

A STUDY OF THE CIVILISATIONAL ASPECTS OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN CONTEMPORARY
UKRAINE

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to an in-depth understanding of the concept of soft power, which according to Joseph Nye indicates the ability to achieve foreign policy goals through cultural attraction. For the purposes of this study of Russian cultural influence in Ukraine, soft power is rearticulated to highlight the ability to engage in mean-making and cultural-ideational leadership on the international stage.

A critique of Nye justifies a reframing of soft power, which is supplied by drawing on the analytical power of post-Marxist hegemony and discourse theory. The methodology through which this concept is operationalised empirically emphasises outcomes over inputs, thus appraisals of soft power must account for whether the discourses promoted by mean-making initiatives resonate favourably with target audiences. Desk-based and field research supports an argument that Moscow acknowledges the need for soft power, understood here in terms of 'sovereignty of spirit'. This civilisational approach is explored further, and the target narratives advanced by significant proponents of the discourse, namely the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Russian Orthodox Church and foreign policy officials, are identified. Insights into the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to promote spiritually-infused discourses are provided, and new developments observed. Finally, the extent of Russian 'civilisational' soft power is estimated through surveys and focus groups gauging audience reception to the ideational narratives promoted.

This thesis is dedicated to my nieces, Chloë Elizabeth Hudson (b. April 2008) and Sophie Jayne Hudson (b. May 2009), who grew with the thesis and always put a smile on my face. In the hope that they will continue to enjoy learning and develop a true love of knowledge

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Abbreviations

DECR Department of External Church Relations [of the Russian Orthodox Church]

DRAFLEA Department for Relations with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Ukraine [of the Russian Orthodox Church]

EU European Union

FSU Former Soviet Union

ONU Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists [*Organizatsiia Ukrainykh Natsionalistiv*]

RF Russian Federation

ROC Russian Orthodox Church

ROCOR Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

UAOC Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church

UGCC Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

UOC(KP) Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate)

UOC(MP) Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

UPA Ukrainian Insurgent Army [*Ukrainska Povstanska Armiiia*]

UkSSR Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background and Overview

This study takes an in-depth look at Russian soft power, that is, the influence that stems from an 'attractive' culture. It starts from the assumption that Russia is attempting to embrace soft power means of conducting its foreign policy, that is, developing the capacity to employ co-optive means of achieving foreign policy goals, rather than relying on the more direct leverage with which it has been associated. To explore how far Russia is mobilising its capacity for soft power, this study focuses on the case of Russia's use of soft power in relation to neighbouring Ukraine. This country has in recent years been on the receiving end of Russia's 'hard power' capabilities, particularly in the energy sector, and so it is an excellent case for analysing how far Russia has effectively shifted to softer mechanisms.

Publishing in 1990, Joseph S. Nye responds to the pessimistic 'declinist' outlooks on America's role in the world prevalent at the time (e.g. Kennedy 1987) with the argument that although America's 'hard power' relative advantage may be declining, the country retained its hegemonic place in the global system since it is *American* culture that is shaping the aspirations of millions of people across the globe. Although inadequately acknowledged by those framing power in traditional, limited, statist terms, this claim offers the United States the possibility to exercise global leadership and shape the international system to perpetuate that status. Nye named this ability to co-opt others to go along with policies that reflect your interests and values on the basis of cultural attraction in international politics 'soft power'. In Nye's words, 'soft power is the ability to attract and attraction often leads to acquiescence' (2004: 5-6). This co-optive power is

counterposed to 'hard' forms of 'command power,' such as those generally stemming from military and economic resources (Nye 1990: 32).

However, while Nye's definition of soft power might arguably be suited to examining the *demonstrable effects* of America's cultural attraction, it is less helpful for an analysis of Russian soft power. Indeed, although the fact that Russia's initiatives to renew its soft power capacity are still on-going makes it a fascinating case study, it means that in order to capture these developments for analysis, a concept of soft power that casts light on the ways in which *attraction is constructed* is required.

Consequently, for the purposes of this study, the following, re-articulated working definition will be used, in which soft power is understood as: the ability of a sovereign polity to be perceived as attractive and to set the agenda for foreign citizens in support of its foreign policy goals.

1.2. Research Questions

The aim of this thesis has been a desire to probe deeper into the anecdotal evidence about Russian soft power in Ukraine, which seemed contradictory. On one hand, one heard of significant attraction among the culturally-close, Russian speaking, still somewhat 'sovietised' population of Ukraine. On the other hand, the word was of Kyiv leading the country whole-heartedly towards the West, seeking to integrate in its institutions and turn away from Russia (Reid 1997; Pachlovska 2009; Kononov 2011). Further, surveys on political issues suggest a population divided along a historical, linguistic, cultural and economic East-West axis.

Thus this study has sought to explore these cleavages in more detail and bring a more nuanced understanding to the debate through the following main research question: To what extent *does Russia have soft power in contemporary Ukraine?*

Since Ukraine has a large and diverse population, the focus was narrowed to one particular demographic, namely among higher education students. Nevertheless, prior to approaching an answer to this question, it was necessary to respond to several sub-questions. Firstly, how is soft power understood in the Russian context? This is important because without knowing what Moscow is seeking to achieve, one cannot identify the most appropriate object of analysis. Secondly, since soft power is seen to function through discourses of meaning, it is necessary to understand which discourses are being projected in the case study country. Thirdly, what means do Russia and its representatives have in Ukraine to disseminate these messages? Understanding the strength of the tools in Russia's soft power arsenal can help us to understand the success, or otherwise, of initiatives to cultivate soft power. Finally, and most importantly with a view to answering the main research question: how are Russian soft power discourses negotiated in Ukraine? Methods for the analysis of audience reception of the target discourse should indicate the extent to which the narratives projected by Russia are accepted as attractive and frame interpretations of the world in Ukraine.

1.3. Contribution

This thesis essentially makes three key original contributions to academic knowledge. The first is theoretical; an innovative reframing of the concept of soft power as coined by Joseph Nye (1990), which results in a working concept that might effectively be applied to explore other cases studies of polities seeking to exercise cultural influence beyond their

borders. Where Nye's concept successfully expresses American soft power as a more or less accomplished phenomenon whose attractive effects might be observed, analysis of Russia's nascent soft power – like that of other rising powers – requires a framework with theoretical tools capable of capturing the communicative process by which that attraction is constructed. Nye's essentialist concept is silent on this subject; seeing communication as a means of spreading the word about phenomena and ideas whose favourable reception is a reflection of their own apparently self-evident 'attractive' attributes. This thesis offers an original approach to soft power, integrating literature not yet applied to the study of soft power into an analysis of this International Relations (IR) concept; namely insights from Cultural Studies, discourse theory and post-structuralism. This facilitates an examination of the way in which attraction is constructed through culturally-specific narratives. This step is grounded in an exploration of existing literature and elaborated upon in the conceptual framework.

The second original contribution of this thesis follows on from the first and consists of a case study of the Russian approach to soft power. Previous studies of Moscow's soft power have tended to analyse Russia using a model based closely on Nye's, examining an eclectic mix of purported markers of attraction and proposed 'tools'. Instead, operationalising the concept developed above, a systematic examination of an aspect of Russian soft power work from start to finish is undertaken; from the vision, to the contours of the civilisational discourse, to a set of tools of their promotion in Ukraine, namely the outreach of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), to an analysis of their reception by an audience there. The empirical analysis presented explores the specific motivations for Moscow's attempt to embrace soft power in its *own* terms. The iterative process of interaction and development between the theoretical and empirical aspects of

the thesis has resulted in a working definition that emphasises cultural sovereignty: in the case study, Russian soft power is concerned with the cultural dimension of national security; 'sovereignty of spirit'. This understanding can give nuance to discussions of Russia's role in the world, and especially in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), which have tended to be funnelled into a narrow imperialist perspective. This study argues that Russian attempts to consolidate Ukraine's place in its 'sphere of influence' through traditional 'imperial' means are recognised to have been ineffective in the Kremlin. Consequently, a turn towards softer, networked means based on attraction and influence exercised through the construction of meaning, is underway. Chapters five and six approach an analysis of one of Moscow's approaches to soft power, and also the target narratives and the networked methods employed to disseminate them.

The third contribution is also represented by a case study, namely one in which the success of Russia soft power initiatives is evaluated in the target country of Ukraine. This element answers the main research question of this thesis, and accordingly debates the extent to which Russia has soft power – attraction and agenda-setting potential – in Ukraine, by operationalising the conceptual framework as outlined in chapter four. Accordingly, this sophisticated methodology examines a selected target audience's reception of Russian cultural, value-oriented and foreign policy narratives and grounds its conclusions in original quantitative and qualitative fieldwork findings. The resulting analysis helps facilitate a diversified understanding of how Russia is perceived in Ukraine. Rather than the East-West, Black-White picture suggested by some projects, this study contends that debates about Russia and the values it seeks to advance go on not only *between* individuals, but actually *within* individuals. Further, acknowledgement of the

attraction of Russian culture does not necessarily imply a positive disposition towards Russian foreign policy.

1.4. Motivation and Researcher Qualification

Drawing on critical notions of security, the genesis of this thesis was motivated by the desire to explore the interaction of identity and security encapsulated by the concept of soft power. Russia represents an under-researched and fascinating case study of a re-emerging power striving to secure itself by, among other means, re-articulating its identity, not only domestically but also on the international arena.

This study has been facilitated by the author's knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian languages, which made possible extensive use of Russian language sources and the processing of large volumes of primary empirical research data. The research was further aided by its author having spent the greater part of a year working in Nizhnevartovsk, Khanti-Mansiisk AO, which helped develop understanding of and openness to Russian culture before the research was formally initiated.

1.5. Synopsis

The second chapter, that is, the first substantive one, explores the existing conceptual literature on soft power. It sets the term soft power in historical context by examining its antecedents and attempts to provide clarity by differentiating the term conceptually from the ideas with which it is often used interchangeably. In-depth analysis of Nye's understanding of soft power locates the main problem in the way that, in essentialising the notion of attraction and thereby delimiting the nature of the attractive, Nye elides examination of the processes whereby certain phenomena, and not others, become

constructed as appealing. Wider power dynamics are deeply implicated in the processes of the social construction of value, in ways that are obscured from view by Nye's suggestion that certain phenomena are simply naturally and inherently more universal than others. The existing research on Russian soft power is also investigated.

Whereas Nye's notion of soft power focuses on the purported effects of manifestations of a state's attraction, the conceptual framework presented in the third chapter shifts the focus onto the way power may be underpinned and legitimated through the dissemination and perpetuation of interpretative discourses and how this may be achieved through processes of communication. The definition of soft power stated above articulates well with Aletta Norval's reading of Gramscian hegemony(2000), whereby the concept assumes a dual aspect, both as practices of cooperation rather than coercion, and as a substantive achievement marked by the ability to generate consent by exercising leadership in the ideational sphere. It is the latter aspect that is the particular concern of this thesis. Now, the notion of leadership presupposes followers; in the case of Russian soft power, this refers to those who would identify with the transborder civilisational project articulated. Consequently, the processes of cultural meaning-making on the international stage acquire a competitive dynamic. Further, it will be argued that Russia seeks to participate in this contestation of cultures; a point that will be elaborated on in the second half of the thesis. In order to facilitate this, a post-foundationalist ontology is posited. Accordingly, the notion of essential truth, such as the claim to the inherent attraction of the 'American Dream', is rejected in favour of acceptance of a rationale for belief framed by discourses of meaning. Accordingly, those with sufficient economic resources, and other 'hard' power required in the particular circumstances, may engage in large-scale communicative activities, thereby exercising a decisive influence over which

values, 'truths' and meanings come to be accepted as common-sense under particular circumstances and provide closure ('suture'), albeit contingent, to ultimately undecidable frames of meaning. However, soft power is not generated automatically as a direct effect of communication; rather the message must be favourably received by the audience, which entails their active negotiation of the discourses promoted. The extent to which an audience finds a discourse 'attractive' – that is, credible, sensible and morally proper – defines the extent to which the ideas and value represented are able to 'set the agenda' by providing the framework to interpret particular phenomena. On this basis, the extent that a state exercises civilisational leadership reflects its ability to draw the citizens of other states into a shared interpretative 'soft power' discourse. A shared worldview provides fertile ground for cooperation in other, 'harder' sectors, thereby facilitating the perpetuation of power of more traditional kinds.

The fourth chapter outlines the methodology and research design employed to operationalise the concept of soft power developed in the previous chapter, that is to say, it will articulate how this concept will be applied to answer the main research question: to what extent does Russia have soft power in Ukraine? Soft power is deemed to be present to the extent that the discourses promoted resonate among the target audience, i.e. the degree to which they evoke positive emotions, are accepted as common sense and become reproduced as the participants' own. In order to examine the extent that the ideas are thus favourably negotiated, surveys and focus groups were conducted among a segment of the Ukrainian population, namely higher education students in four cities across the country. The surveys provide a quantitative picture of the approval rating of Russia's narratives, while the focus groups offer more in-depth insights into how participants negotiated these ideas. This triangulated approach allowed comparison

between the selected cities, while also giving insight into the collective dynamics at play in the negotiation of meaning. Details of the interviews and desk-based research conducted to establish the foundations for this empirical research will also be given.

The understanding of soft power as articulated in the conceptual chapters of this thesis serves as a framework for the analysis of the empirical case study; Russia and its cultural influence in Ukraine. However, it is important to note that phenomena interpreted in terms of soft power by the narrative of this thesis is not necessarily applied to describe its manifestations in Russia by relevant in-country actors. Chapter five argues that there are five broad approaches to 'soft power' in Russia, and explores in depth the one corresponding most closely to the re-framed concept articulated above, namely that of soft power as the dissemination of a Russian civilisational discourse. Accordingly, Russia seeks to reinforce state power by renewing the cultural dimension; its 'sovereignty of spirit' or the ability to exercise cultural leadership or hegemony not only domestically but on the international stage. The participation of 'brotherly' Ukraine is particularly important for Russia's ability to live out its civilisational project, and therefore the identification of Ukrainians with ideational contours of this civilisational discourse are a determining factor in the realisation of this ambition. With attraction and agenda-setting deemed to be two sides of the same coin, in order to evaluate the salience of congruent views among a target population, one must first understand what notion of 'value' – positively weighted discursive elements shaping interpretation – is being promoted. This chapter explains the background to the discursive strands promoted by three significant bearers of the Russian soft power discourse; the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Moscow Patriarchate and Russian foreign policy speeches. In principle, these represent what Nye terms the cultural, values-based and foreign policy 'resources' of Russian soft power

respectively, although in practice they are not so much discrete packages as mutually reinforcing strands reflecting different aspects of a worldview, summed up as 'sovereign democracy'.

Chapter six zooms in on the role of the Orthodox Church as an agent advancing what is argued to be Russia's civilisational soft power discourse, with an emphasis on the values aspect. This examination provides grounds for the suggestion that as an institution conscious of sharing Russia's fate, the Church is developing networked ways of working with partners in Ukraine, as well as becoming more attuned to popular hopes, needs and expectations. Light will be shed on the structures and communicative processes being instantiated in order to facilitate renewed participation in the construction of meaning by the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. The discourses promoted are not seen as inherently attractive, as per Nye's definition, but the dissemination over time and from a variety of sources in Ukrainian society may lead to their shaping the common-sense notion of value and truth drawn upon by Ukrainians in their negotiations of the world.

Approached from the perspective of its ability to exercise civilisational leadership, Russia's soft power is evaluated on the basis of how far participants accepted the discourses representing the contours of the '*ruskii*' civilisational idea. Chapter seven thus presents the findings of the audience reception research conducted in Ukraine and is divided into four principal sections. The first three present the key contours of the audiences' negotiations of the discourses as manifested in the findings of the surveys and focus groups. The first three sections of this chapter suggest that there is some significant sympathy for the ideas advanced. However, the fourth part homes in on the main discourses drawn upon in resistance to Russia's discursive overtures and highlights the

obstacles in Russia's path to rekindling soft power. Indeed, while the core elements of the discourses resonated with the students to a considerable extent, the soft power generated was limited by the fact that the agents representing these narratives were perceived as too close to Moscow's centres of influence, which placed significant barriers to their credibility and acceptance among many participants.

Overall, the survey findings allow us to conclude that Russia had soft power among the audiences in three of the case study cities; Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kyiv, although there is significantly more contestation on this issue in the latter city. In L'viv, attitudes towards a '*ruskii*' cultural zone and Russian foreign policy positions were far more critically received, although when it came to the notion of values, there was greater harmony. In the focus groups, Russian narratives were most stridently contested in the national capital, Kyiv and among students in Galicia, where Ukrainianisation has been the order of the day since independence. However, it is important to recognise that in the other groups, criticism often drew on fundamentally the same negative discourses of 'what is Russia like,' albeit expressed in a less non-negotiable manner. While Moscow may desire to live out a civilisational leadership role, little desire was observed in any of the case study cities to see Ukraine acceding to the role of younger brother in tow. Official discourse, particularly that articulated by the Russian Orthodox Church, is careful to frame Ukraine not in terms of a junior partner but more complementarily, as an equal or even as a spiritual trailblazer. Judging by the findings to be presented in this study, Moscow still has significant work to make this vision a reality for the target audience of this study, although noticeable progress has been made.

Chapter Two: Exploration of the Literature on Soft Power

2.1. Introduction

Despite Nye's succinct definition as 'the ability to get what you want in international politics through attraction'(2004: x), the notion of soft power is highly contested. Thus, prior to applying the concept to the case of Russian influence in Ukraine, it is necessary to clarify the term itself; a process that reveals a number of difficulties to be resolved. Firstly, the concept will be set in historical context and placed in relation to the parallel concepts with which it is often confused. With the background context established, the following section looks at Nye's work more closely, revealing, alongside the concept's merits, contradictions and a certain lack of conceptual clarity. Examination of the wider literature inspired by Nye's work points to the consequences of his attempts to straddle both the academic and policy communities: its apparently parsimonious and intuitive appeal has meant that the concept is nowadays widely known and has had political impact in terms of learned discussion and policy shifts. Yet its conceptual haziness means significant work must be undertaken in order to operationalise it rigorously in an empirical study. The discussion concludes with a response to the understandable question of why, in spite of its weaknesses and overlaps with related concepts, the notion of soft power still has a significant role to play in IR and policy debates.

In this chapter it is argued that by encouraging the assumption of American culture and values as, in principle, universally and 'essentially' attractive and as a catalyst for global change and an indicator of power, Nye is too quick to identify the direction of causality. The fact that he does not embrace a full constructivist approach, and sidelines the neo-

Gramscian concept of hegemony means that he cannot conceptualise how power is not only a result of attraction, but is in fact inherent in the ability to constitute the very notion of how attractiveness itself is defined, and against which empirical phenomena are then judged. As a consequence of this perspective, the role of harder forms of power in the process of ideational construction may go neglected in Nye's analysis, with the result that an overly sanguine view of 'soft' foreign policy may be conveyed.

The second, shorter part of the chapter proceeds with a review of how the concept has thus far been applied in the secondary literature to explore the case of post-Soviet Russian soft power. Thus it prepares the ground for the discussion of the post-structuralism inspired, discourse theoretical content with which the re-articulated concept will be developed in the second chapter. It is this concept that will then be used to explore Russian soft power in Ukraine in subsequent chapters.

2.2. The Attraction of Soft Power for Policy-Makers and Citizens in the Contemporary World

At the outset it is useful to explore briefly why soft power – despite its theoretical lacunae – has become such a popular, even 'fashionable' term in both academic and policy debates. This seems likely to stem from the fact that soft power ways of working are rather suited to the generally stable contemporary international political environment. Soft power does not replace hard power. Political actors still try, as in previous times, to leverage influence through a variety of means; as Nye notes 'in an anarchic system of states where there is no higher government to settle conflicts and where the ultimate recourse is self-help, [military force] could never be ruled out' (1990: 30). Yet the political, economic and social costs of military intervention are generally considered too high to

sustain formal, direct control over foreign states and populations, as was the case in the age of empire. This is not just due to the political pressures associated with overseas military presence and potential casualties; post-modern democracies have often focused on cultivating the socio-economic welfare of the citizenry rather than the pursuit of martial glory (Kagan 2003). As such, there is an absence of a 'prevailing warrior ethic... [meaning] that the use of force requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support' (Nye 2004: 19). The peaceful precepts of soft power thus appear in tune with the intuitive common sense of contemporary populations living under liberal democratic government.

Furthermore, today's global economy is deeply interlaced and consequently the upheaval caused by military conflict produces destabilising ripple effects, including financial uncertainty, disruption to supply lines, social unrest and erosion of public morale, not to mention the 'opportunity costs' of resources directed towards coercive interventions at the expense of societal development. Hence cooperative approaches to resolving international disputes are generally the favoured means of getting things done in international politics today. Working together with other political actors also has multiplicative benefits in terms of burden sharing and greater political weight in the pursuit of common interests. As Nye notes, '[i]n the information age, "cooperative" advantages will become increasingly important... [S]ocieties that improve their abilities to cooperate with friends and allies may also gain competitive advantages against rivals' (Nye 2004: 20).

While the degree of cooperation between states is still presumed to be in good part determined by self-interest, according to Nye, the extent of cultural attraction also affects

the willingness of others to collaborate (2004:29).¹ Further, countries aspiring to the same values, perhaps embedded in international institutions, can work together more easily (Nye 2004b). As Castells puts it '[t]he more the construction of meaning on behalf of specific interests and values plays a role in asserting power in a relationship, the less the recourse to violence (legitimate or not) becomes necessary' (2009:11). Thus, costly material inducements of one sort or another may be avoided if intangible cultural influence, such as shared values, can be leveraged as an aid to co-option.

Bohas (2006), like Nye, also draws attention to the fact that the public may draw a distinction between a polity's culture and its policies. Assuming its culture is found to be attractive, in terms of popular understanding and sympathy towards the values informing a polity's political position, this may serve to deflect criticism or resistance to more coercive measures. The extent to which such policies are seen as threatening by third parties may be mitigated by their framing in relation to familiar, positively-weighted cultural values. For instance, while people may have opposed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, this resistance was likely attenuated by general approval of the values – freedom, democracy, human rights – in whose name the war was ostensibly prosecuted.

Thus there are compelling reasons to take the impact of soft power into account as an 'important reality,' (Nye 2004: 8), one that neoliberal institutionalist Nye insists is of no less significance than hard power (Nye 1990: 32). This position is, however, not taken for granted by neo-realists in both policy-making and academia. Donald Rumsfeld, known more for his hawkish stance within the US administration of George W. Bush once claimed

¹ For instance, as Nye notes, '[b]ecause of American arrogance, the democratic Turkish government refused to see the war as legitimate and wouldn't allow US troops to launch from their soil. That undermined the hard power strategy of the US in a very concrete way' Nye, J. S. (1999)., "When Hard Power Undermines Soft Power." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 21(3): 13-15.

‘not to know what [soft power] means’ (Nye 1990a)². Likewise, leading IR realist John Mearsheimer (1995: 91) summarises the orthodox view of how power is defined within the neo-realist paradigm in the following statement: ‘Realists believe that state behavior is largely shaped by the *material* structure of the international system’ [my italics]. Thus, it may be hard for IR realists to account for soft power in their models, even though soft power can be understood easily within the terms of a realist outlook as the extension of interest maximisation and ‘self-help in an anarchic world’ into the domain of culture as a complement to material forms of influence (Bilgin and Elis 2008: 11). This seems surprising when we consider that notions of ‘softer’ non-military forms of power have long been articulated by historical thinkers deemed from the contemporary perspective to represent key figures in the classical realist school of international relations.

2.3. Historical lineage of non-material forms of power

Some scholars seem to suggest that soft power constitutes a rather novel form of power, casting it as ‘post-modern’ (Cooper 2002). In this section, however, it will be argued that although the term soft power was coined by Nye only in about 1990, this contemporary formulation has a long historical lineage. Indeed, notions of an immaterial, co-optive way to get things done in international politics can be traced back around two and a half millennia.

Perhaps the first recorded conceptualisation of the softer side of ruling was by China’s Confucius³ (551-479 BC), who advocated ‘governance by *dezheng* (reign by virtues) – the application of soft power by the ruler to win the hearts and minds of the people’ (Cao

² Apparently, Rumsfeld has now somewhat moved away from this position. See: Nye, J. S. (2010). Responding to my critics and concluding thoughts. *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*. I. Parmar and M. Cox. Abingdon, Routledge. (p. 224).

³ For this reason, China’s international institutions of cultural diplomacy are named ‘Confucius Institutes’.

2007: 436). In Ancient Greece, Thucydides (460-395 BC) similarly recognised the need for '*hegemonia*', understood at that time as legitimated leadership (as opposed to hegemony as often understood today as political control, which he referred to as '*arkhe*') in order to gain the free consent necessary for sustained power. This concept emphasised ideology and notions of justice as much as material capability in the maintenance of stable and enduring rule. Associated with '*hegemonia*' was '*time*' – the gift of honour, which was for example voluntarily bestowed upon the Athenians by other Greek polities because of their admiration for the courage, heroism and high quality leadership displayed by Athens in repelling Persian invasions and endured for many years thereafter and made inferior political status more acceptable to many states and peoples (Lebow and Kelly 2001).

More recent classical realist theorists have also argued for a more nuanced understanding of power than the narrow, materialistic conception than is typically attributed to their contemporary fellows. For instance, Carl von Clausewitz (1984: 186) in his seminal work published originally in 1832 *On War* distinguishes between two necessary ways to defeat an enemy: using 'moral qualities and effects' and 'the whole mass of the military force,' which may be seen to correspond to an immaterial 'soft' form of power and the military facet of 'hard' power.

Following the rise of industrial capitalism, E.H. Carr led the way in proposing a tripartite conceptualisation of political power. This consists of military power, economic power, and power over opinion, which are closely interdependent and separable primarily for analytical purposes rather than in practice (2001: 102). He understands power over opinion in terms of the 'art of persuasion' and propaganda. In this he is substantially correct, although, as will be shown, there is more conceptual potential to soft power than

the unidirectional information campaign suggested by today's usage of the term propaganda (Carr 2001: 120-30).⁴ He also noted that '[m]orality is the product of power' (2001: 63, 75), a notion that seems to reflect the ideas of Michel Foucault (Williams 2005: 109) and will be developed in the discussion of knowledge, truth and power in the conceptual framework.

Hans Morgenthau also understood power in broader terms, as comprising 'anything that establishes and maintains the power of man over man ... from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another' (1965: 9). Furthermore, while he does stress the prevailing importance for power of armed forces, he observes the even greater significance of a nation's character, morale and quality of its governance (Morgenthau 1965: 186).

Thus we may conclude that 'softer' forms of power are not strictly a novel idea. In fairness, Nye himself recognises this (2010). Yet, we should not assume, as some do, that soft power is straightforwardly a new name for the old concept of propaganda that had assumed a negative taint (Cowan and Cull 2008: 6) due to its perceived unilateral imposition of views. Indeed, it must be admitted that it is only with the spread of information technologies enabling cheap and easy communication with others around the world, that using soft power means to co-opt foreign publics has become feasible as part of a systematic, sustained strategy in international relations (Mattern 2005: 589). Furthermore, previous conceptualisations of non-material forms of power were relatively rudimentary in terms of their conceptual basis. During the Cold War innovations were likely hampered in part due to the ontological limitations of neo-realism and the

⁴ Carr does not explore the reception aspect of information drives, however.

preoccupation with military issues pertaining to the state that characterised that era. The insights of modern scholarship, however, gathered from beyond the disciplinary boundaries of IR, should enable a more sophisticated approach to soft power to be developed. In an information age when '[p]olitics has become a contest of competitive credibility in which whose "story wins"' affects political outcomes and material victory too (Nye 2008: 10), soft power is not only an interesting element, but an essential consideration in a more 'realistic' and complete view of contemporary dynamics in international relations.

