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**Carl Beck  
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Vladimir Putin and the  
Russian Political System



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**Alfred B. Evans, Jr.** received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Texas, and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. His main teaching areas are comparative politics, Russian politics, and Russian foreign policy. He is the author of over forty scholarly articles and book chapters. He is also the author of *Soviet Marxism-Leninism* and a coeditor of three books. His current research focuses on the topics of civil society in contemporary Russia and ideological trends under the Putin regime. He is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science of California State University, Fresno.

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## Abstract

This paper explores the ideas that have been offered by the Putin leadership in Russia to justify the concentration of power achieved since 2000. Though Vladimir Putin has said that Russia does not need a state ideology, since early 2006 some officials associated with Putin, including Vladislav Surkov, have called for an ideology for the dominant United Russia Party, and have asserted that Putin's speeches provide the core of that ideology. This essay discusses Putin's position on Russia's commitment to democracy, the relationship between Russia and Europe, and the nature of the international system in which Russia finds itself. The author sees the concept of "sovereign democracy" that has been offered by Surkov and endorsed by United Russia as summarizing ideas that already had been articulated by Putin. Putin's words strongly emphasize the importance of a consensus of values in Russian society and politics. That theme has important implications for the relationship between the state and civil society in Russia. Evans argues that the ideological pronouncements of the Putin leadership reflect tension between apparently inconsistent principles resulting from a combination of inherently contradictory themes. Putin identifies the main danger facing Russia in the contemporary period as disintegration rather than stagnation.

Vladimir Putin has been president of Russia since early 2000. During his time in the highest office in the Russian Federation, he has successfully reshaped the configuration of power in his country's political system. A consensus of scholarly sources now recognizes the concentration of power that Putin's maneuvers have achieved.<sup>1</sup> In 2003 Harley Balzer categorized the emerging system as *managed pluralism*, using a concept that suggested the limits that system placed on diverse interests while at the same time attempting to preserve terminology associated with the idea of democracy.<sup>2</sup> By 2004, Gordon Hahn's label of *stealth authoritarianism* seemed more appropriate as the features of Putin's design had taken shape more clearly and as the pretense of democracy seemed increasingly hollow.<sup>3</sup> The concentration of power in Russia has intensified further since that time in relation to the regional chief executives, political parties, the media, and both houses of parliament.

A particularly insightful analysis of the changes in the Russian political system that accompanied the consolidation of power by Putin was offered in 2003 by a Russian scholar, Aleksei Zudin. An advantage of his article is that it avoids the value-loaded terms *democracy* and *authoritarianism* by defining the character of Putin's regime as *monocentrism*. According to Zudin, under Putin a "strong center of power," the presidency, was transformed into "the core of a new political system that gradually was reconstructed around it." Zudin describes the Russian political system under Yeltsin as *polycentric*, in the sense that, while the presidency was very powerful in that period, there was a considerable degree of independence for other centers of power and influence, such as the governors, the oligarchs, and the mass media, so that the president found it necessary to strike bargains in order to gain the loyalty of those controlling such institutions. During the last several years, the polycentrism of Russian politics under Yeltsin has been replaced by monocentrism, as all other influential institutions have been drawn into the system of support for the single center of power headed by Putin. Now the governors, the oligarchs, and other previously independent figures in the elite have no choice but to support the president's major initiatives if they wish to keep their positions, because they owe their status to the president of Russia. To refashion power relationships Putin relied on a strategy of cooptation, offering compromises to gain acquiescence for institutional changes that gradually undermined the autonomy of the other power centers. (It should be noted that by 2004 the concentration of power had gone so far that Putin found it less necessary to make compromises in order to win acceptance of his major proposals.) Zudin also advanced the thesis that the principal source of tension in the Russian political system under Putin comes from the contradictory demands

of the concentration of power, on the one hand, and the further modernization of the country, on the other hand.<sup>4</sup>

Can we say that there is an ideological basis for Putin's monocentric political system? The very notion of an ideology associated with Putin may seem contradictory, considering his repudiation of any pretense of ideological trappings for the political system that he heads. In the most important statement of his outlook, in a document published in December 1999 shortly before Boris Yeltsin resigned as president, Putin declared "I am against the restoration of an official state ideology in any form in Russia."<sup>5</sup> Ideology by definition claims to be comprehensive and coherent, maintaining apparent logical consistency among its positions on a wide range of topics.<sup>6</sup> Soviet Marxism-Leninism claimed to present answers to major questions of philosophy, science, history, economics, sociology, political theory, and personal ethics. The current ruling elite of the Russian Federation has not adopted a systematic set of doctrines that would pretend to serve as a replacement for Marxist-Leninist ideology. Yet in a broader sense the leaders of any political system are guided by a set of interrelated assumptions and values that influence their choice of options for responding to the problems that their country faces. Perhaps surprisingly, by 2006 many members of the political leadership of Russia openly spoke of the need for a new ideology for the country and attempted to spell out the central tenets of that belief system.<sup>7</sup> Vladislav Surkov, the deputy head of the presidential administration, stressed the importance of "introducing basic ideological theses" and asserted that in fact a suitable ideology for Russia already existed, as clearly outlined in a number of sources (of which the most important apparently were major speeches by Putin).<sup>8</sup>

If, as is generally agreed, Vladimir Putin has sought a greater centralization of power in the Russian political system, we may seek to understand the thinking that has influenced his choice of goals. In addition, since Putin has only recently begun to devote sustained effort to extending his sphere of control beyond the state and into Russian society, the exploration of the fundamental elements of his outlook may help us sketch out the implications of his thinking for social institutions and their relationship with the state. As the end of Putin's second term as president nears an end, we may wish to assess the legacy that he has established in the realm of ideas, which his successor will have to address if Putin leaves office in 2008 (as he has repeatedly insisted). On the other hand, if Putin should decide to continue as president, it would be even more important to understand his view of Russia and its place in the world. Perhaps because of the prospect of a leadership transition, the Kremlin recently has shown a desire to suggest the direction for the state to follow

in the long term, or as Putin has said, to “give the basis for domestic and foreign policy in the coming decades.”<sup>9</sup>

What are the intellectual underpinnings of the political restructuring that has been carried out by Vladimir Putin? Or have his choices been guided by pure pragmatism, without any consistent ideological orientation or policy priorities? This essay will argue that, though Putin does not subscribe to an ideological framework as comprehensive and integrated as Soviet Marxism-Leninism, his speeches and the statements of others in the current leadership do articulate a view of the contemporary world and a set of goals that display a recognizable internal consistency. While we may not accept the claim by some in the leadership that the Putin regime has an ideology, we may discern the ideological roots of Putin’s outlook. It also is possible to sense the tension between competing and apparently contradictory imperatives that is reflected in Putin’s statements.

## **Russia’s Commitment to Democracy**

Putin does not show a great deal of affection for the memory of the Soviet system or its ideology. In the book *First Person*, a brief autobiography based on interviews by a team of journalists in early 2000, he more than once characterized the system that existed in the Soviet Union before Gorbachev as “totalitarian,” casually accepting a term that was once rejected by Communists as a bourgeois slander of socialist society.<sup>10</sup> Surkov, a spokesman whose views seem to coincide closely with Putin’s, has said that the president shares little of the nostalgia for the Soviet era that is still widespread among the people of his country. That assessment was included in an interview for a major German newspaper in which he added that “our two peoples have one unfortunate element in common: We wrote the darkest chapters in twentieth-century history—you Germans in your way, we in ours.”<sup>11</sup> A similar tone of cold-eyed realism was evident in the evaluation of the Soviet period in Putin’s keynote statement of December 1999, in which he argued that it would be a mistake to deny “the unquestionable achievements of those times,” but also warned that “it would be an even bigger mistake not to be conscious of the enormous price that the society and the people paid in the course of that social experiment.” In balance his assessment was negative, since he observed that Soviet ideology consigned his country to “steady backwardness in relation to the developed states,” and led Russia into “a dead-end route, which led away from the mainstream of civilization.”<sup>12</sup> That did not sound much different from the position that Boris Yeltsin had maintained

in the 1990s when he dismissed the Soviet system as a *tupik*, or dead-end street. A careful reading of Putin's statements about the Soviet period shows that he insists on giving credit to the achievements of the people of the USSR, but is not interested in praising the ideology of the system in which those people lived.<sup>13</sup>

Since Putin has not shown enthusiasm for the principles of the Soviet system, many people in the West may have been startled when the English-language press reported that in his address to Russia's parliament in April 2005, he declared that the collapse of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [twentieth] century." In the original Russian Putin said that the "krushenie," the downfall, wreck, or collapse of the Soviet Union, was "krupneishei geopoliticheskoi katastrofoi veka," which usually would be translated as "a very great catastrophe of the century" or "a major catastrophe of the century."<sup>14</sup> He immediately followed those words with a discussion of why he considered the disintegration of the USSR to have been catastrophic, by stressing that tens of millions of members of the Russian nation suddenly found themselves outside the borders of the Russian Federation, with considerable disruption of their lives. He also mentioned that the downfall of the Soviet system led to the domination of oligarchic interests and the rapid growth of mass poverty within Russia. Within a few weeks after this address, in an interview shown on German television channels, Putin reaffirmed the interpretation that the downfall of the Soviet Union was a "tragedy" because of the human costs that soon were felt by Russians outside Russia. In the same interview he asserted that Russia had been one of the main initiators of the "disintegration" (*raspad*) of the Soviet Union and that the achievement of independence by the other republics of the USSR was what Russia itself wished. He also repeated his familiar line that "those who do not regret the downfall of the Soviet Union have no heart, and those who want to bring it back have no head."<sup>15</sup> More recently Vladislav Surkov declared that it is "fully natural that the Soviet Union disintegrated" and that the Russian people renounced the Soviet system as incompatible with their "search for freedom and justice."<sup>16</sup> In the speech in which Putin had referred to the "very great catastrophe," he had made it clear that he viewed the pain of the collapse of the old system as the prologue to the emergence of a new system that had the potential to offer a better life. He said that in the early post-Soviet period, despite many problems, "our society was generating not only the energy of self-preservation, but also the will for a new and free life."<sup>17</sup> That statement was consistent with his other references to the years that followed the abandonment of the Soviet system.

