1 *Introduction*

September 6, 2019. Moscow International Book Fair, Center for the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy (Vystavka dostizhenii narodnogo khoziaistva, VDNKh), Moscow. Aleksandr Prokhanov, eighty-one years old, sits at the center of the stage, his face inexpressive, behind the table where his latest book, *The Fifth Stalin*, is displayed. Above the stage, a massive screen projects a loop of illustrations from the book: a series of black-and-white drawings that blend religious medieval iconography with Soviet aesthetics. They portray Joseph Stalin in various situations: alongside Orthodox saints; as a schoolteacher facing Vladimir Putin and Dmitrii Medvedev, who sit in the front row sheepishly copying the lesson's title marked on the blackboard in capital letters: "Mobilization"; or on a large nuclear warhead with the inscription "Za stalina" ("For Stalin").

The book's editor, Sergei Dmitriev, director of the publishing house Veche, takes the floor. As he explains, the book commemorates the upcoming 140th anniversary of Stalin's birth. It is a collection of articles by Prokhanov and illustrations by Gennadii Zhivotov, originally published in the newspaper *Zavtra*, fervently glorifying Stalin.

In the conference room, about twenty "Night Wolves," members of Russia's largest motorcycle club, are seated in three rows. They are easily recognizable: shaved heads, biker vests adorned with various pins, and the club's symbol – a wolf's head roaring in a lunar white circle with its mane twirling in orange and red flames – on their backs. Besides them, the audience includes several men with long beards, dressed in black, mimicking the style of the Eurasian philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, and a few other smart men in suits. These are probably the "technocrats from the defense industry" that a journalist identified among the conference's participants, in a report later published by *Zavtra*.[1]

[1] Vladimir Vinnikov, "'Russkii reaktor' na VDNKh," *Zavtra*, September 12, 2019, https://zavtra.ru/blogs/pyatij_stalin_gryadyot. Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations from Russian or French are mine.

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"This book is not a commemoration," remarks Prokhanov, "it is a premonition. Premonition of a new appearance of Stalin. Stalin is coming!"

He further elaborates on the book's title. In Russian history, as he explains, four empires have arisen: Kievan Rus, Muscovite Russia, the Romanov empire, and the Soviet Union. Each of them, Prokhanov claims, gave birth to a Stalinian leader: Prince Vladimir, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Joseph Stalin.

"But the Stalinist empire," he continues, "of which I consider myself a son, was destroyed in 1991 … And now again, in some miraculous way, a new Russian state has started to emerge from this 'black hole.' I call it the fifth Russian empire."

On the stage, the roundtable speakers also include a prominent figure from the younger generation of communist politicians, Iurii Afonin (1977–), deputy chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and a member of the State Duma. Next to him sits Aleksandr Zaldostanov, the leader of the Night Wolves, known as The Surgeon, who is personally acquainted with Putin. Decked out in the same gear as his gang, he, however, is the only one to sport long, curly hair, held in place by a tight black cap. During his speech, he explains that, at Prokhanov's request, he has passed a letter to Putin asking for the restoration of the name Stalingrad to the city of Volgograd. He smiles and adds: "In front of me, Putin read Prokhanov's letter to the end and said: 'Someday this will happen.'"

This event, which I attended during my fourth field research visit to Russia, illustrates several defining attributes of the Russian hawks: They seek to reconfigure the relationship between Orthodox conservatism and Soviet military-technological might, they span various social sectors and generations, and their ideas circulate from ideologues to policy circles through a network of actors made up of disparate members of the intellectual and political elite.

1.1 Who Are the Russian Hawks?

"Hawk" is originally a Cold War expression used in the American context to refer to those who support a well-financed, aggressive military. By contrast with doves' emphasis on cooperation to avoid war, hawks maintain a competitive understanding of international politics.

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They argue for constant military buildup to establish a posture of superior strength and to deter the opponent.[2] As providers of justification for the use of force to defend national security interests over the adversary's, hawks are known as the war machine's chief ideologues.

In the post-Soviet context, the term has occasionally been used to describe Stalinist ideologues advocating for the restoration of a Russian empire,[3] as well as members of the "party of war" within the political and military elite who promoted the use of military force against Chechen secessionists in 1994.[4] I also use this term to designate the group of ideologues examined in this book, including Prokhanov and others, who from the beginning of their careers in the Soviet Union have portrayed the military as the natural carrier of their ideas. At the core of their ideology is a reflection on the modernization processes of the Soviet Union and subsequently Russia. In stark contrast to Western modernization theories, which began to spread during Nikita Khrushchev's Thaw and assumed that technoscientific modernization would eventually lead to the Soviet state's liberalization and convergence with the West, they were committed to preserving the uniqueness of the Soviet path. Throughout the period studied, from the Soviet Union to contemporary Russia, these hawks have been adamant about the "wartime" context faced by their country in its confrontation with the West and have focused on reinvigorating a state ideology to mobilize the nation. To them, the military is the quintessential venue for realizing their conception of the Russian national idea, defined in radical opposition to the West and understood as a blend of technological power and religious conservatism in service of a strong and imperial state. Further, "hawks" alludes to the symbol of the Russian tsarist empire, the double-headed eagle, which these ideologues have revitalized in the post-Soviet context as

[2] Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale, and Joseph S. Nye, "Hawks, Doves and Owls: A New Perspective on Avoiding Nuclear War," *International Affairs* 61, no. 4 (1985): 581–89; Bruce Russett, "Doves, Hawks, and U.S. Public Opinion," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 4 (1990): 515–38.

[3] Vitalii I. Goldanskii, "Russia's 'Red-Brown' Hawks," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 5 (1993): 24–27.

[4] John B. Dunlop, *The Moscow Bombings of September 1999: Examinations of Russian Terrorist Attacks at the Onset of Vladimir Putin's Rule* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 14.

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they have aimed to merge historical narratives and imperial legacies to forge a renewed "fifth empire."[5]

The Russian hawks' advocacy of a mix of technological modernization, religious conservatism, and state patriotism form an ideological language, which I have termed "modernist conservatism." Instead of classic Russian conservatism, modernist conservatism resembles the type of political ideology that Jeffrey Herf identifies in the context of Weimar Germany as "reactionary modernism."[6] As Herf explains, the theorists of the German Conservative Revolution, such as Oswald Spengler, Ernst Jünger, and Carl Schmitt, framed an illiberal and nationalist ideology of modernity by embracing technological progress while rejecting Enlightenment's liberal and secular conception of reason.