2.4. Detangling Soft Power from Parallel Concepts

Since being coined as a term by Joseph Nye more than two decades ago, soft power has enjoyed considerable prominence in discussions of international politics. Yet, despite its popularity, considerable confusion remains as to what exactly the term soft power means. The general cloud of confusion surrounding this concept has been in no way dispersed by the presence of a number of related and parallel concepts that perpetuate obfuscation, particularly as they are often used interchangeably. Hence, in order to understand the nature of soft power, it is helpful to have a clear idea of what it is *not*.

A useful starting point for structuring ideas close to soft power is presented by Yun and Toth, citing Tuch, for whom public diplomacy refers to 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics' (Tuch 1990: 3, cited in Yun and Toth 2009: 493). They introduce two ideal-type approaches to public diplomacy; the realist and the liberalist.

Yun and Toth (2009) describe realist approaches to public diplomacy as possessing statist assumptions, and preoccupations with national security prevail. Accordingly, 'the objective is to influence the behaviour of a foreign government by influencing the attitudes of its citizens' (Malone 1988: 3, cited in Yun and Toth 2009: 494). Furthermore, due to the key assumptions of the realist school, the perceived utility of public diplomacy remains focused on war propaganda and psychological warfare, and played a 'less grand-strategic and more operational role' (Yun and Toth 2009: 494-5).

This narrow understanding of public diplomacy, with its suggested focus on supporting military goals, seems to resemble the concept of 'smart power' also coined by Nye (2008). This concept seems to have emerged as a reaction to the sceptical attitudes of neo-realists, dominant in the American foreign policy establishment, towards the need for state-led public diplomacy following the disappearance of the Cold War ideological enemy against which previous cultural-diplomatic campaigns were directed. Nye describes 'smart power' as a strategy which 'melds hard and soft power. My point is not that soft power replaces hard power. But that you need to be able to use both in a way that they reinforce each other' (Nye 2008).

Unfortunately, however, Nye does not go into detail on how smart power combines hard and soft forms of power, beyond stating that it is not necessary to choose between the two (2008). A further step is taken by Ernest Wilson (2008). Although he doesn't go into detail on how this might work conceptually, he notes that smart power is being explored by the sections of the Pentagon to see how soft power techniques might be used to 'advance traditional war-fighting,' for example, through developing soldiers' cultural

competencies (language and local knowledge) to gain the respect of hostile populations and make public details of enemy brutality (Wilson 2008: 121).

Thus, in this realist approach to public diplomacy, soft cultural approaches are tied closely to the facilitation of hard power goals. While some aspects of this approach could potentially improve the 'attractiveness' of US forces, the emphasis is quite narrowly focused on the achievement of operational objectives in the theatre of war. Accordingly, the suggestion appears to be that the benefits accrued would tend to be of a zero-sum nature, with any progress on an informational plane made by one side liable to be detrimental to the other.

By contrast, liberalist public diplomacy focuses on creating 'attraction for a country's culture (values), ideals (political, economic, social systems), and policies to build an enabling environment for national interests' (Yun and Toth 2009). The liberalists hold a broader understanding of national security and interests than realists, and focus thereby on 'transnational, economic, social and ecological issues emanating from the growth of globalism' (Yun and Toth 2009: 496). There is also emphasis on the conditions (defined as credibility and legitimacy) necessary for realising soft power from one's available resources. As well as being clearly a broader and more progressive approach to public diplomacy, the liberalist approach provides a useful conceptual umbrella sheltering several terms that are frequently, but, I argue, erroneously, used interchangeably with soft power due to their general interest in 'attracting' foreigners.

Firstly, nation-branding can be seen as an example of a liberalist approach to public diplomacy. Describing this concept, Fan observes that,

To some, [nation branding] is simply another term for country-of-origin effect or place marketing (Kotler 2002). In a globalised world countries must manage and control their branding if they are to compete effectively with other countries. Active repositioning of a country through branding can give a country competitive advantage over other countries (Gilmore, 2002) and bring the benefits of tourism and foreign investment. To others, it refers to a consistent and all-embracing national brand strategy [his emphasis], which determines the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the country, and ensures this is supported, reinforced and enriched by every act of communication between the country and the rest of the world (Anholt, 1998)' (Fan 2008: 155).

As such, nation-branding draws on explicit insights from business-related disciplines such as advertising, marketing and psychology. For Fan, nation branding equally 'provides a more focused, culturally unbiased and more useful approach to creating international influence in the world' (2008: 156-7). While Fan mentions 'every act of communication' it is likely this refers more to a polity's consciously promoted official materials, than a reach for a 'hegemonic' approach to overseas information dissemination across the board. Nation-branding is thus something that all states can engage in and hope for positive results for their tourism and business sectors.

Cultural diplomacy is also often used interchangeably with public diplomacy and soft power. Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, for instance, use the term to '[denote] a national policy designed to support the export of representative samples of that nation's culture in order to further the objectives of foreign policy'(2010: 13). Cultural diplomacy is described more specifically by Milton C. Cummings as "'the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding"', which forms an important component of public diplomacy, which basically comprises all a nation does to explain itself to the world' (cited in Schneider

2004: 1). Here we see that cultural diplomacy should foster mutual respect and sympathy as a means to facilitate closer cooperation in a variety of spheres. Accordingly, the tools of cultural diplomacy include libraries, publications, radio and television programming, the provision of internet access and online resources, cinema, cultural performances and festivals, literature and poetry, music, art, sports, exchanges and so on.

Thus, practices such as nation-branding and cultural diplomacy may be seen as components of liberalist public diplomacy. What unites these approaches is that their logic is about creating an international environment conducive to the achievement of national policy goals. Liberalist public diplomacy is perhaps to be understood in terms of its potential to produce positive-sum gains, as the mutual understanding generated by such initiatives may facilitate increases in bilateral trade and other forms of mutually beneficial socio-economic cooperation. In this sense, liberalist public diplomacy can be seen to focus more on the promotion of what Arnold Wolfers has termed 'milieu goals'. Milieu goals are pursued by nations not 'out to defend or increase possession, but [aiming] instead at shaping conditions beyond their national boundaries' as a means to increase security in the long-run'. By contrast, realist public diplomacy seems to be more akin to using cultural knowledge in support of narrower 'possession goals'; those relating to the preservation or advancement of scarce things to which a nation attaches value (Wolfers 1962).

Soft power may be understood in terms of the promotion of milieu goals. However, its conceptual potential is not exhausted by the terms described thus far. Indeed, in answering sceptics, Nye himself insists that soft power is more than just propaganda, persuasion or PR (2004b; 2008: 95-101). For the purposes of this thesis it will be assumed

that while public diplomacy, nation-branding, cultural diplomacy and the like are *techniques*, with soft power, the emphasis is on the *result* gained from the application of those practices.

The key factor differentiating soft power from the practices of public diplomacy is arguably most clearly indicated by the title of the book, in which Nye first presents the concept of soft power: 'bound to lead'. Thus soft power may be said to be about ideational and cultural leadership on the international level, and is thus conceptually distinct from nation-branding and cultural diplomacy, which may be seen to aim to position a nation in an appealing and favourable way within existing value narratives. This assumption is supported by the fact that empirical discussions of soft power tend to focus on countries staking a claim to international leadership such as the USA and the EU and to a lesser extent China and Russia, rather than countries with more modest ambitions that nevertheless engage in high-quality nation-branding and cultural diplomacy.

However, it must be noted that in later works, Nye himself rather muddies the water with regard to the relationship between international leadership and soft power, which he uses to refer to the efforts of 'small' countries such as Norway and Canada to promote human rights (Nye 2004: 112). It is debatable whether this should truly be seen as soft power, since although these countries may appear to be taking the lead in promoting these issues, they are in principle working within the ideational discourse of the West, even if certain Western actors may not at times follow through in practice. Furthermore, these states do not have the independent 'hard power' capacity to enforce these issues and are unlikely to be able to incite others to do so on their behalf.

Thus, while the distinction is not absolute, these parallel concepts contribute to a useful and nuanced conceptual vocabulary to describe and analyse cultural, non-military means of supporting state policy. Yet while there are terms used unjustifiably in the place of soft power, there are also ideas articulated under different terminology that sound very close to soft power.

Indeed, some of the most insightful discussions on soft power have been those which don't use the exact terminology, but that equate the spread of American cultural mores and products with a form of neo-imperialism, which scholars have variously described as 'empire by invitation' (Lundestad 1999), the 'irresistible empire' (Grazia 2005) or 'empire of fun' (Wagnleiter 1999). Here the emphasis is on voluntarism, the extent of which distinguishes the American 'empire' from other generally more unilaterally imposed regimes of influence. US military hegemony was invited in order to ensure security in inter-war and, to a greater extent, post-war Europe, which ushered in American culture in its wake. Yet, the economic basis was 'probably the single most important element and provided much of the underpinning for the other factors' (Lundestad 1999: 194). US involvement in post-war European reconstruction was arguably driven by pursuit of commercial interests and benefitted the US film industry, through the creation of markets for US products (Stephan 2006: 2-3). Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, comparable processes of Sovietisation were underway after 1945 (Rees 2008), albeit with apparently less emphasis on invitation than in the American case.

While the concept of soft power arose in America, European scholars have developed a parallel concept that articulates European specificities.⁵ The soft power debate in Europe originates in a 1973 article by Françoise Duchêne, who advocated the development of Europe's 'civilian power'. This emerged as a response to Europe's military reliance on American might during the Cold War, when the EC was 'long on economic power and short on military power' and hence needed policies 'which can establish a political peace, that is civilian values, out of the technical peace... provided by nuclear statement' (Duchêne 1973: 20). Compensating for its limited military capacity, the EC gained experience and credibility as a non-military actor in international politics. For Duchêne, (1973: 19), civilian power as a practice stands for the, centrality of economic power to achieve national goals; the primacy of diplomatic co-operation to solve international problems; and the willingness to use legally-binding supranational institutions to achieve international progress. Given the emphasis placed on the economic attraction of civilian power, we cannot be sure that this concept meets Diez's stipulation that to make sense as a separate category, namely it should be irreducible to economic and military power (2005: 616). Although Stavridis (2001) suggests that Duchêne in fact *does* imbue his concept of civilian power with further, normative content, most often the emphasis rests on civilian power as a primarily economic way of working which helps to facilitates international cooperation.

Yet more recently, Ian Manners has taken the lead in conceptualising the nature of the EU's power, focusing in particular on its normative aspects. While some scholars have

⁵ Diez argues that the EU's normative power also relates to its desire to articulate an identity distinct from that of the USA to distinguish European citizenship. It conveys the notion of the EU – Kagan's post-modern paradise – as being ethically superior in terms of its modes of living and foreign policy outlooks than the USA.

disputed that the concept of normative power represents a 'new kind of power' (Diez 2005), Manners is insistent that there is a crucial difference between the notion of the EU as an actor working through civilian means, and the EU as what he terms a 'normative power'. With his concept of normative power, Manners' seeks to articulate a concept that goes beyond the 'civilising', neo-colonial associations he attributes to the 'normative' aspects of 'civilian power' (Manners 2006). This particular understanding of 'civilian power' possibly derives from that of Knut Kniste and Hanns Maull who envisage a polity 'whose conception of its foreign policy role and behaviour is bound to particular aims, values, principles, as well as forms of influence and instruments of power in the name of a civilisation of international relations (cited in Diez and Manners 2007: 177).

Manners proposes that the European Union, by virtue of a combination of its historical context, hybrid polity and legal constitution, 'exists as being different to pre-existing political forms, and that this particular difference pre-disposes it to act in a normative way' (Manners 2002: 239-41). Its behaviour, he argues, is defined by 'what it is', namely a *sui generis* international actor, constructed on a normative basis (2002: 240-252). As such, Europe is a more cosmopolitan polity, one that pursues more altruistic policies having transcended 'modernist' (Cooper 2002) concerns with *realpolitik*, and committed to improving the lot of its citizens, neighbours and inhabitants of planet earth through peaceful, socio-democratic means.

Yet there seems to be some merit to Diez's argument that the notion of 'normative power Europe' constitutes a response to a search for a European identity, whereby the EU's embrace of the ideas and language of normativity fosters a sense of distinction to American *realpolitik*. Yet while the USA does not shy away from less normatively desirable

military interventions, it invariably frames such actions in discourses of norms and values.⁶ Hence, for the purposes of this thesis we may place an equal sign between the respective claims to attraction and normativity of Nye and Manners' concepts. In the terminology of soft power, we may see Manners' distinction between civilian and normative power as corresponding to an understanding of soft power as, on one hand, non-military practices in international relations and, on the other hand, as a transformative potentiality functioning through ideational discourses. This will be discussed further in the conceptual framework.

Thus it is clear that a certain amount of the confusion surrounding soft power as a concept is terminological. There are concepts used synonymously with soft power that might usefully be differentiated on one hand, and others that effectively demonstrate soft power in action, but are not linked in to this literature.

2.5. Nye's Concept of Soft Power

Now the focus will shift to a close examination of Nye's work, which forms the starting point for the particular, interpretative approach of this thesis that will be articulated in the following chapter. In his early book *Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power* (1990), Nye seems quite explicit about his intentions with soft power and its role as part of a broader political project. He refers to Cox's neo-Gramscian perspective and writes,

The most critical feature for a dominant country is the ability to obtain a broad measure of consent on general principles – principles that ensure the supremacy of the leading

⁶ Scholars such as Hyde Price (2004; 2006), Eriksen (2006) and Zielonka (2008) also question the extent to which the EU's norm-shaping policies truly represent a departure from coercive politics. Indeed, Hyde-Price, for instance, notes that the threat of exclusion from EU membership is represents a 'very tangible source of hard power' (2008: 31).

state and dominant social classes – and at the same time to offer some prospect of satisfaction to the less powerful. (1990: 32)

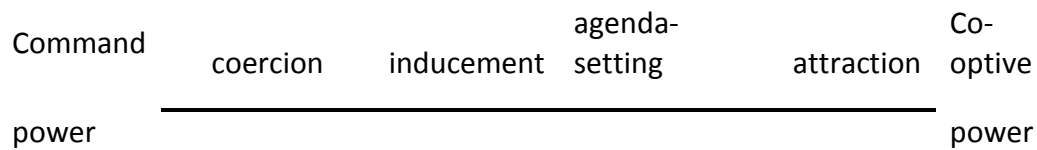
Although here Nye writes of ‘consent’, generally he frames this in terms of ‘co-option’, which he contrasts with command power; ‘the ability to shape what others do’ (1990: 267f). The latter thereby corresponds to the carrots and sticks of military and economic forms of hard power (Nye 1990: 31), and seems to indicate a directly observable, ‘first dimensional’ (Dahl 1957; Bachmann and Baratz 1962) way of exercising power (Nye 1990: 31). As such, it is indicated by ‘the ability of state A to get state B to do what it would otherwise not do’ (Dahl 1957), through threats and sanctions, and positive stimuli such as monetary incentives and other rewards.

Such a behaviouralist understanding of power, with its emphasis on causality, poses challenges to conceptualising the influence yielded by soft power, however, which includes indirect forms of power that are hard to observe. Nye observes with regard to soft power that,

[a] country may achieve the outcomes it prefers in world politics because other countries want to follow it or have agreed to a system that produces such effects. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda and structure the situations in world politics as it is to get others to change in particular situations. This aspect of power – that is, getting others to want what you want – might be called indirect or co-optive power.[...] Co-optive power can rest on the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences that others express. (Nye 1990: 310)

Thus soft power functions on the level of thought, not deed, which is hard to observe as it may lie dormant as a nascent potential rather than being manifested in immediate action. Further, it appears that even within the co-optive end of the spectrum there is a scale of softness. This goes right to the heart of the contestation and confusion about soft power. Soft power, apparently, has two aspects; agenda setting and attraction, whose

functioning is conceived by Nye of in terms of a coercion-co-optation continuum (1990: 267f, 2004: 8):



Although Nye asserts that soft power resources tend to be associated with the co-optive end of the spectrum, and hard power assets with command behaviour, he admits that the relationship is imperfect, noting that ‘sometimes countries may be attracted by myths of invincibility, and command power may sometimes be used to establish institutions that later come to be regarded as legitimate’ (Nye 2004: 7).

Going into greater depth, Nye describes agenda-setting as, ‘the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes others fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic’ (Nye 2004: 7). He acknowledges (Nye 1990: 31, 2008: 108f) that this corresponds to the ‘second face of power’ coined by Bachrach and Baratz, who note that, ‘[t]he extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates barriers or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power’ (1962: 949).

Soft power in this sense has the potential to make a ‘significant difference in obtaining favourable outcomes in bargaining situations’ (Nye 2004: 16) as weaker states *consciously* realise they are unable to get issues related to their own interests on to the international political agenda. Thereby, international decision-making is limited to non-controversial, innocuous issues; those not of great import to the more powerful ‘State A’ (Bachrach and

Baratz 1962). For Lukes (2005), this position does not depart sufficiently from that of behaviourist Dahl (1957).

However, in places Nye's understanding of 'soft power' does appear to go beyond this second dimensional understanding of power. Indeed, with regard to the component of attraction, Nye notes that a state with soft power, 'may obtain what it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity – want to follow it' (Nye 1990: 5). This ability to engage in preference shaping, as both Lukes and Nye term it, approaches the third face of power, about which Lukes ponders, 'is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the thoughts you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires' (Lukes 1974: 23-4).

Yet while Lukes (2005: 483) notes the centrality, profundity and ethical nature inherent in assertions of a particular notion of the 'good life,' Nye fails to problematise this issue; seeming to assume *a priori* the advantages of the American model. Indeed, Bially Mattern offers a constructivist critique of the fact that, despite the centrality of 'attraction' to Nye's notion of soft power, one must 'read between the lines' (Bially Mattern 2005: 591) to gain insight into how he truly understands the concept. Further, Bially Mattern points to 'disappointing inconsistencies' (2005: 591) in the approach to the key concept of attraction, to which 'Nye assigns two ontological statuses' (Bilgin and Elis 2008: 11). On one hand, by noting the possibility of "'converting foreigners" so that they become attracted to one's own values' (Bially Mattern 2005: 591, Nye 2004: 11) and stressing the length of time needed to succeed in this task, Nye implies that the attraction is a result of social interaction (Bially Mattern 2005: 591), and thereby reflects a process of social

construction. On the other hand, however, Nye more commonly suggests that the attraction of US values, such as democracy, human rights and individual opportunities (2004: x) is natural and universal; in short he attributes them with an essentialist character. Indeed, followers of Nye have suggested that America is the soft power *par excellence*, implying that no other country could hope for such a high level of cultural attraction, because America's culture and values are the most universal. Desire for all things American is presented as spontaneous, and reflective of the inherent superiority and universality of the American model. Such perspectives have given rise to numerous critiques accusing Nye of ethnocentrism (Fan 2008).

Although Nye does occasionally admit that American culture is not attractive to everyone, his staple examples of those not attracted consist of the followers of Osama bin Laden, and young Iranians, who are frequently reported in his texts to 'want nothing more than an American DVD to play in the privacy of their homes'(Nye 2008). He thereby gives implicitly the impression that *apparent* imperviousness to American attractiveness is due to the manipulative and distorting influence of fundamentalist and authoritarian leadership, which echoes Lukes' realist epistemological defence of the concept of false consciousness (1974). Thus, while Nye has moved along the ontological scale relative to the behaviouralists Robert Dahl, and Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, he appears to remain wedded to the objectivist tenet that knowledge of, in this case, the 'best model' is 'out there' and knowable, even if some people remain in the dark about it.⁷

In his numerous publications on soft power, Nye consistently maintains his parsimonious theoretical approach and devotes most of the space in longer texts to empirical

⁷ Nye (2010: 217) denies that he asserts the absolute universality of the American model, stating 'otherwise there would be far more universality of view than now exists'. Yet, one cannot ignore that he seems to give this impression in his policy-friendly publications on the topic.

observations of how American cultural products give rise to the attraction reaping tangible foreign policy benefits. Conceiving of the attraction of the American model as objectively given, and thus as inherently, naturally and potentially universally 'attractive' (Wilson 2012), for Nye the attraction permeates out of American cultural manifestations themselves:

The soft power of a country rest primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority. (Nye 2004: 11; 2008: 96)

Later, he observes that soft power relies on communicative means (2004b; 2008: 101-2), but his conceptualisation of this is limited to the need to make foreigners aware of one's *a priori* alluring attributes, with the note that 'if the content of a country's culture, values and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that "broadcasts" them cannot produce soft power' (Nye 2008: 95). He understands the popularity of American films abroad as indicators of US soft power, but declines to recognise that the distribution of such films is a force in creating the attraction whose *a priori* existence it purports to reflect.⁸ As such, his account of soft power is not able to offer a satisfactory explanation of the origins of either attraction or legitimacy, since attraction is depicted as essentialised with legitimacy springing forth organically from it. For instance, Nye notes that,

[w]hen countries make their power legitimate in the eyes of others, they encounter less resistance to their wishes. If a country's culture and ideology are attractive, others more willingly follow. If a country can shape international rules that are consistent with its interests and values, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others. If it uses institutions and follows rules that encourage other countries to channel or limit

⁸ 'Nye (2004: 16) has similarly noted that 'soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers', with the implication being that soft power depends on their being there to intercept communication. In the concept articulated in this thesis, such receivers are not necessarily perceived passively to be 'out there', but are actively *created* over time through the communications that they interpret and receive themselves.

their activities in ways it prefers, it will not need as many costly carrots and sticks. (Nye 2004: 10)

The logic of Nye's argument is that countries will follow others more willingly if the power upon which the claim to leadership is based is legitimate. Concurrently, that legitimacy can stem from the fact that countries find the leading country's values and culture *attractive* and accordingly give their consent to that leadership. The leading country may then shape 'rules' for international society that are consistent with those values, but also with its own interests, which are closely tied up with those values. When a country follows policies in line with the attractive, legitimated values, its *'soft power is enhanced'* (Nye 2004: x). This argumentation is, however, problematic as it seems to suggest a tautological, circular relationship (Bially Mattern 2005: 595-596, Fan 2008); it hints at the potentially self-perpetuating nature of soft power, but elides analysis of the ultimate origins of attraction, and thus of soft power as a whole.

In the context of the US policy-making community, it is easy to see the normative and empirical appeal of Nye's approach, which appeals both to idealists through its apparent voluntarism and to open-minded realists on the grounds of its capacity to empirically demonstrate the benefits of American public diplomacy. However, from a more scholarly perspective, Nye's theory has been roundly criticised as confusing (Fan 2008), shallow (Bilgin and Elis 2008: 6; Bohas 2006: 410) and as resting on a 'shaky theoretical foundation' (Kroenig, McAdam et al. 2010: 412).

Indeed, while Nye rightly criticises 'self-styled' IR neo-realists who 'don't understand the power of seduction' and 'succumb to the "concrete fallacy" that espouses that something is not a power resource unless you can drop it on a city or on your foot' (Nye 2008: 96), he still falls into the same foundationalist ontological impasse as epistemological realists.

In assuming certain phenomena to be essentially attractive, he can't really conceive of *how* such perceptions come to be socially constructed.

Nye's concept of soft power thus vacillates between the second and third faces of power (Bilgin and Elis 2008: 12, Nye 2010). While his reference to Lukes' preference shaping enables him to draw upon the valuable concept of 'ideological power', his foundationalist ontology prevents him from adequately responding to questions about the origination of attraction and exploring soft power's role in the social construction of meaning to the full extent (Bilgin and Elis 2008: 11). Indeed, Nye's concept of soft power makes a highly useful contribution to understanding the role of culture and values in contemporary international relations. Yet, the concept may fulfil its conceptual potential only when expanded to account for a Foucauldian so-called 'fourth face of power' (Digeser 1992), which will allow the theoretical depth and sophistication to answer his critics. This, as a number of scholars (Zahran and Ramos 2010) have suggested, may be facilitated by the integration of neo-Gramscian insight and a fuller embrace of the concept of hegemony. Although sharing elements in common and indeed appearing to draw some inspiration from Cox's notion of 'emulation' (1993), Nye distances himself from these perspectives, arguing that Marxist interpretations are too 'procrustean' (1990a : 182-90; 2010); that is, too bound by economic determinism. This problem is addressed, however, in the next chapter of this thesis through the de-essentialisation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony undertaken by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). Such a perspective on soft power will also facilitate an understanding of how soft power interacts with and depends upon the harder, more tangible forms of economic and political influence elided in Nye's approach. Thus, in the next chapter, scholars of power and discourse such as Foucault, Derrida,

Laclau, Mouffe and Norval will be drawn upon to underpin the re-articulation of soft power as working through discourse.

2.6. The Intangible Softness of Soft Power: Or, What Makes Soft Power 'Soft'?

Thus far we have placed soft power in historical context, distinguished this concept from related, parallel concepts and elaborated in-depth on Nye's understanding of the concept. However, full clarity remains elusive as the diversity of the phenomena to which the label soft power has been applied has stretched the term almost to the point of meaninglessness. Indeed, while a considerable body of literature evokes the concept of soft power, the lack of definitional precision beyond the vague yet somehow compelling 'power of attraction' means that scholars often talk past each other. This may be a result of the fact that Nye himself has not really elaborated on the substantive theoretical content of his concept of soft power since its major presentations (1990; 2004), although he has remained fairly constant in his articulation of what constitutes soft power (Tulmets 2007: 199). The conceptual diversity of the wider literature inspired by the notion of a 'softer' form of power points to the fact that soft power is a contested concept, around which the discussion is as diverse as that on the notion of power itself. In particular, the lack of conceptual common ground is demonstrated by the absence of shared perspectives on fundamental issues such as what precisely characterises soft power's softness.

Soft power is frequently used as a synonym to describe approaches posited in contrast to the use of 'hard' and unilateral military force in achieving foreign policy goals. As Layne sceptically notes, soft power is just a 'pithy term for multilateralism, institutionalism, the democratic peace theory and the role of norms in international politics. In other words, it

is liberal internationalism' (2010: 71). Yet this thesis argues soft power can contribute much more to our understanding of international politics if one accounts for not only how the intangible attraction of culture, values and ideas supports international cooperation, but also how attraction is constructed on the international stage. This requires greater conceptual clarity.

Currently, however, soft power suffers from a lack of fixity of meaning demonstrated in its fluidity of meaning. Thus, on occasions, the term is defined by the simple absence of existential threats to life and coercion. Particularly salient in this respect is economic leverage, working in Tsygankov's terms, 'if not by tanks then by banks' (2006), and drawing on 'dollar diplomacy'. Although in his earlier work Nye himself explicitly frames such tangible factors as 'hard' economic power, later, responding to criticism he admits that 'economic resources can produce soft power behaviour as well as hard' (Nye 2011: 52). Even before this, some commentators had considered energy leverage and even arms exports policy as examples of soft power, particularly in the Russian case (Tsygankov 2006; Yoshihara and Holmes 2008; Chatham House 2011). Here, however, even taking into account Nye's clarification, it is argued that these should be considered hard power, as their effects tend ultimately to play on disparities in economic standing, although potentially the impact of, say, turning off the gas taps, could pose a much 'harder' physical-existential threat were it implemented in mid-winter in an area depending on one source for energy. Similarly, the implementation of a more restrictive migration regime in Russia could have quite coercive political effects. With many of the former Soviet states to a significant degree economically dependent on remittances from their citizens working in Russia, being deprived of employment opportunities and forced to return home could provoke social unrest in the home-state.

