

VALUES IN FOREIGN POLICY

INVESTIGATING IDEALS AND INTERESTS

EDITED BY

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Investigating Ideals and Interests

Edited by Krishnan Srinivasan,
James Mayall and Sanjay Pulipaka

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The projection of attitudes, poses, and rhetoric that cause us to appear noble and altruistic in the mirror of our own vanity . . . lacks substance when related to the realities of international life.

—George F. Kennan, 1985

In the real world of politics, even in countries which claim to follow Jesus or Buddha, moral arguments do not carry weight.

—Parmeshwar Narayan Haksar, 1998

International politics is about values and principle, but first and foremost about what is possible. What matters is doing your job, not your principles. That the means match the ends can be maintained only by someone who has no notion of politics, let alone of a nation's fight for independence.

—Bernhard Jaumann, 2010

The problem comes in when moralistic impulses begin to intrude on the execution of a reasonable, responsible, and rational foreign policy, which is where we are today.

—James Carden, 2018

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Chapter 6

Values in Russian Foreign Policy

Soviet Values, Revisionism and President Putin

Hari Vasudevan and Tatiana Shaumyan

Revisionist features that have marked Russian foreign policy in the first two decades of this century have coincided with projection of the significance of values (*tsemmosti*) by administrations associated with President Vladimir Putin. The process has not involved acknowledgement of a discernible value system comparable to Soviet communism. The latter was a catch-all of ideology, behavioural maxims and ethics intertwined with the Soviet experience of Communist rule and the planned economy; closely linked was a perspective on international relations based on interpretations of class, the exploitative functions of capitalism globally and a commitment to build world communism. To the contrary, although the position is under review,¹ post-Soviet Russia still adheres to Article 13 of the 1993 constitution, which disavows commitment to any single ideology.

Nevertheless, for over a decade, Russian official pronouncements involve a revisionist approach to terms such as 'sovereignty', 'democracy' and 'market economics' as articulated by the European Union (EU), the United States and their allies. Here and in foreign policy, stress falls on the strengthening of values as a means to achieve better levels of security where 'values' are conceived as formulations generated as much by reference points of Eurasian practice as any universal ethical code. Strong condemnation is expressed of 'illegal' and 'neo-fascist' initiatives across the world, applying official Russian standards to do so. Assertion of common interests with the EU and the US coexists with a strong critique of their policies. These points of focus are outlined in the Foreign Policy Concept of Russia of 2016.²

Much of this is at variance with post-Soviet Russia's initial lack of clarity in priority-building, and an early assumption that the West was a model. That model was associated with pluralist electoral democracy, private enterprise and property and cultivation of civil liberties – all in a cocktail defined by

US and Western European practices. The Russian position was a reverse of long-standing Soviet critique of Euro-American practice around such values. But the extent and rate of assimilation of EU/US paradigms post-1991 was uneven. The application of terms such as 'Atlanticist' and 'Eurasianist' to swings in Russian foreign policy was a reflection of this unevenness and marked the Yeltsin era (1992–1999) in Russian politics. At that time, overarching commitment to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) more than any other cooperative framework outside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) demonstrated the importance given by all actors to the Helsinki Act and the Paris Charter (1990).

Post-2004, Russian revisionism has been shaped with this in mind, but also a deep focus on the cooperative formation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Crude authoritarianism and Russian self-aggrandizement in the Soviet space under Putin, rather than well-conceived values, are held to be responsible for change in policy. But the subject has been thinly explored analytically.³

This chapter provides a narrative that draws out values orientation in Russian foreign policy through Soviet and post-Soviet times to show a chequered phenomenon in the present. An argument evolves that values bind Russia to the West more than in Soviet times; but they are also a source and expression of conflict with the West. Following scattered interest in values in the Yeltsin era, exceptional initiatives focused on values have been generated under Putin after 2000. These initiatives have reflected firmly on foreign policy and have persisted through Putin's tenures as president/prime minister. The initiatives are not directly linked to ministers or policymakers, but they coincide with the projection of Russian positions internationally. The trend consolidates as a cultural force which draws from construction of official history, negotiates with religion in Russia and ranges broadly through a substantial presence in the digital media inside Russia and outside, in the space of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The development has been subject to state direction, but it has social depth because it overlaps with attributes of education, school upwards.

This outcome coexists with the engagement with countries outside the former Soviet sphere on terms that involve respect for alternative national perspectives: a position considered more respectful of sovereignty and democracy than Euro-American approaches. The duality compares with pre-1991 Soviet treatment of non-Communist developing states. Here, the approach to India is the best example of adaptation of past relationships to a thin post-1991 'values fabric' in policy. The engagement is not exceptional in range and may be compared with Russia's relations with China. But since there are neighbourhood perspectives involved in the latter, it is the

relationship with India that is the best example of the flexibility of the complex matrix of Russia-centric initiatives in the developing world. Strikingly, the development shows the formative influence of the Indian engagement in the past on Russian foreign policymaking.

BACKGROUND: THE USSR'S FOREIGN POLICY VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS

Russian foreign policy evolved from a critique of Soviet foreign policy. That critique touched on pre-1991 practices and values where the Soviet state vaunted its real achievements to guarantee social attributes valued in Western Europe and the United States (democracy, civil liberties, etc.).