Modernist conservatism is still the ideological flagship of the Izborskii Klub, the hawks' central and largest think tank in today's Russia. Created in 2012, the club comprises intellectual, economic, political, religious, and military elites advocating the restoration of Russia's imperial great-power status, drawing on both religious conservatism and techno-military might. While the hawks were marginal in the 1990s, the regime has increasingly relied on their ideas to justify the authoritarian consolidation of strong state power, to enforce a social discipline based on traditional values, and to pursue an imperialist foreign policy, which culminated in the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Since the start of the war, the Izborskii Klub has been actively engaged in propaganda work stressing the "military-technological," "spiritual," and "ideological" dimensions of what they picture as a "battle of civilizations" between Russia and the West.[7]

This book represents an attempt to understand why, despite the prohibition of state ideology in the Russian Constitution of 1993, Russian hawks have endured across the 1991 regime change and have risen to political prominence as the chief ideologues of Russia's confrontation against the West. The ascent of hawks from the fringes to the center of Russian political discourse underscores broader shifts in societal attitudes and governmental strategies. By tracing the trajectory of these

[5] See, for instance, the cover page of issue 1 of the Izborskii Klub's journal, published in 2024.

[6] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[7] "Vremia Dugina. Otkliki Chlenov Izborskogo Kluba," Izborskii Klub website, September 2, 2022, https://izborsk-club.ru/23275.

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ideologues and examining the mechanisms through which their ideas were translated into state policies, this study aims to elucidate the continuity and evolution of the interplay between ideology and politics in Russian governance from the end of the USSR to contemporary times. In doing so, it provides insights into the ideological underpinnings of Russia's foreign posture and its implications for international security, regional stability, and the global balance of power.

1.2 Sources

While studies on contemporary Russian conservatism have usually revolved around institutions such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Russian Orthodox Church, the concept of the Russian hawks highlights the role of intellectuals in shaping and spreading beliefs through various intellectual, cultural, and political vehicles. I distinguish between two generations of Russian hawks: The first generation began their activities as public intellectuals in the late Soviet Union, around the 1970s, while the second entered the public scene in the late 1990s. Moreover, although the literature on conservative intellectuals has often spotlighted the Eurasianist philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, I place particular emphasis on Aleksandr Prokhanov (1938–), who has held a leading position among the first generation of Russian hawks as the founder of their main media mouthpieces.[8] By contrast with Dugin, whose popularity and visibility in Russia are limited to intellectual circles, Prokhanov is an author of literature well known to the general public.[9] Besides him, I also pay particular

[8] For studies focused on Dugin, see, for instance, Jacob Kipp, "Aleksandr Dugin and the Ideology of National Revival: Geopolitics, Eurasianism and the Conservative Revolution," *European Security* 11, no. 3 (2002): 91–125; Marlène Laruelle, "A Textbook Case of Doctrinal Entrepreneurship: Aleksandr Dugin," in *Russian Nationalism* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 95–133; Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, "Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist? 'Neo-Eurasianism' and Perennial Philosophy," *The Russian Review* 68, no. 4 (2009): 662–78; Dmitry Shlapentokh, "Alexander Dugin's Views of Russian History: Collapse and Revival," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 25, no. 3 (2017): 331–43.

[9] For this reason, Prokhanov has been studied in greater detail by scholars in literature rather than in political science. Edmund Griffiths's recently published book is a remarkable exception. See Edmund Griffiths, *Aleksandr Prokhanov and Post-Soviet Esotericism* (Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, 2023).

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attention to one of the leading members of the younger generation of Russian hawks, Vitalii Averianov, who is the chief conceptualizer of the concept of "dynamic conservatism," blending technological modernity and religious conservatism. Averianov is also one of the founders of the first conservative think tank in contemporary Russia, the "Institute of Dynamic Conservatism."

Following the social history of ideas approach, I use a mixed method of inquiry that combines discourse analysis with empirically grounded research on idea producers. For the Soviet period, my archival sources comprise the newspapers that were used by the Russian hawks as forums for sociopolitical debates, such as *Literaturnaia gazeta*, *Nash sovremennik*, and *Literaturnaia Rossiia*. For the years 1991–99, my sources include the newspapers founded by Prokhanov, *Den* (1990–93) and *Zavtra* (1993–), which served as the rallying points for modernist conservatives. For the period 2000–20, I also review the online archives of the internet media platforms used by the younger generation of Russian hawks, such as the web newspaper *Russkii zhurnal*, and their personal blogs on the social networking service Livejournal (Zhivoi Zhurnal). From 2009 onward, I use the online archives of the institutions created by Russian hawks, first the Institute of Dynamic Conservatism (Institut dinamicheskogo konservatizma, IDK) (2009–12) and then the Izborskii Klub (2012–), which have recorded their publications and transcripts of roundtables on their websites.[10] I have also reviewed the archives of the Izborskii Klub's monthly journal, *Izborskii Klub: Russkie strategii*.[11]

In addition to ideational content, the archives of the IDK's and the Izborskii Klub's websites record in detail the routine activities of the institutions and their members over the period 2009–20.[12] These data include the list of roundtables and conferences that the organizations have hosted, the list of participants that have attended them and the list of meetings held by the leaders of the organizations with political, economic, or religious actors. Reviewing these archives, therefore, provides important information on the audience and socialization of Russian hawks. In particular, these data enable me to track the

[10] See http://dynacon.ru and https://izborsk-club.ru.

[11] The archives can be accessed here: https://izborsk-club.ru/magazine#2013.

[12] See the section "Materials of the IDK Website (2009–2012)" ("Materialy saita IDK (2009–2012)"): www.dynacon.ru/arh_idk/ and the section "Chronology of the Club's Events" ("Khronologiia meropriiatii kluba") in each issue of the Izborskii Klub's journals.

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IDK's and Izborskii Klub's connections with policy circles through the analysis of their mentions of interaction and cooperation with policy-makers or political institutions.

Moreover, by contrast with most studies on Russian conservatism, the interpretation developed in this book benefits from the rich and original materials retrieved during interviews and ethnographic observations, which I gathered during several fieldwork visits in Russia from 2017 to 2019. These materials are especially valuable today as access to the Russian field has been challenged since 2020 owing to Covid-19 travel restrictions and the start of the war.