Some scholars also contest the idea that even power manifested through cultural means is not without an element of coercion, albeit of a subtle, intangible kind. Radical critics point to the threat of ‘violence of representations’ (Escobar 1995: 103) or ‘representational force’ (Bially Mattern 2005). Accordingly, the immaterial nature of soft power does not rule out subjectively violent effects, since soft power is a form of power that ‘operates through the structure of a speaker’s narrative representation’ (Bially Mattern 2005: 586). Representational force threatens ‘harm to the victim’s *own* ontological security,’ whereby domination in communicative exchange may result in the actor’s subjectivity being ‘erased piecemeal by alternative contending or contradictory “realities”’ (Bially Mattern 2005: 601). Representational force ‘aims to close off its victims’ options by promising them unthinkable harm unless they comply in word and deed with the force-wielder’s demands’ (Bially Mattern 2005: 602). Rather than physical existential pressure, representational force threatens the ability of the subject to structure narratives of self as desired.⁹ Indeed, this has been a significant preoccupation of Post-Colonial Studies, which reflects on how the experience of imperial subjection affects subaltern conceptions of self, even once formal empires have been disbanded (Fanon 1986; Escobar 1995; Loomba 1998). Similarly, French scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, have tended to discuss phenomena resembling soft power engagement in the negative terms of ‘symbolic power’ and cultural colonisation (Bourdieu 1992).

⁹ As an example, one could consider the ‘yur with us or yur against us’ rhetoric of George W. Bush’s in building a coalition of support for America’s ‘war on terror’ in Iraq. Although the threats here occur initially at least on a sociolinguistic rather than physical plane, Bially Mattern (2005: 603-610) draws our attention to the coercive potential of such rhetoric, which obviates the nuanced middle ground and offers only dichotomised identities of good and bad, friend and enemy. States unwilling to support the invasion of Iraq risked stood to having an unappealing identity imposed upon them by the United States and its allied media (tools of soft power!) such as ‘appeaser’, ‘Old Europe’ and ‘cheese eating surrender monkeys’ – with all the historically weighted significance and emotive power such terms bear. While initially occurring on a representational level, such discourses have potential to translate into political practice; justifying punitive measures and toppling governments.

Indeed, Nye's analysis, it is noted, fosters the false impression that 'soft power' is a nice and cuddly surrogate to 'hard power,' when it can have highly uncomfortable, if intangible effects. Furthermore, Nye is also accused of underestimating the extent to which US soft power is 'produced and expressed through compulsion' (Bilgin and Elis 2008: 12). Hedley Bull (1982) sees the parallel notion of 'civilian power' as a 'contradiction in terms'. This is because drawing implicitly on a traditional, 'first face' (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, Dahl 1957) notion of political influence, he considers that 'civilian powers' like the EC don't actually have 'power', but are rather 'conditional upon a strategic environment provided by the military power of states, which they [do] not control' (1982: 151). In this case, there is said to be no 'real' power as there is ultimately no independent capacity to enforce compliance.

In a similar vein, Noya, argues that 'soft power is not a type of power at all' (Noya 2005: 54), and that potentially any power resource can be 'soft' provided it is perceived as having society's approval, in short, is seen as legitimate. The classic example given is that of military intervention for humanitarian ends, whereby hard power – if perceived as legitimate - has 'a soft side.'(2005: 56) Manners' has likewise argued that the militarisation of the EU would not necessarily diminish its 'normative' credentials, so long as the process were characterized by 'critical reflection rather than the pursuits of "great power"' (2006: 182).

Another issue relates to who or what 'does' soft power. In some cases, the apparent hard-soft dichotomy is presumed to indicate a division of labour, with the state responsible for hard power matters, and civil society taking care of the soft power. There are certainly benefits to be accrued from the involvement of civil society in soft power as Nye notes,

[p]ostmodern publics are generally skeptical of authority, and governments are often mistrusted. Thus it behooves governments to keep in the background and to work with private actors. Some NGOs enjoy more trust than governments do, and though they are difficult to control, they can be useful channels of communication.' (Nye 2008: 105)

Yet Nye and Owens (1996) certainly do not insist upon this point, since they recognise the issue of soft power as too important to be left to the free market and that 'the market and private individuals cannot fulfill all the information needs of American foreign policy' (1996: 34). While Nye's institutional background possibly pushes him into foregrounding the role of the state in soft power (2010), due to the dispersed nature of power presumed by soft power as articulated in this thesis, civil society actors are typically assigned a significant role in generating attraction, even if their separation from the state is at times questionable (Parmar 2010).

2.7. Evaluating Soft Power

This thesis has the ambition to evaluate Russian soft power. Yet this, as has been demonstrated, is problematic since soft power is a famously intangible concept. Thus is it not surprising that attempts to assess the extent of soft power in a range of contexts have so far proven unsatisfactory. In his 1990 publication, Nye states that

[p]ower conversion is the capacity to convert potential power, as measured by resources, to realized power, as measured by the changed behaviour of others. Thus one has to know about a country's skill at power conversion as well as its possession of power resources to predict outcomes correctly.' (Nye 1990: 27)

Kroenig (2007) adopts such an approach, seeking dependent and independent variables to measure the extent of soft power influence. Yet this must invariably lead to accusations of committing the 'exercise fallacy', whereby 'power can only mean the causing of an observable sequence of events' (Lukes 2005: 477-478). Indeed, while the behaviourist insistence on observed decisions (or 'non-decisions') resulting from the application of soft power may appeal to the policy community, it is unhelpful in assessing the salience of Lukes' third dimensional ideological power with its long-term remit, as will be explored in the next chapter.

Another problem with Nye's approach is that it relies on 'minds changed' (Nye 2008: 101) as an indicator of the presence of soft power. However, if an individual or groups are exposed to a polity's soft power from birth, the effect of preference shaping may be not so much changed attitudes, as the very constitution of the person's perception of reality.

Yet, despite having dismissed 'dollars spent on slick production packages' (Nye 2008: 101) as criteria to measure the effectiveness of public diplomacy, Nye proceeds elsewhere to state that 'measuring power in terms of resources is an imperfect but useful shorthand' (Nye 2004b). Indeed, an assessment of the 'tools' of soft power at a polity's disposal is certainly a crucial part of examining its soft power potential, and necessary to understand how a soft power strategy works in practice. However, in proposing certain proxy indicators of soft power, Nye fails to acknowledge significant differences between these potential gauges of measurement. For instance, he suggests analysts might look at foreign immigrants, asylum seekers, international students, tourists, book sales and music sales, popular sports, Nobel prize winners, life expectancy, overseas aid, number of internet hosts, spending on public diplomacy (Nye 2004: 7-8). Noya (2005) also makes this error.

The lack of conceptual consensus and clarity manifests itself in confusion as to whether soft power may be judged on the basis of 'inputs' – communicative tools aimed at generating soft power, or 'outputs' – successfully achieved outcomes of these processes. The presence of the former, while indicative of an interest in developing soft power, is by no means evidence of the latter. Blurring the distinction between the two, Noya (2005: 55), for instance, in his list of soft power 'indicators' includes various input-side 'tools' such as public diplomacy spending alongside what might more arguably be seen as demonstratable outcomes of attraction, namely the popularity of a country's cultural products, or as a destination among tourists and asylum seekers. These indicators and more are clumped together uncritically as though they stood in equal relation to the processes creating soft power, without asking whether they are the cause or effect of 'attraction,' not to mention *how* exactly they indicate attraction and how geopolitically useful that might be for a state.

There are a number of problems demonstrated herewith, not least that 'the concept has been so stretched that the term comes to mean almost everything and therefore almost nothing' (Fan 2008: 149-50). Firstly, although an inflow of foreigners does suggest a certain 'pull factor' we cannot know whether their reasons are culturally-based, or as is often suggested, economic in nature or even security-related. A similar critique may be leveled at the suggestion of the Rand corporation that the single best indicator of soft power is the answer to the question: 'where would you like to live other than your own country' (Fan 2008: 150). Furthermore, while tourists may flock to a country's tourist sites (e.g. in Egypt, Italy), there is little evidence that their wider cultural preferences are shaped to the host country's geopolitical advantage. Furthermore, it seems methodologically unsound to straightforwardly equate possible markers of cultural

attraction with the tools involved in their creation. In short, these indicators do not stand in comparable relation to the notion of soft power. Furthermore, while Nye is correct that resourcing, in the form of media of communication, is quantitatively important, modern media theory (see conceptual framework) holds that one should not take the qualitative reception of their output for granted. Indeed, many studies of Russian soft power list under soft power tools strident compatriot associations that are actually more likely to alienate the greater part of the Ukrainian population with their irredentist rhetoric and overt pro-Russianness, rather than rekindle 'friendship between the peoples'. Furthermore, cultural products may not be received in line with the purveyor's intentions, which may result in a hybridisation of meaning with consequences potentially at crossed purposes to the communicators' intentions.

Thus, Nye is right to identify surveys and focus groups as a possible means to '[measure] whether a particular asset is an attractive soft power resource (Nye 2008: 95, Nye 2004). If not limited to assessing the attractiveness of a particular cultural marker, this approach has potential. It may give the researcher insight into how audience members receive the target resources – culture, values and foreign policies, and what meanings they attribute to them. This is, however, only a rough yardstick of how successful the polity has been in presenting itself and what it stands for as attractive and legitimate, since while polls indicate favourable opinion, they don't reveal if this is actually a result of conscious public diplomacy, for instance (Wilson 2012). Positive emotions offer fertile ground for cooperation, whereas hostility, disgust and resentment often prove a barrier to closer relations. It is for this reason that soft power should be considered a *potential*, to be approximated through attitudinal analysis. In places, Nye (2004b) appears to recognise this, stating that,

attraction often has a diffuse effect of creating general influence, rather than producing an easily observable specific action. Just as money can be invested, politicians speak of storing up political capital to be drawn upon in future circumstances.

However, probably due to his attempts to straddle the policy-academia divide (Nye 2010), Nye's position on this issue is not consistent, as he vacillates between a positivist approach that stresses observable impact, and an at times more radical acceptance of ideological factors that are harder to measure.

2.8. Review of Secondary Literature on Russian Soft Power

In this section, an overview of existing studies of Russian soft power will be provided, although there are relatively few in-depth scholarly studies alongside the fair number of journalistic commentaries on this theme. Indeed, until at least the mid-2000s there was no such object of study since Russia was considered to face significant limitations to any initiatives to cultivate influence based on attraction (MacFarlane 2006)¹⁰, beyond those rooted in leveraging ties of the past. This view was shared by some critical commentators within Russia even today (Wilson 2012).¹¹ Nowadays, however, a number of reports and academic articles acknowledge Moscow's interest in soft power and seek to familiarise readers with the variety of tools created to this end over the past six years or so (Feklyunina 2008; Pelnēns 2009; Feklyunina 2010).

Since the object of enquiry has developed significantly even over the five years since the research proposal for this thesis was penned, it is difficult to acknowledge progress as this requires in-depth examination, beyond headline-grabbing measures and citations. Few studies appear to have engaged in qualitative fieldwork to explore this topic, with significant exceptions (Feklyunina 2010). Whereas Western and Chinese soft power is said

¹⁰ Andrew Wilson, comments at conference at Birmingham University in November 2009.

¹¹ Interviews with A. Piontkovskiy and A. Okara in Moscow, July 2011.

to be based on an attractive vision of the future, Russian soft power is frequently discussed in terms of ties to the past and the instrumentalisation of shared culture (Chatham House 2011: 10). Yet, as this study will show, that is not the whole story. Today, Russian soft power initiatives are running in tandem with expressions of Russia's growing economic power such as discussions on political and economic integration¹² and might feasibly be framed as attempting to prepare the meta-political ground for such projects.

The richness of Russian cultural heritage and its potential for attraction is readily acknowledged and encouraged (Chatham House 2011). Yet there seems to be a very blurred distinction made in the Russian case between 'good' and 'bad' public diplomacy that doesn't seem to occur in the case of other states (see Maliukevicius 2007; Kivirähk, Maliukevičius et al. 2010). For instance, Kivirähk, Maliukevičius et al state that '[o]n one side of this line, these activities remain only cultural and educational; but on the other side, the use of these humanitarian activities for political goals and influence on foreign countries commences' (2010: 11), without providing us with tools for judging the difference.¹³ Indeed, this study will argue that the differences between soft power and its 'evil twin' propaganda lies less in the 'true' intention of the instigator or the measures themselves ('inputs'), but rather whether they are perceived as attractive or obtrusive by a given audience ('outputs'). Further, perceptions, as will also be argued in the chapter three, depend not only on the message and the actor themselves, but also on external

¹² Later, multilateral cooperation will be identified in terms of soft power as a *practice*. This study will focus on soft power as a *potential*.

¹³ Often, for instance, coverage of Russian soft power engagement provokes the impression that such activities are inherently inappropriate. For instance, Kudors (2010) repeatedly uses the phrase "so-called Russian speakers", which is curious in the absence of explanation since such persons undoubtedly speak Russian. Further, where the audiences of Western soft power may be 'attracted', those targeted by Russian initiatives are seen as 'susceptible'. The resulting impression of these renderings is entirely different.

factors that shape the environment in which those communications are received.¹⁴ In addition to personal experience, such influences also include the soft power narratives of other actors, which may be contestatory. Despite being covered in the media and communications literature (see section 3.10.), this issue has not been accounted for in the existing Western literature on soft power, although competition in the sphere of information is very much a feature of the Russian discussion (see section 5.4.). This study makes a contribution by stepping into this niche.

This is not to say that Russian soft power initiatives are not seen in implicitly competitive terms. Indeed, Russian forays into the world of soft power are frequently – though not necessarily mistakenly – cast as a security threat. Commonly, ‘imperial complexes’ and a national mentality inconducive to soft power mechanisms (Chatham House 2011) are often diagnosed. The focus thereby rests on the assertion of minority rights as a means to exert leverage over neighbouring states and the alleged cultivation of a fifth column (Pelnēns 2009). Indeed, there is an assumption of ‘pro-Russian’ citizens and elites in Ukraine and elsewhere who will loyally serve Moscow’s interests (STRATFOR 2010) that may not strictly be upheld since in some cases, despite sometimes having accepted funds from Moscow, compatriot groups have undertaken measures that have actually undermined the Kremlin’s position; to the extent that a Russian study recommended the distancing of such ‘marginal’ groups (Bespalov, Vlasov et al. 2007). Concern was also

¹⁴ For instance, although covered in other bodies of literature, the cultivation and instrumentalisation of anti-Russian sentiment by nationalising elites as an ‘other’ against which a new national identity of post-Soviet states might be defined, is not linked in to discussions of soft power. Similarly, one sometimes gets the impression of the positing of Russia as a negative ‘other’, against which the *West* might also be positively defined. For instance, a report on Russian soft power by Chatham House states (2011) that ‘[i]n the West, power is a means to achieve a positive end. In Russia, there is much more respect for the simple power to harm, that does not ask what comes next’ and ‘[i]n the West, there is a tension between the political framework and business – in Russia they reinforce each other.’ While there may be some truth to these claims as regards Russia, the positing of such a sharp, essentialising contrast serves to construct the West as a virtuous opposite and elide the question of whether it might also exhibit such characteristics.

expressed in the discussion at Chatham House that a common business culture involving corrupt practices puts the West at a competitive disadvantages when trading in the region.¹⁵ Although the notion of the *Ruskiy Mir* is covered in some studies (Kudors 2010), it is usually given short shrift, without in-depth exploration of some interesting philosophical debates of the related ideational narratives.

There are studies in English by Russians that play down the imperialistic drivers of soft power in favour of explanations focussing on the need for soft power to support domestic modernisation, such as that by Tsygankov that cites Putin as saying ‘the main aim of our policies is to achieve favourable external conditions for the development of Russia (2006). Yet such arguments do not seem to be shaping the general tone of the Western political discussion, which remains sceptical. Indeed, such is the lack of trust in Russia that although Moscow might sometimes be acknowledged as a promoter of norms (Shapovalova and Zarembo 2010; Makarychev 2011), such drives are attributed to Machiavellian reasons, thus precluding consideration of the notion that Russia might be seeking to achieve positive-sum ‘milieu’ goals through its ‘humanitarian’ policies. Thus the impression arises of Russia as being driven by ruthless pragmatism, on one hand, and primordialist emotional impulses on the other.

Thus we see that studies of Russian soft power to date have typically focused rather more on the tools and narrowly defined ambitions of Russian soft power. While some potential attractive resources are acknowledged, instances of their usage beyond the most limited cultural diplomatic practices incur the risk of being pigeon-holed as ‘neo-imperialistic’. Indeed, if competition is a virtue in the spheres of economics and politics, then this does

¹⁵ ‘Soft Power? The Means and Ends of Russian Influence Abroad’, a roundtable discussion held at Chatham House, London, on 31st March 2011 attended by the author. Also see Chatham House 2011.

not seem to be the case with regard to values and culture, at least not from the point of view of Western commentators on Russian soft power: Russian attempts to re-articulate the values held up as universal by the West have not been well received in the West itself.

2.9. Concluding Remarks

Soft power is attractive to policy makers and scholars partly because of its normative appeal; it presents a credible view of how we would like international politics to work. It is also appealing because, at least in Nye's version, it seems possible to empirically demonstrate the link between American attractiveness and foreign policy benefits; hence it serves as a rallying call for further investment in this area.

However, the definitions provided thus far do not seem appropriate to facilitate the rigorous operationalisation of soft power when applied to the empirical case study of Russia. Indeed, in Nye's work the key concept of attraction appears to be excessively objectivist and essentialised. Consequently, the analytical framework to be outlined in this thesis should facilitate a more critical perspective on the mechanisms of soft power. This will be achieved through integrating a post-Marxist take on Gramsci's concept of hegemony and the insights of discourse theorists such as Laclau, Mouffe and Norval and scholars of post-structuralism like Foucault and Derrida into the concept of soft power. Thus, in attempting to transcend the meta-theoretical limitations that confine Nye, this thesis will operationalise an understanding of soft power informed by a post-foundationalist ontology and anti-essentialist epistemology, which facilitates the exposure of the power at play in the social construction of 'attractiveness' and the role thereof in international politics.

In order to evaluate soft power in any given case, a clear, consistent and coherent working definition must be provided. Given the fact of soft power's theoretical and methodological controversies and ambiguities, as well as its relative novelty in the face of long-standing awareness of its key points, the question arises as to why we need the concept at all. Is it not perhaps a faddish, trendily-styled label on an old barrel? Might it not be more useful to simply apply the familiar terms of public diplomacy, neo-Gramscian hegemony and even propaganda rather than fermenting a new formula of dubious vintage?

This thesis will argue that the term and concept of soft power do indeed make a useful contribution since besides its core content, soft power itself does important work in IR practice. As the conceptual framework will suggest, soft power functions as a 'speech act' (Austin 1962): to proclaim a polity as having or being a soft power is to acknowledge the legitimacy of its cultural-ideational work by way of recognising its attraction. By contrast, to couch the same activities in terms of 'propaganda' is to convey a much more circumspect, indeed negative by contemporary usage, appraisal of the agent concerned. As neo-Gramscians Zahran and Ramos incisively note, '[t]he idea of soft power is not a neutral concept but part of the struggle' (2010: 28-9).

Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

In the preceding exploration of the literature the main task was to outline the debates and theoretical contours of the existing body of literature on soft power. The chapter concluded that, while soft power has become a rather fashionable term in recent years, the lack of consensus about certain key conceptual issues has meant that the academic conversation on this theme has often resembled a series of monologues, with the various scholars talking past one another in the absence of even common understandings about the nature of the key debates at stake. In particular, the notion of what defines soft power's very 'softness' remains obscured, and consequently the possibility of realising a consistent, conceptually grounded operationalisation has thus far remained elusive.

Building upon the foundation laid down by Nye's work, this thesis aims to offer a corrective to the theoretical shallowness alleged by some scholars (Bohas 2006). Accordingly, this chapter presents the core theoretical contribution of the thesis. The originality of the contribution lies in the innovative integration of the insights of post-Marxist discourse theorists such as Foucault, Laclau, Mouffe and Norval and communication studies scholars such as Stuart Hall and Norman Fairclough into the conceptual framework of soft power. Elaborating on this body of literature, it is argued that the concept of soft power can usefully be developed with reference to a post-Marxist reading of Gramsci's hegemony theory as articulated by many of these scholars, and which was actually touched upon briefly by Nye himself, but not pursued in adequate depth. The thesis represents an attempt to extrapolate Gramsci's theory of hegemony developed to understand the consolidation of power on the national level, to

international arena, which is necessary if we follow Fairclough's conviction¹⁶ (2001: 203) that 'the primary terrain of domination is now global rather than national'. Soft power – the power of cultural attraction - is particularly relevant to contemporary politics if we also believe those who state that international competition is increasingly assuming a cultural dimension.

The previous chapter argued that Nye's concept of soft power centred mistakenly on an essentialised notion of attraction which *causes* an augmentation in the agent's power resources. By contrast, this study argues that the ability to determine the nature of attractiveness is above all an *effect* of power. Indeed, this chapter will outline the concept to be applied to the case study of Russian soft power in Ukraine. It will highlight how, having stabilised its hard power bases, Moscow is striving to extend its renewed capacity to the cultural-ideational sphere. The extent of its soft power may serve as a measure not only of cultural rejuvenation, but also of sufficient economic stability to facilitate political will, elite consensus and discipline, organisational capacity, as well as ensuring the material bases of attraction. In short, it is a measure of national well-being for a developed country, where hard power methods are the exception, and a condition for the civilisational radiance that Moscow desires.

3.2. Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

Prior to elaborating upon the concept of soft power to be operationalised in this thesis, it is necessary to expound upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions and key concepts that provide the foundations for the claims to knowledge to be explored.

¹⁶ The approaches of Foucault, Derrida, Laclau, Mouffe and Kristeva are significantly different from those of Fairclough and Critical Discourse Analysis, however, as observed by Hansen (2006: xviii) there are 'significant points of convergence... particularly in [CDA's] concern with media representations.'

In order to increase the analytical power of Nye's signature contribution, the concept of soft power will be inlaid with specific theoretical content. Post-structuralist discourse theory in the post-Marxist tradition has been selected as highly appropriate for this purpose as it facilitates the linking of discursive conceptualisations of power with the role of tools of communication in creating hegemony. It helps to explore the role of culture, identity and values in foreign policy (Campbell 1998) as it is concerned to reveal the workings of power, which neo-liberal institutionalist Nye's essentialised concept tends to obfuscate. While in some places Nye appears to acknowledge the constructed nature of reality, this is not consistently pursued and for the greater part he accepts certain 'facts' as ultimate truths (e.g. the attractiveness of the 'American Dream'). The apparent parsimony of this step perhaps explains some of the popularity of his concept of soft power. However, it imposes limitations on his concept's analytical power. Taking 'attraction' as a self-evident property precludes investigation of how certain values and cultural attributes come to be perceived as attractive, while others are denigrated, at a given point in time and under particular circumstances. Whereas scholars of soft power following Nye have conventionally focussed on manifestations of attraction of *a priori* 'attractive' cultural phenomena, here the discussion will analyse the power to construct meaning. This relies upon a particular understanding of the nature of power, which will be outlined further.

As will be shown, the concept of soft power may comfortably be understood in the light of Michel Foucault's understanding power as productive (Sheridan 1980: 219) of subjects, not merely as a repressive force. As such it 'produces knowledge [and] power and knowledge directly imply one another... There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not

presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (Sheridan 1980: 220, cites Foucault).¹⁷ It is for this reason, too, that a stark delineation between the natures of soft and hard power cannot be drawn, since hard power resources are equally enmeshed in powerful discourses governing their application (Clifford 2001: 98). Furthermore, rather than resembling a top-down, centralised force, power is thus conceived of as decentred, diffused and discrete, and invests 'the entire social field' (Clifford 2001: 42, 108). In this sense, there is no possibility of true liberation from the effects of power, and 'the destruction of a system of power can only mean the construction of a different power' (Laclau and Zac 1994: 27). Yet, as will be shown, since hegemony is never truly complete nor meaning is never truly sutured, but ever remains contingent, there is always the possibility of resistance (Clifford 2001: 121) and change.

This thesis assumes the presuppositions of the analytical perspectives applied, namely an anti-essentialist ontology and a post-foundationalist epistemology (Torfing 2005: 13; Glynos 2001: 193; Marchant 2007: 14). Reflecting this ontological stance, post-structuralist discourse theory holds that 'while the world exists out there, truth does not' (Rorty 1989 cited in Torfing 2005: 13). Truth is,

conditioned by a discursive truth regime which specifies the criteria for judging something to be true or false. Within a certain vocabulary we can assess the truth claim of different discursive statements in relation to the different states of affairs that we perceive. However, reality does not determine the kind of vocabulary and truth regime that we will construct. (Torfing 2005: 14)

Essential meaning is, therefore, *impossible* because it is constructed within relational ensembles that are subject to endless displacements (Torfing 2005). Thus, attempts to establish stable discourses of meaning remain faced forever by contingency; eliding

¹⁷ Torfing makes a similar point: 'power and discourse are mutually constitutive and we cannot have one without the other' (2005: 8).

ultimate closure, and could always be constructed otherwise. However, in spite of the assumption of the 'impossibility of final ground' (Marchant 2007: 2), meaning is also *necessary*, since 'without the ability to confer meaning on social phenomena and political events we would not be able to orient ourselves and act upon our orientations' (Howarth 2000: 89; Fairclough 2001: 23; Torfing 2005: 2). Thus, while the assumption of an essential foundation for beliefs is rejected, post-foundationalist approaches maintain that a *rationale* for belief may nevertheless be found within discourses of meaning, to the extent that such rationale may assume the appearance of essential truth or self-evident fact. The constellations of discourses of meaning reflect 'hard' power dynamics, reflecting what Foucault has termed 'power-knowledge', whereby power and knowledge imply one another.

Contrary to the apparent assumption of Nye and his adherents, the implication of these approaches for soft power is that any particular model of development is not to be seen as *inherently* or universally attractive, but is rather constructed as such as a result of the salience of a particular discourse of rationality. Rather than an essential property or reflection of an ultimate truth, perceptions of attractiveness are the result of a particular constellation of power dynamics, projecting the interests of one or more influential actors on an international stage. Indeed, as Castells observes,

value is what the dominant institutions of society decide it is. So, if global capitalism shapes the world, and capital accumulation by the valuation of financial assets in the global financial markets is the supreme values, this will be value in every instance, as, under capitalism, profit-making and its materialization in monetary terms can ultimately acquire everything else. (2009: 27)

For instance, Francis Fukuyama's (1989) well-known 'end of history' thesis appeared discredited with the identification of prominent opposition to the Western model of development (e.g. Islamism, the rise of China), which seemed to disprove the hubristic

notion that international society would now proceed towards the 'victorious' model of liberal democracy and free market economics in the wake of the apparent triumph of the USA and its allies in the Cold War. Yet the focus on resistance characteristic of such critique belies the fact that what was once one of two competing global ideologies has to a significant degree now been normalised as a common sense standard of universally applicable, state 'good behaviour,' with other models viewed as autocratic, parochial and retrogressive deviations. The poststructuralist soft power theory presented here inevitably calls into question the insisted-upon universal attraction of the Western, or any, model, by exposing the claims to truth upon which is based as contingent and political. Global society could ever develop differently, based on alternative conceptualisations of truth about what constitutes 'the good life'. Instead of the current model of wealth creation, individuation and lifestyle consumption (Gripsrud 1999: 10; Kress and Leeuwen 2001: 36), societies might conceivably posit an 'attractive' Archimedean point in terms that would orient politics towards the preservation of the environment, equality for all, spiritual elevation, order and security or any other as yet unimagined set of values. However, due to the pre-existing discourses which inform individuals' and groups' construction of meaning and the 'members resources' thus at the disposal of meaning-making actors, there is, despite the inherent contingency, a pre-disposition towards some degree of continuity in worldview narratives.