Putin has made it clear that in his view the emergence of postcommunist Russia in the early 1990s marked a clear-cut departure from the path of the Soviet



experiment. In his speech in June 2001 on the day of celebration of the declaration of state sovereignty by Russia eleven years before, Putin said that with that declaration “the reading of our new history began” and added that “today we live in another country.”<sup>18</sup> Four years later, on June 12, 2005 (on the holiday now simply titled the Day of Russia), Putin asserted that at the beginning of the 1990s “a new epoch was opened for Russia and her citizens” because of the Russian people’s choice “in favor of democratic development.”<sup>19</sup> In June 2002 he had stressed that the introduction of democratic institutions in Russia was a departure from the purported unanimity of the Soviet era and represented a new creation, not an inheritance from the previous period.<sup>20</sup> Putin also has promised that there will be no rethinking of Russia’s commitment to democracy, since “the devotion to democratic values is dictated by the will of our people and the strategic interests of the Russian Federation itself.”<sup>21</sup> He concludes that there can be no turning back from that decision.<sup>22</sup>

Statements by Putin and those close to him suggest that the historical experience most important for the self-definition of today’s Russian state is not the tsarist epoch or the Soviet period but the decade of the 1990s, the initial period of post-communist transformation under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. The present leaders see the need both to draw on the benefits of that experience and to distinguish the current course of policy sharply from that which was adopted in the 1990s. On the one hand, as Sergei Prozorov observed in 2005, Putin’s outlook “is conditioned by the conception of the decade of the 1990s as not a ‘time of troubles’ to be left behind but as a sufficient *ground* to build upon in the project of consolidation and ordering.”<sup>23</sup> More recently Dmitrii Medvedev, formerly the head of the presidential administration and later a first deputy prime minister, voiced the assessment that “to a certain degree the 1990s were the decade when a substantial part of the foundation for today’s growth was laid,” and cautioned that “it would certainly be wrong to describe the 1990s as a period of missed opportunities.”<sup>24</sup> Putin and his associates see the first postcommunist years as the time when Russia made a choice in favor of democracy. Yet, some of those in the leadership like to remind everyone of the turmoil of that period and the costs that were imposed on most citizens of the country. Surkov is one of many who have stressed the negative features that resulted from the problems of the 1990s, when, in his view, oligarchy took hold of Russia.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis on the undemocratic characteristics of the system that emerged after 1991 and the damage to the well-being of the majority of the country’s population in that period is partly a response to criticism of the practices of the Putin regime as leading to increasingly authoritarian governance. Andrei Isaev, a prominent figure in the ruling United Russia party, has justified the changes brought by Putin as moving

the country away from the years of national humiliation, when the very concept of democracy became associated with failure in the minds of most Russians.<sup>26</sup>

Putin's pronouncements, however, repeatedly place great emphasis on the commitment to democracy in postcommunist Russia. In April 2002 he stressed that "the democratic development of Russia, the establishment of a civilized market and a law-governed state" are the country's unchanging goals.<sup>27</sup> His address to the Russian parliament in April 2005 reaffirmed that he considers the development of Russia as a democratic state to be "the main political-ideological task," and he said in 2001 that Russia "came to democracy by a hard path" and for that reason has a particular reason to value the attainment of that form of government.<sup>28</sup> Putin has stressed that Russia's choice of democracy was independent and not due to pressure from outside.<sup>29</sup> The theme of independent choice also is used to underline the autonomy of Russia's decision in favor of democracy; Russia made that choice "in its own interests and for itself, and for its people and its citizens."<sup>30</sup> He elaborated on that theme in his address to the federal parliament in April 2005: "Russia is a country that chose democracy for itself by the will of its own people. . . . As a sovereign country, Russia will independently determine the timing and conditions of its progress along that path."<sup>31</sup> In December 1999, he said that Russians understood there was no alternative to the reforms leading to democracy and a market system, because "only that path offers the real prospect of dynamic economic growth and raising living standards, as world experience convincingly shows."<sup>32</sup> A democratic political system is necessary if Russia is to enjoy stability and realize the features of a modern, contemporary state.<sup>33</sup>

## **Russia and the International Setting**

Frequent statements by Putin reinforce the impression that he sees the world in which Russia exists as filled with danger resulting from a relentless, dog-eat-dog struggle. He has described the international setting as mercilessly competitive, for example in his assessment that "the norm in the international community, in the contemporary world is . . . harsh competition—for markets, for investments, for political and economic influence."<sup>34</sup> As that statement implies, he perceives economic competition as fundamental, with far-reaching political implications. The fact that Russia is at a lower level of economic development than some other countries makes it particularly vulnerable. "All around us are countries with highly developed economies. We need to say directly: They push Russia out of promising

world markets when they have the chance. And their obvious economic advantages provide ground for the growth of geopolitical ambitions.”<sup>35</sup> As Andrei Tsygankov has pointed out, Putin sees the most crucial threat to Russia as posed not by any particular country but by its disadvantage in economic development.<sup>36</sup> Putin insists that Russians need to realize that in the long run they cannot rely on anyone else for assistance, and in fact they should expect powerful countries to try to impede their development, since “by no means all in the world want to deal with an independent and strong Russia that is confident in itself.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, it would be in the interest of some states to keep Russia in an inferior position.

Thus it is necessary for Russia to catch up with the most developed countries in order to occupy the position of a leader in the world. “We should outstrip other countries in the rate of growth, in the quality of commodities and services, and in the level of education, science, and culture. This is a question of our economic survival, a question of a fitting place for Russia in the changing international conditions.”<sup>38</sup> The goal of making Russia a “great economic power” was central to an article, based on his *kandidat* dissertation, that Putin published even before he became president of Russia, arguing that the country’s energy resources were the main means of achieving that goal.<sup>39</sup> Harley Balzer notes that the article signaled Putin’s desire to achieve economic recovery as a basis for reasserting Russia’s influence in the world, or in other words, for regaining great power status.<sup>40</sup> In that article Putin also advocated a dominant role for the state in the economy and especially in managing the exploitation of energy resources, since he believed that separation of the state and the economy would frustrate the effort to raise the country’s economy to a higher, competitive level.<sup>41</sup> The emphasis on the need to impose restrictions on market forces and to increase the role of the state in the economy carried over into a book published in 2006 that was promoted by the governing United Russia party as an exposition of Putin’s “ideology.”<sup>42</sup>

Putin recognizes international integration as a powerful, and in some ways irresistible, force. “Today processes at work in the world tie all countries in a tight ‘knot,’ not only economically but also politically.”<sup>43</sup> He is particularly clear in recognizing the necessity for the integration of each national economy with the world economy. “Today no country, no matter how big or wealthy it might be, can develop successfully if it is isolated from the rest of the world. On the contrary, success comes to those countries that consciously use their intelligence and energy to integrate themselves into the world economy.”<sup>44</sup> In sharp contrast with Stalin, Putin knows that isolating Russia’s economy would consign the country to a lower level of development, or what Soviet leaders often called “backwardness.”<sup>45</sup> In his address

to the Federal Assembly in May 2006, Putin made it clear that in his view Russia needs unhindered access to international markets, participation in the international division of labor, and “full advantage of integration in the world economy.”<sup>46</sup> More broadly, he has given verbal support for the goal of integrating Russia into “the world community” and has acknowledged that the criteria for success in the internationalization of a country’s economy and society are provided by the “best world models,” presumably some of the most economically advanced nations.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Putin has advocated openness to the world, maintaining that “a free and just society has no internal boundaries or restrictions on movement and it is itself open to the rest of the world.”<sup>48</sup> So ostensibly Putin is a consistent proponent of internationalization and insists that Russia must accept the logic of that imperative.

In the perspective of Russia’s president the highest values are those that are universal for all humanity, and his nation has begun to assimilate those values.<sup>49</sup> Among the worldwide standards are said to be the basic principles of democracy, to which Russia is devoted. “We will adhere to the fundamental principles of democracy, which have been confirmed in the world in general.”<sup>50</sup> At the same time, however, one of the fundamental themes of Putin’s speeches is that Russia should not attempt to implement any models derived from the experience of other countries. In December 1999 in “Russia on the Edge of the Millennium,” he made that point emphatically. “The experience of the 1990s eloquently testifies that a genuinely successful renewal of our homeland without excessive costs cannot be achieved by the simple transfer to Russian soil of abstract models and schemes taken from foreign textbooks.”<sup>51</sup> Putin’s insistence that Russia made its own choice in favor of democracy is deliberately intended to imply that his country has exercised its independent right to choose its own path of development.<sup>52</sup> In May 2005, he said that in the Great Patriotic War the Russian people fought for the right “to have their own statehood, culture, and traditions. . . . They upheld their right to independent [*samostoiatel’noe*] development.”<sup>53</sup>

Putin often has stressed that while the fundamental principles of democracy must be interpreted uniformly all around the world, many features of democracy in practice must depend on the history, traditions, and other factors that are unique in each country.<sup>54</sup> Thus he concludes that the meaning of democracy must be adapted to Russian conditions, above all in order to fit that country’s traditions. “Of course the fundamental principles of democracy and the institutions of democracy should be adapted to the realities of Russian life, to our traditions and history. And we will do that ourselves.”<sup>55</sup> In Putin’s view the system that is emerging in his country will combine universal values with the influence of Russian tradition. “It seems to me

that the new Russian idea will come into being as an alloy, an organic compound of universal, all-human values with primordial [*pervoobytnye*] Russian values that have stood the test of time.”<sup>56</sup> Reportedly, when Putin met with the president of the United States in Santiago, Chile, in November 2004, he tried to convince Bush that Russia needed to have a “style of government that was consistent with Russian history.”<sup>57</sup> The insistence on what might be called “democracy with Russian characteristics” is fundamental to Putin’s outlook and must be kept in mind to understand his repeated expressions of support for democracy in Russia and his insistence that the acceptance of democracy reflected the Russian nation’s “sovereign choice.”<sup>58</sup>

If Putin’s references to “universal, all-human values” are superficially reminiscent of discourse of the Gorbachev period, his rhetoric concerning a united Europe sounds even more like Gorbachev’s. “I am deeply convinced: A united Large Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, and in fact to the Pacific Ocean, the existence of which is based on generally recognized democratic principles, is a unique chance for all the peoples of the continent, including the Russian people.”<sup>59</sup> As that statement suggests, Putin firmly identifies Russia as a European nation. “No matter where our people live, in the Far East or in the South, we are European.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Vladislav Surkov has declared that “Russia is a European country” and “on the whole we have traversed the same path as other European countries.”<sup>61</sup> In accordance with his characterization of Russia as always having been a part of Europe, Putin asserts that dedication to the ideal of freedom has been a central theme in Russian history. “In this connection it would not be out of place to recall how the striving toward freedom and justice was formed in Russian society and how it matured in the public consciousness.”<sup>62</sup> Putin even has alleged that Russia has shared all the major experiences of European society and that his country developed democratic institutions and the rule of law in largely the same manner as the other European nations. One of his most remarkable statements was made in May 2005: “The Russian people always felt itself part of the great European family and was bound to it by common cultural, moral, and spiritual values. On our own historical path, at times falling behind, at times outstripping our partners, we passed through the same stages of establishing democratic, legal, and civil institutions.”<sup>63</sup> It is hardly necessary to point out that Putin’s retelling of Russian history is highly imaginative. His claim that for centuries Russia moved toward freedom largely in the same way as other European nations is also inconsistent with his own admission, quoted earlier, that Russia’s supposed “choice of democracy” at the end of the Soviet period was a new departure in the country’s history. For our purposes, however, the relevant point is that Putin has his own reasons for engaging in such creative rewriting of Russian history.