There were many challenges involved in my fieldwork. The first difficulty was to get in touch with a social group far away from my personal environment in the sensitive political context of hostility and mistrust that prevailed between Russia and the West following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Another difficulty related to the conditions brought about by my immersion in an antipathic cultural milieu as an isolated stranger. As scholars have highlighted, exposure to "extreme" or "repugnant" cultural milieus challenges ethnographic methodological processes, which rely on a certain openness and interpersonal empathy to allow access to the respondents and the smooth running of the interviews.[13] In this respect, I concur with other French female researchers on Russian right-wing political and ideological milieus who have noted that the status of foreigner, "exotic" to the cultural milieu covered by the research, helps to neutralize personal reactions and establish a more professional ethnographic posture.[14]

In total, I conducted thirty-two semistructured oral interviews in the Russian language. The first category of interviewers was composed of members of the two generations of Russian hawks, including Izborskii

[13] Susan Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other," *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 373–93; Magali Boumaza, "L'expérience d'une jeune chercheuse en 'milieu extrême': Une enquête au Front National," *Regards sociologiques* 22 (2001): 105–21; Véra Nikolski, "La valeur heuristique de l'empathie dans l'étude des engagements 'répugnants,'" *Genèses* 84, no. 3 (2011): 113–26; Clémentine Fauconnier, "Enquêter sur le parti Russie Unie : De la défiance politique à l'illégitimité scientifique? L'apport critique de l'étude des objets antipathiques," *Terrains/Théories* 10 (2019).

[14] Nikolski, "La valeur heuristique," 20; Fauconnier, "Enquêter sur le parti Russie unie," 7.

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Klub members and "Young Conservatives."[15] Some of the key questions I asked related to the context that led them to start authoring public speech, the reason behind turning points in their intellectual trajectory, the individuals whom they related to as *edinomyshlenniki* (like-minded persons) at specific points in their life, the rival groups that they targeted in their publications, the incentives that led them to coalesce with other ideologues, their routine practices as part of a group of ideologues, and so on. A second category of interviews was aimed at gaining insight into the perception of the hawks by other members of Russia's contemporary intellectual and political elites.[16]

The fieldwork also included ethnographic observations such as attending events organized by the Izborskii Klub as a group or separately by its members. My goal here was to identify the type of audience that Russian hawks attracted in the public space and to get insight into the more affective, emotional dimension of their identity as a group.

1.3 A Social History of the Russian Hawks' Ideas

Whereas studies on contemporary Russian conservatism focus exclusively on the post-Soviet context,[17] I look at Russian modernist

[15] The list of these interviewees is available in Annex 1, but the material quoted from interviews is anonymized.

[16] See Annex 1. Some of them are anonymized. They are identified by a letter (e.g., "A.", "B.") and by their professional occupation.

[17] Marlène Laruelle, ed., *Le rouge et le noir: Extrême droite et nationalisme en Russie* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007); Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008); Marlène Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation: Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Nationalism: Imaginaries, Doctrines, and Political Battlefields* (London: Routledge, 2019); Thomas Parland, *The Extreme Nationalist Threat in Russia: The Growing Influence of Western Rightist Ideas* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004); Véra Nikolski, *National-bolchevisme et néo-eurasisme dans la Russie contemporaine: La carrière militante d'une idéologie* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2013). Andrei P. Tsygankov, *The Strong State in Russia: Development and Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud, eds., *The New Russian Nationalism: Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism 2000–15* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Katharina Bluhm and Mihai Varga, eds., *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019); Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds., *Contemporary Russian Conservatism: Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives* (Boston: Brill, 2020).

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conservatism as an ideological product that was formed over a period encompassing the late Soviet Union to contemporary Russia. In this respect, my research builds a bridge between the historiography of the late Soviet period and the literature on post-Soviet Russia.[18] Moreover, contrary to classic intellectual histories of Russian conservatism,[19] I draw on recent attempts to develop a method for the study of political ideas by combining a contextualist interpretation of discourses with an analysis of the social conditions of their production and circulation.

In the early 2000s, the American sociologists Charles Camic and Neil Gross defined this approach as the "new sociology of ideas."[20] Likewise, in France, a group of scholars has recently laid down the key principles for a new "social history of political ideas."[21] The social history of ideas builds on the historiographical movement formed by the Cambridge School in the 1970s. Representatives of this school have argued that ideas are not purely abstract constructions; rather, they "intervene" in specific historical contexts.[22] Quentin Skinner has particularly emphasized that understanding the meaning of ideas involves the identification of their argumentative context. The study of ideas, he argues, should reveal the "broader networks of beliefs"

[18] Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993); John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); James P. Scanlan, ed., *Russian Thought after Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994); Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Nikolai Mitrokhin, *Russkaia Partiia: Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR 1953–1985 gody* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003).

[19] Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Paul Robinson, *Russian Conservatism* (Ithaca, NY: Northern Illinois University Press, 2019); Glenn Diesen, *Russian Conservatism: Managing Change under Permanent Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

[20] Charles Camic and Neil Gross, "The New Sociology of Ideas," in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, ed. Judith R. Blau (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 236–49.

[21] Arnault Skornicki and Jérôme Tournadre, *La nouvelle histoire des idées politiques* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015); Chloé Gaboriaux and Arnault Skornicki, eds., *Vers une histoire sociale des idées politiques* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2017).

[22] Quentin Skinner, "Interpretation and the Understanding of Speech Acts," in *Visions of Politics: Volume 1; Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 116.

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and "intellectual frameworks" that form the discursive environment in which ideas occur.[23]

A key aspect of this method is to understand what authors were "doing in writing" by retrieving the intention and performative meaning of their discourse. This approach led me to look at the Soviet genesis of the ideas upheld by contemporary Russian hawks, whose lives and professional careers spread over the 1991 change in regime. Their ideology is based on a thread of ideas that has not been systematically theorized through a core set of works but is rather spread across a series of documents including newspaper articles, political manifestos, blog articles, doctrines, and essays. Most of these sources belong to the specifically Russian discursive genre of *publicistika*, which roughly translates as sociopolitical journalism. A central part of the analysis of these texts, therefore, includes the reconstitution of the broader discursive context composed by the articles and authors to which they referred and reacted.

Unlike the Cambridge School's essentially semantic definition of discursive contexts, however, I follow up on the sociological turn in the study of ideas that has also brought to the fore the social processes that shape the production and circulation of ideas. Based on the concept of field developed by Pierre Bourdieu, this sociology of ideas locates discourses within a social space of idea production, structured by specific rules and by the power relations between the groups that compete with each other for the distribution of the field's capital.[24] As Camic and Gross put it, idea producers are engaged in "historically specific struggles with one another" to establish their "legitimacy and respectability."[25]

In this respect, by contrast with studies based on a fixed definition of Russian conservatism as a stream of ideas maintained unchanged throughout history, I focus on the specific trend of Russian modernist conservatism as the doctrinal language of a group whose theoretical definition and relation toward other groups are evolving and contested.