Rejecting such Soviet claims in memoirs of his early years as minister of external affairs of the Soviet Russian Republic, Andrei Kozyrev pithily described foreign policy in the USSR as the concern of a few and a matter rarely discussed with knowledge among the general public. Confidentiality surrounded the conduct of foreign affairs.⁴ Practitioners of policy were made up of recruits from institutions held to be appropriate such as the Moscow Institute of International Relations,⁵ their ranks supplemented from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB) and the armed forces. Appointment was decided by bureaucratic format, awareness or skill, but as much by the rules of advancement set by the party's *nomenklatura* system. Such rules prioritized obedience to the party and the different 'lines' of ideas that it evolved.

In this snapshot of the poor democratic credentials of Soviet policymaking, Kozyrev indicated the consequences of the guiding influence in Soviet policy of Bolshevik or Soviet 'civilization'. That civilization was meant to express the best of European progressive values, including commitment to representative and democratic government, the rule of law, personal liberty, social equality, social justice and tolerance of religious and national difference, but with a focus on institutionalized social engineering rather than constitutional or legal provision. Here, 'socialist legality' required law to be guided by CPSU priorities.

A reading of history underpinned this civilization: where the USSR stood in advance of other countries as a state that had passed from feudalism to capitalism to a stage of socialist and communist construction. The codes and behavioural practices of Soviet institutions acquired the status of values. Stress fell on eschewing private property, and the utilization of public enterprise and planning as instruments, justification being provided by CPSU Marxist-Leninist perspective.

Internationally, Soviet foreign policy argued for a meaningful peace agenda, and work with appropriate trades union, peasant and youth bodies committed to opposition to imperialism and reduction of inequalities between nations. This was counterposed to commitments, articulated in bodies such as the League of Nations/United Nations that were said to lack substance.

Soviet Values and External Relations: The Cold War

During 1945–1991, practitioners of foreign policy were moulded by such a ‘Second World’ civilization and developed a global perspective which framed their view of the Cold War and divided the world into three zones. The zones were the Soviet state itself and allied states of eastern Europe, Vietnam and Cuba; a more distant range of friendly countries, Iraq, Syria and India among them, and the more hostile capitalist world led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the four decades of Cold War before 1991, the USSR was sustained by the alliances and interactions among the first two zones, and competed for global hegemony with the third. International relations theory common among Euro-American communities of specialists was often appropriated to guide policy, but seldom in any systematic manner. This led to a sense that Soviet and non-Soviet practitioners of policy did not mean the same thing when they used the same terms.

Soviet Values and Bilateral Relations

Significantly, in African and Asian countries with friendly ties to the USSR, projection of the values of ‘Soviet man’ was important,⁶ but engagement went beyond this. Economic policy sought a new international division of labour to decentre manufacturing away from the West with Soviet assistance. Soviet enterprises for technology transfer were state enterprises working for the notion of such enterprise in principle. But equally Soviet spokesmen argued for the consolidation of nation-building in partners on terms preferred by such partners, working with the private sector as much as the public sector when required. This was a feature of the Khrushchev era (1956–1964) and was partly led by the special engagement with Egypt. It was more firmly shaped thereafter by the links with India which were to be more sustained in the long term.⁷

Soviet self-projection as the bulwark of nationalism was accompanied by the complex role played in relations with the developing world by the All-Union Association for Cultural Relations (1925–1958) (VOKS) and its successor in 1958, the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship with Foreign Countries (SSOD).⁸ These organizations projected Soviet ideas in individual countries; they also united activists of Soviet science, literature, art, education

and sport with the aim of acquainting Soviet society with the achievements of foreign countries. VOKS ran friendship societies in the USSR, studied the world and arranged visits of foreign writers, artists and film-makers to the USSR. In 1941, VOKS appeared in Libya, Syria, New Zealand, Australia, Chile and India. Many other countries came into the picture post-war, encouraging respect in the Soviet Union for national aspects of culture among individual emerging nations.

The case of India increasingly stood out as the largest single area of state-to-state collaboration in the non-Communist world. Here, the activities of VOKS and SSOD and the visits of dignitaries and technical personnel between the countries led to relationships that did not take, as given, the healthy nature of Soviet values. In the circumstances, the engagement with India, flanked by economic and military technical collaboration and its overall justification, nuanced Soviet communism itself. The lessons of the relationship shaped Soviet connections with West Asia and Africa during the Brezhnev era.⁹

SOVIET DISINTEGRATION, REJECTION OF SOVIET PERSPECTIVES AND 'VALUES'

It was in Eastern Europe and within the USSR itself that the notion of Soviet values as an enhancement of progressive Western values was most questioned. The Soviet Communist Party was accused of tyranny; Soviet practice was criticized for failure to satisfy national aspirations in the Baltic, Ukraine and the Caucasus as well as Eastern Europe. Nationalists in Russia expressed such opinions.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the decisive control of the Russian government by votaries of the anti-Soviet critique during the creation of the Russian Federation as the successor state. The new state did not have the population, territory or resources of the USSR. However, Russia inherited the USSR's international responsibilities and nuclear arsenal; and Moscow continued to be the pivot of Soviet-era economic networks, statesmen retaining a sense of their world importance.