While on some occasions Putin has affirmed that Russia is a part of Europe, at other times he has classified his country as Eurasian, as in his words of November 2000: “Russia has always felt itself to be a Eurasian country.”<sup>64</sup> He has usually identified Russia as Eurasian when addressing potential trade partners in Asia, so his words might be seen as serving his state’s goals in international economic relations.<sup>65</sup> It is interesting, however, that he embraced the Eurasian identity for Russia when speaking to a domestic audience in August 2005, during the celebration of the thousand-year anniversary of the founding of Kazan, the capital of the Tatar Republic of the Russian Federation. He argued that the relationship with the Kazan khanate impelled the tsarist state “to form Russia as an integrated Eurasian power,” and he further concluded that the result had been to make Russia “a bridge, connecting two great civilizations, European and Asian” and a place of “dialogue and synthesis of two very rich cultures.” He even went so far as to credit the “Golden Horde” of Mongols and Tatars, who conquered the East Slavic territories in the thirteenth century and ruled them for centuries in a manner usually viewed by Russian historians as an oppressive yoke, with making valuable contributions to the traditions of the Russian state, including a centralized administrative structure and a habit of tolerance of ethnic differences.<sup>66</sup>

With that statement, Putin implicitly but clearly paid homage to the intellectual legacy of Eurasianism, a school of thought that emerged among some Russian émigrés in the 1920s.<sup>67</sup> The Eurasianists of that time argued that Eastern forms of statehood had exerted a direct influence on Russia through the Mongol-Tatar rule.<sup>68</sup> Exponents of Eurasianism, including those who resurrected that viewpoint after 1970, see fundamentally positive aspects to the Mongol-Tatar influence on the Russian state.<sup>69</sup> Marlène Laurelle says that according to that perspective, “the real Russia was born . . . from the conjunction between Orthodoxy and the principles of the Mongol state, from the fusion between Russians and Tatars.”<sup>70</sup> The idea that the Mongol-Tatar invasion produced some positive results for the Russian state had originated in the writings of Nikolai Danilevskii in the nineteenth century and later was accepted by the Eurasianists.<sup>71</sup> The central thesis of the Eurasianists was that Russia was historically separate and distinct from both Europe and Asia.<sup>72</sup> A hard-line, anti-Western version of Eurasianism calls for Russia to unite the states of the Eurasian landmass in a coalition opposing the United States of America.<sup>73</sup> The Putin leadership shows no interest in that strategic conception; Putin’s speeches suggest a moderate version of Eurasianism that is reflected in his words depicting Russia as a bridge between Europe and Asia.<sup>74</sup> Russia’s highest leader in effect has described his country as looking in both directions, to the West and the East, but his

commitment to Eurasianism is rather superficial, while he firmly insists that Russia is a European country.

## **Russia's Unique Path of Development**

Putin's essential message is that, while supposedly Russia has adopted world standards of democracy and sees itself as historically a part of Europe, his nation defends its right to forge its own distinctive path to the future. With the end of the Soviet experiment, "we had to find our own path to the construction of a democratic, free, and just society and state."<sup>75</sup> That theme was expressed clearly before he became president, in his statement on "Russia on the Edge of the Millennium": "Each country, including Russia, has to search for its own path of renewal. . . . We can reckon on a worthy future only if we are capable of combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with the realities of Russia."<sup>76</sup> He stresses that the building of a modern democracy must draw on Russian tradition: "In that complex work the thousand-year unity of the Russian peoples in many ways increases our strengths."<sup>77</sup> He adds that the legacy of Russian history conditions his country's place in the world.<sup>78</sup> Putin insists that Russia has a unique heritage, that its current development draws on the "primordial values" of its people, and that the adoption of democracy does not prevent Russians from following a distinctive path, which implies finding "our own answers to questions of spirituality and morals."<sup>79</sup> He regards the careful retention of Russia's "national memory" as a patriotic duty, warning that "we should forget nothing, we should know our own history, know it as it is, draw lessons from it, and always remember those who created the Russian state, defended its dignity, and made it a great, powerful, mighty state."<sup>80</sup>

The references to Eurasia in the speeches of Putin and his close associates, while avoiding the extreme hostility to the West of some contemporary Russian nationalists, still imply the rejection of the wholesale adoption of a Western model of development in Russia. The Eurasianists of the 1920s and 1930s insisted that it was "impossible to export the European model outside its original Western space" and argued that there was no reason that the values of the West should be considered universal.<sup>81</sup> (Of course, at present the main power center that is accused of seeking to impose its values on the rest of the world is not Europe but the United States.) The intellectual grandfather of the Eurasianists, Nikolai Danilevskii, introduced the thesis that all national cultural types are of equal value because of the uniqueness of each, as seen in development based on its original principles.<sup>82</sup> Vladimir



Belinkin has pointed out that the thinking of the Eurasianists foreshadowed the later neocolonialist school of thought, since they charged that Western civilization “relentlessly imposes its imperial domination over other ethnic groups by means of military, economic, and cultural aggression.”<sup>83</sup> Vladislav Surkov, who routinely is characterized as the main ideologist of the current leadership, embraced the critique of neocolonialism dramatically in July 2006 when he suggested that Ernesto “Che” Guevara should be a source of inspiration for contemporary Russia because he understood the importance of establishing the economic basis for genuine political sovereignty. Surkov warned that without economic independence that will permit the people of Russia “to be an independent subject of history,” they would be subjected to domination like an African tribe that allegedly is forced to follow the orders of a Western corporation.<sup>84</sup> A few days earlier Putin had charged that the arguments used to justify Western colonialism in an earlier era are being echoed in statements concerning Russia today, with “civilizing role” and “civilization” replaced by “democratization” and “democracy.”<sup>85</sup> Putin clearly regards American programs for promoting democracy as a pretext for extending the domination of the United States and a threat to Russia’s sovereignty.

Although Vladimir Putin has said that Russia has made an irrevocable choice in favor of democracy, he also has emphasized that the adoption of democratic institutions must not be at the expense of order and stability; in the combination of democracy with order he sees “the independent character of the democratic path that we have chosen.”<sup>86</sup> What are the traditions that have helped to shape the contemporary Russian political system? According to Putin, one is the centralization of political power. “From the very beginning, Russia was created as a supercentralized state. That’s practically laid down in its genetic code, its traditions, and the mentality of its people.”<sup>87</sup> Other elements of Russian tradition are collectivism and paternalism. “It is a fact that in Russia the attraction toward collective forms of activity always has prevailed over individualism. It is also a fact that in Russian society, paternalistic attitudes are deeply rooted.”<sup>88</sup> Sergei Markov, one of the main organizers of the Civic Forum in Moscow in November 2001, expressed an idea that is consistent with Putin’s thinking when he suggested that Russian civil society is distinguished from civil society in the West by attaching the highest priority to the value of service to the people (*narod*) and the homeland, so that “people, participating in civil society, will regard as of primary importance not so much the idea of freedom, not so much the idea of interests, as the idea of service to a certain common cause.”<sup>89</sup> Putin and his associates have made it clear that in their estimation a higher degree



of collectivism separates the culture of the Russian nation from the cultures of Western democracies.

Putin's discussion of the values of Russian society is colored by his strong emphasis on the necessity of unity in the state and the nation. As early as September 1999 he voiced the opinion that the operation of all the branches of government must be subordinated to "one goal—preservation of the unity and integrity of the state."<sup>90</sup> The unity of the organs of executive power is necessary so that all levels form "a single, united system of power, and accordingly should work as an integrated organism with a clear structure of subordination."<sup>91</sup> But unity as envisioned by Putin would go much farther than that and would extend to the entire society. He contends that Russia has been successful only when the people as well as the state have been united by all citizens' dedication to the goals of the whole nation.<sup>92</sup> Underlying Putin's words is a fear of disunity and fragmentation in Russian society. In December 1999 he warned that "fruitful and creative work, which our fatherland so urgently needs, is impossible in a society, in a condition of division, internally disintegrated, a society in which social strata and political forces adhere to different basic values and fundamental ideological orientations."<sup>93</sup> In May 2003 he voiced his apprehension over the difficulty of dealing with contemporary threats if society is "splintered into small groups," each of which is devoted only to its own narrow interests, and he called for consolidation "around basic national values and tasks"; he also asserted that unity is necessary for a developed civil society and that it requires overcoming distrust among social groups and unifying the nation in agreement on the main strategic tasks facing the country.<sup>94</sup> A horror of internal moral and ideological divisions that would undermine national strength and block the solution of major problems is central to Putin's analysis of the problems and prospects of contemporary Russia.

Therefore it is not surprising that Putin attaches great importance to achieving a firm consensus on goals in Russian society. When asked about the main priority for his country, he replied that it was the adoption of goals or moral values that all members of the society would comprehend, like the "Code of the Builder of Communism," a set of ethical guidelines for all citizens that was disseminated by the Communist party of the Soviet Union in the 1960s.<sup>95</sup> The significance that Putin attaches to social consensus is reflected in his recurring references to the crucial concept of *soglasie*, meaning accord or harmony in society. In July 2000, in his first annual address to the Russian parliament, he said that the development of society was "inconceivable without accord on common goals," and added that those goals are not only material, but include "spiritual and moral goals." He made it clear that consensus on goals

should grow out of the unique cultural traditions and shared historical memory of the Russian nation.<sup>96</sup> In September 2004, Vladislav Surkov introduced the idea that a “moral majority” is taking shape within the country, developing as a result of “the modernization and solidarity of the major social corporations.”<sup>97</sup> The moral majority apparently consists of those who share the consensus on the core values for society that are endorsed by Russia’s highest executive leadership.