[23] Quentin Skinner, "Introduction: Seeing Things Their Way," in *Visions of Politics: Volume 1; Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4–5.

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur," *Les temps modernes* 246 (1966): 865–906; Pierre Bourdieu, "Le fonctionnement du champ intellectuel," *Regards Sociologiques* 17/18 (1999): 5–27.

[25] Camic and Gross, "New Sociology of Ideas," 248.

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First, Russian modernist conservatism operates in the intellectual field of idea production in confrontation with other groups carrying rival worldviews, such as antimodern conservatism or liberalism. In this regard, in addition to the analysis of their concepts and ideas, I identify the evolving position of the hawks within the intellectual field, which I determine from attributes such as their generation, education, professional trajectory, institutional memberships, and places of publication. Second, as an action-oriented program aimed at becoming a state ideology, Russian modernist conservatism plays in the political space of competition for influence over policy choices, in interaction with other concurrent groups.

1.4 Modernist Conservatism: An Illiberal Ideology of Modernity Formed across the 1991 Regime Change

Instead of the standard historiographical distinction between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, I highlight the need to comprehend Russian modernist conservatism as addressing an argumentative context spanning from the 1960s until today. As I argue, this timeline corresponds to the unfolding of a convergence horizon between Russia and the West, against which Russian modernist conservatism reacted by designing an alternative to Russia's engagement on a shared path with Western modernity.

Early sociological theories of modernity, as found in the work of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx, defined modernity as a historically and geographically situated phenomenon that arose in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. As Shmuel Eisenstadt has highlighted, these "original" theories characterized modernity as having two major dimensions.[26] The structural, or organizational, dimension refers to changes such as urbanization, industrialization, spread of education and literacy, demographic revolution, increased scale of communication, development of science and technology, and the differentiation of the social structure into distinct sectors of activity. The institutional dimension refers to the development of a new political community, the nation-state, of new capitalist political

[26] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities in an Age of Globalization," *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers Canadiens de sociologie* 24, no. 2 (1999): 284.

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economies, and of a new cultural program based on secularization, rationalization, and individualization.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Western modernization theorists such as Talcott Parsons, Daniel Bell, and Alex Inkeles singled out the structural aspects of the Soviet system to argue that it shared certain features with modern industrial societies.[27] They emphasized tendencies such as the growth of scientific knowledge and technical expertise associated with claims to intellectual autonomy, the professionalization of the Soviet economy, and the role of the occupational structure, social class, and upward mobility as central factors in Soviet life. Moreover, on their visits to Moscow in the 1960s, Robert Merton, Parsons, and George Fischer acknowledged the emergence of a new Soviet sociology, whose empirical turn and efforts to import structural functionalism departed from orthodox Marxist–Leninist ideological frameworks. As Parsons put it, the growing autonomy of Soviet sociology and economic rationality was evidence of the "secularization" of Soviet social sciences and its separation from ideology.[28] In contrast to the view of the Soviet Union as a totalitarian exceptionalism, American sociologists contended that the requirements of economic and industrial growth would lead to the "end of ideology" and the eventual convergence of the Soviet system with the institutional aspects of Western societies.[29]

Similar reflections were developed inside the Soviet bloc. An intense dialogue took place across the Iron Curtain between postwar Western and Soviet social sciences on the issue of modernization.[30] Scholars have increasingly used the label "late socialism" to refer to the period that followed Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956.[31] The liberalizing effects of

[27] David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), 180–205.
[28] Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, 197.
[29] Daniel Bell, "The 'End of Ideology' in the USSR?" in *Marxist Ideology in the Contemporary World: Its Appeals and Paradoxes*, ed. Milorad Drachkovich (Stanford: F. A. Praeger Pall Mall Press, 1966).
[30] Isabelle Gouarné and Olessia Kirtchik, "La 'modernité' des sciences sociales soviétiques," *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 40 (2022): 5.
[31] See "Chapter 1: Late Socialism; An Eternal State," in *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation, ed.* Alexei Yurchak (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1–35; Neringa Klumbyte and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "Introduction: What Was Late

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this speech brought considerable changes from the early Soviet period and led to growing correspondences between Soviet society and some of the sociocultural features of Western modernity such as intellectual liberalization and pluralization, the professionalization of the social sciences, and the individualization of lifestyles.

First, Khrushchev's Thaw was accompanied by the liberalization and pluralization of Soviet intellectual life. Phenomena such as the loosening of party control over scientific production and the mass circulation of "thick journals" (*tolstye zhurnaly*), used as forums for sociopolitical arguments, fostered the opening up of posttotalitarian enclaves of public debate.[32] Soviet intellectuals gained steady, although controlled, access to non-Marxist intellectual references, such as Western authors and the prerevolutionary Russian philosophical heritage.[33] The discovery of these alternative sources inspired the emergence of the dissident movement of defenders of rights (*pravozashchitniki* or *zakonniki*) as well as various types of "other-thinking" (*inakomyslie*) that revisited the Marxist–Leninist creed. While they still abided by Marxism–Leninism as the official reference, these nonconformist worldviews sought to combine it with other forms of thought.[34]

Relatedly, the de-Stalinization program enhanced another sociocultural feature associated with modernity, that is, the professionalization of scientific discourse. Remarkable progress was made to separate

Socialism?" in *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964–1985*, ed. Neringa Klumbyte and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Lexington Books, 2012), 6–18.

[32] Paul R. Josephson, "Soviet Scientists and the State: Politics, Ideology, and Fundamental Research from Stalin to Gorbachev," *Social Research* 59, no. 3 (1992): 590; Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991*, Russian Research Center Studies 91 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 31.

[33] Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 135; Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*.