To give a post-Communist meaning to this profile, in the early months of its existence Russia witnessed the banning of the Communist Party and abolition of the planning system. The new state committed itself to no ideology. The Constitution of 1993 was clear in Article 13 that '(1) Ideological diversity shall be recognized in the Russian Federation and (2) No ideology shall be proclaimed as State ideology or as obligatory'.

Structural features of politics, though, prevented priority-building in foreign policy or substantial values construction. In government, institutional chaos marked 1992–1999, where the presidential establishment was the

pivot of the post-1991 Russian economic reforms and, under Boris Yeltsin, emerged as the centre of Russian government with exceptional powers accorded it during 1992. In the faction-ridden parliamentary framework the Ministry of External Affairs revolved around the president. The situation generated only limited equilibrium to decision making, since the politics internal to the presidential establishment did not make for coherent policy.¹⁰

During the post-1991 Russian reforms, commitment to a transition to capitalism led to the formation of 'oligarchic' empires and public corporations in an unstable economy. Such entities possessed networks throughout former Soviet areas of influence and financial holdings positioned in offshore locations and had 'mafia' operators to guide them. Public corporations worked closely with the presidency, which shaped many of the new Federal State Unitary Enterprises and the combines (*obedinenia*) that they fed into.

Post-Soviet Russian Foreign Policy: Values in the Doldrums

Foreign policy came to be influenced by these centres of power – even as earlier Soviet connections were a bond between senior members of the Russian government and leadership elsewhere in the erstwhile Soviet space – poorly structured by the CIS. Social links through communities that straddled boundaries made this 'near abroad' a crucial area of foreign policy. Former members of the Soviet Communist Party, now situated in high office in Russia, used their erstwhile connections to shape policy for personal and institutional benefit, often without reference to the ministries, which had yet to form fully equipped embassies and develop specialists. The residue of Soviet values – loyalties and preferences generated by common training and personal networks – guided interactions.

Russia evolved bilateral and multilateral relationships in this framework, a path followed by other CIS members.¹¹ Inconsistency of purpose was to be seen in the countervailing forces that worked against Atlanticist approaches that were tilted to favourable engagement with the United States and the EU and symbolized by Russia's first Minister of External Affairs Kozyrev. The countervailing forces were represented by Eurasianist approaches and were symbolized by Russia's second Minister of External Affairs Yevgenii Primakov. Euro-American neglect of Russian minority rights in the former USSR and hostility to allied states such as Serbia shaped the influence in policy of Eurasianism.

Attempts to evolve appropriate theoretical apparatus for geopolitics of the former USSR added a layer of complication. The overall ideological framework of Soviet socialism ceased to be of value in the new situation, and foreign agencies, such as the Carnegie Foundation and the Soros

Foundation, along with think tanks and universities in the Euro-American world, stepped in to 'train' a new Russian cohort. No clear 'values' were discernible – although held to be necessary.

Poor professionalism along new lines in the domain of foreign policy added to institutional incoherence. Entrants into the Ministry of External Affairs and Russian think tanks dealt with the vicissitudes of Russian everyday life and attempted to emigrate when opportunities arose. Educational and research institutions faced severe funding problems and variations in personnel. Clusters of Russian specialists oriented themselves around Euro-American, Chinese, Japanese and Korean institutions, spending long periods outside the country. The OSCE was a point of reference through all this, giving shape to adjustments over the dismemberment of the COMECON and the Warsaw Pact and providing Russia with a foundation for partnership with the EU. However, Russia's aspirations for exceptional status were an indication of unease with the offer.

Bilateral Relations in the Developing World

Bilateral relations between the developing world and Russia were shaped on an ad hoc basis. Neighbourhood was significant in the case of Iran and Turkey, but policy drew little from graduation from developmental concerns of the past to liberalization concerns of the present to form common ground in values. Elsewhere, demand for Russian military hardware underpinned relations with countries in West and Southeast Asia and Africa and Latin America.

Projecting the new Russia and its priorities, meanwhile, SSOD was recast into the organization Roszarubezhtsentr, continuing to be headed by Valentina Tereshkova. Initial attempts were made to generate an agenda. But much of the inputs into this became hampered under the Russian reforms. Initially, in all cases, the importance attached to ideas, values and culture as part of bilateral exchange tailed off. During the last months of *perestroika*, the commitment to projection of Soviet culture and its use as a bridge with partners outside the 'socialist world' had decreased precipitately. Post-1991, this trend continued.

The spectacular improvement in cultural relations with China has been discussed by M. L. Titarenko. Poor contact during years of Sino-Soviet hostility and persistence of a Communist idiom in Chinese policy led to a slow start to enunciation of common values. Language learning and commercial arrangements made up most of the new activity, to support trade and military-technical cooperation.