3.3. The Power of Discourse

Whereas military and economic power trade in weaponry and financial clout respectively, the currency of soft power is culture, specifically discourses of meaning that inform human experiences of the cultural world. According to Laclau, a discourse is 'an

articulated set of elements' (Laclau 1990: 32). Such elements can be understood as the general terms of reference or engrained societal organising principles drawn upon when talking about diverse topics, and which lend coherence and meaning to communication. Elements of the discourse must not necessarily *in themselves* be entirely homogenous, coherent or consistent.¹⁸ Thus defined, discourses are assumed to be limited. Beyond the limits of the set, elements are no longer within the discourse and do not constitute a meaningful statement. In this way, discourse represents the bounded area of what is sayable about a particular topic at a particular point in history, or the 'limits of acceptable speech' (Butler 1997: 34). Outside the ideational boundaries of a discourse, statements are not merely incorrect, but may also not appear to make sense, be ridiculous or even offensive. Such limits are not static in time, and may not be well defined or manifested, only becoming visible in encounters with elements outside the discourse, at which point they may solidify to become a political frontier against which 'Others' beyond 'our' discourse may be identified. In this way, discourses exercise a significant disciplinary function on what can meaningfully be said, and therefore on what is actually said. For instance, in contemporary politics, liberal democracy and its attendant values have become sedimented as a positively-weighted normative discourse in international politics to the extent that to argue otherwise in public appears not merely misguided, but potentially threatening and hence liable to provoke a securitised response. The notion of articulation reflects the post-foundationalist, anti-essentialist presuppositions of this approach; a discourse does not exist in and of itself, but needs to be articulated to

¹⁸ Indeed, as Curran (2002: 112) has reported, research indicates that 'in most eras, the dominant ideology dissolved under close inspection into a miscellany of inconsistent and even contradictory themes, and they were rarely dominant in the sense they were uncritically accepted by the subordinate classes.'

become a reality. The idea of articulation¹⁹ also reflects the contingency and undecideability of the discourse; it could always be articulated otherwise, thus there is the inherent and constant possibility of change. While a range of different views on societal organisation may start out as a set of contrasting ideas or 'ideologies', they become discourses as their assumptions become naturalised to the point of common-sense (Fairclough 2001: 76), at which point their ideological nature becomes invisible; and the ideas commonly accepted as neutral truths. Hence, we can speak of discourses of truth as 'forms of rationality' (Clifford 2001: 100) about particular topics.

In a given information space, a large number of competing myths may be in circulation. In this sense a myth refers to an understanding that shapes the way some people think about an issue. An imaginary represents a sedimented myth, which has become an overarching horizon for discourse, establishing limits. While myths 'operate at the level of the interests of a particular group', imaginaries refer to those cases 'where a particular group succeeds in moving beyond its particular interests onto a universal terrain' (Norval 2000: 229). Thus '[w]hile a social order may be characterized by the presence of many competing myths, it is less clear whether the same may be true of imaginaries' (Norval 2000: 228). A hegemonic discourse indicates the capacity to impose one's will – simultaneously incorporating the interests of other actors - so that one's own particular imaginary horizon or worldview becomes universalised; consensually accepted as valid, the impossibility of the full achievement of this process notwithstanding. Accordingly, social and political relations are characterised by '*hegemonic struggles* that aim to establish a political and moral-intellectual leadership through the articulation of meaning

¹⁹ Here, the notion of articulation does not always imply a verbal or even textual method of communication; other semiotic modes may be employed, drawing on the same discourses but expressing them visually, auditorily, etc (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 40).

and identity' (Torfing 2005: 15). It is 'in and through' (ibid) such hegemonic struggles that historically specific discourses are constructed, which in turn provide a background for all forms of social practice.

However, this should not be taken to suggest that all potential discursive imaginaries are equal. Some myths are certainly more equal than others, namely those with a less particularistic logic who are likely to experience greater ease in promoting identification with the 'instituting power' (Kalyvas 2000). Indeed, Castells among others admits that some phenomena may indeed have a relative advantage over others since those with a 'structural impediment to exist globally are at a disadvantage vis-à-vis others whose logic is inherently global' (Neuman 1991: 86; Castells 2009: 28). For instance, a life of material impoverishment, asceticism and self-denial can be constructed as having a certain appeal when framed in discourses of spirituality or environmental sustainability, and has historically been practised by many esteemed religious figures, at least in part because this challenging lifestyle sets its practitioners apart from the greater mass of humans. Much as it may be admired by others, this manner of being is unlikely to become widely practised if alternatives are available. Indeed, in order for a particular vision to become hegemonic, in Gramscian terms, it has to 'show something more than a spontaneous attractiveness or moral superiority. It has to show its ability to become a realistic alternative for the organization and management of the community' (Laclau and Zac 1994: 16).

Furthermore, despite the associations with 'domination', hegemony as understood in this thesis, that is, along post-Gramscian lines, is eternally an unfulfilled, incomplete condition.

As previously noted, Nye himself has made various nods to the Gramscian notion of

hegemony, yet declines to pursue these fruitful insights on the grounds of Marxist thought being 'too procrustean' (1990a: 182-90; 2010). However, through the post-Marxist interpretations supplied by Laclau and Mouffe and others, the limitations of this essentialised, economically-determinist view can be overcome. Indeed, where even the 'most "superstructuralist" conceptions [have] retained a naturalist vision of the economy' Laclau and Mouffe demonstrate that the 'space of the economy is itself structured as a political space, and that in it, as in any other 'level' of society, those practices we characterized as hegemonic are fully operative' (2001: 76-7). The implication for this study of soft power is that while economic hard power certainly has a role, as discussed, essentialist notions of economic interests do not play a deterministic role in hegemony.²⁰

One may refer to the establishment of hegemonic consent, but that should not suggest homogeneity, omnipotence or absolute conformity. On the contrary, hegemonic discourses are in constant competition with other discourses as well as challenged by changing circumstances that may rupture the façade of timelessness and inevitability that lends the political order behind it its stability.²¹ At that moment, the contingent and

²⁰ Torfing (2005: 21) takes issue with the possible complaint that claim that 'the stipulation of the absence of essences is an essentialist stipulation,' and thus represents a liar's paradox. He rejects this on the grounds that it represents a 'fallacy of equivocation'. He notes, 'When discourse theorists claim that there is no essence they take issue with the metaphysical idea of a positively defined essence that is given in and by itself and from which it is possible to derive a whole series of determinate effects. Now, for the claim that there is no such essence to be an essentialist stipulation it requires that the affirmation of the absence of a deep ground of social identities produces a series of determinate effects. This requirement is exactly what is not fulfilled. Whereas it is possible to derive a whole series of effects from a positively defined ground, nothing follows from the affirmation on an abyss of pure negativity. An economic structure is logically speaking capable of determining the structure of society, but nothing follows by logical implication from the dislocation of the economic structure. In other words, the rejection of an essentialist grounding of the social world cannot fulfil the role of a new essentialist ground.'

²¹ See Aleksei Yurchak's excellent 2005 book *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton University Press, for an example of how the rigid 'hegemony of form' characteristic of public discourses during the period of 'late socialism' crumbled with speed during perestroika.

ideologically constructed nature of reality may become visible, simultaneously exposing unequal relations of power.

It should also be noted that following from Derrida's assertion that there is 'nothing beyond the text' (Derrida 1976: 158-9), recent discourse theory breaks with previous approaches distinguishing between the discursive and non-discursive realms, and asserts that holds that '[d]iscourse no longer refers to a particular part of the overall social system, but is taken to be coterminous with the social' (Torfing 2005: 8). In terms of the categories of this thesis, the implication of this position is that, while soft power is often framed as a motivation for action, ultimately it is not possible for even the actors in question themselves to truly distinguish between factors relating to the 'soft' discursive realm and hard, material non-discursive motivations for behaviour.

Accordingly, it follows from the absence of a 'pre-given, self-determining essence that is capable of determining and ultimately fixing all other identities within a stable and totalizing structure' (Torfing 2005: 13) that identities – like other structures of meaning - are inherently undecidable; it is impossible to attribute essential meaning to them. However, there is a tendency for social meaning and identities to become partially fixed 'in and through' discourse (Torfing 2005). While such constructed meanings are inherently contingent and open to the possibility of change, they are lent structure by 'decentred discursive systems', whereby a discourse acts as 'a relational system of signifying practices that is produced through historical and ultimately political interventions and provides a contingent horizon for the construction of any meaningful subject' (Torfing 2005: 8).

Indeed, although defined by contingency, discourses are in practice not random, rather they refer back, *intertextually*, to previous texts, albeit not necessarily explicitly citing them. In this way they may draw on the established legitimacy of existing discursive elements, while rearranging and rearticulating them to suit contemporary circumstances (Kristeva 1980, cited in Hansen 2006: 56).

While stressing the contingency of identities, discourse theorists follow the insight of mainstream theorising in the field in assuming that identity construction is associated with political limits or frontiers, that is, the discursive parameters by which “we” are distinguished from “them”. Thus while identities are built on some positive elements accepted as characterising the self, meaning equally coagulates in knowing where the limit or frontier lies, which enables the distinction of what is *not* meant by ‘us’ (Norval 2000: 226).

The bounded nature of discourses of meaning emerges as a result of a Derridian ‘ethico-political decision’ (Torfinn 2005: 12) – presumably taken by a ‘hegemon’ - which privileges particular formations, inscribing them with some level of ‘contingent decideability’; a stability of meaning, albeit one that is constantly open to renegotiation. Indeed, in contrast to essentialist or even some constructivist conceptualisations, this tradition of discourse theory proposes that despite ‘the force with which [identities] are usually asserted and maintained’ we should not allow ourselves to be misled into ‘believing that they are immutable, unchangeable and simple’ (Norval 2000). Demonstrating the misconception of the unalterability of even discourses that seem to be deeply rooted, Norval(2000) points to the ‘surprising ease’ by which Marxist-Leninist conceptions of economic democracy were subverted by neo-liberal discourse, which shifted in a

relatively short time from being one myth among several to become an effective imaginary on the global stage. Thus, the simplicity and straightforwardness of political identities suggested by apparently clear-cut 'us-them' boundaries is problematised, and suggested to potentially be the result of complex discursive movements, re-articulations of relations and continuous renegotiations (Norval 2000: 227). This has profound implications for the case study of post-Soviet Ukraine.

3.4. Assumption of the Dual Nature of Soft Power

The preceding theoretical discussion provides a basis for the following elucidation of soft power as it is to be operationalised in this thesis. Hegemonic discourses from various sources have long given meaning, structure and orientation to human societies. Soft power concerns the extension of this theorising to the international realm, where, often in the absence of the relative political hegemony (domination) that has characterised the domestic situation, geo-political powers strive to extend their influence through cost-effective means that appear to be compatible with the contemporary discourse in the Western-influenced world that, in principle at least, condemns unsanctioned coercion as potentially destabilising and ethically unsound.

This thesis assumes a dual understanding of soft power. On one hand, it is argued, soft power can be seen to refer to the *practice* in international politics of achieving foreign policy goals by co-optive (as opposed to coercive) means, often in the form of multilateral cooperation, diplomacy, and international organisations. On the other hand, soft power refers to the *potential* (actual ability) to shape meaning on the international stage.

This dual conceptualisation of soft power articulates well with Aletta Norval's post-Marxist framing of Gramsci's understanding of hegemony:

In Gramsci, hegemony denotes both a type of political relation, and a substantive achievement. In the former case, one is concerned with a type of articulatory relation where persuasion predominates over the use of force, while in the latter, one is concerned with whether or not a particular force has managed to achieve supremacy by imposing its will on to the rest of society through the creation of consent and the incorporation of interests of rival forces. In talking about myth and imaginary and their relation to hegemony I am concerned with the latter, that is, with the types of substantive hegemony that may be achieved in any given social order. (2000: 229)

So, on one hand, Gramsci's earlier notion of hegemony as a political relation based on persuasion; 'the tactical and instrumental need of building... alliances and of constructing a unitary political bloc' (Kalyvas 2000: 353)²² coincides with soft power as a political practice of international cooperation motivated by a range of factors on some common basis. On the other hand, there is the understanding of hegemony as the ability to generate consent and exercise moral and intellectual leadership, and like Norval, this study is interested in exploring this latter aspect. Thereby soft power is conceptualised as a substantive achievement; the ability to create shared meaning in the context of international politics in broad support of the interests, objectives and 'milieu goals' (Wolfers 1962) of those doing the creating. However, it must be noted that these two aspects are often in practice inextricably bound together in the contemporary world, which may be explained in several ways.

Firstly, the ability to shape meanings and thus to win others over to your way of thinking provides the pre-requisite basis of shared values and norms from which cooperative

²² Gramsci's neo-Marxist approach is indicated by his preoccupation with inter-class struggle and the need for the working class to 'challenge the dominant position of the ruling class' (Kalyvas 2000: 353). However, from a post-Marxist perspective and for the purposes for this thesis, there is no reason to restrict the analysis to these confines.

interactions can proceed. Without some commonly understood reference points, there is no foundation for a basic level of mutual trust or shared expectations which support cooperation to achieve respective goals. Such conditions of insecurity establish a pre-disposition to conflict and coercive approaches towards the pursuit of interests. Soft power potentiality can pave the way for cooperative engagement as its focus is on promoting understanding of one's own worldview and thereby coopting others to one's values and norms as legitimate, common grounds for cooperation.

Secondly, by exercising meaning-making potential by means of communicative engagement or attracting others to one's ideas, a political entity is already engaging in soft power practice since the more it is capable of coopting others and winning them over to its worldview, the less it will need to apply hard power means to achieve its ends. This may even come down to simply persuading an opponent of one's overwhelming superiority in wielding tools of violence as a means of facilitate the accommodation of one's interests since this is also meaning making.

However, ultimately it must be maintained that hard and soft forms of power are mutually intertwined: soft power cannot come into being without a 'hard' material basis to facilitate the production and dissemination of discourses, while hard power without soft power's capacity to generate the consent of the ruled may not endure long or only at an excessive cost.

3.5. A Working Definition of Soft Power

This conceptual framework takes as its starting point the assumption that soft power is coterminous with cultural-ideational leadership on the international stage, whether that be realised in global, regional or diasporic terms. Accordingly, for the purposes of operationalisation in this thesis, soft power will be understood as *the ability of a sovereign polity to be perceived as attractive and to set the agenda for foreign citizens in support of its foreign policy goals*. This definition requires some unpacking.

Ability

Rather than focusing on ‘resources’ – the cultural equivalent of ‘tanks and banks,’ this definition places the emphasis on the extent to which ‘soft’ tools of influence actually have societal impact. Soft power is deemed to be present to the extent the agent has the ability to exert such cultural-ideational influence. This follows the Gramscian insight that a ‘political entity is hegemonic when it has *managed* to articulate’ a particular discourse (Kalyvas 2000: 361) [my italics].

The methodological implication of this approach is that outputs, more than inputs, must be evaluated if we are to understand the extent to which a polity may be seen to have soft power among a given target audience.

Sovereign

Rather than indicating formal political independence, sovereign here should point to a Schmittian notion of being the subject taking the original ethico-political decision; or, in Gramscian terms of hegemony, ‘involving the instauration of a new political reality’ (Kalyvas 2000: 354). Indeed, Kalyvas argues that Schmitt’s concept of sovereignty and

Gramsci's notion of hegemony represent two distinct variations on a single theme, namely the idea of the political as the instituting moment of society (2000: 345). For Schmitt, the essence of sovereignty resides in 'its creative, instituting power to set new systems of fundamental laws, to instaurate new political and social orders, and to bring into being novel constitutions' (Kalyvas 2000: 348). Rather than adhering to the order and value structures instituted from without, a 'true sovereign decision is never subsumed under any rule or norm because, in fact, it constitutes their ultimate origin' (Kalyvas 2000: 348). It may be argued that this rendering depicts a decisionism and voluntarism out of character with post-structuralism. This concern is, however, easily refuted on the basis of a reading of Laclau, for whom taking a decision is 'like impersonating God' (1996: 56, cited in Norval 2004: 144), where God is that being 'who has not to give [an]account of his actions before any tribunal of reason, because He is the source of rationality'. Yet, while space is found for human agency, it nevertheless remains the case that all decisions are taken within a certain structural context (Norval 2004). Human agency is admitted on the premise that social beings are located in a "symbolic order" that both shapes their identity and structures their practices' (Glynos and Howarth 2008: 164). These structures are ontologically incomplete ('dislocated'), can never achieve complete suture of meaning, and can hence never fully determine the identity of agents, or their ability to act (Glynos and Howarth 2008: 164). Thus, individual agents may act within the constraints of the discourse of practice, which may 'change over time, [be] determined by changing relationships of power at the level of the social institution or of the society. Power at these levels includes the capacity to control orders of discourse' (Clifford 2001: 23-25).

As will be argued in chapter five, it is such an understanding of sovereignty that prevails in the Kremlin, understood as 'the ability to compete' – *konkurentosposobnost'* in Surkov's

terms (2006). It implies not merely following pre-existing trends, but the ability to engage internationally as a cultural leader, making contributions which transcend national borders and are able to compete successfully in the global dialogue and steer understandings of human civilisation. Frequent references are made to the need for 'creative work', reflecting the notion that 'the sovereign is less an absolute commander than a founder' (Kalyvas 2000: 348).

Thus I argue that soft power represents the cultural facet of great power; indicated by the power to implement the political decision as to what should be 'attractive' in a given cultural context.²³ Thus, rather than simply presenting itself as corresponding to widely-held standards of 'attractiveness' in the manner of nation-branding, a polity with soft power engages creatively in engendering the values referenced by others in their constructions of meaning. This is not to say that there is no mutual interaction and influencing between sovereigns on a cultural level; on the contrary, information about 'the other' challenges foreign citizens' understandings of attractiveness. Thus while the Soviet 'classless' way of life and social provision seemed attractive in the 1950s, by the 1980s the consumerist West had taken the lead in defining what constituted an attractive lifestyle, and with the USSR unable to even keep abreast of innovations, it thus suffered declining relative attraction and legitimacy.

²³ Critics might argue that the values of freedom and democracy shouldn't be touted as a specifically 'American' soft power discourse, since they are also represented and effectively advanced by the European Union, for instance, and hence America may not claim authorship. Nye himself (2004: 82) accounts for this, observing that European soft power can also be a 'source of assistance and reinforcement for American soft power and increase the likelihood of the United States' achieving its objectives. Soft power can be shared and used in a cooperative fashion. European promotion of democracy and human rights helps advance shared values that are consistent with American objectives,' Indeed, although having European pedigree, the contemporary manifestations of such ideas have been largely implemented under America leadership in the post-war period, as noted by de Grazia(2005) and Stephan(2006). Further, as Bull (1982) has already been noted to have commented, the EU has existed under the American military umbrella. Hence one might launch a counter-argument that Europeans agents are co-opted into American discourses, with nuances just a part of increasing their local credibility.

Polity

The typical bearer of soft power today is the state, since it is also capable of wielding the economic and military forms of hard power essential to the creation of hegemonic discourses and serves as a focal point undergirding this collective expression of the will to power (Nietzsche 1966). However, the medieval Catholic Church (Curran 2002) and the radical Islamist network al Qaeda can also be seen as examples of non-state soft power actors as they have also presided over the triad of military, economic and cultural power.²⁴

Precursors of the soft power concept have included 'civilian power' and it is often associated with notions of civil society, rather than state activity. Kalyvas (2000: 366) notes that, 'secured by a stable hegemonic ideology', the state may wither away leaving 'an increasingly expanding and democratically organized civil society' presiding over transparent self-administration. In such a society, discursive 'disciplinary technologies' and governmentality have become entrenched, eliding the need for the hard power spectacle (Foucault 1995). However, given the eternal contingency of discursive regimes of truth and their proneness to rupture and dislocation, the hard power of the state must remain the guarantor of last resort. Indeed, Castells (2009: 109) and Nye concur that soft power and its modus operandi, communication, are too important to be left to the vagaries of the market and private enterprise. For a leading state, soft power is important for maintaining an international environment favourable for policy and interest maximisation, not to mention the fact that in a globalised world, a state's reputation

²⁴ It is also not to be excluded that big corporations with access to not only huge economic and informational resources but also having private military contractors at their disposal might again in the future come to play such a role.

abroad frequently reverberates on the domestic mood, although this is truer of some countries than others.

In this thesis, the polity under study may be referred to in the text as 'soft power centre' or 'agent'.

Perception

As the ability to engender a given perception, soft power can only be said to exist to the extent that a particular sovereign political entity's soft power – cultural, value-based and political - discourses find resonance or at least tacit acceptance among a target audience. In this sense, the presence of soft power is not determined by the array of public diplomacy structures or other communication tools at a polity's disposal or even necessarily the number of times any foreign audience encounters a discourse, but rather depends on the audience's negotiation of the message. A positive reaction may not necessarily be a result of a reflexive process of evaluation, but may be diagnosed if an individual implicitly accepts the discourse, evidenced by their referencing it as a frame of reference in their thinking and normative interpretations, and reproducing it and perpetuating it in their own utterances. The notion of perception also indicates the possibility of seeing otherwise.

Foreign Citizens

While comparable dynamics are at work in the domestic context, soft power's interest lies with the international realm, whether this be defined in terms of a global or regional remit, or with reference to diasporic communities (Dayan 1999).

As such, soft power implies the ability to shape the 'hearts and minds' of the intended audience. This indicates sufficient 'economic power' resources to engage in a multi-faceted information campaign to convey the message to audiences. However, one must also be technically able to access those audiences. Under the current global conditions this is in many cases relatively easy (although certain regimes resist, remaining closed to these informational inflows, notably North Korea, and to a lesser extent China). On one hand, the liberal-democratic logic of freedom of information casts aside normative-ideological barriers to the open diffusion of information.²⁵ On the other hand, the borders of national information spaces have been rendered relatively porous as a result of the spread of communication technologies such as the internet, VOIP, telephones, satellite and cable television, but also letters, and traditional printed media. Where in the past states might only have been able to commence large-scale efforts to legitimate their power among subjugated peoples once territorial control had been achieved through military power, now the door is much more easily opened to a Gramscian meta-politics; the establishment of cultural hegemony as a lead-in to political influence on the international arena.

Furthermore, it should be noted that unlike traditional forms of cultural imperialism, soft power is more likely to be 'networked' (Castells 2009); it will not necessarily reflect a mono-centric source of power, but rather reflect the Foucauldian diffusion of power characteristic of much of the contemporary globalised world.

²⁵ Of course, states do undertake measures to limit this when it suits them, either through traditional censorship as practiced by China, or through what Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has described as the 'privatisation of state censorship'; the application of pressure on to private corporations to interpret their term and conditions of service in particular ways and act accordingly to exclude transgressors.

Attraction and Agenda-Setting

While the literature often associates soft power with the attraction exercised by interesting, fitting and otherwise desirable cultural phenomena, this thesis argues for a broader understanding of 'attraction' and 'attractiveness'. It is contended that soft power is not merely about manifesting an appealing image, but is ultimately about the creation of meaningful knowledge on the international stage; knowledge of value, knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of 'our own', knowledge of what defines 'us' and 'them'. It is working within the framework of such broadly defined and potentially emotive meta-narratives that policy is formed.

Indeed, the ability to set the agenda indicates leadership, but this capacity should be understood not simply in terms of defining *what* is discussed in international fora, but also *how*; that is to say, which values are reflected in the terms of reference applied.²⁶ In becoming hegemonic, such values will be recognised as attractive, infuse foreign policy discourses and provide a legitimating framework for political action, the caveats provided by this conceptual framework notwithstanding. Ultimately, agenda-setting in a soft power sense is about a political entity being able to make its values attractive to other entities. Yet in order to successfully set this agenda, the soft power aspirant must itself be 'attractive'; legitimate, understandable and persuasive. It must possess the credibility to make claims to knowledge in order to construct such regimes of truth. Thus, rather than being positioned as more co-optive and less co-optive on the soft end of Nye's hard-soft spectrum respectively, the processes of attraction and agenda setting are engaged in a

²⁶ My broader understanding refers moreover to the ability of a political entity to play a decisive role in the definition of the values referred to in international debates; the 'rules of the game'. A classic example of agenda-setting in this sense was the discussions prior to the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, where the long held principle of the inviolability of state sovereignty was effectively subordinated to the notion of human rights, which has a relatively short history as a significant value in international politics.

mutually constitutive relationship like two sides of the same coin. As Fairclough notes, '[h]aving the power to determine things like which word meanings or which linguistic and communicative norms are legitimate and 'correct' or 'appropriate' is an important aspect of social and ideological power, and therefore a focus of struggle.' (Fairclough 2001: 73)

Foreign Policy Goals

As a potentiality, and often as a practice, soft power functions in an interactive relationship with hard power resources in the creation of an enabling environment for foreign policy. Soft power attracts foreigners; integrating them into one's own value discourses, which are drawn upon in providing a framework to legitimate policy.

Soft power stands in a mutually dependent relationship with hard power capacity, and is a means of easing the perpetuation of a polity's predominance by reducing the costs co-opting foreigners into a particular constellation of discourse.

3.6. Implications for the Study of Soft Power and Research Questions

Post-structuralism is sometimes chastised for being far from the 'real world' but actually its research programme is based on assumption that policies are 'dependent upon representation of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address' (Hansen 2006: 5-6), that is, the success of political action may hinge upon the extent to which the discourse in which it is embedded is hegemonic. This in turn determines the level of resistance a given polity may face, or the coalitions of support it may co-opt behind it.

However, a poststructuralist approach has certain implications for the claims to truth that can be aspired to by researchers seeking to operationalise empirical studies informed by this perspective. Most significant is the inability of poststructuralist discourse theory and analysis to provide a foundation for assertions about cause and effect. It is not possible to assert whether 'attraction' is elicited by a country's hard or soft power resources, or whether a given policy was the result of soft power or material incentives, as it is ultimately impossible to distinguish between the discursive and non-discursive realm. Such decisions will always implicitly be informed by discourses of value without which 'objective interests' cannot be conceived. Thus it is not possible to credibly distinguish between soft power variables and other factors.

This has implications for the research questions posed as the researcher must simply accept and assume that levels of legitimacy are supported by discourse, and that if discursive hegemony becomes ruptured, it should be re-sutured through a re-articulation of the discursive elements.

This thesis strives to respond to the following research question, which is supported by the sub-questions below:

- Does contemporary Russia have soft power in Ukraine?
 - How is soft power understood in the Russian context?
 - What 'soft power' discourse is Russia disseminating?
 - What means do Russia and its representatives have in Ukraine to disseminate these messages?
 - How are Russian soft power discourses negotiated in Ukraine?

3.7. Soft Power as an Indicator of Civilisational Vigour

The significance of culture for soft power needs to be explored in more detail than undertaken by Nye's articulation of the concept. By his reading, culture is a 'resource'; a focal point for the attraction of foreign citizens. Similarly, as noted in the review of the literature, discussions of soft power often examine the popularity of cultural products, and see this as evidence of power. Yet while this may be accurate, it is not the fully story. Indeed, as argued, above the relationship between a given cultural product and its recognition as appealing is not as straightforward as Nye's approach tends to suggest. Delight at a nation's cultural products (Latin-American music, Japanese animation, English Morris dancing, for instance), does not necessarily imply the osmotic absorption of the social values underlying these phenomena in their indigenous setting. Rather a process of hybridisation of the old and new may take place (Curran 2002: 170, Fairclough 2001: 207). Such manifestations of cultural diplomacy do not, as noted previously, necessarily indicate soft power's ambition of cultural leadership as defined by this study, but may be focussed on familiarising audiences with an attractive image and demonstrating achievement and prestige. The logic is that positive-sum absolute gains are accrued by all. Such a logic, it is argued, does not characterise soft power, and sets it aside from parallel concepts in this regard. Indeed, following the Gramscian insight that social and political relations are characterised by '*hegemonic struggles* that aim to establish a political and moral-intellectual leadership through the articulation of meaning and identity' (Torfing 2005: 15), then soft power may be understood in terms of the cultural contestation foretold by Huntington (1993) and others as likely to become a major arena of geopolitical competition. In contrast to cultural diplomacy, soft power – whether or not it

is publically acknowledged as such – is concerned more with accruing relative gains at the expense of other worldviews. In this sense, while soft power may be progressive in terms of advancing human physical security, its application of non-military tools of engagement does not transcend the realist ontology of competition in an anarchic world. It implies the ability to compete successfully in the international competition for meaning making, and may well entail perceptions of threat to the identity security (Buzan, Wæver et al. 1998) of a target audience, which has indeed been securitised in Russia.