[34] Janina Markiewicz-Lagneau, "La fin de l'intelligentsia? Formation et transformation de l'intelligentsia soviétique," *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 7, no. 4 (1976): 7–71. See also Mikhail Epstein's two volumes on Marxist revisionism and non-Marxist thought in the late Soviet period: Mikhail Epstein, *The Phoenix of Philosophy: Russian Thought of the Late Soviet Period (1953–1991)* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Mikhail Epstein, *Ideas against Ideocracy: Non-Marxist Thought of the Late Soviet Period (1953–1991)* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

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scientific expertise from ideological and political considerations.[35] Moreover, the authorities' new perception of social sciences as a resource for policymaking increasingly challenged the grip of ideology over political decisions.[36]

Finally, modernity in its sociocultural aspects also reached Soviet society more broadly through the progressive individualization and Westernization of lifestyles and behaviors. Scholars have emphasized the impact of major programs such as Khrushchev's new housing policy – which involved mass individual housing construction – and the development of an automobile industry on the spread of individualistic values such as consumerism, personal well-being, and worker welfare.[37] In addition, Khrushchev's doctrine of "peaceful coexistence" with the West resulted in the transition of Soviet society to controlled interaction with Western values in various sectors and social milieus. Western modern art and culture, for instance, were on display in Moscow during the Picasso exhibition in 1956 and the American jazz music concerts held at the 1957 World Youth Festival.[38]

The development of these aspects of modernity in the late Soviet Union, however, was an ambivalent process that brought contradictions to the Marxist–Leninist foundations of the Soviet political system. The Soviet authorities' commitment to reform was characterized by a nonlinear chronology, partial consistency, and limited

[35] Olessia Kirtchik and Mariana Heredia, "Social and Behavioral Sciences under Dictatorship," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)*, ed. James D. Wright (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 141; Martine Mespoulet, "La 'renaissance' de la sociologie en URSS (1958–1972): Une voie étroite entre matérialisme historique et 'recherches sociologiques concrètes,'" *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 16, no. 1 (2007): 57–86.

[36] Kirtchik and Heredia, "Social and Behavioral Sciences under Dictatorship," 142.

[37] Christine Varga-Harris, "Forging Citizenship on the Home Front: Reviving the Socialist Contract and Constructing Soviet Identity during the Thaw," in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 101–16; Susan E. Reid, "Khrushchev Modern," *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, no. 1–2 (2006): 227–68; Nordica Nettleton, "Driving towards Communist Consumerism," *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, no. 1–2 (2006): 131–51.

[38] Eleonory Gilburd, "Picasso in Thaw Culture," *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, no. 1–2 (2006); Pia Koivunen, "The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union," in *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (London: Routledge, 2009), 46–65.

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application to certain sectors.[39] Polly Jones particularly highlights the authorities' paradoxical, concurrent promotion of a new Soviet individual (*lichnost*) and their fear of "disengagement from collective pursuits."[40] Similar dilemmas attended the modernization of the social sciences, which stood on a narrow path between the liberalization of knowledge production and the repressive political control over its conformity with Marxist–Leninist dogmas.[41]

In contrast to the view of the Soviet system as a rigid and monolithic bloc, therefore, the late Soviet period was marked by conflicting dynamics: the dispersion of values shared with Western liberal modernity and the preservation of idiosyncratic features of the Soviet authoritarian order.[42] The dual nature of Soviet modernity reached a climax in the Brezhnev era. Indeed, while Leonid Brezhnev's coming to power in 1964 has commonly been associated with an authoritarian crackdown and stagnation, research has shown that the maturing of Soviet modernity in these three aspects – intellectual autonomy, scientific professionalization, and individualization – continued under Brezhnev's regime, along with repressive policies of state control and censorship seeking to maintain the status quo.[43]

This paradoxical situation led some Soviet intellectuals to call for ideological reform. Toward the end of the 1960s, the Czech philosopher Radovan Richta and his fellow social scientists from the Prague Academy of Sciences reassessed some of the key epistemological principles of Marxism–Leninism to adjust them to the postindustrial development of Soviet society. They advocated reform of the state ideology

[39] Polly Jones, "Introduction: The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization," in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006), 12.

[40] Jones, "Introduction: The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization," 9. See also Oleg Kharkhordin, "The Individual in Mature Soviet Society," in *The Collective and the Individual in Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 329–54.

[41] Mespoulet, "La 'renaissance' de la sociologie en URSS (1958–1972);" Gouarné and Kirtchik, "La 'modernité' des sciences sociales soviétiques."

[42] For an instance of the view of the Soviet system as a monolithic ideocracy, see Graeme Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

[43] Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Dina Fainberg and Artemy Kalinovsky, eds., *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

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to account for the changed conditions of the Soviet socioeconomic order, where the new role of the scientific intelligentsia as the key growth factor seriously challenged the Marxist class structure based on proletarian forces.[44] In particular, instead of the Marxist causal-material linear philosophy of history, they admitted a "potentially open-ended horizon of change."[45] As Jenny Andersson has noted, the discourse of the Richta group bore a certain similarity to Daniel Bell's writings on the postindustrial convergence of societies, which cited Richta extensively.[46]

These calls for ideological reforms, which resulted in the Prague Spring of 1968, were eventually crushed by the regime. However, debate over the definition and directions of Soviet modernization continued throughout the 1970s in a discursive space formed in between dissident thought and official state ideology, where Soviet intellectual elites could contribute nonconformist thinking to public sociopolitical debates while remaining established thinkers in the existing system.[47] Under these conditions, the conception of Soviet modernity as engaged on a developmental path shared with the West and leading to the two systems' ultimate convergence remained influential among reformist intellectual and political elites.[48]

It was precisely to react against this view that other Soviet intellectuals coined an alternative vision of modernity. By contrast with the convergence approach, which linked the technological modernization

[44] The volume edited by Radovan Richta, *Civilization at the Crossroads: Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution*, was published in Czech in 1966, in French in 1967, and in English in 1969. See Jenny Andersson, "Bridging the Iron Curtain: Futurology as Dissidence and Control," in *The Future of the World: Futurology, Futurists, and the Struggle for the Post-Cold War Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 123.

[45] Andersson, "Bridging the Iron Curtain," 128–29.

[46] Andersson, "Bridging the Iron Curtain," 134–35.

[47] Mark Sandle, "A Triumph of Ideological Hairdressing? Intellectual Life in the Brezhnev Era Reconsidered," in Bacon and Sandle, *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, 144; Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More*, 25.

[48] Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, *The Power of Systems: How Policy Sciences Opened Up the Cold War World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Sergei I. Zhuk, "'Academic Détente': IREX Files, Academic Reports, and 'American' Adventures of Soviet Americanists during the Brezhnev Era," *Cahiers du monde russe* 54, no. 1–2 (2013): 297–328; Sari Autio-Sarasmo, "Stagnation or Not? The Brezhnev Leadership and East–West Interaction," in Fainberg and Kalinovsky, *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era*, 87–104.

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of the Soviet state with its ultimate liberalization and was used by reformist Soviet elites to justify dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and cooperation with the West, they aimed to maintain the Soviet Union in confrontation with the West. They sought to "reenchant" Soviet modernity with non-Marxist conservative and nationalistic ideological sources preserving the specificity of Russia's path. In doing, they connected elements of paradigms formerly held as incompatible, including Soviet technoscientific modernity, religious Russophile conservatism, and Stalinian state patriotism. The construction of this distinctive configuration of concepts was the birth act of Russian modernist conservatism as an ideological language.[49]

Outside the Soviet and Russian cultural areas, similar types of ideological languages also emerged around the same period to frame an alternative to Western modernity. In China and Turkey, for instance, political leaders and intellectuals have coined a comparable model of strong state power resting on a blend of traditional conservative and spiritual values with economic and technological developmental goals.