In construction of bilateral relations elsewhere in the developing world, India was significant. Trading relations developed with debt settlement

beneficial to Russia, and military-technical cooperation was crucial to the relationship. But unlike erstwhile partnerships of the USSR in the developing world which oriented towards globalization ad hoc, the connections with India projected common values that came from a commitment to post-1991 economic reform and multi-ethnic state formation. India was required to accept economic liberalization after 1992. Structures and processes based on public enterprise and autarchic trade regimes were altered to accommodate the International Monetary Fund requirements to deal with a prevailing financial crisis. In this process of adaptation, India and Russia found common ground in a language centred on new precepts. An entente of sorts existed between the two countries in international affairs based on these issues during 1995–1998, though the depth of the entente thinned due to poor Russian support for Indian nuclearization in 1998.

Debates that took place in the Russian Federation were projected in India by the country's journalists and scholars based in Russia. Exchanges of ideas persisted under the aegis of the Indo-Russian Joint Commission and the Russian Academy of Sciences, and seminars or projects.¹² The incoherent values of the new Russia included a respect for Indian culture.

VLADIMIR PUTIN'S CHANGE OF COURSE AFTER THE 'COLOUR' REVOLUTIONS

Values Initiatives as a Strategy of Foreign Policy

Vladimir Putin's emergence as president of the Russian Federation in 2000 hardly affected this situation, even if a clear coherence came to characterize politics (a trend often viewed critically)¹³ and this affected foreign policymaking as other aspects of government. The apparatus centred on the presidency, and the Ministry of External Affairs was not altered, but the sub-systems associated with neighbourhood policy and the energy complex¹⁴ were brought more firmly under presidential control.

In policy, the Afghan crisis of 2001 and Russia's collaboration with the United States was a clear indicator that engagements with the West remained important and Igor Ivanov's presence at the Ministry of External Affairs until 2004 was a marker of this. Mention in a National Security Concept document of 2000 of spiritual challenges that Russia faced did not find follow-up in other statements or policies. Putin and Medvedev administrations participated actively in a variant of the European Neighbourhood Program; after 2005, four 'common spaces' were defined for cooperation between the EU and Russia: on trade, freedom and justice, security and education.

However, in 2003, following the 'colour revolutions' (Rose Revolution in Georgia and Orange Revolution of 2004 in Ukraine) and the expansion eastward of the EU, a hard edge increasingly marked Russian foreign policy; *sui generis* interpretations of market economics¹⁵ and parliamentarism were on view.¹⁶ During the second Putin presidential term (2004–2008) and the decade that followed, taking up strands in a National Security Concept document (2000) and ideas in the Russian foreign policy concept document of 2016, views critical of Euro-Atlantic policies figure prominently. Euro-American support for regime change outside NATO was regarded as breach of sovereignty. Full support was expressed for contested political regimes, like trans-Dnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, of the former Soviet space that rejected an EU orientation. These developments have coincided with the tenure of Sergei Lavrov as minister of external affairs.

The turn came at a time of confidence in the Russian economy under the regulatory regime established by Putin, and Russia's settlement of foreign debts. The confidence overcame any sense of inadequacy in official circles that remained from the Yeltsin years.

The departure had much in common with Eurasianist positions expressed in the 1990s but had broader dimensions. In presidential circles the stress in pronouncements fell on necessity for international respect to sovereignty and nationality according to history and religion. 'Official History', engagement with the Orthodox Church and engagement with 'official' religion in the case of Buddhism and Islam (religions that accept the diktats of the state) were integral to the approach. In foreign policymaking, focus fell on a larger domain of media initiatives linked to Russia's global positions. Institutions evolved under Putin that were designed to inspire values centred on this approach.

The Putin Values Initiatives

Foundations

In the Putin initiatives, echoes exist of pre-1991 motifs and ideas and trends post-disintegration. Pre-1991, patriotism was tapped to provide emotional ballast to the creation of 'Soviet man'. Toleration in a low key of the Orthodox Church, Islam and Buddhism was the hallmark of this pre-*perestroika* era. Focus on Russian nationalism was shaped around societies for the preservation of monuments.¹⁷

Those involved were active publicly during *perestroika* and after Soviet disintegration, generating debate about Russia's global position. Such discussion was not focused purely on foreign policy, but broadly on Russia's identity. Persons of differing opinions like Alexander Dugin, Gleb Pavlovsky,

A. S. Panarin and Andrannik Migranyan were concerned.¹⁸ The discussions took place in magazines such as the *Russkii Zhurnal*. In the Yeltsin era, the Orthodox Church had fetters removed from it, as did Islam and Buddhism. Links with government developed on an ad hoc basis, and public presence in debate evolved with the diversification of the press.

The use of digital media by nationalist organizations fixed on the consolidation of Russian identity dates from this time. In the 1990s, the nationalist agenda was taken up by scattered media organizations; the most prominent was lenta.ru who obtained subvention from the Foundation for Effective Policy established by Maxim Mayer and the ex-dissident Gleb Pavlovsky, who had close links with the Yeltsin administration. Comparable information agencies circulated Internet information in Russia and abroad, using equipment and methods that were an advance of older organizations associated with the print media, such as Pravda.ru, which were burdened with ideas and technological know-how that failed to gain momentum during *perestroika*.