## **The Debate over “Sovereign Democracy”**

In February 2006, when the leadership had begun to promote the idea of a national ideology, Vladislav Surkov made a speech in which he asserted that the successful resolution of the tasks facing Russia would make it possible for the country to become a “sovereign democracy.” He contrasted that concept with the model of “managed democracy,” which he defined as a political regime controlled from outside the nation that it governs, while being manipulated by forces tied to “certain centers of global influence.”<sup>98</sup> (We may see that interpretation as a response to the charge that Russia under Putin has become a “managed democracy” in the sense that it has displayed increasingly authoritarian features.) As Sergei Ivanov, Russia’s defense minister, said a few months later, the use of the term “sovereign democracy” asserts the right of Russians to determine the direction of development of their own country while being protected from external pressures.<sup>99</sup> Consistent with the ideas expressed earlier by Putin, Surkov has said that the principal features of sovereign democracy in Russia will not differ from democracy in the West, but that in building democracy “a country’s culture and the speed of implementing reforms” should be taken into account.<sup>100</sup> Aleksei Chadaev’s book on Putin’s “ideology” went so far as to claim that the idea of “a global democratic revolution” had become a pretext for the “liquidation of sovereignty.”<sup>101</sup> He implied that efforts to establish universal standards for democracy are seen by the Russian leadership as a threat to the independence of non-Western nations and as a pretext for domination of those countries by the West, headed by the United States. As Sergei Ivanov has put it, “We cannot fail to observe that today we encounter a situation in which the slogans of democracy frequently are used to cover for active intervention in the internal affairs of other states that are defending their own sovereign interests that run counter to the ‘standards’ being forced on the world community.”<sup>102</sup> The rejection of such intervention was stated emphatically by Putin around the same time, when he affirmed that “we categorically oppose the use of all possible levers, including

arguments about the necessity of democratization of our society, in order to interfere in our internal affairs.”<sup>103</sup>

The introduction of the concept of sovereign democracy, while adding little new substance to the ideas that Putin had presented for years, was associated with the Russian leadership’s expression of increasingly open opposition to the trend of American domination in a world with only one superpower. As Ivanov has said, “We consider intolerable a world order where attempting to dominate the planet is just one center of force that imposes the rules of the game on all the rest based on military and economic supremacy.”<sup>104</sup> For Putin himself, the most vehement expression of criticism of the United States for allegedly attempting to establish a “unipolar world” was articulated in his speech in Munich in February 2007.<sup>105</sup> One factor behind the more explicit objections to the U.S. government’s attempts to promote democratization may have been the Russian leaders’ belief that their country had moved into a stronger position: its economic health had improved substantially since the late 1990s, primarily because of growing income from the export of oil and natural gas. Andrei Isaev has referred to the 1990s as the time of a “compromised understanding of democracy,” implying that Russia’s need for economic aid and its desire for a new model of development led it to submit to excessive foreign influence. Isaev argued that moving from that compromised version of democracy to the conception of sovereign democracy will make it possible for Russia “to overcome a period of national humiliation.”<sup>106</sup>

Another factor that evidently influenced the public stance of the Putin leadership and stimulated some to promote the slogan of sovereign democracy was the uneasiness that they experienced after the toppling of the leadership in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004. In those cases the techniques of manipulation of political processes that have been perfected in several of the post-Soviet states were thwarted by protests arising from grass-roots activism that were encouraged by Western assistance for democratization.<sup>107</sup> Could the same kind of destabilization take place in Russia? Though that possibility seems very unlikely, Surkov has warned that the “main threats to Russia’s sovereignty” include “the soft absorption by contemporary ‘orange technologies’ with the lowering of the national immunity to external influence.”<sup>108</sup> (“Orange technologies” is code language for the means that were used to overturn the results of a fraudulent election in Ukraine and demand a new election, which the more Western-oriented candidate won.) The events in some post-Soviet states have given the Putin leadership even more reason to seek to limit the influence of outside forces on political developments in Russia. The theme of

halting interference in Russia's internal affairs has become stronger in the pronouncements of figures in the Putin leadership during the last few years.<sup>109</sup>

The governing United Russia party planned to adopt a new party program before the end of 2006, and after Surkov's speech in February of that year, it seemed likely that the concept of sovereign democracy would play a major role in that program. Thus it was surprising when Dmitrii Medvedev, a first deputy prime minister who often has been mentioned as a possible successor to Putin, voiced skepticism about the value of that concept in an interview published in the magazine *Ekspert* in July. He suggested that, though sovereignty and democracy are both important, they refer to separate categories in the political sphere. He added that to attach any modifying or qualifying term to "democracy" inevitably "leaves a strange aftertaste" and cautioned that neither sovereignty nor democracy should be allowed to "suppress [*podavliat*] the other."<sup>110</sup> Soon Evgenii Primakov, a former prime minister and still a prominent political figure, announced that he was "categorically opposed" to the use of the term "sovereign democracy" since it could lead to the denial of important principles such as the separation of powers and freedom of choice.<sup>111</sup> Then some of the spokesmen for United Russia openly disagreed about whether sovereign democracy would be included in their party's new program.<sup>112</sup> In late August, Surkov seemed to back off a bit, admitting that sovereign democracy was "only one of several concepts," though he still thought that it "appeals to the dignity of the Russian people and the Russian nation as a whole."<sup>113</sup> In September, Putin seemed to agree with Medvedev's position, when he noted that "sovereignty and democracy are concepts that assess two different phenomena," though he indicated that he would not interfere in the discussion of sovereign democracy.<sup>114</sup> A few days later Surkov said that he did not care what would happen to the term "sovereign democracy," though he did care about the substance represented by that wording.<sup>115</sup> Almost immediately Medvedev strengthened his criticism of the term, saying that he considered it "one-sided and incomprehensible," and adding that "'democracy' is more important than any adjective that you would care to stick to it or define it by."<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, the draft of the party program that was published in early October 2006 did contain the term "sovereign democracy," though it was not emphasized as much as might have been expected a few months before.<sup>117</sup> Of course, the major ideas that Vladimir Putin had articulated for several years exerted a pervasive influence on that draft program. The emphasis on "sovereign democracy" in early 2006 had not reflected a significant innovation in thinking; as we have seen, Putin had already placed great stress on Russia's "sovereign choice" of its distinctive form of government and had repeatedly claimed that Russia has made a commitment to

democracy. Some observers have suggested that “sovereign democracy” became the target of so much criticism from the West by the summer of 2006 that the Putin leadership decided to de-emphasize it.<sup>118</sup> The obvious disagreement within Russia’s political elite over whether juxtaposing the words “sovereignty” and “democracy” is appropriate may have been a sign of conflict behind the scenes among factions in the elite that are competing for the power to control the interpretation of Putin’s intellectual legacy if he leaves office in 2008. That debate also suggested that alternative interpretations of Putin’s major ideological themes are possible and that there will be a struggle to determine which interpretation will emerge victorious.

## **State and Civil Society in Putin’s Russia**

In this section, I will focus on the outlines of Putin’s intentions for Russian society and its relationship with the state. It should be noted, however, that analysis of that subject is equivalent to an attempt to hit a moving target (and perhaps a target that moves in a shadowy setting), since the framework of Putin’s model of state-society relations is still emerging. One point that Putin has made many times, and one that requires careful interpretation, is that of the vital importance of civil society for contemporary Russia. That is a point that he made in his December 1999 document on “Russia on the Edge of the Millennium”<sup>119</sup> and he has returned to that theme frequently since then. In July 2000 he complained that “the root of many of our failures lies in the underdevelopment of civil society and the inability of the authorities to communicate with it and to collaborate with it.”<sup>120</sup> Earlier he had stressed that Russia “should have a broad base of support for continuing transformations in the country,” and he added, “I am convinced that the best guarantee of such continuity is a mature civil society.”<sup>121</sup>

Another persistent thesis of Putin’s speeches is the urgent necessity of strengthening the Russian state. He ascribes the basic causes of all Russia’s greatest problems to the “weakness of state institutions” and insists that meeting the challenges facing his country “is impossible without the strengthening of the state.”<sup>122</sup> He accords a central place in that process to tightening control of the vertical hierarchy of executive power. Even before he became president and before he released “Russia on the Edge of the Millennium,” he warned that none of the major tasks confronting the government could be resolved “unless basic order and discipline are established in the country and unless the executive chain of command is strengthened.”<sup>123</sup> Thus it is not surprising that his overview statement of December 1999 declared that “the

key to the revival and raising of Russia is in the state-political sphere today. Russia needs strong state power and should have it.” In that document, he also revealed his conviction that a strong role for the state is among the traditional, “primordial” values of the Russian nation. “Our state and its institutions always have played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and the people. A strong state for Russians is not an anomaly, not something with which it is necessary to struggle, but on the contrary, a source and guarantee of order, the initiator and main moving force of any changes.”<sup>124</sup> His view of the state as the principal source of development in Russian society was reinforced by his assertion that the Russian public desired “the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state,” in a phrase that was reminiscent of the official description of the guiding role of the Communist party in Soviet society.<sup>125</sup> While Putin affirms that a healthy civil society is needed to protect the state apparatus from stagnation, he also cautions that without an effective state there will be no civil society.<sup>126</sup> It is the responsibility of the state to provide “an integral system” of regulation of the social sphere as well as the economy, so that the Russian state will be “the efficient coordinator of the country’s economic and social forces, ordering the balance of their interests, determining the optimal goals and parameters of social development, and creating conditions and mechanisms for their achievement.”<sup>127</sup>

Yet more than once Putin has given verbal support to the notion that civil society must be in some sense independent of the state.<sup>128</sup> In November 2001, addressing a large gathering of representatives of social organizations, Putin sought to reassure the leaders of NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) that he realized that civil society cannot be formed “from above” or “by the initiative of the authorities.” He added, “I want to emphasize again that it [civil society] grows independently, has its own base, and feeds on the spirit of freedom, and only then it is becoming genuinely civil.”<sup>129</sup> In another discussion of civil society, in an address of April 2005, Putin invoked the words of Sergei Witte, an enlightened conservative leader of the late tsarist period who has become a hero in contemporary Russia, in favor of the idea that “the state does not create . . . it is all citizens who are the true creators.” On the basis of that reasoning, Putin concluded that citizens’ independence “should not be hampered but developed and assisted in every way.”<sup>130</sup> He has rejected the possibility that society should be assimilated by the state bureaucracy. “The most unsuccessful solution would be attempts to bureaucratize its [society’s] institutions. Copying the methods of work of state structures here obviously is unsuitable; civil society has other, more effective instruments.”<sup>131</sup>

Putin advocates a partnership between the state and civil society.<sup>132</sup> For him, that means primarily that social or nongovernmental organizations should work with the state in addressing social problems such as infectious diseases, drug addiction, the growth in the numbers of street children, and the needs of people with disabilities.<sup>133</sup> In other words, NGOs should lighten the burden on the state by sharing responsibility for performing some services that are needed by society.<sup>134</sup> For example, Putin has suggested that citizens' organizations could assist the police in protecting public order and that he sees civil society as valuable for providing feedback to the authorities, informing them of the population's reaction to the policies of the state.<sup>135</sup> He has said that he wants civil society and the state to be in a "constructive, positive, and constant dialogue."<sup>136</sup> Of course, the crucial question is that of the terms on which the dialogue is conducted, and Putin may have different conditions in mind than those envisioned by proponents of democracy. Nevertheless, he does recognize the danger of alienation between society and the state, and he has even admitted that some degree of such alienation always exists, though he seems to attribute that problem primarily to inadequate efforts to inform citizens about the activities of the state.<sup>137</sup>