Post-Mao Chinese society, indeed, also faced a new phase of modernity following rural decollectivization and the development of a freer labor market in the late 1970s.[50] In the 1980s, Chinese society experimented with what Anne-Marie Brady calls an "age of enlightenment," marked by intense intellectual polarization over the "westernization" of the Chinese path.[51] The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sought to "Sinicize Marxism" by combining Confucianism and communism in its efforts to design an alternative to the American doctrine of "peaceful evolution," according to which exposure to Western ideas and lifestyles would lead communist systems to merge with the dominant Western model of modernity.[52] Moreover, as Lawrence Sullivan argues, following the crackdown of the proreform faction in the CCP in 1989, Chinese leaders further embraced a conservative ideology

[49] My identification of Russian modernist conservatism as a new form of ideology is based on Michael Freeden's definition, according to which ideologies are forms of political thinking built around "distinctive configurations of concepts." Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 4.

[50] Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 66.

[51] Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship*, 60.

[52] Anne-Marie Brady, ed., *China's Thought Management*, Routledge Studies on China in Transition 40 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 58–70.

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similar to "reactionary modernism," combining an illiberal political model with modern technology.[53]

In Turkey, a comparable ideological hybrid, the "Turkish–Islamic Synthesis," was formed in the 1970s by a right-wing intellectual society, the "Intellectuals' Hearth," to address the intellectual and social developments of modernity. The synthesis was meant as a counterreaction to the radical left-wing protest movements that had occurred in France in 1968 and were paralleled in Turkey.[54] It sought to overcome divides between secular nationalism and Islamism to unify the diverse right-wing forces against communism and the Westernization assumed by Kemalism. Since the military coup of September 1980, Zeynep Bursa-Millet shows, this eclectic synthesis has been used as the official ideology of the state and has inspired a series of education and economic reforms.[55]

Conservative reconsiderations of modernity also arose in Western contexts in the 1970s, following the postwar acceleration of individualization, technological progress, and globalization. Western societies' experience of growing sociocultural polarization, economic crises, and ecological risks triggered value uncertainty over some of the founding ideals of modernity such as the nation-state, rational progress, and growth. Sociologists have identified this period as a second phase of modernity, or late modernity, where modernity starts to question its own premises.[56] In the words of Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, "late modernity" is characterized by its "self-reflexivity," that is, its capacity to "take itself as object of reflection."[57] This

[53] Lawrence R. Sullivan, "Reactionary Modernism in China: Cultural Conservatism and Technical Economism in Communist Ideology and Policy Since June 1989," in *The Aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Crisis for Mainland China*, ed. Bih-jaw Lin (Routledge, 1993), 15–38.

[54] Zeynep Bursa-Millet, "Le foyer des intellectuels: Sociohistoire d'un club d'influence de droite dans la Turquie du XXe siècle" (PhD diss., Paris, Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2020), 19.

[55] Bursa-Millet, "Le foyer des intellectuels," 18.

[56] Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[57] Scott Lash, "Reflexivity and Its Doubles: Structures, Aesthetics, Community," in Beck, Giddens and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, 112; Ulrich Beck, Wolfgang Bonss and Christoph Lau, "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization: Problematic, Hypotheses and Research Programme," *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 2 (2003): 6.

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problematization of modernity has fed the resurgence of new conservative movements, such as the German Deutsche Volksunion, founded in 1971, the French Front National, founded in 1972, and the American "Moral Majority," created in 1979. These radical right movements were not characterized by a rejection of modernity in its entirety but rather selectively opposed the sociocultural changes brought about by the second phase of modernity.[58] An important body of literature has covered the rising popularity of these antiliberal or illiberal political movements in Europe and the United States over the past fifty years.[59]

The study of Russian modernist conservatism, therefore, opens ways to cross-cultural comparisons of illiberal ideologies of modernity that seek to frame an alternative path to postindustrial modernity emancipated from the sociocultural dimensions of the Western liberal model. In this respect, this ideology falls within the framework of "multiple modernities" developed by Eisenstadt to account for the multiplication, from around the 1960s, of understandings of modernity that have challenged the formerly homogenic vision of modernity as a Western-centered concept.[60] Eisenstadt identifies "communist Soviet" and "fascist/national-socialist" systems as the "first distinct, ideological, 'alternative' modernities."[61] Johann Arnason further theorizes the Soviet project as a "practical alternative to the existing Western version of modernity" that sought to "improve on shared ideas of modernity," such as a growth-oriented economy, modern state-building and scientific progress, albeit through its own distinctive patterns.[62] Proponents of the multiple modernities framework, however, argue that Soviet modernity eventually failed as an alternative to Western modernity. Arnason states that Soviet modernity turned into a "defunct model," a "distinctive but ultimately self-destructive version of modernity, rather

[58] Michael Minkenberg, "The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-modernity," *Government and Opposition* 35, no. 2 (April 2000): 177.

[59] For a selection of the most recent publications, see Theda Skocpol, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt against Liberal Democracy* (London: Pelican, 2018); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[60] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 24.

[61] Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," 11.

[62] Johann P. Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 70–71.

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than a sustained deviation from the modernizing mainstream."[63] Likewise, Michael David-Fox writes that Soviet communism was "a failed modernity" in that it was "not able to resolve its deepest problems and perpetuate itself during its seven-decade life cycle, and it ultimately vanished as an alternative."[64]

In contrast with this historiography of Soviet modernity, which reads it backward from 1991 as a failed and self-destructive project, I analyze the phenomenon of Russian modernist conservatism as an ideological attempt to frame an alternative to Western modernity, whose mix of elements of Soviet modernity with conservative ideological resources remained active and influential as a political language across the change in regime. Russian modernist conservatism's recombination of Soviet technological modernity with traditional conservative values was maintained and consolidated after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This book suggests a method of inquiry into the production and circulation of modernist conservatism, which could be used beyond the Russian case study to reflect on other contexts where alternative conservative ideologies of modernity have risen to contest liberal standards.