However, pre-2000, the ramshackle economy made the stability of new organizations limited, and they survived on a mixture of state subsidy and handouts of businessmen working across post-Soviet borders. In the case of lenta.ru, the US head of the media organization SUP provided funding. Again, there was no specific target for the initiatives except an undifferentiated public, distinguished by the specific range of the ventures concerned.

In the circumstances, how far Putin's policies since 2003 may be deemed part of a larger project centred on generation of values for Russia may be a matter for justifiable speculation.¹⁹ In so far as they fit into trends in the past in Russia's development of nationhood, they have foundations. However, as an interrelated format, they centre on institutions and individuals that cannot always be firmly traced to older phenomena. Most prominent among the initiatives are cultivation of the *Russkii Mir* and *Regnum* foundations and a special closeness to religious bodies. The values involve a firm reference to Russian historical precedent and practice defined by the institutions concerned, a form of official history.

Official History

Generation of official history became a feature of the presidential establishment in Vladimir Putin's second term, and continued during the Medvedev presidency and the third Putin term. The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation has been pivotal. This was established in 2007, and its chairman is Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov's grandson Vyacheslav Nikonov. The foundation operates inside and outside Russia; has staged events in Europe, United States, Australasia and Latin America; and covers China and India. It provides forums for discussions of Russian history and Russia's global links. Many

of the topics are taken up in the foundation's flagship journal circulated in Russian missions abroad. Articles discuss subjects that vary from the status of the Russian language in countries ranging from UK and Peru to India and the Russian experience of interpretation and translation and the lives of major writers and their work (Ivan Bunin and Leo Tolstoy among the classics). The journal projects the complexity of the Russian civilizational experience: the Buddhist legacy of Buriatia and Kalmykia featuring in an early number of the journal.²⁰

Nikonov is clear that the foundation wishes to go beyond philosophical speculation on what Russia is and what its future should be and that the need of the moment is a practical support to those aware of Russian legacies for consolidation and development of this awareness. *Russkii Mir* articles draw out implications of the agenda for Russian speakers who are citizens of the Russian Federation, or spread through the CIS and beyond. But the foundation's goals touch non-Russian language speakers too: for those who see in their own history a serious Russian connection. The foundation stresses that Russia is globally engaged, and that many in the world are, and have been, engaged with Russia.

Nikonov has drawn attention to the writing of V. N. Molotov, considering Soviet legacies appropriate for the creation of centripetal forces around Russia and Russian practices as a paradigm. Nikonov's projection is modern and takes into account the increase and scattering of Russian-speaking populations during the twentieth century as well as global sympathies inspired by Soviet Russia, which made writing in Russian, sourced from Russia, a part of global engagements during the Cold War.

Since 2015, the Nikonov project for generation of official history has been supplemented by Putin's restoration of the Tsarist-origin Russian Historical Society. This has been given important tasks, including appropriate celebration of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Official Religion

The state's engagement with history has coincided with a similar engagement with religion. The establishment has projected itself as protector of faiths that claim a Russian mooring. Such a role vis-à-vis the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) takes the lead. Close relations have existed between the ROC and the presidential establishment: relations that have been reflected in the formal document relating to Social Concept of the Church. Presidential and ministerial pronouncements have associated Russian culture and Russian values closely with the Church. But a similar closeness has been evinced with Islam and Buddhism as practised within Russia, where the relationships attract emphasis in public.

The situation does not reflect any assertive role the ROC plays in Russian society. Reduced to a minor force under Communist rule, religion generally ceased to be associated with public ritual and practice and was deeply personal. Post-1991 the Orthodox Church registers only 6 percent of the population as formal practitioners attending Church regularly. Under Patriarch Alexei (until 2008) and Patriarch Kirill thereafter, though the claim of the Church to the monopoly of Christian presence in the former Soviet Union has been assertive, the social significance of this is not clear. Nevertheless, the Church has received firm support from the presidential establishment. Symbolically its acceptability was stressed through formal support for church construction and restoration. Since 2000, firm attempts have been made to exclude churches that have non-Russian provenance from actively pursuing evangelical goals in the country, even if they have some record of having been present in the region earlier.²¹

Meanwhile, looking beyond the ROC, Putin has made it clear that 'Islam has always been one of the foundations of Russian statehood and of course the state authority in Russia will always support our traditional Islam'.²² Regular interactions take place between the presidential establishment and the muftiates that exist in cis-Ural Russia, the North Caucasus and Siberia: the conflicting apex organizations of various Muslim spiritual boards (*Dukhovne Upravlenie Musalman*) are the *Tsentral'noe Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musalman* and the *Soviet Muftiev Rossii*.²³ This level of interaction with the presidency is also true of the Buddhist establishments in the Buryat, Tuva and Kalmyk republics.

Targeted Media Offensives

Projects such as *Russkii Mir* and the engagement with the ROC, Islam and Buddhism have generated dynamic media projection specific to the organizations themselves. But the presidential establishment has steered media focus in its own right through agencies loyal to it, which work among a general public and are outside the standard 'soft' material put out by the Kremlin's websites.

In Russia's scattered family of media bodies, late in the first Putin administration a focus emerged, supported by the president, and funded by a more stable economy and better revenues. In the course of the fifteen years during and after Putin's first term, Internet users in Russia rose to over 60 million. The information agencies figured the giants, RIA Novosti, Interfax and Prime, with agreements with China and Europe and US-based agencies.