As previously hinted and argued by Gramsci, hegemony is about the creation of some level of collective identity; involving the ‘transformation of a fragmented people into a new effective political force’ (Kalyvas 2000: 353), as a basis for collective political participation and accordingly consent to the leaders. Hegemony thus gives rise to an ‘imagined community’, the sense of a culture shared with individuals one has never met (hence ‘imagined’), which ‘commands profound emotional legitimacy’ (Anderson 1983: 4) and can thus be seen as arguably the ‘most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time’ (1983: 3). The printing press expanded possibilities for the distribution of knowledge, although ‘its potential for spanning space was limited by the entrenchment of vernacular languages’, hence communications circulated primarily on the national level, fostering nationalism, rather than internationalism (Curran 2002: 52). Although Anderson’s argument focuses on national identities, there is thus little reason why his logic cannot be extrapolated to the supranational level, with certain provisos to be discussed further. Indeed, building on Curran’s observations one may state that media can make groups of individuals ‘knowable as a community and also as a familiar object of affection’ and encourage a “‘we-feeling” through its shared news values’ (Curran 2002: 30)

that is potentially as applicable to a wider transborder community where multilingual services are available.

Expanding the project of cultural identity formation to the supranational level broadens the referent object of such campaigns to, in the main, civilisational identity. Huntington (2002: 43) defines civilisations as 'the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.' Accordingly, a civilisation's soft power 'content' reflects the broad cultural attributes; the 'set of values and beliefs that inform, guide, and motivate people's behaviour' (Castells 2009: 36), shared by adherents of that civilisation which distinguish it from other civilisational groupings. This notion of identifying with foreign citizens with whom one imagines shared values may provide a sense of common purpose, and thus a legitimate basis for policies to realise goals in their name.²⁷

Indeed, while to some extent the concept of soft power allows us to extend theorising and analyses of identity construction and cultural value dissemination to the international realm, certain distinctions should be observed. Although the emergence of parallel civilisational identities may reflect the gradual expansion of the human communicative horizon, a soft power community or civilization still encompasses many different nations and national interests, and hence the cultural attributes defining that community must be more broadly formulated than within a nation, providing meta-narratives within which individual, affiliated cultures can construct their self-understandings and relationship to the broader discourses. For instance, the individual rights discourse is very different in Germany and the USA. While some elements of cultural convergence are certainly

²⁷ Although identities are often multiple, a civilisational sense of belonging must vie for loyalty by engaging in a hegemonic struggle with other foci of identity formation. This is particularly problematic for European identity, for instance, as the EU is often cast as an 'other' by national elites.

observable, it is not presently possible to speak of civilisational homogeneity and the notion of national sovereignty retains discursive power, if less and less actual power under conditions of globalisation.

The preceding discussion may appear to foreground the force of ideological power. However, recalling the impossibility of ultimate closure that overshadows discourses of meaning, 'even when a ruling coalition [and by extension its hegemonic discourses] appear[s] to be firmly in control, its ascendancy is rarely complete in practice and always needs to be renewed' (Curran 2002: 141). Indeed, as observed, a hegemonic discourse may become *dislocated* when confronted with developments that it 'it cannot explain, represent, or in other ways domesticate' (Torfing 2005: 16). The political struggles to define the nature and objectives of the new realities continue still; hegemony, in the sense of societal consent, has not truly been achieved in post-Soviet Russia, evidenced by the tendency towards over-reliance on hard forms of power, although this thesis suggests an awareness of the need to move towards softer forms of influence.

3.8. Tools of Soft Power Influence

The first half of this chapter has outlined the theoretical premises informing this exploration of soft power in the Russian context. Now the framework will draw on research on the empirical side; outlining more closely how communication with audiences creates meaning and the factors affecting the efficiency of this process.

Much has been written about the establishment of regimes of truth on the domestic level, often under the rubric of the study of the spread of religion or nationalism, and the logic and assumptions underpinning this theorising offers fruitful analytical potential for the

international angle addressed by soft power. If we understand that valuable political commodity of 'attractiveness' as emerging simultaneously with the actual (rather than merely intended) agenda-setting capacity of a political entity, then in order to explore the internal workings of soft power we must examine the ways in which discourses are brought into being. This necessitates a thorough examination of the workings of the cultural apparatus, or in my terminology the 'tools of soft power', whose communications are so profoundly implicated in the socialisation of populations. Indeed, as Foucault has observed;

No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communications, records, accumulation and displacement which is in itself a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and functioning, to the other forms of power. (cited in Sheridan 1980: 131)

Reflecting on identity forming trends within a national context in his seminal thesis, Anderson traces how nationalisms emerged in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which he attributes in large part to 'print-capitalism'; the convergence of capitalism and printing technology (Anderson 1983, Curran 2002). Book printing gave rise to unified fields of communication, and a growing sense of a shared culture with persons otherwise unknown. Wind forward several hundred years and a plethora of instruments of mass communication are available to those seeking to share and advance their worldview, including aspirant 'soft power centre'. Writing in the 1930s, Gramsci refers to the non-coercive 'civil society'²⁸ apparatuses' such as the Church, schools, trade unions, political parties, cultural associations, clubs, the family etc., which perform the task of producing and reproducing cultural hegemony; the winning of consent for leadership. Similarly, Curran (2002: 139) speaks of 'socialising agencies' and Said (1981: 43) of

²⁸ Gramsci's understanding of civil society is counterpoised to 'political society': the police, army, legal system, in short the methods of political and legislative order. There is often overlap between political and civil society.

‘cultural apparatus’ to describe the agents involved in processes of socialisation and enculturation; the process of reproducing norms in society. Often operating in tandem with state institutions, whether in a coercive or co-optive capacity, such associations play a role in developing, shaping, disseminating and maintaining discourses bearing the culture, philosophy and morality of the nation’s ruling or, in Gramsci’s terms, hegemonic elite.

Today the range of communication tools at the disposal of political elites is wider than ever. However, in the case of soft power, where the interest lies in shaping the worldview of persons beyond one’s own national borders, the situation is somewhat different as an aspirant soft power actor may not have direct access to the substantive opinion forming instruments of third states, in particular the education system and domestic media.²⁹ Nevertheless, in an era of globalisation, this is far from an insurmountable barrier to wielding influence abroad, provided a polity can rally sufficient material resources to implement an appropriate campaign. Indeed, as Fairclough observes, there is today a sufficient mass of ‘global’ – what he sees as North Atlantic’ – discourses, that in many different countries, people have a ‘constant external point of reference and horizon for their own discursive practices’ (2001: 206).

Although the following list is by no means exhaustive, it provides an overview of the means of communicating with foreign audiences that, depending on the institutional and legal framework in the state of residence, may enable a polity to access target populations in ways that circumvent the oversight of the said state.

²⁹ The case may be the reverse, however. A political entity may have established hard power domination over a peripheral entity and desire to stabilise and facilitate its authority by legitimating it; encouraging foreigners to see its power as beneficial, responsible, legitimate, necessary and otherwise attractive by drawing them into accepting the centre’s value discourses as their own.

- Charities, NGOs and other civil society organisations, particularly those which promote values, such as religious institutions, human rights organisations or offer 'technical assistance'
- Educational schemes (language training, exchanges, scholarships, textbook / learning resource publication, conferences, skills training sessions, summer camps)
- Mass media, press agencies, internet resources, social networks, blogs
- Idea formation institutes; academic institutions, think tanks, consultancies, polling organisations, seminars
- Traditional diplomacy, kin-state policies, legislation on diaspora rights and privileges, diplomatic assistance
- Public diplomacy: cultural diplomacy, sport, science
- Entertainment industry; books, film, TV, radio and music production, cinema
- Private corporations and advertising, nation-branding

The situation among such nodes is very diverse. Some unofficial proponents of the official discourse may be obviously state-supported and acknowledged as operating in line with its agenda, if not in so many words. Others may insist on their independence. Significantly, the most successful soft power strategies will succeed in co-opting third party agents to their agenda without the provision of material or hard power incentives; thus is the co-optive charm of soft power. Indeed, it must be the ultimate aim of soft power strategies that entities on the periphery become socialised into the values of the centre and reproduce the main elements of its discourse spontaneously in their own policies, rhetoric and activities. Indeed, there are other agents beyond the official instruments of public diplomacy which are actively and significantly engaged in promoting a political entity's overall worldview. These may be conceptualised in terms of a loose spectrum, according to the degree of dependence upon, and determination by the soft power agent:

- Official state public diplomacy apparatus, presumed to follow state line without question
- Unofficial diffusers of general state position, at least partly directly state-funded but this is not generally acknowledged, or they are still considered as formally distinct
- Co-opted – not state funded but still generally promotes overall perspective, may be based in the target country rather than the centre

- Free-agents – consider self ‘pro-country X’, but don’t necessarily promote the official vision, and may even provoke contrary effects

We may not know which category on this spectrum a given outlet falls into, and this position may change through time.

Furthermore, when considering a political entity’s soft power measures, a conceptual distinction needs to be made between (i) tools of communication and their activities and (ii) other ‘content’ measures who would only touch a relatively small number of people were it not for the multiplier effects of communication tools. For instance, a polity may implement policies which assist people living beyond its borders, or pursue excellence in the arts. Yet the potential attraction of such policies and events isn’t fully realised until it receives wider diffusion, which may lead to it becoming part of the polity’s image. Similarly, the potential sympathy established through the provision of scholarships for elite foreign students to study in one’s country may take years to bear fruit in statements that significantly advance one’s worldview to a wider audience.

3.9. Discursive Strategies

It has been argued that with its soft power work, Russia seeks to promote its civilisational worldview and attract others share its vision. Yet what does this mean, more precisely? And how do these aims articulate with wider policy goals? It is proposed here that by using informational-communicative means to promote certain narratives, a soft power agent tries to achieve three core goals. Firstly, it strives to promote its agenda as attractive in the world; its positive contribution to the international market place of ideas and what comes to mind primarily when speaking of soft power. Yet this set of potentially attractive narratives is accompanied by less-discussed narrative elements whose purpose

is to undermine the ideational hegemony of others, on one hand, and to provide a rationale to help deflect criticism of the agent in question itself, on the other.

In the terminology of discourse theory, what Russia seeks to incite may be termed a 'moment of antagonism,' whereby the 'undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible constitutes the field of the 'political.'" As Norris notes, '[a]ntagonism has a revelatory function, in that it shows the ultimately contingent nature of all identity'. In the terms of Laclau's political theory of hegemony, this moment constitutes the first phrase of a process of a Wittgensteinian 'aspect change,' which occurs 'where our established ways of doing and seeing have run out and a new set of corrections is established between things not previously linked together' (Norval and Mijnsen 2009: 44). In this first stage, soft power 'tools' seek, through their communicative activities, to provoke *ruptures* in the hegemonic – i.e. above all, Western, but also Ukrainian nationalist – discourse. This is done, for instance, by highlighting contradictions that draw attention to the political nature of norms that have assumed the appearance of common sense. In the Russian case, one can observe consistent efforts to highlight interpretations of incidents whereby Western activities cannot adequately be explained by the West's own normative discourses. Accounts pointing the audience towards the conclusion of hypocrisy, double-standards and self-interest dressed up as humanitarian concerns must contribute towards an erosion of legitimacy, hence trust and hence the 'attraction' of the given international actor as a credible meaning-making agent. In this way, Russian communications may be viewed as attempts to chip away at the hegemony of the soft power discourses underpinning the Western political model. Not only does Russia resist integration into this order, its counter-hegemonic activities also make it easier for others to do likewise.

Pro-active communication leading to sustained antagonism of this nature might ultimately bring about *dislocation*³⁰, whereby it becomes apparent that phenomena cannot be explained by current hegemonic discourses, thereby necessitating the construction of new discourses of meaning. Norval and Mijnsen advise that '[a]ny attempt to respond to a condition of dislocation will have to be able both to respond to existing conditions and to offer something by way of novel forms and terms of identification' (2009: 44). As Laclau has observed, 'the acceptance of a discourse depends on its credibility and this will not be granted if its proposals clash with the basic principles informing the organisation of a group'(1990: 66). Hence, rather than trying to impose entirely foreign, radical and new discursive solutions, it is far easier to start with concepts that are already familiar and in some way acceptable and 'attractive' to the target audience. For instance, the Russian soft power narratives draws on certain elements of critique articulated by post-colonial scholars, whose frequent recourse to Marxist-inspired theories means the discourse has the added benefit of intuitive familiarity – and hence the ultimate ring of truth³¹ – both to citizens of the former Soviet republics, as well as a potential wider global audience in the formerly 'second world' and non-aligned countries. This is important domestically as well. The thinking of Russian philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has provided specifically 'national' inspiration to identity narratives.

As already noted, an information strategy must also take into account the need to response to external criticism. As Hayoz (2009: 127) notes, the concept of 'sovereign

³⁰ Dislocations are events that cannot be symbolized by the existing discursive order and function to disrupt that order (Laclau, 1990:39-59) Ruptures are essentially less fundamental incidences of the same, which just require an adjustment of the discourse, not its complete reconstruction.

³¹ Media research shows people prefer to follow their 'gut feelings' or prejudices, regardless of strong evidence to the contrary.

democracy', which will be examined in detail in chapter five, "sutures" social divisions and hides dislocation'. Thereby it provides a discursive basis upon which to rearticulate the discourse to account for and integrate antagonistic elements; the ruptures done to Russia's own discourses regarding legitimacy, its human rights record, political system, living standards, etc. In this sense, critics are correct to see the sovereign democracy concept as a 'smoke screen' for 'authoritarian' practices, but to view it as *only* that is not to appreciate its wider potential, as will become clear.

3.10. Transmission Effects vs. Audience Reception

The following section explores how tools of communication shape the discursive imaginaries that give meaning to people's lived experience. Castells proposes that,

we can assert that the most important sources of influence in today's world is the transformation of people's mind. If it is so, then the media are the key networks, as the media, organized in global conglomerates and their distributive networks, are the primary source of messages and images that reach people's minds. (2009: 27-8)

While this study does not question that primacy of the role of the mass media, it is asserted that meaning-making is undertaken not only by the mass media, but is rather something to which any medium of communication may contribute, proportionate to the scale of its activity. Given the relative weight of its impact, most communication theory has focused on the role of the mass media in this regard, rather than the way in which NGOs³², for instance, shape the discursive landscape in which target audiences interact. It is assumed, however, that many of the processes and debates are equally relevant for other methods of communication. As Neuman observes, there is 'no evidence of consistent or significant differences in the abilities of different media to persuade, inform,

³² Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), in which a 'development discourse' is identified and its implications explored, is an excellent exception to this.

or even to instill an emotional response in audience members' (1991: 99). Additionally, in the most successful cases, their activities and messages are likely to receive wider diffusion through the mass media, and thereby benefit from multiplicative effects. Thus, I will draw on the media and cultural studies literature with the assumption that although diverse kinds of communication media may have different *social* effects, the *communicative* mechanisms and effects are nevertheless analogous. That is to say, these tools of communication in the broadest sense strive to perform the essential task not only of disseminating information but also engage in competition to convert such information into knowledge.

The Communication Studies literature reports that there are two main approaches to the study of the workings of the mass media. The first – known sometimes as the 'bullet' or 'hypodermic-needle model' (Neuman 1991: 87) – seems to take response of the 'passive, attentive and gullible' (Neuman 1991: 79, 87) audience largely for granted, focusing on the ways in which the media work on audiences; their 'transmission effects'. The second shifts the focus on to the audience, who are seen as active negotiators, and examines the factors affecting the extent to which the communication process functions as intended. Indeed, while the media are held up as a great source of power given their capacity to reach unprecedentedly large audiences, some scholars argue that this power is by no means as absolute as some give it credit, and is rather at best contested (Dyczok 2009), and hence reception should be explored (Castells 1997: 311; Dayan 1999: 30). Livingstone (1991: 101) argues that it is necessary to abandon such dichotomised thinking, and it indeed appears to make sense to consider both the ways in which the media strive to influence the audience's constructions of knowledge, and also the factors informing the audience's negotiations of the messages they encounter. Therefore, a two-pronged

approach to understanding the role of communications in generating hegemonic power will be taken.

3.10.1. Transmission effects

Firstly, the ways in which the media are theorised to work in society will be examined. According to Castells (2009: 157), the media play a highly significant role in forming people's interpretative frameworks which structure how they perceive the world. He highlights three major processes which are involved in communications with the public and shape how populations are encouraged to perceive the issues covered; agenda-setting, priming, and framing. From the point of view of my conceptualisation of soft power, I would argue that these processes can be considered functions of Nye's more broadly defined 'agenda-setting'. The ability to set the agenda on the international political stage is the result of such engagement with such processes in communications by political actors.

3.10.1.1. Agenda setting [prioritising]

For Castells, agenda-setting 'refers to the assignment of special relevance to one particular issue or set of information by the source of the message (e.g. a specific media organization) with the expectation that the audience will correspond with heightened attention to the content and format of the message.' (2009: 157, cites McCombs and Shaw 1972, 176). To avoid terminological confusion, I will refer to this as *prioritising*. Essentially, this involves suggesting to audiences *what* the relevant issues are at a given moment in time, an action which inevitably entails a selection process and the exclusion of certain, potentially significant issues from the main discussion fora. This selection

process reflects the priorities identified by wider discourses of meaning and value, and naturally the preponderance of influence and interests in the society concerned.

3.10.1.2. Priming

Castells (2009: 157, refers to Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007: 11) states that priming occurs 'when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments. It is often understood as an extension of agenda setting... By making some issues more salient in people's minds (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues (priming).' Thus, by producing and reproducing discourses of value (shared understandings of what constitutes 'good', 'praiseworthy' and 'aspirational' and correspondingly bad, reprehensible and worthy of sanction), media of communication contribute to the shaping of the normative criteria that audiences apply in their interpretations of the world.

3.10.1.3. Framing

Finally, Castells (2009: 158, refers to Entman, 2004: 5) notes that 'framing is the process of "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution." [...]' Framing as a chosen activity by the sender of the message is sometimes deliberate, sometimes accidental, and sometimes intuitive. But it always provides a direct connection between the message, the receiving brain, and the action that follows.' Sometimes, the process of framing does not even need to be direct and explicit, instead the process may

'[operate] by leaving gaps in the information that the audience fills with their preconceived schemas' (Entman 2004, also Castells 1997: 314). Such guided discovery may enhance the message's credibility by appearing to be an independent, individual conclusion. In this way, media of communication may draw intertextually on associations that implicitly support audiences in reaching a particular emotional state on a particular issue. Such intertextual framing may also allow information outside the mainstream discourse on a given topic to be conveyed, thereby boosting perceptions of openness and hence credibility, but then be trumped through association with subtle intertextual references, leaving audiences with an impression that remains 'on discourse'. For instance, articles conveying more contemporary, progressive stories about Russia may conclude with reference to the Soviet period that seem to frame recent positive developments as an exception to an enduring negative constant without even stating as much and thereby 'inoculating' audiences against the potential effects of the preceding information (McGuire 1961).

These processes of agenda-setting support the assumption that, even if the media may not be able to tell people *how* to think, they have a major role in influencing *what* they think *about* (Cohen 1963). Dominant media have the capacity to affect the 'closure of the debate' (Curran 2002: 38) by 'imposing terms of reference' concerning what is important to consider with regard to any given relevant issue. Consequently, it may become taken for granted what the main problems or issues are, while alternative understandings may be largely excluded or expressed as subordinate, marginalised elements within this dominant framework. Indeed, as Curran (2002: 165) notes 'the principal way in which the media influence the public is not through campaigning and overt persuasion but through routine representations of reality. The power of definition influences public

understandings of the world, and in an indirect and contingent way, public attitudes and behaviour.'

3.10.2. Audience Reception

The previous section has detailed how media of communication can in principle shape audience perceptions, views and self-understandings, including engendering soft power. However, the measures above do not always yield the result predicted by the theory, as audiences respond in different ways to the same stimuli. Thus, these transmission effects arguments must be balanced by insights suggesting that audiences, rather than behaving like passive, tabula rasa receptacles awaiting filling with informational content, themselves exert friction on the transmission process, which thereby assumes characteristics of an active process of negotiation (Neuman 1991: 88, Fairclough 2001: 207). Stuart Hall (1973), for instance, has produced a schema indicating that between the message sent by the sender and the message received by the recipient a complex process of interpretation is at play, with the consequence that the message received may differ considerably from the message intended by the sender. By way of explanation, Castells (2009: 132) refers to Umberto Eco's notion that 'senders and addressees interpret the codes and subcodes [of media messages] by involving their own codes which decouple the relationship between signifier and the signified in the message that was sent, and filter the signifier to obtain a different signified'. Thus, in Neuman's words, 'the audience member is both passive and active at the same time. The mind is such that new information, ideas and impressions are taken in and evaluated and interpreted in the light of cognitive schema and the accumulated information from past experience' (Neuman 1991: 114, cited in Castells 2009: 128).

Considering audience reception, Kinder (1998, cited in Castells 2009: 153) has asserted that '[t]he basic materials that form public opinion are of three kinds: values, group dispositions, and material self-interests'. In line with Nye's assertion (2004b) that soft power is less about rational persuasion, available research shows that predispositions and values (the ingredients of symbolic politics) have a greater say in the formation of political opinion than material self-interest. Curran (2002: 62) concurs that influence works not by imposition of opinion, in the manner of blunt 'propaganda,' but by playing on feelings. In the case of soft power's contestation of values, all other things being equal, the prevailing 'regime of truth' may not be that which presents the best arguments, but the one that elicits the right feelings (Westen 2007: 125, in Castells 2009: 154). In this way, soft power may thus be partially understood as relying on receptivity to the emotional pull of the reference points of a soft power centre's cultural tags. Touching upon a neuro-psychological angle, Castells (2009: 145) states that the 'activation of our brain through neural patterns induced by mirror neurons is at the source of empathy, identification with or rejection of narratives in television, cinema, or literature and the political narratives of parties and candidates.' Communication may be deemed successful if it inspires the desired response in the audience.

Further to this, Castells (2009: 116) observes that 'for communication to happen, senders and receivers need to share codes'. 'Code', or what Fairclough names 'members' resources' (2001: 65) can be understood in terms of the cultural reference points, expectations and assumptions that are shared between groups and allow often unconscious access to emotional effects among the audience, for instance, references to topics that evoke guilt through 'appeasement', a duty to 'protect the innocent', fear of 'Soviet imperialism', or the righteous defence of individual rights 'because I'm worth it'.

Thus, we can understand 'codes' as reflecting 'regimes of truth': a message is more likely to achieve the intended reception if it is rooted in common value pre-assumptions and plays on cultural reference points familiar to the target audience.

Some scholars explain the ineffectiveness of the media to persuade audiences of their agenda by reference to the 'engrained' attitudes of individuals. In this regard, Castells (2009: 154) refers to partisanship as an emotional constraint with both institutional and emotional features. Such partisanship is institutional as it is historically rooted and is a factor of continuity. Emotional factors relate to the way that 'experiences of partisanship, often received from the family during childhood, are wired into the brain as they are associated with a number of emotional events' (Castells 2009: 154). As Curran (2002: 133) observes, 'media influence also increases if the mediated communication accords with audience members' prior dispositions'. Simply put, audiences tend to ignore information that doesn't fit with their world view.

This conclusion articulates well with the notion that the influence of the media is long-term; cumulative and accruing (Fairclough 2001: 43). Shared codes, a sense of commonality or 'shared destiny', rather than being intrinsic and primordial are the result of often life-long exposure to the same experiences and cultural attributes that are reproduced, albeit with updates, generation after generation. Soft power must thus be about preserving and developing shared emotional reference points that derive from, and simultaneously reinforce, self-understandings. Thus, a soft power strategy must not simply focus on the dissemination of a particular message, but also take into account the preservation, and development of shared cultural 'codes' upon which messages will then draw to gain power. In order to 'prevent the death' (Dayan 1999: 30) of existing identities,

like, in the Russian case, the Eastern Slavic Orthodox discourse, there is a need for particularistic media to continue articulating an identity narrative, rather than assuming that centuries of shared cultural-linguistic heritage will perform this perform by virtue of their existence alone.

Scholars critical of the notion of an omnipotent media may return agency to audiences, stressing their capacity to call upon their own faculties in interpreting media messages. Yet Livingstone (1999: 100) qualifies the potential of this capacity, noting that 'audience reception theory... assume[s] that viewers' interpretative resources (i.e. knowledge and ways of knowing) are constructed entirely independently of the media'. Thus she suggests that what appear to be individuals' own insights are themselves conditioned by information flows, shifting the emphasis away from self-generated knowledge. This is not to completely discount the significance of personal experience in assessing media messages, indeed, as noted, meaning is never fully sutured, but simply to recall that those impressions of personal experience are themselves shaped by discursive regimes of truth that may be more or less favourable to the perpetuation of the status quo.³³

³³ In addition to alternative narratives gained through access to oppositional media, the interpretation of soft power messages may be affected by personal experience with the polity in question; how far does reality correspond with rhetoric. This may affect a state's attractiveness and thereby its credibility in the eyes of individuals to make claims to truth. In this sense soft power is not just about images of attractiveness, but asserting a viable claim to actually be attractive. Thus, credibility is a core issue in soft power. (USSR communication protocols foster cynicism today still).

3.11. Competitive Communication

In addition to the advantages of long-term, repeated exposure to particular cultural codes, another highly significant factor affecting audience reception of soft power messages must be identified as 'access to oppositional discourse'(Curran 2002: 158). Although generally not taken into account in the soft power literature, this is very relevant as individuals existing in an information space dominated by one discourse of rationality have less ready access to other codes of interpretation, and may thus be considered less likely to subvert the 'regime of truth' embodied in the 'code'. This aspect points again to the zero-sum nature of soft power. Soft power is often considered to function on a 'positive sum' basis in that individuals can appreciate and draw upon the codes of more than one soft power centre simultaneously and as such may possess multiple identities. However, if the presence of oppositional discourses in a given information space diminishes the capacity of a particular message to be received as intended, then advances of the capacity and effectiveness of one soft power centre will undermine the receptive potency of the discourses of another soft power centre. Indeed, commenting on communication networks, which characterise large-scale communication possibilities, Mulgan notes that such networks are 'created not just to communicate, but also to gain position, to out-communicate' and thereby place the interests and values they embody in a more advantageous position in the mind of audience (cited in Castells 2009: 20).

It therefore follows from the zero-sum logic argued to reside at the heart of the concept that a soft power strategy entails not only positive measures to promote the enhancement of a polity's *absolute* attractiveness, as per the approach of cultural diplomacy. Rather, ratcheting up one's *relative* soft power vis-à-vis competitors may

entail negative communications designed to provoke ruptures in the hegemony of their discourse, and hence their attraction and agenda-setting capacity.