1.5 From Ideological Fringes to Policy Prominence: Tracking the Career of an Idea Network in an Authoritarian Context

Russian modernist conservatism has grown in response to a growingly pressing political and geopolitical issue faced by the Soviet and then Russian regime – the horizon of convergence through postindustrial modernization – with the aim of becoming a state ideology that must guide the leaders' choices. The relation of Russian hawks to the state, therefore, has not merely been discursive; it has also been socially worked up by actions through which they have sought to play a part in setting policy agendas, inserting norms and concepts in official discourse, and legitimizing political decisions.

[63] Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," 61; See also Richard Sakwa, "Modernisation, Neo-modernisation, and Comparative Democratisation in Russia," *East European Politics* 28, no. 1 (2012): 49.

[64] Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 9.

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Despite the centralized and patrimonial character of the regime that has unfolded in post-Soviet Russia, scholars have emphasized the persistence of a moderately pluralist, policy-consequential competition between elite groups. They have described Russia as a "network state" to highlight the reliance of the regime on various informal elite networks whose interaction contributes to the country's governance by organizing the distribution of resources through a system of coercion and reward.[65] These models of Russia as a network state, however, exclude intellectuals from any role by focusing exclusively on the political and economic pursuits of elite groups such as oligarchs, party bosses, and government officials. Furthermore, Henry Hale's influential study on post-Soviet patronal politics posits elite networks as displacing ideology, by drawing individuals away from collectivities bound by abstract principles and into collectivities based on personalized exchange of material gains.[66] Instead, my analysis of the formation of the Russian hawks puts forward the concept of "idea network" to highlight that ideology is a key dimension, alongside material factors, that determines the construction of elite networks.

In this attempt, I follow in the footsteps of authors who have restored the significance of ideology as a form of symbolic language constitutive of social life. This approach seeks to reach a balance between idealism, which views ideas as pure value commitment to norms, and structuralism, which understands ideas as instruments concealing material interests. By contrast, authors such as Karl Mannheim have defined ideology as a collective practice that is dependent on group existence and is rooted in action. As Mannheim explains, ideology is a collection of shared meanings and evaluative interpretations that contains a "crystallization of the experiences of a certain group" and defines membership in this group.[67] More recently, Michael Freeden has linked the study of ideological recombination with the processes of

[65] Vadim Kononenko and Arkadii Moshes, *Russia as a Network State: What Works in Russia When State Institutions Do Not?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Alena V. Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernise?: Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Henry E. Hale, *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective*, Problems of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[66] Hale, *Patronal Politics*, 9–10.

[67] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (Mansfield Center, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015), 19.

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mutation of groups from which ideologies emerge.[68] This perspective stresses the relational aspect of ideology as a variety of group language that has a meaning in relation to the ideology of other groups.

Likewise, I understand modernist conservatism as the collective language that has provided symbolic representation to the Russian hawks by organizing their common reaction to late modern developments. Starting in the late Soviet Union, modernist conservatism provided a rallying "magnet" sealing a common group identity for various intellectual and political elites opposing convergence with the West.[69] The unity of the coalition was formed as much on a set of common reactions and experiences as on a common pledge to gain hegemony over other elite groups. Despite the eclecticism of this coalition, the consolidation of modernist conservatism as their common language performatively forged their sense of group belonging and carried it through the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only did Russian hawks sustain and expand as a social group across two generations in post-Soviet Russia but they also managed to reach new constituencies among intellectual, political, and cultural elite groups.

Ideology, therefore, plays a structuring role in the Russian political system, since it defines and substantiates the identity and contours of elite groups whose interaction, administered under the authoritarian control of the executive power, shapes the power system organizing the distribution of resources.[70]

This approach addresses an important debate in political science regarding how to assess the influence of ideas over policy decisions. In the Russian case, some scholars assume that the regime's policy decisions are rooted in ideological considerations. They use discourse analyses to demonstrate the political leaders' progressive endorsement of an increasingly assertive conservative state ideology.[71] Others, by

[68] Michael Freeden, "Confronting the Chimera of a 'Post-Ideological' Age," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (June 2005): 257.

[69] On ideas as "magnets," see Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox, "Ideas as Coalition Magnets: Coalition Building, Policy Entrepreneurs, and Power Relations," *Journal of European Public Policy* 23, no. 3 (2016): 428–45.

[70] I thank Aleksandr Lutsenko for helping me formulate this argument.

[71] See, for instance, Aleksei Chadaev, *Putin. Ego ideologiia* (Moscow: Evropa, 2006) and Maria Engström, "Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy," *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 3 (2014): 356–79.

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contrast, expose the regime's lack of genuine adhesion to ideological values and principles. They have pointed to the Kremlin's mere instrumental and cynical use of ideology as a cover, hiding pragmatic goals such as legitimizing a ruling circle holding onto power and attracting international support for Russia among conservative political audiences.[72]

Instead, I demonstrate that the rise of the Russian hawks' ideas to policy prominence was the result of the reconfiguration of the Soviet and then Russian elite networks, which ensued from conflicts and negotiations taking place over the past sixty years across intellectual and political milieus. I therefore depart from strictly realist approaches that only consider material interests and capabilities as explanatory variables affecting policy decisions. Further, I also highlight what culturalist approaches may not be so good at seeing – the interactional and competitive process through which idea producers seek policy influence.

Contrary to the view that pits the Soviet state ideology against the post-Soviet ideological vacuum,[73] I show that, starting from the mid-1990s, the Russian regime has resumed Soviet practices of state sponsorship of ideology production. However, unlike in Soviet times, the post-Soviet regime does not rely on an institutionalized ideological apparatus but rather on transactional relations with idea networks across intellectual and political elites.

By focusing on the public career of the Russian hawks, I highlight the sociohistorical processes through which they have evolved from the fringes to an hegemonic position able to contribute to the

[72] See, for instance, Marlène Laruelle, 'Conservatism as the Kremlin's New Toolkit: An Ideology at the Lowest Cost,' *Russian Analytical Digest* 138 (2013): 2–4; Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir* (London: Routledge, 2017) and Mark Galeotti, *We Need to Talk about Putin: Why the West Gets Him Wrong, and How to Get Him Right* (London: Ebury Publishing, 2019).

[73] For works carrying on this view, see Artemy Magun, *Negative Revolution: Modern Political Subject and Its Fate after the Cold War* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Serguei Oushakine, "In the State of Post-Soviet Aphasia: Symbolic Development in Contemporary Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 6 (2000): 1003; Stephen Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Graeme Gill, *Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 11, 212.