One consequence of Putin's emphasis on the importance of unity in Russian society is that he and his supporters have shown a great deal of suspicion of possible foreign influence on social organizations in Russia. In July 1999, when Putin was still the director of the FSB, the domestic successor to the KGB, he charged that "foreign secret service organizations" were actively using "all sorts of ecological and public organizations, commercial firms, and charitable organizations" to achieve their ends.<sup>138</sup> In June 2001 he complained that many Russian NGOs depended on grants from foreign organizations. Such dependence on assistance from outside "does not give us honor," he said, and urged that civil society in his country "should develop on its own base."<sup>139</sup> Most prominently, in his address to the Russian parliament in May 2004, though he conceded that many social associations "are working constructively," he accused other organizations of being oriented primarily toward "receiving financing from influential foreign foundations"; others are "serving dubious group and commercial interests," while they neglect the real problems of the society. He added that such organizations "simply cannot 'bite the hand' that feeds them," clearly implying that their overriding loyalty is to foreign funding sources or illicit domestic economic actors.<sup>140</sup> During the next few months after Putin's speech, according to Catherine Fitzpatrick, there was a series of "articles placed in pro-government newspapers and various propagandistic interventions at public meetings and abroad attacking the human rights movement as 'unconstructive.'"<sup>141</sup>



Intensifying the atmosphere of suspicion, in September 2004 in an interview with *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, Vladislav Surkov warned that in his “beleaguered country” there was “a fifth column of left-wing and right-wing radicals” with “common foreign sponsors” who were united by “hatred of Russia itself.” He accused such disloyal groups of seeking “the defeat of their own country in the war on terror.”<sup>142</sup> Masha Lipman reports that Surkov’s interview was followed by two essays in the same newspaper attacking domestic critics of the regime and alleging that the “liberal community sponsored from abroad” is attempting to undermine the authority of Russia’s president and is fighting “against the traditions of Russian statehood.”<sup>143</sup> In July 2005 Putin emphatically condemned the possibility of any foreign funding of political activity by NGOs or parties in Russia, saying that “not a single state that respects itself allows that. And we will not allow it.” He explicitly objected to foreign financing of environmental organizations in Russia, charging that such funding “calls forth suspicion from the state and compromises social organizations of the most various kinds,” and he suggested that the positive alternative was a closer relationship between domestic environmental organizations and the Russian state.<sup>144</sup> In September 2005 Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, also announced that the government would not tolerate foreign funding of NGOs that engaged in political activities.<sup>145</sup> Putin and his followers have implied that organizations in Russia that receive support from abroad are likely to be disloyal to their country and that domestic critics of the government may be in collaboration with enemies of the nation.

Since 2004 the Putin administration has turned more actively toward control of civil society, though the general outlines of its intentions were probably clear at least as early as 2001. As Masha Lipman put it in January 2005, “Civil society has become the new Kremlin passion.”<sup>146</sup> The essential elements of Putin’s strategy for coordinating civil society are the marginalization of those social organizations that are more critical of the government (such as human rights groups and environmentalist organizations) and the cooptation of those that can be persuaded to cooperate sufficiently with the political leadership.<sup>147</sup> One of the techniques used by the Kremlin is creating groups that some have labeled “government-organized nongovernmental organizations,” or GONGOs, to preempt representation of a sphere of society or to marginalize existing groups.<sup>148</sup> Sometimes the organizations fostered by the political leadership are parallel to existing NGOs, with the purpose of neutralizing the impact of the groups that arose from independent initiatives by citizens.<sup>149</sup> Also, the Putin leadership for some time has shown that it has wanted to create an institution that would provide representation for NGOs and at the same time play a role in



achieving coordination among such organizations. As a first step toward that goal, in November 2001 the Kremlin convened a Civic Forum in Moscow, so that several thousand officers of social organizations could meet with government officials. One scholar has said that the forum was intended to integrate “civil society organizations throughout Russia into a single corporatist body that would allow them an official consultative role with the government.”<sup>150</sup> Criticism of that forum by the leaders of groups who feared that it would be an instrument of control by the state led the executive leadership and its supporters to moderate their expectations, however, and Putin’s most reassuring words about the need for social organizations to reflect genuine citizen initiative and the importance of avoiding the bureaucratization of civil society were included in his speech to the Civic Forum.

Though the political leadership did not immediately follow through on the Civic Forum, the core idea behind that gathering reemerged as the inspiration for a new proposal from Vladimir Putin in 2004, when he proposed the creation of a Public Chamber (Obshchestvennaia Palata, which could also be translated as “Social Chamber”). Its functions would be to present ideas from citizens, bring expertise to bear in the evaluation of draft legislation, and facilitate oversight of the work of government administrators.<sup>151</sup> The bill on the Public Chamber was approved by both houses of parliament in March 2005 and was signed into law by Putin in the following month.<sup>152</sup> Putin appointed one-third of the members of the chamber, who selected an equal number; together, the two groups chose the remaining third.<sup>153</sup> Vladislav Surkov urges that the Public Chamber “should give impetus to the development of civil society in Russia,” which clearly implies that the state must exert initiative for civil society to grow vigorously.<sup>154</sup>

Putin has described the Public Chamber as a means of representation of social interests and a channel through which public opinion can influence state affairs.<sup>155</sup> He hopes that the chamber will enhance feedback from society to the state, improving the quality of legislation and administration.<sup>156</sup> Putin insists that the Public Chamber must not be part of the state bureaucracy, but should be one of the structures of civil society.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, he foresees that the body will help in “attracting citizens to the implementation of state policy,” suggesting that it will operate partly to assist administrative agencies.<sup>158</sup> Further, the manner in which members of that chamber are selected gives the executive leadership of the state considerable influence on its composition, implying that it will be made up of the leaders of social organizations that are in a cooperative relationship with the government. Surkov suggested that prospect with his prediction in July 2005 that the Public Chamber would “gather people who support the common cause” while also serving as advocates for a wide

range of social groups.<sup>159</sup> In September 2004, when Putin first proposed it, he said that one of its functions would be to “facilitate the consolidation of the whole Russian society.”<sup>160</sup> In August 2005, when Putin spoke to representatives of NGOs, he expressed the hope that the Public Chamber would be an “institution for the coordination” (*soglasovanie* or “harmonization”) of social interests and would contribute to the “coordination and cooperation” of social organizations.<sup>161</sup> Apparently Putin hopes that the new institution will assist in orchestrating the harmony of values that he considers necessary for Russia to be strong and prosperous.

## Conclusion

Vladimir Putin’s statements on the relationship between the state and civil society display a substantial degree of tension between apparently conflicting principles, which results from the fact that on a deeper level his depiction of Russia’s place in the world and her path of development contains inherently contradictory themes. On such questions as whether Russia is a European country, whether the principles of democracy are universal, and whether civil society should be independent from the state, Putin evidently wants to have it both ways. Of course, it is difficult to know how much of what he says is chosen primarily for public relations purposes and is designed to disguise some of his real goals. But the interpretation that is offered here is that there is a real tension between contradictory impulses in Putin’s outlook, which is reflected in the institutional arrangements that he has structured. He seems genuinely to want Russia to be more closely tied with the technologically developed countries, probably mainly for economic purposes, and apparently he knows that such economic integration rules out the degree of political and ideological isolation that was preserved by the Soviet regime. However, the political model that he favors for his country is a democracy with distinctively Russian characteristics, which for civil society implies what Henry Hale has called “the statist conception of state-society relations.”<sup>162</sup> As Hale notes, that model contrasts with the liberal model of civil society that is familiar to Western scholars.

The analysis of Putin’s speeches may remind us that a crucial difference between those models is the relative emphasis that is placed on conflict or cooperation in the interaction between state and society. Putin rejects the liberal model’s fundamental assumption that the state and civil society are independent of each other and are essentially adversaries. His speeches and actions suggest an ideal of civil society that assumes a primarily cooperative relationship between structures of political authority

and organizations of citizens. Putin is attempting to institutionalize the interaction between state and society in a way that will facilitate such cooperation. His model of civil society fits his needs as he intensifies the hegemonic centralization of power, which now leads him to recruit social organizations to widen the base of support for the center of authority. It has become increasingly apparent that his strategy for the development of civil society entails the creation of a network of corporatist structures that will be capped by the Public Chamber.<sup>163</sup> That strategy is based on the hope that it will be possible to stimulate citizen activism in organizations supervised by the state and to guide the representation of interests through channels that are managed by the state. A tension between diametrically opposing goals is inherent in Putin's model, since he endorses the value of genuine expression of the needs and demands of social groups, while at the same time he suggests that it is necessary to make sure that the state retains enough control to keep the articulation of competing interests within acceptable boundaries.

Perhaps the most basic question Putin faces is that of Russia's identity. His statements about Russia's sovereign choice of her own path, while showing superficial loyalty to democracy as a symbol, imply a preference for another system that he regards as more consistent with his country's traditions and values. Though Putin has not fashioned a systematic ideology, it is clear that he has made a commitment, not to the liberal democratic model to which Boris Yeltsin superficially pledged loyalty, but in favor of a version of Russian nationalism that insists on his country's sovereign prerogative to synthesize principles of Western democracy with elements of authoritarianism. (Putin's partial acceptance of the rhetoric of Eurasianism implies a justification of authoritarian rule and a rejection of foreign criticism of Russian institutions, as anyone familiar with the contemporary Russian political spectrum must realize.) Putin appeals to Russian nationalism and not to Soviet communist ideology in order to justify the institutionalization of control that is designed to ensure that changes in society will be guided from above. One result is that Putin and his associates have no desire to encourage the principled self-examination of Russian society. They are defensive about the darker episodes in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union and are hostile to those who would seek further investigation of those subjects. They are also prone to equate criticism of the state from within the society, from human rights groups and environmentalist organizations, for example, with disloyalty to the national community. Yet in fact Russian human rights and ecological organizations are not a threat to the stability of the state and society in their country. The political elite's attempts to use such groups as scapegoats does not speak well for the current Russian political regime's capacity to maintain a work-

able balance between the preservation of the unity of society and the acceptance of a variety of interests and ideas.