A strong soft power strategy will likewise provide for the defensive measures against attempted ruptures. A sophisticated and effective communication strategy is required to handle high-profile incidents – such as the August 2008 war with Georgia – to explain such challenging events in terms of codes well-received by target audiences, thereby framing potentially dislocatory discursive moment ‘on’ or ‘within’ the prevailing discourse, and hence ensuring their acceptability, or at least diffusing the most extreme manifestations of opposition. Russia is widely judged to have lost the information front in the early days of the war against Georgia in August 2008. However, since then it has fought back, construing Georgia and in particular President Saakashvili as an unreliable ally ill-suited to NATO membership, and thereby maintaining a significant strategic goal of halting US military penetration into the region.

Finally, in order to effectively engage in such political struggles for the definition of meaning on the international stage, an agent must itself be ‘attractive’, here in the sense of credible and legitimate. Soft power messages make claims to truth about the nature of politics and society. As with other speech acts (Austen 1963; Buzan et al 1998), if members of the audience do not have trust in the authority of the agent of soft power to make such claims to truth, then they are correspondingly less likely to accept the message disseminated. This credibility relates both to the ‘tools’ and the ‘centre’ of soft power itself. Neuman(1991: 85) recommends a diversified strategy for this purpose, since ‘[r]epresenting the official point of view in government-controlled newscasts is one thing; it is easily recognized and interpreted by audiences. But more subtle cues regarding what

is and is not politically acceptable, carried as part of main-stream advertising, comedy, and action-oriented entertainment, can be more effective.’ Indeed, promoting a consistent – or at any rate discursively compatible – message via a selection of non-official media helps occupy the information space and create a sense of critical mass, conducive to the emergence of new rationalities of ‘common sense’. In order for the centre to be able to disseminate and reinforce its core values and metanarratives by way of apparently distinct tools, it is highly desirable for aspirant soft powers to have access to a wider network of communication outlets.³⁴ Accordingly, an entity may use both financial and psychological incentives (i.e. patriotism, pride in being part of an attractive movement) to coopt a wider network of partners.

Furthermore, the perception of the tools themselves being independent, non-biased, and fair is also an important asset as otherwise a sense of being a propaganda target may emerge, inciting an effect contrary to that intended. To this end, coverage of 'subordinate elements' – i.e. contending views - rather than their complete exclusion is also an effective strategy. Accounting for alternatives and oppositional arguments by *framing* them in a way that tacitly accepts the assumptions of the powerful about what is important, necessary, possible (Castells 2009), may point to their inappropriateness or irrelevance; radical ideas may simply not make sense within a dominant discourse, particularly when its reference points are strictly disciplined by meaning-making elites. In this way, while a range of opinions may apparently be debated, the underlining value assumptions framing the discussion remain unchallenged. This approach to covering alternative views not only has the capacity to neutralise opposition by subtly discounting them as marginal and thereby ‘inoculating’ (McGuire 1961) audience members against

³⁴ Castells (2009) details the networking of the most powerful business empires.

their potential effects, but may even lend credibility to the dominant view through cultivating the impression of the tool in question being fair, open and democratic.

3.12. Concluding Remarks

This conceptual framework has argued that the alleged 'shallowness' of Joseph Nye's theory of soft power can be well remedied by the integration of insights and analytical concepts from post-structuralist discourse analysis, and a post-Marxist understanding of Gramsci's hegemony. The anti-essentialist epistemology and post-foundationalist ontology problematise the notion of 'attraction' seen to be at the conceptual core of soft power, and expose claims to truth as not only constructed as an effect of power but ever lacking in closure of meaning. Identities are similarly contingent upon Foucauldian discursive articulations, which are themselves a significant marker of power relations. As such, soft power is the ability to influence these discursive constellations in such a way that particular policies, worldviews and interpretations are framed as 'common sense'. Chapter six will examine in-depth the narratives that Russia seeks to promote as the defining contours of its contribution to the marketplace of civilisational ideas, while the final chapter will provide insights into how the selected target audience negotiated these discourses. Indeed, following from the conceptual framework outlined here, whereby soft power is understood as the ability to not only construct oneself as attractive in the international arena, but also define the very criteria for judging attraction, Russia will be deemed to have soft power to the extent that these ideas received a positive reception.

Soft power is more complicated to 'wield' effectively than the direct forms of influence offered by economic and military resources. In this chapter, soft power was argued to be the result of successful communication. In order to understand how this works, the two

main perspectives on the influence of the media have been examined, exploring both the purported effects of the media on audiences, and how messages conveyed are actively negotiated by those audiences. While communication outlets may present information as so to structure audiences' responses, whether these cues are taken is informed by the audiences' interpretative resources, which may be shaped by discourses suggesting alternative meanings. The penultimate chapter will explore the networks of 'soft power' influence that are being constructed in Ukraine, focusing on the informational activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate's activities. The next chapter will now detail how the definition of soft power outlined here will be operationalised in the empirical research.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The concept of soft power and its discontents were explored in depth in the second chapter. Certain conceptual ambiguities were identified, and the definitions presented by Nye and others were argued to be problematic with regard to the ability to facilitate the rigorous and coherent operationalisation of an empirical research project. In order to help resolve this impasse, a working definition was proposed, according to which soft power is understood as ‘the ability of a sovereign polity to be perceived as attractive by and to set the agenda for foreign citizens in support of its foreign policy goals.’ This rearticulated concept was given theoretical content by drawing upon neo-Gramscianism and post-Marxist insights from discourse theory, particularly as approached by those who may be labelled post-structuralist. By this rendition, soft power may be understood as cultural leadership; expressing the capacity to successfully engage in the formulation of meaning on the international stage.

The task of this chapter is to outline how the rearticulated concept of soft power was operationalised in the fieldwork study of contemporary Russian soft power in Ukraine. It likewise aims to provide the reader with insight into the methodological choices that were made in the design and implementation of the main part of the empirical research, the results of which are presented in the final chapter. This, essentially, will provide a road map to how the central research question of the thesis will be answered: *‘To what extent can Russia be said to have soft power in contemporary Ukraine?’*

4.2. Operationalisation

The issue arises of how to assess the prevalence of the soft power discourses advanced. As noted in the discussion of the literature, the proponents of the first and second faces of power (Dahl 1957, Bachrach and Baratz 1962) have stressed observable change in terms of decision-making and non-decision-making as criteria to evidence power. However, inspired by a three (Lukes 1974; 2005) or even four (Digeser 1992) dimensional understanding of power, the ontological and epistemological precepts of this study do not demand directly observable changes in behaviour to identify power at work. Rather, soft power as a result is viewed as an accumulated ideological *potential*, which may then serve to discursively frame certain policies as politically possible. Thus, the outcomes concerned will not in the first instance be behavioural modifications or policy shifts, but rather of an attitudinal nature. That is, they concern the response of the target audience to the communicated message. This may or may not require an actual change in opinion among the subjects under investigation, or it may simply reflect the perpetuation of value constellations and their preservation in the face of the pressure of alternative views currently being promulgated in a particular society.

As argued in the conceptual framework, attraction and agenda-setting are to be seen as two sides of the same coin. Thus, responses to the main research question will focus on examining the extent to which Russia has been able to 'set the agenda' in terms of successfully projecting its reference points, value orientations and interpretative filters. Agenda-setting ability – and by extension, attraction – will be deemed to be present relative to the extent that these ideological discourses are accepted by the target audience. As such, acceptance may not necessarily be indicated by explicit and overt

agreement; it may also be observed in so far as audience members tacitly accept the discourse as their own, seeing it as credible, and adopt and use its precepts without fundamental critique. In neo-Gramscian terms, these individuals, by accepting moral leadership in this way, give their implicit consent to these discourses, which themselves serve to underpin and reflect relations of power in a harder sense too. In such cases we may speak of hegemony.³⁵ Individuals co-opted into the discourse unwittingly become agents of its wider dissemination, since their spontaneous reproduction of the discourse serves to reinforce it as a societal structure, and contributes to its normalisation as 'common sense'.

This study follows Nye's suggestion to evaluate soft power outcomes by means of surveys and focus groups. However, due to the largely structural, discursive approach of this thesis, an evaluation of whether soft power is present will focus less on whether particular individuals openly express 'attraction' towards Russian 'resources', and more on how the cultural and value narratives promoted by Moscow resonate with the target audience.

4.3. Background Research: Desk-Based Work and Expert Interviews

Desk-based research involving the review of relevant media, scholarly and policy-related sources has naturally been ongoing throughout this research project, and has covered a range of primary and secondary sources, including books, articles and reports published mostly in Russia and in Russian, in which the wider theme of soft power is discussed by practitioners and analysts capable of influencing political practice. This desk-based

³⁵ Whenever the term 'hegemony' is used in this thesis it will be in the neo-Gramscian sense articulated in the conceptual framework. 'Dominance' will be used to express the more conventional notion of the term.

research was supplemented by expert interviews in order to contextualise the readings and provide further insight from individuals with knowledge resulting from their proximity to domestic debates or policy work. The interviews were conducted in three main waves.³⁶ The first were during a 10-day scoping visit to Kyiv in January 2010, the main purpose of which was to confirm Ukraine as a case study and gain greater familiarity with the political context there, especially as it was the moment of the first round of the elections that saw Viktor Yanukovych elected as president. Secondly, I travelled to Moscow for a month in June / July 2011 and conducted a number of interviews with experts, including academics, practitioners, policy advisers, analysts and four PhD students writing on topics related to Russian soft power. I conducted a few informal interviews during my preparatory visit around Ukraine in July 2011 and alongside the focus groups in the different regions of Ukraine, which helped gain a little more insight into local specificities. Further, telephone interviews were conducted with relevant experts on a rolling basis throughout the project as I came in touch with them to enrich my understanding of the local context.

Generally, the persons interviewed were either recommended by university contacts, authors whose work I'd found useful or those I became acquainted with through the 'snowball' method.³⁷ The interviews were semi-structured to provide thematic guidance,

³⁶ Please see the appendices for a full list of interviews conducted.

³⁷ 'Snowball' sampling is a method whereby initial interviewees put the interviewer in touch with other individuals whose insights they believe may be beneficial for the research project, in the manner of a chain. Biernacki, P. and D. Waldorf (1981). "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling." *Sociological Methods Research* 10(2): 141-163. Also see Rivera, S. W., P. M. Kozyreva, et al. (2002). "Interviewing Political Elites: Lessons from Russia." *PSOnline* December: 683-688.

while allowing participants to raise the issues they considered relevant to Russian soft power, which, as will become apparent in the next chapter, differed significantly.³⁸

This study is particularly interested in the soft power influence of the Russian state. Therefore, in order to adjudge this, it is necessary to identify the discursive resources responding as closely as possible to those of officialdom. In addition to the foreign policy perspectives expressed in political leadership discourse, the Russia Orthodox Church and the Russkiy Mir Foundation have been selected as bearers of cultural and value narratives that dovetail with the political notion of sovereign democracy. Although formally independent entities, these bodies will be argued to have a commonality of purpose with the Russian state that is reflected in their tessellating discourses.

4.4. Identification of Sources of Official Russian Soft Power Narratives

Most straightforwardly, the Kremlin's foreign policy discourse was ascertained through examination of the public discourse of foreign policy leaders between 2006 and 2011. Above all, this meant analysing the speeches of the Russian President and the Foreign Minister, although statements of other politicians with an interest in the softer aspects of foreign policy have also been taken into account (e.g. Konstantin Kosachev, Farid Mukhametshin). Although there was a shift in tone between the Putin and Medvedev presidencies, the core assumptions and perspectives have not demonstrably changed from the view of the world expressed by President Putin in his February 2007 address to the Munich Security Conference. Indeed, Richters has observed continuity in terms of Russian political culture under Putin and Medvedev (2012: 11).

³⁸ The basic set of questions may be found in Appendix J.

With regard to the more culture- and value-oriented discourses, the situation is a little more complicated. Since the collapse of communism, the Russian state has distanced itself from ideological structures in favour of flexibility of reaction.³⁹ With this in mind, combined with the cultural heterogeneity of the Russian Federation, it is uncomfortable for the state to take an official position on culture and values, and indeed, the presidency has tended not to elaborate on these themes. Thus, in order to identify cultural and value-oriented discourses, it was necessary to look beyond the formal structures of the state. To this end, this study focuses on the cultural discourses articulated by the Russkiy Mir Foundation and the value-based narratives of the Russian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Kirill.

In many respects, the Russkiy Mir Foundation is an archetypal tool of cultural diplomacy. It was established by presidential decree in 2007 as a joint project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science, with the stated purpose of ‘promoting the Russian language, as Russia's national heritage and a significant aspect of Russian and world culture, and supporting Russian language teaching programs abroad’. The Foundation is headed by Vyacheslav Nikonov, a well-known politologist, who has also contributed positively to the debate on sovereign democracy (Orlov 2006)⁴⁰. Indeed, Nikonov was one of the initiators of the idea of soft power in Russia, who developed the idea that Russia must advance its influence abroad with the help of soft power. Although the foundation was created with the idea that it would be funded by a combination of

³⁹ State ideology is prohibited in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

⁴⁰ Nikonov is has also been a Senior Research Fellow at Moscow State University, Dean of History and Political Science at the International University in Moscow, founder of the Polity Foundation, President of the "Unity for Russia" Foundation, Head of the Commission on International Cooperation and Public Diplomacy of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, Deputy Chairman of Editorial Board for "Russia in Global Affairs" and a Member of the Board of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy. <http://www.polity.ru/engl/nik-eng.htm> (accessed 14th December 2012)

public and private sources, in practice it has reportedly received its financing from the state budget since its foundation by Putin's presidential decree. As such, it may be seen to represent a state view on culture.

The main source of information for the analysis of these cultural narratives is the website of the Russkiy Mir Foundation,⁴¹ including features, articles, and speeches by senior representatives. The discourses were identified on the basis of regular and in-depth browsing of the foundation's website since March 2008. Over this time, the texts available have increased in number greatly, but the narrative's core assumptions appear to have been rather consistent.

The Russian Orthodox Church was selected as the mouthpiece of a Russian discourse on values due to its long-standing connections with both state and society. The prescribed atheism of the Soviet period notwithstanding, Orthodoxy has long been at the heart of what it means to be Russian (*russkii*). As Nathaniel Davis has noted, '[t]he historic faith of Russia is Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy is deeply embedded in the Russian soul. It defines a Russian's sense of nation, history and identity, even when the individual is not devout' (1995: 222-3).

Likewise, the synergy between Church and State is a long-standing feature of the Russian polity, with Prince Vladimir having been baptised into Orthodoxy as the Church of Kievan Rus in 988. Between 1721 and 1917, the Church formed part of the imperial state, and religion constituted a key component of Minister of Education Sergei Uvarov's 1830 doctrine of official nationality; Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality.⁴² Despite persecution, suppression and infiltration during the Soviet era, the Church remained as an institution,

⁴¹ <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/> (accessed 14th December 2012)

⁴² More information on the traditional role of the Russian Church may be found in Richters 2012.

poised to regenerate following the collapse of the communism. Indeed, the Russian Orthodox Church has become one of the major players in the field of Russia-Ukraine relations⁴³, a fact that is likely driven not only by of the spiritual significance of Kyiv, but also by the ‘competition for souls’ from different denominations in the country. This has rendered the task of maintaining and nurturing the spiritual leadership role of the Moscow Patriarchate as a means of preserving a common cultural and ideational space between Russia and Ukraine quite immediate. In short, the Russian Church may be seen as a bearer of what Gramsci has termed the ‘state spirit’ (1971: 146-7; Parmar 2010); a sense of responsibility for the fate of the state.

However, it is important to recall that ROC is not a homogenous entity in terms of the outlooks of its representatives and followers. Rather, as Anastasia Mitrofanova (2005) notes in her study of the politicisation of Russian Orthodoxy, the existence of a number of different strands may be observed.⁴⁴ Thus, references in this study to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) are to be understood as indicating the official position advanced by the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’ Kirill, unless otherwise stated.⁴⁵ Patriarch Kirill, whom some close to the Kremlin consider the

⁴³ Interview with Igor Zevelev conducted in Moscow July 2011.

⁴⁴ The five versions of political Orthodoxy as an ideology noted by Mitrofanova (2005) are as follows: political fundamentalism, contemporary pan-Slavism, neo-Eurasianism, Orthodox Communism and Russian Nationalism: quasi-Orthodoxy and neo-Paganism. As she herself notes (p. 37), in practice it is only possible to distinguish between these different versions as ideal types since they are ultimately different facets of the same ideology. None of these versions corresponds to the official ideology of the ROC, and represent more different religio-political shades of ideological extreme.

⁴⁵ Although there is diversity of opinion among the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate (Richters 2012, interview with A. Zolotov), this study focuses on the ‘upper echelons’ of this body to elicit the narratives as these persons are ‘more publicly visible and only they have been granted the right to speak on the Church’s behalf. Furthermore, Frank Parkin points out that political ideals tend to work their way from “the top” downwards. This applies especially to hierarchical organisations like the Moscow Patriarchate, which did not hesitate to defrock the independently-minded priest and political activist Gleb Iakunin in 1993 (Richters 2012: 6).

'second Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation,'⁴⁶ has been very active in cultivating Russian relations with Ukraine. Consequently, in terms of the sources selected as reflecting the views of the Russian Orthodox Church as they pertain to the on-going international value debate, these include primarily speeches given by Patriarch Kirill as accessed from the website, a book of speeches (Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' 2011) given by the Patriarch over the years, and certain policy documents available on the aforementioned website, namely the Social Concept⁴⁷ and the Human Rights Policy⁴⁸. In addition, some comments by the Patriarch's close collaborators were also considered.

It is also worth noting that interaction between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russkiy Mir Foundation bucks the trend towards a lack of coordination among soft power tools observed in the next chapter; with relations between the two characterised by 'close cooperation'.⁴⁹ This is reflected in the way that, in spite of the division of labour in terms of themes, the key assumptions of texts generated by the foundation are within the discourse established by the church. Both institutions stress their distance from political engagement⁵⁰, although examination will show that together these discourses have significant (meta-)political implications.

Although disentangled into these three strands for analytical purposes, the narratives (indicated in-depth in the appendices) are mutually reinforcing and inter-dependent; the propositions advanced and maintained as 'attractive' are simultaneously employed as

⁴⁶ Interview with an independent researcher conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

⁴⁷ The Basis of the Social Concept: <http://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/> (accessed 3rd January 2013)

⁴⁸ The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights: <http://mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/> (accessed 3rd January 2013)

⁴⁹ Interview with A. Dolinskiy conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

⁵⁰ Interview with V. Istratov conducted in Moscow in June 2011, Part Three of the ROC's Social Concept. 'Church and State': <http://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/iii/> (accessed 3rd January 2013).

reference points to underpin agenda-setting initiatives. They likewise share a similar logic and central key assumptions about Russia, namely that Russia is a strong country with a historically-rooted civilisational radiance beyond its own borders; Russia is a 'normal' great power on the ascendant again, which has the capacity and right to participate in discussions of topics of global political, economic, cultural and other significance; Russia has a right to participate in the international community as an equal partner that shares much with Europe and the West, but also has its own valid perspectives borne of its particular experiences; moreover Russia has the will to defend and promote these beliefs by whatever means necessary, but seeks primarily to do so in concord with partners. This represents, in short, the premises of sovereign democracy as a political doctrine. The cultural and value-related strands advanced by the ROC and the Russkiy Mir Foundation represent the underpinning value basis, upon which the Russian claim to difference, expressed in the political positions summed up as sovereign democracy, rests.

Indeed, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russkiy Mir Foundation are selected agents that seek to preserve and develop the cultural and spiritual characteristics that distinguish Russia from the West and underpin Moscow's claim to civilisational uniqueness. The existence of a sovereign, *samobytnyi* cultural space justifies policies under the rubric of sovereign democracy which proceed from the assumption that Russia has cultural traditions requiring universal values and models to be implemented in ways that account for such specificities. Such policies also help retain decision-making power and 'sovereignty' in Russia and help resist globalising imperatives. The ambition is to re-assume leadership by supporting national development in a way that both retains countries' cultural differences, while widening access to the socio-economic benefits of modernity.

4.5. Conduct of Textual Analysis

In preparation for the fieldwork, it was necessary to identify the target narratives, whose hegemony might then be assessed through the study of audience reception. As was previously noted, five Russian approaches to soft power have been discerned, only one of which can be explored in this study, namely Russia's civilisational discourse.

In order to identify the contours of the contemporary discourses being projected by the official foreign policy establishment, textual analysis, supplemented by expert interviews, was employed. Officialdom is interpreted quite broadly here, encompassing not only formal representatives of the state, but also those working in close collaboration with it (Hansen 2006).

The target narratives were derived on the basis of wide reading, including not only speeches and policy documents, but also commentaries and other articles by representatives of the three selected institutions, as 'if discursive structures operate in a political space, they will show up in any text' (Wæver 2005: 40). In terms of how many texts to read, Wæver advises reading 'any text, as long you read for long enough!' (Wæver 2005: 40). Thus, a great number of texts were read, until it was felt that saturation point had been reached and no new key narratives were emerging.

In terms of the time frame covered by the textual analysis, the research focuses on the positions articulated under the Medvedev presidency (2008-2012). Soft power became a more prominent topic in both scholarly consideration and policy circles during this period, as the discussion in Russia on this topic matured. Yet this is simply a useful temporal

bracket and should not imply a break with the policies of Putin; indeed a certain discursive continuity with that administration in this regard is acknowledged.

Some commentators have expressed scepticism about Russia's soft power intentions, and might lodge the complaint that Russian discourses are merely a disingenuous smoke screen for the pursuit of real hard power concerns. Wæver counters this with the observation that,

[d]iscourse analysis works on public texts. It does not try to get to the thoughts or motives of the actors, their hidden intentions or secret plans. Especially for the study of foreign policy where much is hidden, it becomes a huge methodological advantage to stay at the level of discourse. (Wæver 2005: 35)

In this sense, the sincerity of the soft power agents is of little import beyond the issue of credibility in the eyes of the audience, as it is discourse, not 'true' intent, which conditions what is politically possible.⁵¹ A list of the soft power narratives evaluated in the survey is provided in the appendices, along with annotations explaining the rationale for the choice of question in greater depth.

4.6. Audience Reception: Justification of Choice of Methods

This study has sought to devise a methodology to evaluate the presence of soft power that goes beyond the two-dimensional ambiguity of opinion poll data, while reaching for a greater scope than in-depth studies of particular aspects of cultural attraction (e.g. linguistic preferences). The study's firm rooting in social science methodologies should also provide a more reliable means of assessing Russian soft power in Ukraine, which has also often been reported in anecdotal terms, frequently cherry-picked to suit the purposes of the author. As such, it should provide a more complete and balanced picture

⁵¹ Also see Morozov 2009.

of the state of Russian soft power in Ukraine. In order to achieve this ambitious goal, a triangulated approach to methods was taken including with both quantitative and qualitative research. On one hand, a survey was employed to generate a quantitative, comparative perspective, which should help to satisfy the demand for reliability and generalisability. On the other hand, focus groups were conducted in order to elicit rich data enabling the statistical findings to be placed in a qualitative context.

Surveys were used to generate a quantifiable picture of attitudes towards Russia's proposed soft power discourses, and allow comparison between four selected cities. The way in which the data was processed also allowed for inter-regional comparison of the different themes (culture, values, policy etc.), which presented a more differentiated picture than anticipated. However, quantitative surveys give neither insight into the rationale for an opinion, nor help the researcher to understand how certain discourses are negotiated by audiences.

To alleviate some of the shortcomings of the survey method, it was combined with focus groups, which are capable of providing a deep understanding of the context in which the soft power discourses are received. Yet as a social science method, they are not alone in this; such results may also be achieved through individual interviews. However, focus groups have a number of advantages over single-person interviews that caused this method to stand out as the most appropriate for the research in hand. This is because group dynamics are of relevance to the research.

Indeed, rather than assuming inevitable 'media effects,' this study focusses on how communicated messages are actually received and negotiated by a target audience. This is because the *real* limits of discourse are not directly imposed by individuals or even

institutions, but emerge as a result of processes of meaning making that are imbued with power. They exercise a disciplining effect over thoughts and behaviours only to the extent they are internalised as common sense among a society of individuals. Thus, an advantage of focus groups is that this method of data gathering emphasises the social nature of communication, rather than seeing the views of groups of participants as simply a convenient ‘aggregate of atomised opinions or attitudes’ (Lunt and Livingstone 1996: 8).⁵²

As Lunt and Livingstone (1996: 94) observe, ‘focus groups generate discussion, and so reveal the meanings surrounding an issue – both the meanings that people read into the discussion topic and how they negotiate those meanings. The significance of this lies in the fact that, as Moscovici (1984, referenced in Lunt and Livingstone 1996: 89) emphasises, social representations – such as identities and value orientations - are ‘generated not so much through individual cognitive processes but through everyday conversations,’ that is, in a group setting. Thus, by functioning as simulations of the wider, quotidian processes of negotiating social meaning, focus groups provide insight into the social realities of a cultural group, through direct access to the language and concepts which structure participants’ experiences (Hughes and DuMont 1993).

The dynamic discussions that focus groups are designed to generate also draw out diversity of opinion within or between groups, which also serves to ‘stimulate the

⁵² Flick points to the possible benefits in terms of saving time and money (2002: 113) through the use of focus groups. However, this researcher’s choice of method was not motivated by the potential advantage of harvesting multiple opinions simultaneously. On the contrary, the time and effort required to coordinate a meeting time simultaneously convenient for a sufficient number of participants, arrange a reasonably easily accessible room to host the discussion and plan how to handle group dynamics more than compensated for any practical benefits accrued through this method. Indeed, there are also major financial and time-effort implications in effort in organising, conducting, recording, transcribing and interpreting group discussions, and hence it makes most sense to employ them when researching questions that might be not answering satisfactorily in the absence of the ability to replicate the social dynamics of generating opinions in groups (Flick 2002: 120).

answerers and support them in remembering events, and that [...]can lead beyond the answers of the single interviewee' (Flick 2002: 113). The proposed advantages of interaction offered by focus groups over individual interviews were born out by my experiences, as sometimes individuals revealed a more nuanced opinion on topics that they initially appeared to be quite set upon when challenged by fellow group members. This gave insight into the interplay of different factors in the formation of individual opinions. Equally, it is interesting when a point raised *did not* get challenged or questioned.

This was particularly important as Russian soft power is a politically sensitive topic, with strong opinions on both sides claiming the presence or absence of what amounts to soft power. Focus groups are therefore useful as a method since they offer some means of quality control on data collection in that 'participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme views... and it is fairly easy to assess the extent to which there is a relatively consistent, shared view... among the participants' (Patton 1990: 335-6, cited in Flick 2002: 113). As such, focus groups represent a relatively sound means of generating valid data.

4.7. Limitations of the Methods Selected

However, despite the strengths of the chosen methods for responding to the research questions posed in this thesis, certain limitations should be acknowledged.

Firstly, focus groups cannot claim, unlike, albeit debatably, more positivist methods, to establish cause and effect relationships (Lunt and Livingstone 1996: 12). Yet this is not a major problem from the point of view of this study since, following the meta-theoretical

position outlined in the conceptual framework, it is in any case never truly possible to discern why individuals hold a certain opinion as it is not truly possible to differentiate between discursive and non-discursive factors. As such, we cannot ultimately know whether individuals and groups respond positively to Russian soft power narratives as a result of the Russian initiatives to promote those discourses, or due to other reasons. However, this is not an irreconcilable problem from the perspective of this research, as congruent outlooks are likely in any case to facilitate Russian policy by measure of their similarity with the wider soft power discourse, whether they are a result of Russian activity or not.⁵³

Secondly, qualitative methods such as focus groups are sometimes criticised by empiricists for their alleged inability to provide conclusions generalisable to the wider population. While acknowledging the need for care in such matters, this researcher would counter this with the contention that limited generalisability may be posited if saturation point is reached in terms of the main thrusts of the content. This requires sufficient groups to be conducted, until no further key ideas emerge in the last group. This issue may also be addressed through triangulation of qualitative findings with methods recognised as enabling the drawing of more generalisable conclusions, such as quantitative surveys.