In this framework, the president evolved a focus that was centred on the historian-publicist Modest Kolerov,²⁴ who developed the information agency Regnum, with the assistance of Vigen Akopyan, an information specialist, in

2002. In Russia itself, indicating its domestic range, the agency had offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg, with regional bases at Voronezh, for Central Russia, the Volga regions, the Far East and the Urals. Abroad, it has offices in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan but also covers the Baltic and the Balkans.

Kolerov became a leading figure in the presidential administration during Putin's second term as head of the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (2005–2007). He took up propaganda exercises in the Baltic states on behalf of the Russian minority. Subsequently he was declared *persona non grata* in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia by the end of the 2000s. Finding his hands tied by his official position, Kolerov left it, but heads Regnum, which supports presidential policies, and has formed a subsidiary that deals with economic affairs. Regnum is sceptical of the appropriateness of Euro-American institutions for Russia. The project represents the EU as an 'empire' whose expansion is funded and directed by the United States. Whether within government or out of it, Kolerov has been associated with Putin's stress on close attention to the welfare of Russian communities outside the Federation, and the projection in Russia of their plight.

The Putin Initiatives as Support for Foreign Policy

The preceding Putin initiatives have as an agenda the promotion of values and cannot be equated with the 'soft power' initiatives taken by the president (for instance, the Institute of Democracy and Cooperation or the Russia Today television channel). In the ill-defined context of post-Soviet institutionalization, such distinctions are not spelt out, but a variety in range and content is clear. Unlike soft power initiatives, the values initiatives establish a focus on the legacies of Russian history and language and practices of the past as interpreted by the establishment. They derive their tenor and content heavily from 'cultural education' – which stresses Russia's uniqueness and has replaced Marxism-Leninism as a compulsory subject in Russian higher education since 1995. This is a subject whose content is influenced by the state, and the values initiatives reinforce the impact of the subject and take that impact in new directions. Consequently, they possess relevance both outside Russia's borders and domestically.

Soft power activity is rhetorical and seeks to legitimize Russian global positions against challengers, without elaboration. Its target is external; and engagement is firmly with positions articulated outside the country.

Presidential engagement with *Russkii Mir* and the other bodies has distinct import for foreign policy without a formal link. While foreign policy documents claim commitment to universal values, they also speak of commitment to obligations to the protection of Russian-speaking peoples, the advancement

of the Russian language and those states of the neighbourhood that have claimed Russia as protector (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, trans-Dnistria).

Putin's foreign policy initiatives have almost direct implications for the operations and output of the bodies concerned. Following the Ukraine crisis of 2014, for instance, V. Nikonov discussed Russia's readiness for a 'strategic break' in the pages of the journal which has featured other articles on policy.

In the case of religious bodies, the link with foreign policy shapes in a different manner. The first visit of Patriarch Alexei to the Ministry of External Affairs in 2003 was followed by regular meetings of a working group between the Ministry and the Church.²⁵ In its claims to primacy as a Christian organization in the former Soviet space, and not merely in Russia, the ROC looks to the Russian government for support; and in turn, it supports the capacity of the Russian state for strong action in the CIS. Among its congregations, the ROC rhetorically asserts its regard for the range and authority of that state. The ROC's External Affairs department monitors its status outside Russia as its Patriarch conducts negotiations. In the case of Islam, Russia's participation in the Organization of Islamic Countries has not been formal and is tied to the 'spiritual boards' that interact with the presidential establishment. In the case of Buddhism, although Russian foreign policy seeks to maintain accord in Sino-Russian relations, the establishment has allowed regular interactions between the Buddhist communities in Buriatia, Tuva and Kalmykia and the Dalai Lama and Buddhism in Mongolia and Japan. This has occurred at the behest of the Lamaic establishments in Russia.

All bodies of the Putin initiatives seek to draw support to the evolution of the EAEU,²⁶ a key concern of Putin. On 1 January 2017, the Union included Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The Union centres on a Free Trade Area that was established in October 2007 by members of the Eurasian Economic Community founded in 2000, but the Union also involves coordination of legal regulations and a developmental edge.

Values in the Putin Initiatives: Institutions as a Challenge for Foreign Policy

Ironically, the values sponsored under the Putin initiatives generate challenges for foreign policy. Initiatives work at cross purposes; Russian official history is at variance with the official history generated in states of the EAEU. The promotion of the Russian language militates against the support for Tatar among Muslim groups that straddle CIS borders and look to the Russian state for support. In the ROC, proselytization and conversion come from confidence generated by the initiatives, but the process accentuates intra-religious tensions and affects relations with Muslim countries. In turn, foreign policy generates challenges to the initiatives. In post-2014 Crimea, Russian policy

is at odds with Muslim Crimean Tatars; the latter, through links in Russia, undermine the support of official Muslim bodies for the Russian state and increase support for non-official Muslim groups.