A principal theme of the Putin regime is the goal of returning Russia to the status of one of the world's great powers.<sup>164</sup> The program of United Russia asserts that "Russia has all the grounds to lay claim to the role of one of the centers of world influence and without fail will become such a center."<sup>165</sup> In fact, both Sergei Ivanov and Dmitrii Medvedev, who many see as competitors to succeed Putin, claim that Russia has already recovered that status.<sup>166</sup> In the view of the Putin leadership, Russia's growing strength relieves that country of the necessity of submitting to guidance by other nations, as it was compelled to do during the humbling decade of the 1990s, when its economic problems forced it to become dependent on assistance from abroad. For Putin and his associates, the basis of independence is economic, since competitiveness in the economic arena is necessary to assure the genuine sovereignty of any state.<sup>167</sup> That point was suggested by the title of Vladislav Surkov's speech on sovereign democracy in February 2006, "Sovereignty Is a Synonym for Competitiveness." As we have seen, Putin acknowledges that for Russia's economy to reach a level of development that will permit it to be competitive with others, his country cannot be isolated from the world economy. Yet though Putin does not regard economic isolation as a viable option, he seeks to preserve a degree of political separation for Russia, in the sense of limiting the influence of the West on his country's political affairs.<sup>168</sup> As Matthew Schmidt says, for Putin "integration in the economic life of the Euro-Atlantic West does not necessarily have to mean full acceptance of the political or philosophical underpinnings of that economic order."<sup>169</sup> There is a tendency for members of the current leadership of Russia to use the rhetoric of democracy in an instrumental fashion, to contribute to integration into the world economy; the regime under Putin has been moving in a direction that implies that the concept of sovereign democracy may be largely empty of democratic content.<sup>170</sup> This would explain why some Russian commentators have suggested that the real meaning of "sovereign democracy" is best expressed by the classical Russian word *samoderzhavie*, or autocracy.<sup>171</sup>

Another crucial question faced by Russia's executive leadership by the end of the 1990s was identifying the main risk confronting their country. Was it the danger of stagnation or the threat of disintegration? Putin's words and actions have implied that, while he was aware of both sources of danger, his greatest horror was aroused by two tendencies: growing disunity in society, and the weakening of state authority. His emerging design for the political system and civil society is intended to guard against the divisions that pose the risk of internal chaos, but this design

incurs a relatively high risk of discouraging competition among interests and the generation of initiatives from the bottom up, thus limiting the development potential of the system.<sup>172</sup> Most Western and Russian scholars would probably say that at present the main factor undermining the effectiveness of the Russian state, damaging citizens' trust in the government, and hampering the growth of a market economy is not excessive division in society<sup>173</sup> but the pervasive and corrosive phenomenon of corruption within the state.<sup>174</sup> One might ask what mechanisms have the best chance of countering that corruption. Independent sources of information about the activities of government, provided by groups with the freedom to engage in criticism of illicit practices, could play a valuable role in reducing the misuse of authority by officials. Yet Putin's model of civil society seems likely to decrease the autonomy of social groups, as it has already tightened restrictions on the mass media, political parties, and the parliament.

The real challenge for the contemporary Russian political elite is to devise a set of institutional structures that will avoid both the peril of the disintegration of authority and the trap of authoritarian stagnation. By the end of the 1990s, just before Putin's accession to power as president, it may have been reasonable for him to conclude that the main problem threatening to paralyze development in Russia was the excessive weakening of the state apparatus. During the Putin period, however, changes in the political system have created a new situation in which it is becoming increasingly likely that the most serious barriers to further economic and social modernization are posed by the excessive centralization of power. As Aleksei Zudin has observed, there is great internal tension inside Putin's system between the tendency of concentration of power around a single center, on the one hand, and the leadership's orientation toward a higher level of modernization, on the other hand.<sup>175</sup> It remains to be seen how successfully that tension will be resolved.

## Notes

I am grateful to Professor Stephen Hanson, Professor Andrei Tsygankov, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this essay. Any errors that remain are my responsibility.

1. Michael McFaul, “Putin’s Strong Hand Is Failing Russia,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 12, 2004, in Johnson’s Russia List, [www.cdi.org/russia/johnson](http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson), no. 8362, Sept. 12, 2004; Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin’s Russia*, rev. and exp. ed., trans. by Antonina W. Bouis (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 325.

2. Harley Balzer, “Managed Pluralism: Vladimir Putin’s Emerging Regime,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 19, no. 3 (July–Sept. 2003): 189–227.

3. Gordon A. Hahn, “Putin’s Stealth Authoritarianism,” *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, [www.rferl.org/reports/rpw](http://www.rferl.org/reports/rpw), vol. 4, nos. 14, 15, and 16 (April 15, 22, and 29, 2004).

4. A. Iu. Zudin, “Rezhim V. Putina: kontury novoi politicheskoi sistemy,” *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’*, 2003, no. 2, 67–83. In a personal communication to the author (April 23, 2007), Andrei Tsygankov astutely pointed out that the degree of polycentrism in the Russian political system in the 1990s was not the result of a deliberate choice by Boris Yeltsin, but was a reality with which Yeltsin had to deal, and that after 1992 he “tried to consolidate and centralize his power,” but with only limited success.

5. Vladimir Putin, “Rossiia na rubezhe tysiacheletia,” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, Dec. 31, 1999.

6. A standard scholarly definition of ideology is given by Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 12: “An ideology is a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organized political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify, or overthrow the existing system of power.”

7. Vladimir Rudakov, “The Ideology of 2008,” *Profil’*, April 3, 2006, 24–33, in *What the Papers Say*, LexisNexis, [web.lexis-nexis.com/cis](http://web.lexis-nexis.com/cis), April 10, 2006.

8. Vladislav Surkov, “Suverenitet—eto politicheskii sinonim konkurentosposobnosti,” speech of February 7, 2006, *Politicheskii klass*, March 31, 2006, 15–21. Sergei Ivanov, Russia’s minister of defense, soon chimed in, claiming that “the difficult process of forming a new system of values to define the fundamental worldview of Russian society in the new millennium, a process going on since the early 1990s, is now complete.” Sergei Ivanov, “The Triad of National Values,” *Izvestiia*, July 14, 2006, in Johnson’s Russia List, 2006, no. 159, July 15.

9. Vladimir Putin, “Poslanie Federal’nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” May 10, 2006, web site of the president of Russia, [www.kremlin.ru/mainpage/shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/mainpage/shtml), May 10, 2006. (All of the following citations of speeches and other statements by Putin are from this web site unless otherwise indicated.)

10. Vladimir Putin, with Natalia Gevorkian, Natalia Timakova, and Andrei Kolesnikov, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President Vladimir Putin*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 42, 50, 77. Vladislav Surkov also has labeled the Soviet state as “totalitarian,” as is now rather common in Russia. “Suverenitet,” 15.
11. Vladislav Surkov, “Russian President’s ‘Chief Strategist’ Views Ties with the West,” *Spiegel Online*, BBC Monitoring International Reports, LexisNexis, June 20, 2005.
12. Putin, “Rossiia na rubezhe.”
13. Surkov has written that “we should relate with respect to that which our predecessors did.” “Suverenitet,” 15.
14. Putin, “Poslanie Federal’nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” April 25, 2005. The English version of the presidential web site translates the phrase as “a major geopolitical disaster of the century.”
15. Vladimir Putin, “Interv’iu germanskim telekanalam ARD I TsDF,” May 5, 2005.
16. Surkov, “Suverenitet,” 16.
17. Putin, “Poslanie,” April 25, 2005.
18. Vladimir Putin, “Vystuplenie na torzhestvennom prieme po sluchaiu Dnia priniatiia Deklaratsii o gosudarstvennom suverenitete Rossii,” June 12, 2001. See also Putin, “Interv’iu telekanalu En-Bi-Si (S.Sh.A.), July 12, 2006: “From the beginning of the 1990s we took a step into a new life.”
19. Vladimir Putin, “Vystuplenie na prieme po sluchaiu prazdnovaniia Dnia Rossii,” June 12, 2005.
20. Vladimir Putin, “Vystuplenie na prieme po sluchaiu Dnia Rossii,” June 12, 2002.
21. Vladimir Putin, “Poslanie Federal’nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” May 26, 2004.
22. Vladimir Putin, “Zaiavlenie dlia pressy i otvety na voprosy na sovmestnoi s Prezidentom SShA Dzordzhem Bushem press-konferentsii,” Bratislava, Slovakia, February 24, 2005.
23. Sergei Prozorov, “Russian Conservatism in the Putin Presidency: The Dispersion of a Hegemonic Discourse,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 10, no. 2 (June 2005): 125.
24. Aleksandr Budberg, “A Deputy Prime Minister of National Importance,” *Moskovskii komsomolets*, September 14, 2006, in Johnson’s Russia List, 2006, no. 208, Sept. 14.
25. Surkov, “Suverenitet,” 16.



26. Ekaterina Dobrynina, "Prishli k soglasiuu," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, September 6, 2006.
27. Vladimir Putin, "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," April 18, 2002.
28. Vladimir Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005; Putin, "Pis'mennoe interv'iu avstriiskoi gazete 'Noie Kronen-Tsaitung,'" February 8, 2001.
29. Vladimir Putin, "Interv'iu 'Radio Slovenskogo' i Slovatskoi telekompanii STV," February 22, 2005.
30. Putin, "Pismennoe interv'iu," February 8, 2001.
31. Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005.
32. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe."
33. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na tseremonii vstupleniia v dolzhnost' Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii," May 7, 2000; Putin, "Vystuplenie na Vsemirnom kongresse informatsionnykh agenstv 'Informatsiia: vyzovy XXI veka,'" September 24, 2004.
34. Putin, "Poslanie," April 2002.
35. Vladimir Putin, "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," May 16, 2003.
36. Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 2 (April–June 2005): 138. He adds that "this perspective assumed that in today's world, geo-economics has gained an upper hand over geopolitics, and thus Russia had to learn to defend its national interests by economic means."
37. Putin, "Poslanie," May 2004. In 2006 Putin reaffirmed that it is necessary for Russia to be able to defend itself against moves designed to weaken it: "We should be able to answer any attempts at international pressure on Russia, including those by states with the goal of strengthening their own positions at our expense." "Poslanie," May 2006.
38. Putin, "Poslanie," May 2006.
39. V. V. Putin, "Mineral Natural Resources in the Strategy for Development of the Russian Economy," *Zapiski Gornogo Instituta* 144 (1999): 3–9, reprinted in *Problems of Post-Communism* 53, no. 1 (January–February 2006): 49–54. The quoted words come from p. 49.
40. Harley Balzer, "The Putin Thesis and Russian Energy Policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 3 (July–September 2005): 212.
41. Martha Brill Olcott, "The Energy Dimension in Russian Global Strategy: Vladimir Putin and the Geopolitics of Oil," paper presented at the Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, Houston, Texas, October 2004, 3, 18. That theme is expressed by these words in Putin, "Mineral



Natural Resources,” 52: “Now the market euphoria of the first years of economic reform is gradually giving way to a more measured approach, allowing the possibility and recognizing the need for regulatory activity by the state in economic processes in general and in natural resource use in particular.”