The third issue concerns representativeness. Although attention was paid to sampling, the 62 participants of the focus group discussions cannot be taken as strictly representative of the 436 survey respondents.⁵⁴ While survey completion is a relatively undemanding, passive process for the respondents, participation in focus groups is likely

⁵³ See Nye 2004: 82, and section 6.4. of this thesis.

⁵⁴ In this thesis, when 'respondents' are referred to, it always indicates those who completed the survey. 'Participants' refers to those who took part in the focus groups.

to appeal individuals who feel more confident in expressing their views in front of groups of strangers. Furthermore, only those who were generally interesting in participating in a discussion of these political and social themes attended.⁵⁵ My Kyiv moderator went so far as to inform me that the participants, who were mostly Master students, were ‘more active, less lazy’, than their counterparts on the old, five year, pre-Bologna ‘specialist’ degree programmes. Likewise, the great majority of the ethnic Ukrainian group in L’viv commented in their introductory statements that they were involved in the life of their faculty and / or city. Similarly in the East, particularly in Donetsk, participants tended to be more critical towards the stimulus materials than suggested by survey. Overall, however, from a methodological perspective, this is not problematic since the focus group is not conceptualised with the purpose of generalisability in mind, but rather to provide some context to the survey returns. The main conclusions from the focus groups will be drawn on the basis of the nature of the discussion, rather than the relative prevalence of certain perspectives.

4.8. Rationale for Choice of Target Audience

There is a debate about which is the more significant audience for soft power efforts; elites or the general public. Understanding soft power as representational force, Bially Mattern concludes that it is necessary above all for would-be agents of soft power to engage with elites; to ‘trap leaders or decision makers with threats to their subjectivities since it is they whose submission translates into policy and behaviours’ (2005: 610-611).

⁵⁵ Indeed, to many students, even the entirely respectable remuneration of 40 *hryvnia* – a purchasing power equivalent to about 20 single journeys on the ‘*marshrutka*’ mini-bus taxi, or two cinema trips or two three-course meals in the Ukrainian buffet meal chain ‘*Puzata Khata*’ – was insufficient encouragement to participate. Indeed, the few cases where it was suggested that certain participants may have been primarily enticed by the financial incentive, they tended to be noticeably quiet in the discussion (e.g. a male student in Donetsk 2).

This is understandable, as it is they who are responsible for decision making in their respective society and therefore the potential agents of change in foreign policy direction, as well as acting as gatekeepers for the further dissemination of soft power messages. However, studies have pointed to the influence that may be wielded by co-opting the general public into one's vision of society. This is demonstrated, for instance, by looking at US soft power in the 1950s, when the promotion of American consumer culture was aimed above all at the masses. This was highly successful in subverting the cultural dominance of European elites, who were horrified by these mass imports, which quietly introduced demand for change on a much wider plane (de Grazia 2005, Stephan 2006). Of course, the most successful soft power strategies will strive to nurture preference for their culture and values among both elites (with exchange programmes, scholarships, seminars etc.) and the general public (with mass communications and other civil society activity). Yet due to the relatively porous nature of international borders resultant from widespread access to means of communication and transport, it is possible for ideas to gain ground in the imaginations of populations and thus affect their understanding of themselves and their situation without the consent of the national ruling elite.⁵⁶

In this study I aimed to elicit the views of a section of the general population, since I am interested in analysing the reception among ordinary individuals whose stance is less likely to be shaped by vested economic interests, and who are more likely to feel able to express their opinion freely without political considerations. Elites are perhaps more likely to assume the official position of their patron in a focus group context⁵⁷, as opposed to

⁵⁶ The psychological effects of these information initiatives contributed significantly to the end of the Cold War, as well as providing focus for the demonstrations that led to the colour revolutions across Eastern Europe in the noughties.

⁵⁷ For instance, in Jacob Preuss' 2010 documentary film 'the Other Chelsea' about the interaction between politics, business and sport in Donetsk, protagonist Kolya, a young, up-and-coming local politician, informs

engaging in a spontaneous and natural discussion of their own perspectives. Another reason for exploring the attitudes of members of the Ukrainian general public is that it was precisely this group that Medvedev declared should be targeted by Russian efforts in the sphere of soft power.⁵⁸ There is also a feeling in Russia that Western agencies are specifically targeting the general public in order to try to effect political change in the manner of a 'colour revolution'.

However, the Ukrainian population has become very diversified since the fall of communism. Thus, in order to be able draw sensible and generalisable conclusions, it makes sense to focus on a particular section of the Ukrainian public. For this purpose I have selected higher education students from four cities across the country. In focusing on higher education students, I have chosen a highly educated section of society, born largely after the end of the USSR (aged c. 16-21) and with a relatively high level of access to a diversity of information. While it is not possible to directly extrapolate the views of this specific sample group to the general public as a whole, it is worth considering them thoughtfully, as the potential shape of things to come. After all, they are likely to become Ukrainian society's leaders and opinion-formers of the future; the politicians, the business elites, the teachers, the journalists, the managers – in short those who are more likely to be in a position to act as an authoritative opinion-multiplier, spreading their views to others. As such, their negotiations of Russia's soft power discourses are especially significant for scholars of politics.

the director that he'll be going to a meeting to listen to Donets'k oligarch Rinat Akhmetov and on this basis formulate his own position.

⁵⁸ 11th August 2009, address by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko. <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2009/08/220759.shtml> (accessed 23rd November 2012).

Researching the reception of contemporary Russian soft power discourses among Ukrainian students also had a number of practical benefits. It was assumed to be relatively easy to gain access to students as they are often linked in to online social networks that can be used to disseminate advertisements for my study. In the event, local coordinators from the universities were employed to recruit respondents and participants, whose task was greatly facilitated by their institutional connections and access. Furthermore, students are likely to attend certain places (i.e. university buildings) on a regular basis, thus facilitating focus groups attendance.

It was decided to recruit students from only one university per city, because different universities have different orientations⁵⁹ and in such a small-scale study one could not fairly represent the full spectrum so to speak of 'students from Kyiv'. The research centred on 'National' universities, that is to say, ones considered to be more prestigious in Ukraine: Taras Shevchenko University in Kyiv, Ivan-Franko University in L'viv, Donetsk National Technical University and V.N. Karamzin Kharkiv National University. As such, they were not only usually the largest institutions in their respective towns, but also those that might be supposed to be among the more likely alma maters of the future generation of Ukrainian leaders.⁶⁰

4.9. Ukraine's Regional Diversity and Presentation of Case Study Cities

⁵⁹ For instance, e.g. the Kyiv Mohyla Academy has a distinctly pro-Western orientation. NaUKMA has a lot of Western educational and research partners: http://www.ukma.kiev.ua/eng_site/en/proj_part/part/education/index.php (accessed 22nd November 2012).

⁶⁰ The National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA) was not included in this project as it is well-known for its more pro-Western orientation, (the languages of education are Ukrainian and English, with Russian excluded) and was thus considered not to represent a fair test of wider attitudes, even among Kyiv's student population. Indeed, although prestigious, this university is one of the smallest in Ukraine.

Numerous objective reasons speak for Ukraine's selection as the case study country. Ukraine is a large, populous country situated at a strategic location between the European North and South, East and West. As well as hosting the Russian Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol, Ukrainian territory is also a key supply route of pipelines delivering Russian and Central Asian gas to Europe (STRATFOR 2010). It is also characterised by vast tracts of fertile agricultural land. The country is on the cusp of Eastern and Western Christianity, and has historically been a meeting point of empires. Not only in their Russian and Soviet manifestations; the territories of contemporary Ukraine have also been under Polish, Lithuanian, Austrian, Austro-Hungarian, Romanian, Tatar and Ottoman rule. Even today, Ukraine is an area of contestation between Russian and European-Western influence, not to mention the domestic forces of nationalism. There are also more emotive, subjective factors that explain why Ukraine is especially important to Russia, but these will be discussed in the next chapter.

Interest in the Ukrainian case is only increased by the fact it may be seen as a potential high-water mark of Russian soft power, if we consider the number of people speaking Russian as their native language and the high number of ethnic Russians as a proportion of the population. Furthermore, Russia has significant tools of ideational influence in Ukraine by virtue of its participation in Ukrainian media landscape and geographic proximity.

Ukraine is characterised by very significant historically rooted regional diversity. Different parts of Ukraine still bear the influences of experiences under different empires, which continue to have, or perhaps have a revived impact on attitudes and cultural preferences.

Such is Ukraine's regional diversity that, while I have taken four city case studies, it is not necessarily justifiable to assume that they reflect the wider picture in their region. For instance, it would be unjustifiable to assume that Kyiv represents central Ukraine beyond the capital, just as the situation in L'viv certainly does not correspond to the situation in Transcarpathia in west Ukraine, where Viktor Yanukovich received 41.55 per cent of the vote, compared with 8.6 per cent in L'viv and 25.72 per cent in the city of Kyiv. The aim with this sampling strategy was rather to try to represent a limited cross section of Ukraine's diversity. At the same time, the decision was taken to exclude certain outliers, such as Transcarpathia and Crimea.⁶¹

Furthermore, one should recall that although the sample sizes are approximately equal for each city case study, the samples themselves represent populations that are not equal in number. The Donbas is among the most densely populated region of Ukraine, while the Galician regions are relatively rural and sparsely populated. Given that so-called 'pro-Russian' attitudes constitute a significant cleavage in elections, one should take this factor into account if pursuing the political implications of this research.

Background information on each of the case study cities is presented below.

4.9.1. Donets'k

Located in the east of Ukraine next to the Russian border, Donets'k's city population is the fifth largest and metropolitan population the second largest in Ukraine. Although ethnic Ukrainians represent nearly 60 per cent of the population, the Russian language is

⁶¹ Although Crimea is often included with Eastern or Southern Ukraine in regional comparison, it is a particular case. Russia has more soft power tools and resources in this autonomous region, particularly since it is a relatively new part of Ukraine and is home to many Soviet military veterans and their families, as well as Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Transcarpathia too is characterised by historical dynamics that make it different from elsewhere in Ukraine, and worthy of separate study.

clearly dominant. The city was not founded until 1869, but the area was previously part of the 'Wild Fields' to the South East of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and Novorossiia. As such, this area was not part of an independent Ukrainian state until 1991.

Donets'k, both as a city and a region, is heavily industrialised and played an important role in the Soviet economy. The region retains significant integrated links with Russian business. Furthermore, reflecting the place of the Donbas in the economic power structures, a significant proportion of national leaders hail from this relatively wealthy region.

4.9.2. Kharkiv

Founded in 1654, Kharkiv is situated in the East of Ukraine and constituted a main centre of Sloboda Ukraine [*Slobozhanshchina / Slobids'ka Ukraina*]; a historic trans-border region straddling Kharkiv and Russia's Belgorod oblasts, and as such a hub of Ukrainian culture in the Russian Empire. Having been the first city to recognise Soviet power, it was capital city to the Ukrainian SSR between 1919 and 1934. Russian is the primary language in the urban centres, although Ukrainian is spoken in rural regions of Kharkiv oblast. According to the 2001 census, 71 per cent of the population of Kharkiv oblast were ethnic Ukrainian. Today, Kharkiv is a relatively wealthy, industrial city.

4.9.3. Kyiv

As the national capital, the city of Kyiv naturally commands a decisive influence over the country's political direction, as it is from the capital and its universities that a large share of national leaders emerge. As the birthplace of the medieval kingdom of Rus', not only Ukraine but also Russia and Belarus trace their statehood back to Kyiv. Having changed

hands numerous times, Kyiv became capital of the Ukrainian National Republic in 1917, and after an intermission of 13 years, was the capital of the UkSSR. Today Kyiv is considered a thoroughly Ukrainian city, and although Russian remains widely spoken, it is not to the exclusion of Ukrainian.

4.9.4. L'viv

The Western Ukrainian city of L'viv is often held up as a contrasting point to Ukraine's eastern regions. By far the largest city of Western Ukraine, with c. 1.5million inhabitants, it forms a regional centre for Ukrainian Galicia (L'viv, Ternopil and Ivano Frankivsk oblasts). As of 2001, 88 per cent of the population were ethnic Ukrainians and the area is primarily Ukrainophone although there is also a significant Russian minority (c. 9 per cent in 2001).

Galicia [*Halychyna*] became part of the Soviet Union only in 1939, having been variously under Polish and Austro-Hungarian rule. It is considered the heartland of Ukrainian nationalism, and was the site of fierce partisan resistance to Soviet occupation during the Second World War. These regions remain relatively rural and agriculturally oriented, although L'viv has a long history as a cultural and intellectual centre. Since the fall of communism, the city has (re-)developed significant cultural ties with the countries of *Mitteleuropa*.⁶²

4.10. Conduct of Survey

The survey aimed to gauge responses to Russian soft power discourses and provide a quantitative picture of regional differences. The questions were developed on the basis of

⁶² Interview with Marina Zubrytska, Dean of the Humanities Faculty at L'viv's Ivan-Franko University, October 2011.

consistently recurring positions and discursive themes articulated by the selected Russian soft power agents. These positions were formulated into statements, which the respondents had to evaluate on a five point scale, with one representing strong disagreement, five indicating strong agreement and three indicating ambivalence. The statements were all formulated in such a way that a score of five always indicated a very positive, 'pro-Russian' response. This allowed the generation of three scores corresponding to an average of each respondent's evaluations of the cultural, value-oriented, and foreign policy statements in the three substantive sections. An individual's overall 'Russian soft power score' represents an average of their responses to the three sets of questions.

In order to adjudge the presence of soft power, the 'soft power score' – whether relating to a particular strand or overall – should be equal to or greater than three; the point at which the average score exceeds 'ambivalent' and enters positive territory. Arguably, one might feel that having an ambivalent average score is not a particularly affirmative statement. Yet one should take into account that in the minds of the Ukrainian respondents, a score of three turned out to not be perceived strictly as an indication of neutrality or ambivalence. The scoring system was designed in tandem with the Kyiv moderator who recommended using a five point system (rather than the ten-point version I had initially proposed) due to the greater familiarity of this system to Ukrainian students, who are used to being evaluated out of five in their education system.⁶³ Hence while labelled 'ambivalent' in my survey, the score of three still has an intuitively positive

⁶³ In principle, a new grading system has been introduced taking into account the Bologna Process. However, the five point system still seems to function as a reference point, with the new 12 point system probably only being applied to the Bachelor and Master programmes, i.e. a minority of cases, while many students continue on the five year 'specialist' programmes of the Soviet era. Under the tradition system, the grade of two indicates 'unsatisfactory'; a failing grade.

association with being 'satisfactory', rather than say 'neither positive or negative'; a fact I was unaware of at the moment of the research design. In short, this supports the notion of taking an average of three or greater as indicative of the presence of soft power.

Survey recruitment was managed and executed to my instructions by a colleague in each of the four participating universities. In each case, these coordinators were faculty members concurrently working towards a doctoral degree [*kandidatskaya*]. I became acquainted with them through personal contacts and as a result of enquiries with Ukrainian research institutes. The surveys were piloted and then dispatched to the local coordinators ready for completion prior to my arrival in each of the target cities for the focus groups. This took place mostly in September 2011. The survey was available in both Russian and Ukrainian and each respondent should have had the choice, however, in Kyiv, the Dean stipulated that all surveys must be conducted in Ukrainian as a condition.⁶⁴

Respondents were solicited in various ways; survey distribution by university teachers in classes, active recruitment of individuals by employed student assistants, and emails from the moderators bearing the links to the online surveys. Recruitment was randomised in accordance with the prescribed sample populations.

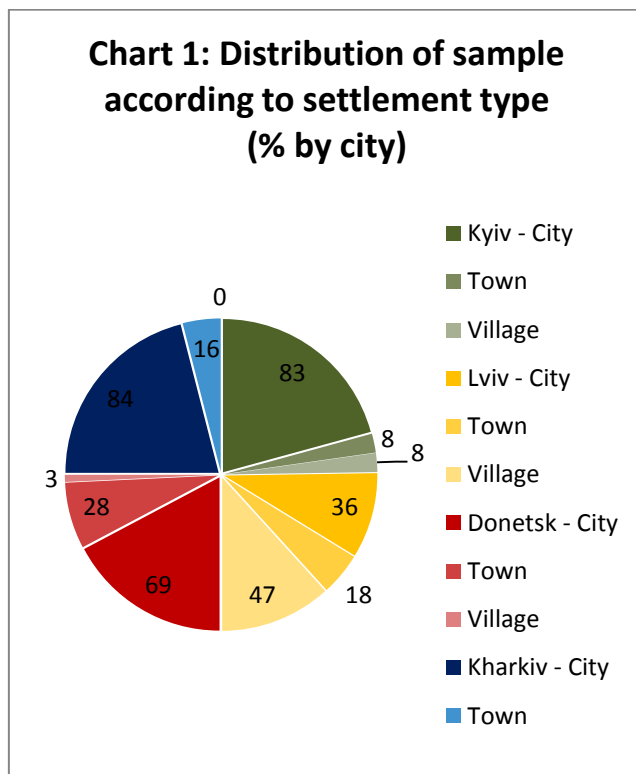
Upon completion of the survey, the data was cleansed and input into a statistics package, SPSS 19, for ease of analysis. The survey was generally completed well – there were few cases of all responses being the same, which might indicate an element of thoughtlessness. Some individuals, again very few, did choose to exclude whole sections, or even large parts of the survey. These cases have been included nevertheless for the insights they offer to particular questions, and where a particular element of information

⁶⁴ This was because Ukrainian is the official working language of the university. However, my moderator informed me that 80 per cent of the time she spoke with students in Russian outside formal classes.

is missing, this case was automatically excluded by SPSS in relevant queries and thereby did not affect the overall results.

4.11. Profile of Survey Sample

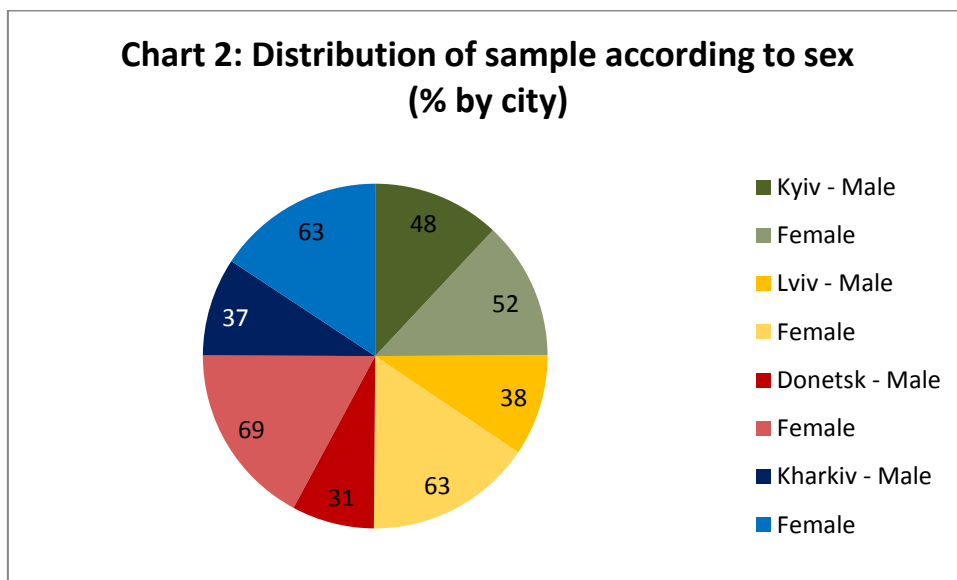
Altogether, 436 questionnaires were gathered, of which 100 were from Kyiv and Kharkiv each, 101 from L'viv and 136 from Donets'k.⁶⁵ The figures below provide an overall picture of their composition, according to discipline, sex and home settlement type.



⁶⁵ The reason for the additional 36 survey respondents in Donetsk was that upon my arrival in the city, only around 70 of the intended 100 surveys had been completed, and, what's more, despite verbal and written guidance detailing the proposed sample, those collected were rather weighted towards disciplines related to Business, Economics and Maths. Fortunately, my moderator here was willing and able to help correct this imbalance.

Table 1: Distribution of sample according to field of study by city (%)

City	N	Natural Science, Engineering	Economics, Maths Business	Humanities, Arts Social Science	Other
Kyiv	100	23	36	31	10
L'viv	101	33	34	34	0
Donets'k	135	40	57	0	3
Kharkiv	100	8	21	66	5



66

4.12. Conduct of Focus Groups

The survey findings presented a diverse spectrum of opinions on the different narratives highlighted as relevant by this study. In the focus groups, the participants' responses to

⁶⁶ Participants were also given an 'other / prefer not to say' option, but no respondents selected this. Kyiv was the exception, where the survey coordinator removed the option without consulting with me, later stating that it was 'not necessary in Ukraine'.

Russian soft power discourses were explored in greater depth, with the assumption that this would provide insight into whether the participants shared and accepted the worldview proposed to them by Russia; a key indicator of soft power.

The survey had posed a large number of questions, but given the generally accepted maximum duration of two hours, it would be impossible to discuss all points in the context of a focus group. Indeed, this was not necessary, since the focus groups did not simply seek an embellishment on the survey responses. After an introduction to the proceedings by the moderator, short video clips (c. five minutes) expressing the discourse were shown. The aim was to stimulate free-flowing discussion on the broad topic of the narratives, thereby giving insight into *how* the participants negotiated the proposed narratives and the interpretative resources they drew on in doing so. This offered insight into how discourses resonated and whether they were spontaneously reproduced or in various ways subverted by respondents. This enabled an assessment of the *hegemony* of the target discourses, and thus the extent to which Russia can be said to have soft power. Full information on the conduct of the focus groups, including the focus group guide and transcriptions of the stimulus materials may be found in the appendices.

4.12.1. Role of Moderators

The focus groups were facilitated by a moderator, whose job it was to explain the formal procedures, including introductions, outline the expectations of the participants, initiate an icebreaker, as well as lend formal direction to the discussion (Flick 2002: 116-7).

In each case, the local survey coordinators also moderated the focus groups. This had a number of practical and methodological advantages over this researcher conducting them

herself. While considerable time and energy have been devoted to learning the Russian and Ukrainian languages, it is generally accepted that focus groups should be conducted by moderators mother-tongue fluent in a native language of the participants. In order for the participants to feel at ease to speak their mind freely and authentically, it is important that the moderator be able to quickly build a rapport, which is far harder for a foreigner and non-native speaker of the working language(s).

Moderators were informed of the stipulations in various briefing documents (terms of reference, sampling guide and focus group guide) prior to my arrival in the city, and orally, both at the time of recruitment and during the specially budgeted briefing meeting.

4.12.2. Number of Participants and Duration

The literature proposes between six and ten participants as the ideal (Lunt and Livingstone 1996: 7), and indeed my experience suggested eight members as optimal in terms of group dynamics. The recommended length is 1.5-2 hours (Patton 1990: 335, cited in Flick 2002: 113). Most of my groups were within this range, although sometimes they did run longer once formal procedures were included.

4.12.3. Number of Groups

In terms of how many groups should be conducted, Lunt and Livingstone draw attention to 'a useful rule of thumb [which] holds that for any given category of people discussing a particular topic there are only so many stories to be told. Hence one should continue to run new groups until the last group has nothing new to add but merely repeats previous contributions' (1996: 7). This stipulation was born in mind during the conduct of the research, and it may be said that the picture that emerged across all groups reflected a

certain coherent range of views, although the extent of their prevalence differed somewhat by location. In total, eight groups were conducted,⁶⁷ with two in each city. In each case, I liaised with the respective local moderator to ascertain their opinion as to whether a full range of likely mainstream opinions had been expressed. This was in every case affirmative after two groups.

4.12.4. Focus Group Composition

Another methodological decision in the design process concerns the composition of the focus groups; should they be homogenous or heterogeneous? Flick (2002: 115) notes that '[i]n homogenous groups, members are comparable in the essential dimensions related to the research question and have similar background. For their part, Lunt and Livingstone (1996: 15) observe that 'groups consistent in composition... are easier to conduct: the group establishes confidence more quickly, it moves more readily beyond platitudes towards analysis.' Benefits were gleaned in these respects since my target audience was homogenous in the sense that all participants were university students and foreseen to be from the same universities.

However, participants from a breadth of disciplinary backgrounds were targeted to ensure a range of outlooks, and a gender balance was likewise sought. This stipulation helped ensure the recruitment of people who did not know one another prior to the focus groups, which is generally considered to have benefits over working with 'groups of friends or of people who know each other very well, because the level of things taken for granted which remains implicit is higher' with such groups (Morgan 1988: 48, cited in Flick 2002: 121). Thus, participants' lines of thinking were more readily articulated for the

⁶⁷ In addition, two pilot groups were run (in Kyiv and Donetsk), which revealed in each case comparable findings.

purposes of the recording and analysis than might otherwise have been the case. The groups were also heterogeneous with regard to certain characteristics relevant for the research questions; namely nationality and language preferences. Flick anticipates this will be beneficial in that,

many different perspectives will be expressed and also that individual participants' reserve will be broken down by the confrontation between these perspectives... the expectation linked to this is that the different backgrounds will lead to intensified dynamics in the discussion, which will reveal more aspects and perspectives of the phenomenon under study. (2002: 205)

However, while acknowledging this potential plus, I chose to limit the internal heterogeneity concerning these issues with a view to potentially isolating the impact of the variables of ethnicity, language preference and region. This approach also allowed the observation of tendencies towards similarity and difference between the differently sampled groups.

Recruitment to the focus groups was conducted on a voluntary basis: Individuals were offered the opportunity to participate at the end of the survey and those who indicated their willingness were invited by the moderator by telephone or email if they met the desired group profile.

The focus group discussions were all recorded on a voice recorder and then transcribed in the original language by colleagues in Ukraine. The transcript data was carefully formatted for transfer into NVIVO 8, a qualitative data analysis programme. This helped facilitate the coding of the data into useful and easily reviewable analytical and thematic categories by the researcher.

For ease of reference, this summary table of the design of participant profile is provided.

Table 2: Summary of focus group participant profiles

Focus Group Name	Native Language	Ethnic Background	Language of FGD
Kyiv 1 ⁶⁸	Ukrainian speakers	(Mixed- not profiled)	In Ukrainian but with some Russian
Kyiv 2	Russian speakers	(Mixed- not profiled)	In Russian, but much Ukrainian
L'viv 1	(Mixed- not profiled)	Russian or mixed background	In Ukrainian only
L'viv 2	(Mixed- not profiled)	Galician Ukrainian background	In Ukrainian only
Donets'k 1	(Mixed- not profiled)	(Mixed- not profiled)	In Russian only
Donets'k 2	(Mixed- not profiled)	(Mixed- not profiled)	In Russian only
Kharkiv 1	(Mixed- not profiled)	Russian background	In Russian only
Kharkiv 2	(Mixed- not profiled)	Ukrainian background	In Russian only

4.12.4.1. Profile of Focus Groups in Donets'k

While groups in the other cities were constructed in their own ways so as to try to reflect a certain demographic, some difficulties with recruitment were experienced at Donets'k National Technical University that meant it was not practically possible to construct groups according to a particular ethnic or linguistic profile and hence ethnicity was not controlled for in group composition.⁶⁹ Each of the groups lasted around two hours, and took place exclusively in Russian on 9th and 10th November 2011.