As the list of Kolerov's contact points and the range of the ROC indicates, the institutions based on the Putin initiatives are focused heavily on the CIS, former Warsaw Pact countries and former Yugoslavia. In the developing world, the work of the Putin initiatives has figured marginally in foreign policy success in Syria and Iran, countries that are at variance with Russia in terms of development models and political institutions. Ethnic links are minimal. Presidential connections to official Islam in Russia have seldom been a factor in building links. Elsewhere, the initiatives dovetail with the main agency that deals with the projection of Russian values *Rossotrudnichestvo*, the heir in 2008 of *Roszarubezhtsent*, which Kolerov has sharply criticized for inadequacies. *Rossotrudnichestvo* has been the pivot of various initiatives in China to promote the Russian language. This has been popular, given the country's trading interests in the CIS.

Foreign Policy and Values within a Larger Matrix

In engagements with China and India, which figure strongly in Putin's strategic perception as counterpodes to the West, projection of values initiatives indicates a degree of multivocality in the way values are read, understood and applied. Common ground on necessity to protect sovereignty from Western expansion was on display after the colour revolutions, China being strongly assertive at the China-Russia-India Trilateral meetings in 2005.

Multidimensional trans-border interactions in China, though, have not always provided the best terrain for development of the Putin initiatives. This includes the various areas of interaction: trade, cooperation in energy production, military technology and the consequences of Chinese migration into the Far East. Contention has been regular: dispute has been coloured by the Chinese negative reaction to the achievement motif in official accounts of Russia's Far Eastern presence.

Rather than press the aims of the values initiatives, Russian policy has bought into Chinese cultural initiative that projects the People's Republic of China. This has included gala occasions and a round of spectacles to support for the One Belt One Road project since 2015.

In India, the complex manner in which *Rossotrudnichestvo* works – projecting a Russian interest in local cultures rather than purely Russian history, practice and language per se – has been important for a relationship in drift. At the time of Vladimir Putin's election as president, Russia's relations with India stood 'thinned' by the cool Russian response to the Pokhran nuclear tests of 1998. Negotiations with the United States formed the

umbrella of a special relationship that matured in the Indo-US nuclear deal of 2009. Despite this, a cordial bilateral relationship has been sustained through major Russian projects of energy and military technology collaboration. Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have been important points of interaction.

Putin's initiatives have seldom been given importance in the sustenance of the bilateral relationship. True, *Rossotrudnichestvo* in India has set an agenda in keeping with values initiatives. This includes action as the information-propaganda corollary of Russian foreign policy: Russia itself, promotion of Russian language, culture, science and education and support to Russians in India.²⁷ *Rossotrudnichestvo* has been active in sponsoring projection of Russian work on India and Russian interest in Indian culture. Russian Indology and its achievements have been on display, and meetings have been arranged on 'India in Russian publications', while local cultural centres have sponsored Indian themes.

CONCLUSION

The example of *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s activities in India, developments in the Russia-China relationship and the pre-2000 background of the Putin initiatives indicate a complex context and character to those initiatives. The complexity raises questions regarding Timothy Snyder's argument that Russian perspectives are invariably tantamount to 'a proposition that everyone should be a nation-state and we should all compete to see who is stronger and who is weaker'.²⁸ Russian acknowledgement of the authority of other nationalisms is understated in this contention. This is important, since the Putin initiatives have acquired accentuation during further reorientation of Russian foreign policy in the direction of autarky and national focus. The reorientation follows estrangement of Russia from Western partners after the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, the EU-US sanctions regime on Russia and the downturn in the Russian economy. Self-awareness in terms of 'civilization' is even more than before a motif of officially sponsored public discourse in Russia.

It remains moot whether values promoted by such strategy can be meaningful except tentatively. Contradictions between the initiatives make the strategy problematic; the exclusive features of the values that are promoted pose problems in engagements with long-standing international partners such as China or India.

As a binding force between Soviet and post-Soviet, and communities inside and outside Russia, the Putin initiatives may serve a purpose. It may be likely that in promoting them, this is the prime objective of the Russian establishment, rather than to use the values generated as a guide to foreign

policy. This may come of an impasse regarding a decision about what values are Russian or the desirability to enshrine them: an impasse reflected in the state's inability to reframe constitutional positions regarding ideology during 2015–2017.

NOTES

1. 'В Госдуму внесен законопроект о новой идеологии в России' in *NezavisimaiaGazeta* (9 November 2016).

2. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 30 November 2016), *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation* (1 December 2016). http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/cptickb6bz29/content/id/2542248.

3. It has not been wholly unexplored. See Sinikukka Saari, 'The Persistence of Putin's Russia', *Finnish Institute of International Affairs* 92 (November 2011); 'Putin's Eurasian Union Initiative: Are the Premises of Russia's Post-Soviet Policy Changing?' *Swedish Institute for International Affairs, Stockholm Ul Brief* no. 9 (1 November 2011) [Hereafter Saari, *Eurasia*]. Also Marcel van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power in Russia* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

4. Andrei Kozyrev, *Preobrazheniia MezhdunarodyeOtnosheniia* (Moscow, 1994), 275–76.

5. Iu. V. Dubinin, *DiplomaticheskaiiaByl'* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997).

6. A good example is the tone of V. V. Zagladin (ed.), *Mezhdunarodnoekommunisticheskoeedvizhnie. Ocherkstrategii i taktiki* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970).