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justification of major policy choices in contemporary Russia.[74] Their rise resulted from the strategy of cultural influence that they deployed to gain recognition and legitimacy in the public space by investing a set of relational, discursive, and institutional resources. On the other hand, their ascension was fostered by their top-down cooptation by decision-makers seeking legitimizing and mobilizing resources for the regime's distinction from Western liberalism. Analysis of their public career shows that they have been increasingly able, starting from the 2000s, to compete against more liberal groups for access to state-sponsored resources such as media visibility, honorific status recognition and financial support. The creation of the Izborskii Klub in 2012 provided official institutional shape to the Russian hawks as an idea network across various elite groups. The regime, however, has remained committed to the maintenance of a competitive environment for ideology production, where the Izborskii Klub has coexisted with liberal-inclined elite networks.

Beyond the Russian context, this research contributes a study of the transformation of the use of ideology in contemporary authoritarian regimes. As authors have highlighted in the Chinese and Iranian contexts, I show that, instead of fixing a single state ideology, authoritarian leaders maintain ideological polarization within elite groups and selectively coopt them to ensure a degree of policy flexibility and sustain themselves in changing strategic environments.[75]

1.6 Structure of the Book

Chapter 2 demonstrates that Russian hawks first theorized modernist conservatism in the late Soviet Union as an attempt to confront the convergence horizon predicted by Western liberal modernization

[74] Although I use a relational approach to analyze the evolution of the position of the Russian hawks relative to that of other groups, my focus on the particularities of the hawks' career limits the scope of my research to one ideological group in a broader environment of ideology production. A more comprehensive understanding of that environment would require similar in-depth investigations into the socio-intellectual career of the Russian hawks' alternatives.

[75] See, for instance, Wendy Ramadan-Alban and Thierry Balzacq, "Pivotal Powers: Iran," in *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework and Cases*, ed. Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) and Zhu Xufeng, "The Influence of Think Tanks in the Chinese Policy Process: Different Ways and Mechanisms," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 2 (2009): 333–57.

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theories. They aimed to reenchant Soviet modernity through the decontestation of the relationship between technological modernity and spirituality. As they view it, this new ideological language should serve to reinvigorate the Soviet state ideology and maintain it as an alternative to the Western model of modernity. The chapter shows that, in contrast to the description of the Soviet state ideology as a rigid monolith, modernist conservatism's ideas were selectively dispersed in official sites of ideology production such as the Komsomol.

Chapter 3 argues that, starting from 1985, the Russian hawks consolidated as an idea network built around their common opposition to *perestroika*. Modernist conservatism served as the ideological magnet of this eclectic group aggregating national-conservative intellectuals with pro–status quo members of the Soviet political and military establishment. The newspapers *Den* (1990–93) and *Zavtra* (1993–) became the intellectual and social fabrics of the group's identity and cohesion, which were maintained across the 1991 regime change. The chapter demonstrates that some of the hawks' ideas spread in the ruling elites' discourse as early as in the mid-1990s to legitimate the authoritarian nature of the turn to a superpresidential system and to foster the construction of post-Soviet state patriotism.

Chapter 4 shows how the Russian hawks' ideas moved from the fringes to the center of the public scene in the early 2000s. It investigates the 2001–2002 controversy that surrounded the publication of a novel written by one of the most radical conservative ideologues, Aleksandr Prokhanov. It demonstrates that the controversy reconfigured the formerly consensual distinction between legitimate and transgressive public discourse. It explains that the intellectual legitimation of Prokhanov thrived on Russia's political and intellectual elites' backlash against the legacy of the 1990s and the standards of Western liberalism. The controversy eventually contributed to normalizing modernist conservatism, which gained a new audience among the younger generation of intellectuals.

Chapter 5 demonstrates that in the years 2000–2005 a new generation of Russian hawks born around the 1970s, the "Young Conservatives," acquired a reputation as professional media intellectuals and developed a new type of collective ideological entrepreneurship. They naturalized modernist conservatism's eclectic blend of concepts into a full-fledged ideology, "dynamic conservatism." Moreover, they established themselves as a legitimate stratum of Russia's intellectual elites contributing public policy recommendations.

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Chapter 6 shows that Russian hawks entered the regime's market for ideology in the years 2005–12. Transactional relations were established between modernist conservatives and the ruling party, whereby the former's ideological discourse was sponsored as a strategic resource for the regime's legitimation against oppositional forces and for its distinction against the Western model of liberal democracy. In 2012, the creation of the Izborskii Klub provided institutional form to this interelite network aimed at gaining policy influence over more liberal-inclined elite networks.

Chapter 7 finds that, from 2012 to 2022, the Izborskii Klub evolved from a state-sponsored think tank, whose ideas were used as legitimizing sources for the regime's policy decisions, to a private lobby group competing for hegemony over the definition of Russia's grand strategy. The alternative state promotion and demotion of the club demonstrates the executive power's limited and contextual endorsement of ideological narratives and its principled commitment to maintaining a certain degree of pluralism and policy flexibility through the attribution of shifting power weights to different elite blocs.

Chapter 8 discusses how the Russian regime's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 concretely enacted Russian hawks' conception of Russia as an imperial great power that should rely on its technological and military might to assert its civilizational distinction from the West. This chapter argues that the Russian regime has restored elements reminiscent of the Soviet-style "vertical," facilitating the propagation of norms and principles through a bureaucratic chain of command. However, the regime has not completely reconstructed a cohesive institutionalized state apparatus. Its doctrinal framework remains adaptable. In addition to official state-led initiatives, the regime continues to oversee ideology formation through interactions and transactions with a variety of nonstate ideological entrepreneurs. This involvement of diverse actors across state and nonstate realms fostered maintains a certain degree of polarization within policy circles. Moreover, the hawks' production of narratives justifying Russia's imperialism and war violence has encountered resistance from recent intellectual emigrants who have established organizations in exile dedicated to fostering critical thinking and dissent within intellectual circles.

In conclusion, Chapter 9 highlights that the book has shown that the Russian regime, from the mid-1990s onward, has revived Soviet practices of sponsorship of ideology production. Instead of the Soviet

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institutionalization of an ideological apparatus, however, the current regime has outsourced it to clubs and think tanks outside the administration or party institutions. This challenges the common narrative that identifies a distinct conservative turning point in the Russian regime from 2012 onward. Instead, the book argues that this shift should be viewed within a broader and more gradual evolution of the relationship between decision-makers and "ideas networks." The second implication is that regime support for ideology production aimed not at consolidating a unique state ideology but at cultivating and authoritatively controlling a certain degree of ideological pluralism. While an ideological core consolidated over the years in official discourse around key concepts such as strong state power and the multipolarity of the world order, additional ideological content remained fluid. This practice of "managed ideological pluralism" through the promotion or demotion of different idea networks maintained a range of lines and narratives available to justify various policy courses.

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