Putin's annual press-conference'. 16 December. (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=414412>)

Newspapers:

1. *Argumenty i fakty*. Moscow, 2010.
2. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, Moscow, 2010.

Textbooks:

1. Danilov, A. A., A. I. Utkin and A. V. Filippov. 2009. *Istoriia Rossii, 1945-2008. 11 klass: uchebnik dlia uchashchikhsia obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii: s vkladyshe*m. Moscow: Prosveshchnie.
2. Shestakov, V. A. and A. N. Sakharova. 2010. *Istoriia Rossii. XX – nachalo XXI veka. 11 klass: uchebnik dlia uchashchikhsia obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii: profil'nyi uroven'*. Moscow: Prosveshchnie.

Novels:

1. Akunin, Boris. *Ves' mir teatr*. Moscow: Zakharov, 2009.
2. Marinina, Aleksandra Borisovna. *Vzgliad iz vechnosti. Kniga 3. Ad*. Moscow: Eksmo Press, 2010.

Films:

1. Bekmambetov, Timur. 2010. *Yolki*. Moscow: Bazalevs Productions.
2. Orlov, Gleb. 2010. *Nasha Russia. Iaitsa Sud'by*. Moscow: Central Partnership and Comedy Club Production.
3. Kavun, Andrei. 2010. *Kandagar*. Moscow: Central Partnership.