7. For a modern review, see Vojtech Mastny, 'The Soviet Union's Partnership with India', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12, no. 3 (2010).

8. T. N. Zagorodnikova, V. P. Kashin and T. L. Shaumian, *ObrazRossii v obshchestvennomsoznaniIndii: Proshloe i Nastoiashchee* (Moscow: Centre for Indian Studies, RAN, 2011): 194–95. [Hereafter *Obraz*]. 194–95.

9. Hari Vasudevan, 'Communism in India', in Silvio Pons, Norman Naimark and Sophie Quinn Judge (eds.), *Cambridge History of Communism 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

10. A memoir that indicates as much is Alexander Korzhakov, *Otrssveta do zakata* (Moscow: Interbook, 1997).

11. This trend in the CIS was looked upon as natural in Russian debate. See *Vostok i Rossiianarubezhe XXI veka* (Institute of Oriental Studies, RAN, 1998); the same is true of responses to developments in sensitive areas such as Central Asia and the Caucasus, as indicated in *Zapadnaiaaziia, Tsesntral'naiaAziia i Zakavkaz'e. Integratiia i konflikti* (ibid., 1995).

12. *Induizm i sovremennost'* (*Materialynauchnoikonferentsii*) (Moscow: Centre for Indian Studies, 1994); *ProvozvestieVivekanda* (*Materialynauchnoikonferentsii*) (Moscow: Centre for Indian Studies, 1993); *Rossiiia i Indiiia v sovremennom mire. Voprosy sotrudnichestva i vzaimodeistviia v sveteikhnational'no-gosudarstvennykhinteresov*

(*Materialy nauchnoikonferentsii*) (Moscow: Centre for Indian Studies, 1995); *Rossiiia I Indiia. Na porogetret' egotyssiacheletiiia* (Materialy nauchnoikonferentsii) (Moscow: Centre for Indian Studies, 1998). In cases such as the latter, the articles by B. I. Kliuev (56–60), E. F. Mizhenskaia (61–66) and F. N. Iurlov (67–71) compared the reform processes in India and Russia and attempted to generate a debate of sorts.

13. Joel Ostrow, Georgii Satarov and Irina Khakameida, *The Consolidation of Dictatorship in Russia* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing House, 2007).

14. A. M. Salmin, 'Iznankavneshneipolitiki', in *Rossiiskaia Politiiianarubezhevkov* (Moscow: Politiiia, 1997).

15. A statist approach to private enterprise was initiated in proceedings against the oligarch Khodorkovskii in 2004–2005.

16. 'Sovereign Democracy' as a concept gained ground, initially touted by Putin's aide Vladislav Surkov in 2006. Ya. Iu. Matvienko, *Институционально-правовые модели легитимации суверенной демократии современной России* (after referat of the Candidate Dissertation for the Juridical University of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Rostov on the Don, 2008).

17. John Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

18. V. Agafonov, V. Rokitianskii, *Rossiiia v poiskakh budushchego* (Progress, 1993) for examples of this kind of speculation, interview with Iu. Iu Boldyrev, pp. 38–55, who argued that the changes indicated the end of one 'civilization', and the beginning of another, but also looked for continuity; A. V. Sobolev, the philosopher, spoke of Russia as a cultural heritage, as a personality and argued for a large view of Russia's future. 'Russia will be saved only as Great Russia, Russia with a Great Culture'. This was a time for far-ranging discussions of different aspects of Russian identity. See S. B. Chernyshev, *Inoe. Khrestomatiianovagorossiiskogosamosoznaniia* (Moscow: Argus, 1995). 4 vols.

19. Ben Smith, 'Russian Foreign and Security Policy', *House of Commons Library – Briefing Paper 7646* (5 July 2016).

20. For all issues of the journal see www.ruskiimir.ru. Vyacheslav Nikonov reflections on Russian identity are in 'Ne vospominaniia o proshlom a mechta o budushchem' in V. Nikonov (ed.), *Smysli I Tsennosti Russkago Mira* (Moscow: Russkii Mir, 2010).

21. Kathy Rousselet, 'L'eglise orthodoxe russe et le territoire', in *Revue d'etudes comparatives est-ouest* 35, no. 4 (2007): 149–71.

22. Rinat Mukhametov, 'Russian Muslims and Foreign Policy Russia', *Global Affairs* (7 October 2012).

23. Gordon M. Hahn, in a critique of Putin in *Russia's Islamic Threat* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 26–27, is not able to ignore this interaction. Tatarstan being a case in point, 185–86.

24. See Saari, *Eurasia* for Kolerov. Material on Regnum is from its website, www.regnum.ru.

25. Robert C. Blitt, 'Russia's Orthodox Foreign Policy', *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law* 33, no. 2 (2011): 364–458.

26. Eurasian Economic Union (www.eaeunion.org) for the basic information on the entity.

27. Zagorodnikova et al., *Obraz*, 196–97.
28. 'Timothy Snyder: "History Is Always Plural"', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (20 June 2015). <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-interview-bloodlands-timothy-snyder-history/27082683.html>.

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