42. Aleksei Chadaev, *Putin: ego ideologiya* (Moscow: Evropa, 2006), 137.

43. Putin, “Pis’mennoe interv’iu,” February 8, 2001.

44. Putin, “Poslanie,” May 2003.

45. That assumption was articulated explicitly by Valerii Zor’kin, the head of Russia’s Constitutional Court, in September 2006: “A state cut off from the outside world by ditches, fences, and a new ‘iron curtain’ is a state on the path to stagnation and decay. It is expulsion to the periphery. It is the marginalization of the state.” Dobrynina, “Prishli k soglasiuu.”

46. Putin, “Poslanie,” May 2006.

47. Putin, “Poslanie,” April 2002.

48. Putin, “Poslanie,” April 2005.

49. Putin, “Rossiia na rubezhe.”

50. Putin, “Zaiavlenie,” February 24, 2005.

51. Putin, “Rossiia na rubezhe.”

52. Vladimir Putin, “Vystuplenie na voennom parade v chest’ 60-i godovshchiny pobedy v Velikoi Otechestvenoi Voine,” May 9, 2005: “We are building our policy on the ideals of freedom and democracy, on the right of each state independently to choose its path of development.”

53. Putin, “Poslanie,” May 2005.

54. Putin, “Interv’iu amerikanskomu telekanalu ‘Foks N’ius,’” September 17, 2005.

55. Vladimir Putin, “Interv’iu ‘Radio Slovenskogo’ i slovatskoi telekompanii STV,” February 22, 2005, presidential web site. See also Putin, “Zaiavlenie,” February 24, 2005: “Naturally these contemporary institutions of democracy and principles of democracy should be adequate to today’s development of Russian society, to our history and traditions.”

56. Putin, “Rossiia na rubezhe.” Mark Smith notes, concerning statements by two spokesmen for the current leadership, that “Isaev’s emphasis on *sobornost’* (along with Markarian’s emphasis on communal civilisation) indicates how he is reaching far back into Russia’s past in his attempts to define an ideological identity for contemporary Russia.” Mark A. Smith, “Sovereign Democracy: The Ideology of Yedinaya Rossiya,” Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies

Research Centre, Russian Series, Paper 6, August 2006, 7.

57. Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* (New York: Scribner, 2005), 377. The authors report on a White House aide's summary of Putin's conversation with Bush.

58. Vladimir Putin, "Uroki pobedy nad natsizmom," *Gazeta Figaro* (Russian presidential web site), May 7, 2005.

59. Ibid.

60. Putin, *First Person*, 169. Also Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005: "First of all, Russia has been and of course will remain the largest European nation."

61. Surkov, "Suverenitet," 15. He added, in comparing Russia with European countries: "We are no worse and no better than others."

62. Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005.

63. Putin, "Uroki."

64. Vladimir Putin, "Stat'ia Prezidenta Rossii V. Putina 'Rossiia: novye vostochnye perspektivy,'" November 10, 2000.

65. As Paradorn Rangsimaporn says, the Yeltsin and Putin administrations primarily have used Eurasianist language "in a pragmatic and instrumental sense" to reassert Russia's significance in East Asia, not only in economic terms, but as a regional great power. "Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia's Role in East Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 3 (May 2006): 376. The economic implications of Putin's interpretation of Eurasianism are emphasized even more by Matthew Schmidt: "The Eurasianist policy outlined by Putin has largely been economic in nature. . . . The available evidence suggests that Putin is largely interested in making Russia an energy and transportation bridge between Asia and Europe." "Is Russia Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism?" *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 93. The rhetoric of Eurasianism does also have some broader ideological implications for the Putin leadership, however, as will be indicated later in this essay.

66. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na torzhestvennom sobranii, posviashchennom 1000-letiiu Kazani," August 26, 2005.

67. The ideas of the proponents of Eurasianism are described by David Kerr, "The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 6 (September 1995): 977–88.

68. V. M. Khachaturian, "Istoki i rozhdenie evraziiskoi idei," *Tsivilizatsii*, 2004, no. 6 (October): 197.

69. Ryszard Paradowski, "The Eurasian Idea and Leo Gumilëv's Scientific Ideology," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 41, no. 1 (March 1999): 26.
70. Marlène Laruelle, "The Two Faces of Contemporary Eurasianism: An Imperial Version of Russian Nationalism," *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 1 (March 2004): 124.
71. Khachaturian, "Istoki," 190.
72. Slawomir Mazurek, "Russian Eurasianism—Historiosophy and Ideology," *Studies in East European Thought* 54, no. 2 (March 2002): 108.
73. That interpretation of Eurasianism, which is very evident in the writings of some contemporary Russian intellectuals such as Aleksandr Dugin (whose works are widely read), is consistent with the heritage of Danilevskii, who "called for the peoples of Eurasia to unite under Russian leadership" in opposition to the West, as represented in his day by Europe, whose values Danilevskii repudiated. Schmidt, "Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism," 90.
74. Nikolai Spasskii, "Strategiia dlia Rossii—2008," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, July 25, 2006, affirms that for Russia, "Eurasianism is the only path." He sees Eurasianism as meaning that Russia has the "historical mission" of being a "civilizational bridge between the West and the East," of becoming the "real third force in the world, regulating the balance among the United States, China, India, the European Union, and the Islamic world," and of avoiding involvement in wars while steadily accumulating influence. That vision contrasts sharply with the version of Eurasianism that calls for Russia to lead a broad coalition of powers united by enmity toward the United States. Like Putin, Spasskii envisions Russia as maintaining independence of action and looking out for her own interests.
75. Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005.
76. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe."
77. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na torzhestvakh, posviashchennykh Dniu Rossii," June 12, 2004.
78. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie," June 12, 2002.
79. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na prazdnike, posviashchennom Dniu Rossii," June 12, 2003; Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe"; Putin, "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," July 8, 2000.
80. Putin, "Vystuplenie," May 7, 2000.
81. Laruelle, "The Two Faces," 117; Mazurek, "Russian Eurasianism," 109.
82. Khachaturian, "Istoki," 189. Danilevskii expressed such ideas in the late 1860s.

83. Vladimir Belinkin, "The Ideology of Russia's Rulers in 1995: Westernizers and Eurasians," *Monthly Review* 47, no. 5 (October 1995): 29.
84. Vladislav Surkov, "Rossiia—samostoiatel'nyi sub"ekt istorii," Edinaia Rossiia web site, <http://www.edinoros.ru>, July 11, 2006. See also the report on that speech by Elena Rudneva and Anna Nikolaeva, "Let's Be Like Che Guevara," *Vedomosti*, July 12, 2006, in Johnson's Russia List, 2006, no. 156, July 12.
85. Putin, "Interv'iu" (NBC), July 12, 2006.
86. Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005. In an interview with American journalists in September 2003, when he was asked about "setbacks for democracy" in Russia, Putin replied, "If by democracy one means the dissolution of the state, then we do not need such democracy," and added, "I don't think that there are people in the world who want democracy that would lead to chaos." Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising*, 286. The authors note that Putin quickly associated democracy with "the dissolution of the state" and "chaos."
87. Putin, *First Person*, 86.
88. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe." In that document, Putin observes of paternalistic attitudes, "That habit is dying off extremely slowly."
89. Quoted in Fedor Pogodin, "Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo s russkoi dushoi," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, November 21, 2001.
90. Vladimir Putin, "Vladimir Putin Speaks about the Most Important Issues," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, August 17, 1999, condensed text in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 51, no. 33 (Sept. 15, 1999), LexisNexis, September 15, 1999.
91. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na rasshirennom zasedanii pravitel'stva s uchastiem glav sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii," September 13, 2004.
92. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie," June 12, 2004. On the importance of Russian national unity, see also Putin, "Vystuplenie na parade v chest' 58-i godovshchiny pobedy v Velikoi Otechestvenoi Voine," May 9, 2003; Putin, "Vystuplenie na prazdnike, posviaschennom Dniu Rossi," June 12, 2003, presidential web site; and Putin, "Vystuplenie," September 13, 2004.
93. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe."
94. Putin, "Poslanie," May 2003.
95. Putin, *First Person*, 169.
96. Putin, "Poslanie," July 2000. He emphasized that theme again in, "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," April 28, 2007.

97. Vadislav Surkov, "Interview with Vladislav Surkov," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, September 29, 2004, in BBC Monitoring International Reports, LexisNexis, October 3, 2004.
98. Vladislav Surkov, "Suverenitet."
99. Sergei Ivanov, "The Triad of National Values," *Izvestiia*, July 14, 2006, in Johnson's Russia List, 2006, no. 159, July 15.
100. "Kremlin Aide Praises Russia as Strong Democracy, Tells West to Mind Own Business," July 5, 2006, in BBC Monitoring International Reports, LexisNexis, July 5, 2006.
101. Chadaev, *Putin*, 26.
102. Ivanov, "The Triad."
103. Putin, "Interv'iu" (NBC), July 12, 2006.
104. Ivanov, "The Triad."
105. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie i diskussiiia na Miunkhenskoii konferentsii po voprosam politiki bezopasnosti," February 10, 2007. The reasons for the recent hardening of the Russian government's rhetoric toward the U.S. government (and toward the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) would require an analysis of the factors shaping current Russian foreign policy, an endeavor beyond the scope of this essay. Certainly that speech introduced no new themes in the ideological discourse of the Putin leadership. It is interesting that in his speech to the Federal Assembly in April 2007, Putin did not continue the denunciation of American high-handedness and in fact offered no general assessment of American foreign policy. One Russian journalist has said that one section of the prepared text of that speech had included a condemnation of the current U.S. policies as neocolonialist in character (a familiar theme of the Putin leadership), but that section disappeared when the speech was delivered by Putin. Andrei Kolesnikov, "Vladimir Putin otstavil poslednee slovo," *Kommersant*, April 27, 2007.
106. See Aleksandra Samarina and Sergei Varshavchik, "Suverennaia demokratiia kazhdomu," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, August 31, 2006.
107. Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005) provides a well-informed explanation of those techniques for manipulating the media, public opinion, and elections, which have been very successful in Russia in recent years in insulating the political elite from the potential unpredictability of democracy.
108. Surkov, "Suverenitet." Dmitrii Badovskii, "Vavilonskaia bashnia Kremliia," *Gazeta.ru*, August 31, 2006, argues that the concept of "sovereign democracy" was created "as a response to the specter of the 'orange threat,' the destabilization of the Russian political regime, controlled from outside." Dobrynina, "Prishli k soglasiuu," offers a similar interpretation. It should be noted that Surkov and others with the same outlook greatly exaggerate the influence of Western

countries on the voting in Ukraine in 2004 and neglect to mention the far greater (and lavishly funded) efforts by the Russian government to sway the outcome of that election.

109. Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Finding a Civilisational Idea: ‘West,’ ‘Eurasia,’ and ‘Euro-East’ in Russia’s Foreign Policy,” *Geopolitics* 12, no. 3 (July 2007): 385.

110. Dmitrii Medvedev, “Dlia protsvetaniia vsekh nado uchityvat’ interesy kazhdogo,” interview by Valerii Fadeev, *Ekspert*, 2006, no. 7 (July).

111. See Vladimir Rudakov, “Sam sebe suveren,” *Profil’*, no. 27, July 2006.

112. Evgeniia Zubchenko, “Discussion or Division,” *Novye izvestiia*, July 25, 2006, in Johnson’s Russia List, 2006, no. 168, July 25; Francesca Mereu, “United Russia Pans ‘Surkov Democracy,’” *Moscow Times*, July 26, 2006; Roman Lapshin, “Suverennaia demokratiia—osnova nashei ideologii,” *Izvestiia*, July 27, 2006.

113. Vladislav Surkov, “Eto vremennno, eto—shtopka,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, August 31, 2006.

114. Vladimir Putin, “Stenograficheskie otchet o vstreche s uchastnikami tret’ego zasedaniia mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba ‘Valdai,’” September 9, 2006, presidential web site. An early report on that discussion indicated that Putin had said that the concept of sovereign democracy contains “contradictions.” Andrei Zolotov, Jr., “Russia Experts Granted Ample Answers to Softball Questions,” *Russia Profile*, September 10, 2006, in Johnson’s Russia List, 2006, no. 204, September 10. The mention of contradictions was absent from the transcript presented by the presidential web site.

115. See Anna Zakatnova, “Bez revoliutsii: Vladislav Surkov predlozhit presse vyrabotat’ grazhdanskuiu pozitsiiu,” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, September 13, 2006.

116. Budberg, “A Deputy Prime Minister”; Mikhail Fishman, “Epokha bez nazvaniia,” *Gazeta.ru*, August 18, 2006.

117. Edinaia Rossiia, “Rossiia, kotoruiu my vybiraem,” web site of the Edinaia Rossiia party, October 2, 2006. The draft program uses the term “sovereign” or “sovereignty” nine times, including only two references to “sovereign democracy.” The way the draft program treats sovereign democracy allows some prominent members of the ruling party to claim that the term is central to the party program, while others can say that the concept was not emphasized strongly. By comparison, “economy” (or a variant of that word) appears twenty-one times in the program, “development” occurs seventeen times, and “renewal” is found nine times. “Kvantitativnyi analiz programmy ‘Edinoi Rossii,’” *Kommersant*, October 3, 2006.

118. “Russian Leaders Drop Concept of ‘Sovereign Democracy,’” Open Source Center Analysis, July 25, 2006, in Johnson’s Russia List, 2006, no. 169, July 26; Mereu, “United Russia Pans ‘Surkov Democracy.’”

119. Putin, “Rossiia na rubezhe.”

120. Vladimir Putin, "Poslanie," July 2000.
121. Vladimir Putin, "Obrashchenie k grazhdanam strany pri vystuplenii v dolzhnost' Prezidenta Rossii," May 7, 2004. Other statements by Putin emphasizing the importance of civil society may be found in "Pis'mennoe interv'iu," February 2001; "Poslanie," May 2003; and "Poslanie," May 2004.
122. Putin, "Vladimir Putin Speaks"; Putin, "Poslanie," July 2000.
123. Putin, "Vladimir Putin Speaks."
124. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe."
125. Ibid.
126. Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie na otkrytii Grazhdanskogo Foruma," November 21, 2001; Putin, "Vystuplenie na vstreche s predstaviteliami obshchestvennykh nepolicheskikh organizatsii," June 12, 2001.
127. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe." A frank statement of the need for the organizations making up civil society to "conform to the state as an integral whole" is found in Chadaev, *Putin*, 79. That statement may express the interpretation of the "partnership" between the state and civil society preferred by many in the current political leadership.
128. Putin, "Rossia na rubezhe."
129. Putin, "Vystuplenie," November 21, 2001.
130. Putin, "Poslanie," April 2005.
131. Putin, "Vystuplenie," November 21, 2001.
132. Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe"; Putin, "Poslanie," July 2000; Putin, "Vystuplenie," November 21, 2001.
133. Vladimir Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo na zasedanii Soveta po sodeistiiu razvitiuu institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka," July 20, 2005.
134. Putin, "Vystuplenie na vstreche," June 12, 2001.
135. Putin, "Vystuplenie," September 13, 2004; Putin, "Vystuplenie," November 21, 2001.
136. Putin, "Vystuplenie na vstreche," June 12, 2001.
137. Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," July 20, 2005.

138. *RFE/RL Newsline* ([www.rferl.org/newsline](http://www.rferl.org/newsline)), vol. 3, no. 139, part I, July 20, 1999. Putin immediately added, “this is why, regardless of pressure from the public and mass media, such organizations will always be a subject of our [the FSB’s] attention.” The FSB is the successor to the KGB in performing domestic counterintelligence and investigative operations in postcommunist Russia.
139. Putin, “Vystuplenie na vstreche,” June 12, 2001.
140. Putin, “Poslanie,” May 2004.
141. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, “Russian NGOs Slam Putin Reforms as ‘Unconstitutional,’” *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly* 4, no. 37, September 24, 2004.
142. Surkov, “Interview,” September 29, 2004 (BBC Monitoring, October 3, 2004).
143. Masha Lipman, “How Russia Is Not Ukraine: The Closing of Russian Civil Society,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Russian and Eurasian Project Policy Outlook*, January 2005, in Johnson’s Russia List, no. 9037, January 27, 2005.
144. “Stenograficheskii otchet o zasedanii Soveta po sodeistviu razvitiu institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka,” July 20, 2005, presidential web site.
145. Mikhail Petrov, “Mass Media Quite Free in Russia—Lavrov,” ITAR-TASS, September 21, 2005, LexisNexis, September 21, 2005.
146. Lipman, “How Russia Is Not Ukraine.” That argument parallels that of Alfred B. Evans, Jr., “Putin’s Design for Civil Society,” paper presented at the annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Boston, December 2004: “Since his reelection as President of Russia in the election of March 2004, Putin has placed growing emphasis on efforts to integrate nongovernmental organizations into his system of comprehensive support.” A large part of the analysis in that paper appears in “Vladimir Putin’s Design for Civil Society,” in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Alfred B. Evans, Jr., Laura A. Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2006), 147–58.
147. Evans, “Vladimir Putin’s Design;” Lipman, “How Russia Is Not Ukraine.”
148. Alexander Nikitin and Jane Buchanan, “The Kremlin’s Civic Forum: Cooperation or Cooptation for Civil Society in Russia?” *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 149. Note that this technique was evident during the early part of Putin’s first term as president. Its use has expanded more recently, however.
149. Lipman, “How Russia Is Not Ukraine.”
150. John Squier, “Civil Society and the Challenge of Russian *Gosudarstvennost’*,” *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 177.



151. Putin, "Vystuplenie," September 2004.
152. RIA Novosti, "Putin Inks Public Chamber Law," TASS, April 4, 2005, LexisNexis, April 4, 2005.
153. For details on the composition of the Public Chamber and its actions during its first few months of existence, see Alfred B. Evans, Jr., "The Public Chamber in Action: Representation or Coordination?" paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Washington, D.C., November 2006.
154. TASS, "Putin Aide Says Public Chamber to Encourage Civil Society in Russia," Sept. 30, 2005, in Johnson's Russia List, no. 9260, October 2, 2005.
155. Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," July 20, 2005. See also Vladimir Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo na vstreche s predstaviteliami konsul'tativnykh organov pri Prezidente po voprosu formirovaniia Obshchestvennoi palaty," August 3, 2005.
156. Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," August 3, 2005.
157. Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," July 20, 2005; Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," August 3, 2005.
158. Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," August 3, 2005.
159. Vadislav Surkov, "Vladislav Surkov's Secret Speech: How Russia Should Fight International Conspiracy," Moscownews.com, July 13, 2005, in Johnson's Russia List, no. 9199, July 13, 2005.
160. Putin, "Vystuplenie," September 24, 2004.
161. Putin, "Vstupitel'noe slovo," August 3, 2005.
162. Henry Hale, "Civil Society from Above? Statist and Liberal Models of State-Building in Russia," *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 309.
163. Surkov, "Interview," September 29, 2004: "Modernization and the solidarity of major social corporations . . . are sure to lead Russia to success." Zudin, "Rezhim V. Putina," 75, refers to the construction under Putin of "links of the monocentric system that are in principle new, to be precise, of structured corporate-civil representation."
164. Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Vision," 134.
165. "Rossiia, kotoruiu my vybiraem."
166. Ivanov, "The Triad": "Russia has now completely recovered the status of a great power that bears global responsibility for the situation on the planet and the future of the human condition."

Medvedev, “Dlia protsvetaniia”: “Not one serious global or regional problem in the West or East can be resolved successfully without Russia’s active and equal participation, much less in disregard of its interests.”

167. Leonid Radzikhovskii, “Europeans on the Outside,” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, March 8, 2006, in Johnson’s Russia List, 2006, no. 61, March 10.

168. Rudakov, “The Ideology of 2008.”

169. Matthew Schmidt, “Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism?” 93.

170. Alexander Konovalov, “Gde vziat’ elitu s ideologiei?” *Politicheskii klass*, 2006, no. 34, 25–26. Konovalov refers specifically to the rhetoric of Vladislav Surkov, but it could apply to Putin equally well, in my judgment.

171. Rudakov, “The Ideology of 2008.”

172. A similar conclusion is offered by Shevtsova, *Putin’s Russia*, 324. Like Shevtsova, I see the main risk that is incurred by Putin’s strategy not as political instability, but as the stagnation of development.

173. The main exception to that generalization is provided by the problems arising out of certain ethnic enclaves in the Russian Federation. Putin’s design for the state and society is not conditioned primarily by those challenges, though its architects are certainly aware of those them, and those problems may have reinforced Putin’s determination to centralize power.

174. On the problem of corruption in Russia, see Yelena Panfilova, “Between Niger and Sierra Leone,” *Izvestiia*, October 19, 2005, in Johnson’s Russia List, no. 9276, October 23, 2005; and Ivan Sas, “The Right Way to Pay a Bribe,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, October 22, 2005, in Johnson’s Russia List, no. 9276, October 23, 2005. Those sources argue that the corruption in government in Russia has increased during the last few years.

175. Zudin, “Rezhim V. Putina,” 83.

Center for Russian & East European Studies  
University Center for International Studies  
University of Pittsburgh  
4400 W. W. Posvar Hall  
320 S. Bouquet Street  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260  
(412) 648-8716  
[www.ucis.pitt.edu/crees/cbpaper.html](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/crees/cbpaper.html).

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