The first group was made up of six students, of which two were females, who were studying various specialisations in the faculties of Economics and Management. Two of

⁶⁸ In Kyiv, the groups were not designed to be bilingual but sometimes emerged as such. However, there appeared to be no problems in communication.

⁶⁹ The first group was originally scheduled for several days earlier, but only four student attended and so it had to be postponed since it was felt that six was the minimum required to make it worthwhile in terms of the diversity of opinion and the resources required to conduct a single groups regardless of size.

the students indicated explicitly that they had family roots in Russia, while the group as a whole seemed to share the feeling that having Russian relatives was quite common.

In the second group there were ten students, of which four were females. Many of these students were from the faculty of Energy Mechanics and Machine Building, with others from Economics and Computer Science. There are no Humanities or Social Science faculties at this university.

4.12.4.2. Profile of Focus Groups in Kharkiv

In Kharkiv, the first focus group was composed of nine students, of which one was male. This group was constructed of ethnic Russian, Russophone students. In the second group of six participants there were equal numbers of male and female students, who were from a Ukrainian background, but considered themselves native Russian speakers. These discussions were conducted on 16th and 17th November 2011 respectively; exclusively in Russian.

In principle, these groups should have been composed entirely of students from the Kharkiv Karamzin National University. However, after both groups had been conducted it emerged that the second group of students had been recruited instead from the Kharkiv National University of Radio-Electronics ('National' designation received in 2001), thereby leaving this group constructed on different principles from the others. The decision was taken to retain this case study since both groups yielded interesting data. While the results were broadly in line with the findings from the other focus groups, these groups offered some interesting nuances. The group of Ukrainian background students hailing from the Electronics University seemed to reflect the Russian soft power target narratives

more consistently relative to the other groups in the study. In this sense, they provided a useful point of comparison, as a 'control' group that reflected the findings of the survey more closely.

4.12.4.3. Profile of Focus Groups in Kyiv

In Kyiv, the focus groups for the students from Taras Shevchenko National University were conducted in the morning and afternoon of 22nd October 2011, and lasted approximately two and a half hours each. The students were recruited to the survey by student assistants.

The first group was targeted at Ukrainian speakers and consisted of seven participants, of which four were female. Three were from the Faculty of Philosophy, while the remainder hailed from diverse faculties, including Physics, Geography and Mathematics. Although this group was constructed as being Ukrainian-speaking, two male students spoke Russian throughout; one of these seemed to do this for the sake of being a contrarian and was the only student to take the opportunity to give himself a pseudonym; Ulrich.

The second group was designed for Russian speakers, and was composed of nine students, of which four were female. The participants came from a full range of social science and technical faculties, including Radio Physics, International Economics, Law and Cybernetics. Again, despite having been constructed for Russophones, the group turned out to be much more linguistically mixed, with two or three of the participants choosing to respond in Ukrainian. After the end of the groups it emerged in conversation with the student assistants involved in recruitment, that these individuals had indicated Russian as their mother tongue in the survey and had spoken Russian on the phone, but had equally

'made a transition' to Ukrainian as their preferred everyday language of communication during the course of their higher education.

4.12.4.4. Profile of Focus Groups in L'viv

Both focus groups for students of the Ivan Franko National University in L'viv were conducted exclusively in Ukrainian on 25th and 27th October 2011, and lasted about two and a half hours each. The first group was constructed as a mixed group, with most students originating from the regions of Western Ukraine but having a family background with ties to Russia. This usually meant a Russian parent or Russian speaking family, although the sample also included a girl whose great grandfathers fought on different sides during the Second World War. This group consisted of seven participants, of which five were females, from various specialisations within the History and Electronics faculties.

The second group was composed of students from a traditionally Galician background, that is to say, staunch Ukrainian speakers indigenous to the Western regions of Ukraine. There were eight participants in this group, of which two were female. In terms of discipline, again, most came from the faculties of History and Electronics, with one from Mathematical Mechanics. This group was constructed by the moderator as likely to articulate the most sceptical end of the spectrum as concerns Russian soft power narratives. The rather intellectual bent of some participants was reflected in the tone of the discussion, which sometimes became quite abstracted from the topic in hand, expanding to address the wider fate of Ukraine.

4.13. Statement of Research Ethics

Ethical concerns were taken into account during the design and conduct of this research project. Respondents and participants were briefed on the project prior to data gathering commencing, and given the chance to ask questions. All data collected is held securely and anonymised, while focus group participants cited in the write-up are referred to under a pseudonym in order to preserve their privacy. That no harmful offence be caused to the focus group participants, the moderators maintained an atmosphere respectful of a diversity of views.

The triangulated approach is also ethically positive as it gives a voice to the participants and thereby enables them to contribute to the data interpretation process, rather than unilateral researcher analysis. This is a component of the 'new, critical approach to methodology which emphasises empowering and respecting respondents as participants in the research process' (Seiter et al 1989, cited in Lunt and Livingstone 1996: 5).

An ethically-minded approach was also taken in dealings with the four local coordinators. Indeed, the balance of power was rather in favour of the Ukrainian colleagues, who played a significant gatekeeper role and without whose assistance the project would have been practically impossible. While all steps were taken to ensure effective, positive relations, on occasion certain issues arose, in terms of communication, differing standards of professionalism (lack of experience with Western counterparts, emphasis on just doing the formal task, 'box ticking' mentality, tendency to see methodological details as 'parroting', unnecessary formalities, unhelpful attitude towards constructive criticism, non-reporting of problems, unilateral decision making) and related to the fact that as public university academics are very poorly paid, they require several jobs to make ends

meet and are hence very busy. On the whole, however, the experience was successful, positive and rigorous.

I take this opportunity to declare for the record that I have neither personal nor financial ties that would push me to favour a conclusion on the presence or absence of Russian soft power in Ukraine. This research has been conducted in a spirit of open-minded curiosity with the aim to increase understanding of the concept of soft power and how this concept is being engaged with in Russia. All the many persons who contributed to this research have been credited in the acknowledgements, appendix and bibliography as appropriate.

4.14. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has outlined how the working definition of soft power established in the conceptual framework will be operationalised in order to answer the research question concerning the extent to which Russia may be said to have soft power in Ukraine. To this end, a particular section of the diverse Ukrainian population, namely higher education students in Kyiv, L'viv, Donetsk and Kharkiv, was selected. Their attitudes were canvassed through surveys and focus groups in order to gain quantitative and qualitative insight into how they negotiate Russian soft power discourses. This mixed-methods approach to evaluating the presence of soft power should overcome the problem of de-contextualisation that dogs conclusions based exclusively on quantitative findings, whilst simultaneously allowing a broader perspective on the theme than is provided by studies relying on richly descriptive qualitative research alone. Prior to conducting such audience reception research, it is necessary to both understand the context of Russian approaches

to soft power and the core content of the discourses which are being promoted in Ukraine. These topics constitute the subject matter of the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Russian Approaches to Soft Power

5.1. Introduction

Whereas some existing studies have been sceptical about the seriousness of Russian engagement with soft power, this thesis suggests that the Kremlin is indeed striving to develop genuinely co-optive tools and mechanisms of foreign policy influence, although it does raise some issues concerning its effectiveness.

This chapter looks first at different notions of soft power in circulation in Russia, finding that some misunderstandings are indeed in evidence. The definition of soft power employed in this thesis was developed iteratively with the investigation of the Russian-Ukrainian case study, with the ongoing revisiting of both theoretical and empirical materials contributing to a definition that sits well with the case study. However, this is not the only understanding in currency in Russia, and analysis of the empirical matter suggests five different approaches to soft power in practice. Thus, one might analyse Russian nation-branding, humanitarian cooperation, initiatives to promote an 'objective image' abroad, compatriot policies and the initiative to resume civilisational leadership. Some of these phenomena are described using soft power terminology, but wouldn't come under the definition provided in the conceptual framework of this thesis. Conversely, activities corresponding to this definition are not necessarily described as soft power by practitioners. This thesis will only examine the fifth approach, Moscow's attempt to reassert civilisational leadership. Since the definition articulated in the conceptual framework posits soft power as an 'ability' and substantive achievement, studies of Russian soft power must examine the extent to which Russia is able to exercise such cultural leadership in a given context, in this case, contemporary Ukraine.

Russian elites see their country as a great power, a defining characteristic of which is the ability to assume leadership on the international stage. A pre-requisite for leadership is a project or approach that one can propose to would-be followers. Further, to qualify as sovereign leadership, the cultural-ideational discourse framing such approaches should be determined in-country and distinctive from the offerings of other civilisational contenders, drawing on indigenous tradition. That Russia approaches soft power in this way is demonstrated in this chapter with reference to the statements of scholars and practitioners. Having established this background, the stage will be set for an examination the ideational contours of the civilisational discourse around which Russia seeks to rally partners.

5.2. Conceptual Engagement with Soft Power in Russia

This thesis argues that the need for soft power is recognised within the Kremlin. As Farid Mukhametshin, former head of Rossotrudnichestvo has noted, ‘any modernisation in society starts with the modernisation of worldview’ (2011). While Russia is unlikely to rely excessively on soft power to achieve its international objectives or reduce its hard power capacity, as Boris Mezhuev, a political analyst who has been involved in Russian discussions on soft power and image, said at a conference: ‘bad is the Hobbes who doesn’t dream of becoming Kant!’ (cited in Pavlovsky 2009). Indeed, while Russia’s military resources and raw materials may underpin Russian power, for them to be Russia’s main contribution to the world is seen as primitive, undignified and unworthy (Kosachev 2004; Medvedev 2009).

However, within relevant state structures, interpretations of soft power are significantly less coherent (Rogozin 2010). Indeed, for all this interest in soft power among political

and media circles over the last years, there is evidence suggesting misunderstanding and a lack of engagement with the concept.⁷⁰ Indeed, 'soft power' has been associated with femininity and thereby a culturally mitigated perception of weakness, which impedes serious engagement in certain quarters (Kivirähk 2010). The 'real' business is seen to lie with hard power, and therefore for some elites 'softer' approaches are incomprehensible.⁷¹ Hence, for many, attitudes towards soft power may be summed up by the view: 'We're not loved, but respected – that's the main thing'.⁷² Indeed, Konstantin Kosachev (2009) observed that Russia underestimates attractiveness as a significant factor in its relations with its partners, and needs to cultivate sympathy and trust.

Furthermore, in the Russian context, the first issue may in part be a linguistic one, with 'softness' and power seeming oxymoronic, as the Russian renderings of 'power' – '*sila*' [force], '*vlast*' [domination], '*moshch*' [might] – convey a stronger sense of asymmetrical obligation, compulsion and coercion, whereas the English term 'power' is flexible enough to also convey the notion of co-option. Perhaps it is for this reason that 'soft power', measured by identity, is sometimes seen to suggest a kind of 'loyalty' and 'service' to Russia among foreigners who are in some way dependent upon Moscow (Chatham House 2011: 10; Pavlovsky 2011: 2; Ryabukh 2011; Prokhorenko 2012).⁷³

Consequently, the notion of 'soft power' has taken time to become embedded in the Russian policy world. Furthermore, the term has frequently been imbued with a negative

⁷⁰ For instance, early in the discussion, Russian journalists Avdeev and Kulikov (2007) refer to the use of water cannons and rubber-bullets as soft power, presumably on the grounds that these tend not to inflict fatal wounds, even if they are wielded coercively

⁷¹ Interview with N. Belaeva in Moscow June 2011.

⁷² (2009). *Lyubyat li v mire russkikh?* *Fond Russkiy Mir*, 6th April: <http://ruskiymir.ru/ru/publication/choice/index.php?id4=9148> (accessed 7th April 2009).

⁷³ Interviews with N. Belaeva and A. Okara conducted in Moscow in June-July 2011.

meaning quite at odds with the generally positive connotations of the English-language term. Vladimir Putin, for instance, has used the term in quite a different sense from that Nye intended, perhaps because none of its direct translations fit comfortably with Russian ways of thinking, and because it's an Americanism whose conceptual claims to legitimacy are not accepted in Moscow. Putin recently employed the term 'soft power' to designate a specific type of Western-driven propaganda campaign:

The notion of 'soft power' is being used increasingly often. This implies a matrix of tools and methods to reach foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence. Regrettably, these methods are being used all too frequently to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalistic attitudes, to manipulate the public and to conduct direct interference in the domestic policy of sovereign countries.

There must be a clear division between freedom of speech and normal political activity, on the one hand, and illegal instruments of "soft power," on the other.⁷⁴

By this reading, soft power is not the positive, post-modern, ethically sound way of conducting politics, as presented in the West. Rather, soft power represents a synonym for 'orange technologies'; the financial, training-related, practical and moral support provided to members of Ukrainian civil society, particularly youth groups, in the run-up to the 2004 presidential elections. In this way, the metapolitical ground was prepared for the initiation and maintenance of popular mobilisation against electoral fraud on the part of the 'pro-Kremlin' candidate Viktor Yanukovich to the benefit of the Western-supported candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. Konstantin Kosachev, in comparing Chinese soft power with that of the West notes,

Whereas China underscores its non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, the West's soft power principle say: "Make things better! Don't put up with infringements on your rights! Don't wait for changes to ripen by themselves!" It follows that the Chinese

⁷⁴ An article on foreign policy. Putin, V. V. (2012). "Russia and the Changing World." *RIA Novosti* 27th February(<http://en.rian.ru/world/20120227/171547818-print.html> (accessed 27th February)). This perspective was reiterated by the respondent in my interview with an independent researcher in Moscow, 27th June 2011.

variant addresses contented people, while the West's one appeals to the discontent. Logically, it should stimulate the West to incite internal discontent in other states to create optimal conditions for projecting its soft power (Kosachev 2012).⁷⁵

The recent proliferation of 'velvet' 'revolutions' in formerly Soviet-influenced countries combined with continued socio-economic and political problems on the domestic stage stoked elite fears of a 'birch revolution' in Russia. This resulted in the introduction of strict laws on foreign NGOs, presumably to impede their ability to propagate provocative ideas and ferment discord. It was likely such factors that caused Kosachev (2012) to declare that soft power relates 'not so much to the sphere of culture and information as to geopolitics'. Issues of culture, spirituality and information integrity have been securitised (Buzan, Wæver et al. 1998) in today's Russia, and the potential for threats against them are mentioned in the National Security Strategy (2009) and the Information Security Doctrine (2000).

Elsewhere, 'soft power' is interpreted as simply as aspect of PR, as Okara observes:

Very many people, especially the political establishment, believe that soft power is only the improvement of one's own image [*imidzh*], that it's simply the improvement of the country's image in the post-Soviet space, that is to say, improving the image in the world.⁷⁶

In this vein, Andrey Kazantsev has opined that the methods of soft power *are* understood in Russia, and namely under their traditional moniker of 'propaganda' and, despite claims to the contrary, as being nothing new.⁷⁷ In the Russian debate on this theme, two expressions corresponding to the English word 'image' are used; '*imidzh*' and '*obraz*'. Konstantin Kosachev (2012),⁷⁸ has pointed to the idea of '*imidzh*' as referring to 'a set of

⁷⁵ On the role of Western actors in instigating 'colour revolutions' also see Herd (2005).

⁷⁶ Interview with A. Okara conducted in Moscow in July 2011.

⁷⁷ Telephone interview conducted with Andrey Kazantsev in July 2011.

⁷⁸ Konstantin Kosachev has been head of Rossotrudnichestvo (Federal Agency for the CIS, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation) since March 2012. He is also the Russian

outside observers' ideas about a subject, i.e. a reputation which is often formed under the influence of persisting stereotypes (national, religious, historical or political) and information from intermediaries (the mass media, ratings, expert conclusions, etc.)' By contrast, '*obraz*' is seen to equate to 'an exact reflection of objective reality which one can see for oneself, the actual state of affairs, which in case of an open state can adjust excessively negative or unjustified ideas' (Kosachev 2012). While this thesis would not necessarily support this distinction on methodological grounds, it reflects a fault line in opinion on whether it is necessary to improve conditions in Russia with a view to the reality presenting itself in a more attractive way (*obraz*), or merely improve PR and marketing to ensure that existing conditions are more favourably perceived, without fundamentally changing anything (*imidzh*) (Kononenko 2006; Beshpalov, Vlasov et al. 2007; Adilova 2008).

Aside from the general mentions it receives in normative, journalistic commentaries, the term 'soft power' is most commonly used in Russia by members of the academic community who are understandably keen to link in to international debates surrounding this currently quite fashionable term. On one hand, the expression may also be used to refer to what has been termed in this thesis as soft power as a *practice* of engagement with multilateral institutions, rather than unilateral coercion, as a means of achieving foreign policy goals. On the other hand, Russian academic discussions of soft power as a *resource* share much in common with their Western counterparts in terms of the absence of a critical disassembly of the concept and consequent difficulties in operationalising a theoretically consistent analysis. That said, since the debate is more commonly turned to

President's special envoy for relationships with CIS member states, a member of editorial board of Russia in Global Affairs and former chair of the Duma Foreign Affairs Committee.

narrower empirical examples, the discussion often turns out to be more informative as it relates to specific issues and provide new knowledge to the Western researcher (for instance: Fominykh 2008; Lebedeva 2009; Panova 2011).

5.3. Obstacles to the Renewal of Russian Soft Power

However, for all the words devoted to the broad theme of soft power, numerous issues impede successful implementation.

Although 'neo-imperialist' or revanchist rhetoric may be utilised by some politicians to serve their own ends at a particular moment, on the whole, there is little intent among members of the mainstream political establishment to revise the borders of the Russian Federation. Indeed, despite the talk of Russia's 'imperial complexes', one issue that has impeded the development of Russian soft power relates to an insufficiency of political will to engage in international meta-projects (Sakwa 2011 cited in Lomagin 2012: 499).⁷⁹ Sergei Karaganov (2010: 34) attributes this to the wish of the population to 'relax after burden of communism and revolution.' While at one time there was will in the political class to pay the economic price to 'reintegrate the old empire' (Evgeny Primakov cited in Fawn and White 2002: 167), today, even if money were available, there is little desire even to subsidise gas to Ukraine, for instance, in exchange for 'friendship' (Filimonov 2010). Pragmatism is largely the mood of the day, as elites remain concerned with everyday political issues, not to mention ensuring their own access to power and money flows.

Global projects are side-lined as a distraction from the bread and butter issues of domestic problems. According to Bokan, the elite is aware of the potential grounds for

⁷⁹ Interview with A. Okara conducted in Moscow 2011.

resistance, and foresees the reaction of opponents in such complaints that ‘we have enough internal problems, and again this nostalgia for the idea of being “ahead of the whole planet”, again imperial habits, again teaching others while at home...and so on and so forth’ (Bokan 2010: 148). There is a sense that the Russian state can’t do soft power because many of its influential representatives don’t, at this stage, believe in any ‘romantic’ discourses; they are cynically ironic towards them.⁸⁰

Further, a lack of national self-confidence to act as a driving force behind such visionary projects is also diagnosed by Surkov, who writes,

People say: “Russia has overstrained itself. Prolonged imperial exertion has weakened its powers; it has lost passionarity⁸¹ and is leaving history. Russia is breaking apart: the Far East is depopulated, the Caucasus embittered. Russia has fallen behind forever – a raw material backwater, a country of slaves and masters and eternal poverty, living from hand to mouth, off hemp and gas. Russia is physically dying out – a lethal outcome from population loss is inevitable.” (2009: 17)

A loss of belief in Russian abilities to assume a wider leadership role have led to a shift in discourse among some elements of the nationalist movement, away from an internationalist narrative towards a set of ideas more typical of the European far right. Defensive, anti-migrant, isolationist and with paternalistic elements, this strain of nationalism is ‘more concerned with maintaining Russia’s “Russianness” than with territorial expansion’ (Popescu 2012). Such ‘red-brown’ nationalism is a cause for concern as it threatens not only domestic discord, but also to undermine Russia’s desired image narrative as a country well placed to offer the world the benefits of its successful multinational, multi-confessional experiences. Such cleavages in nationalist stance were observable at the Russian March to mark National Unity Day 2011 where more traditional

⁸⁰ Interviews with A. Pionkovskiy and A. Okara conducted in Moscow in July 2011.

⁸¹ The translator notes: ‘*Passionarnost*’ – a concept in Lev Gumilev’s theory of the life cycle of the ethnos.’ (Surkov 2009: 17)

slogans like ‘There is No Russia without the Caucasus’ met chants of ‘Stop Feeding the Caucasus’ and ‘Russia for Russians’ expressing frustration towards migrants and the flow of federal funds to the region (Filimonov 2011).

Nevertheless, irredentist elements do still exist. Statements interpreted in this light uttered by politicians such as Konstantin Zatulin have resulted in him being denied entry to Ukraine as a *person non grata*. Similarly, ideas expressed by the more radical among Russian politicians, to the effect that the Russian Empire should be restored as a Eurasian civilisation, provoke alienating impressions of Russian chauvinism (Pelnēns 2009) quite at cross-purposes to soft power. Overall, there is an impression of states being ‘forced to friendship’, thereby excluding the possibility of actual friendship.

By contrast, ‘those for whom the sun sets in the West’ (Surkov 2009: 9) are depicted as wanting Russia to follow a liberal path of development, implying the relinquishing of a ‘historical civilisational mission’ and establishment of ‘normal’ relations with neighbouring countries.⁸² According to Dmitri Trenin, Russia’s middle-classes – who arguably constitute the main constituency of liberal Westernisers – are ‘consumers, not citizens or entrepreneurs’ and thus in the absence of a *res publica*, Russia is not a nation (2010: 36). Hence there is a strong desire to co-opt this group, described as the best part of the country in the context of recent protests; the creative class upon whom success depends.⁸³

⁸² Russia has long had pro-Western constituency, for details, see for instance: Riasanovsky, N. V. (2005). *Russian Identities. A Historical Survey*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

⁸³ Of course, the memberships of these groups are fluid and may overlap and shift. Indeed, according to Nicu Popescu (2012), some nationalist leaders believe that the blend of anti-immigrant rhetoric and oppositional stance will appeal to many young, urban, Western-liberal leanings middle-class voters.

A further problem is that this group, which tends to be young (under 35), highly educated and professionally successful, are seen to be lacking in cultural and historical consciousness. Perhaps as a result of having been socialised during a 'time of troubles' in Russia, these high-flyers frequently chose degree courses likely to maximise their career prospects, in disciplines related to economics and management. Consequently, as Natalia Narochnitskaya (2007) observes, this influential portion of the new generation received a higher education that did not impart a cultural, historical consciousness. Indeed, Patriarch Aleksey also complained about the 'practical, at times mercantile character' of post-Soviet curriculum (cited in Richters 2012: 47). The results of this may possibly be observed in the recent report conducted by the Gorchakov and the *Naslediye Evrazii* Foundations, which reported increasing skepticism about the premises of Russian diplomacy, including a 'civilisational mission' (Makarychev 2012). They don't share a sense of the pressure of history but rather that of the moment; the need to secure their position after several decades of insecurity and to enjoy the material rewards of what they've achieved (Fadeev 2006: 133).

A number of commentators have been preoccupied by the lack of a blueprint for such a global construction project in the form of a specific, innovative model of development to offer the rest of the world. The lack of a distinctive ideology (Nikonov 2009) or original political philosophy 'possessing organisational-practical potential' (Pronin 2009) is seen as a problem to the generation of soft power on the grounds that, in sum, 'a country claiming the role of a superpower, a centre of soft power, should propose its picture of the world to those surrounding it' (Semenov 2008).

This ambivalence has a number of consequences. Firstly, it is reflected in an absence of serious funding for this foreign policy area (Filimonov 2010).⁸⁴ This affliction is only aggravated by the high level of corruption⁸⁵ in this sector, with up to 70% funds designated for soft power purposes said to be skimmed off.⁸⁶

Secondly, the fact that far from all elites have been co-opted one way or another into the official soft power discourse has resulted in some representatives of Russia, for instance, 'hardline nationalists with a genuinely imperial agenda' that are capable of exercising leverage over the government (Tsygankov 2006) being quoted making statements – albeit sometimes disingenuously - that are essentially outside the 'political correct' 'soft power' discourse. While publicly doubting and railing against Ukrainian independence may provide short-term gratification to a certain demographic of the domestic audience, and thus mobilise support in elections, such rhetoric is counter-productive from the perspective of soft power. It provides continued fuel for anti-Russian narratives framing Moscow's policy orientation as aggressive, imperial and retrogressive, and undermines more diplomatic overtures.

Thirdly, as an independent researcher interviewed in Moscow in July 2011 put it, there is a lack of 'systemisation of knowledge of national interests in this sphere' making it harder to formulate and implement coherent policies. This is reflected in an absence of 'mechanisms for inter-departmental (inter-corporate) coordination of efforts' (Filimonov 2010) and an ineffectiveness of some existing tools (e.g. Rossotrudnichestvo)(Wilson 2012). Instead, Russia's public diplomacy is directed in a very top down way, through the

⁸⁴ Interview with A. Dolinskiy conducted in Moscow in July 2011.

⁸⁵ Particular ire is directed against a faceless oligarchic-bureau class, who while being of uncertain national orientation are identified as 'enemies' of Russia's project through their hampering of state efficiency by diverting funds to their own ends (Surkov 2009).

⁸⁶ Interviews with A. Kazantsev (by telephone), A. Okara and A. Dolinskiy in Moscow July 2011.

press service and foreign policy offices of the presidential staff and the Russian government staff which hinders grass-roots co-option and involvement (Filimonov 2010).⁸⁷

5.4. Different Approaches to Russian Soft Power

However, despite these obstacles, there is activity on the soft power front in Russia, although the presence of the above-mentioned issues is reflected qualitatively in efforts at implementation. Most significantly perhaps, Russian soft power suffers from a lack of coherent approach. That is to say, it is not the case that a single image of Russia is promote abroad, but rather it depends on the actors involved and what they seek to gain through Russia's foreign policy (Feklyunina 2008: 610). The potential impact of such measures is, therefore, impeded by at-times clumsy top-down direction and a lack of networked interaction in public diplomacy,⁸⁸ as there appears to be a lack of direct communication and cooperation between the various agencies charged with such activities. The combination of will in some elite circles and ambivalence in others seems to have manifested itself into a hydra-like approach to soft power in Russia, whereby several different fronts are being pursued simultaneously. The approaches below have been teased apart primarily for analytical purposes; in practice there is some overlap between the discourses, goals and agents concerned, which allows for some mutual reinforcement. However, this step enables the identification and analysis of a manageable object of study about which sufficiently precise commentaries may be made.

⁸⁷ Interview with A. Dolinskiy in Moscow July 2011.

⁸⁸ According to insights imparted by A. Dolinskiy during this interview in Moscow July 2011, the MFA, ROC, RMF and RT are also 'directed' from the Presidential Administration.

5.4.1. Approach: Nation-Branding

In general, the aims of nation-branding activities are quite focused on promoting economic development and draw most explicitly upon insights from the world of business, especially marketing and PR. Seen through the prism of nation-branding, soft power is about elevating Russia's image in the eyes of foreign citizens in general. Winning the right to host global sporting mega events such as the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and the 2018 World Cup would seem to indicate the pinnacle of achievement. Such demonstrations of supreme organisational, marketing and construction achievement may inspire awe and help create a prestigious image, but they also help raise the profile of a country as a means to create favourable conditions for development. For instance, the Presidential Press Office contracted PR agency Ketchum in the run up to the 2006 G8 summit in St Petersburg to promote the country as 'an attractive place to invest, as a reliable energy partner, and as rightful member of the G8 and other world governing bodies.'⁸⁹ Additionally, for instance, there are websites such as WowMoscow, which promotes a 'new brand of Moscow'; '*Moskva budushchego*,'⁹⁰ by providing cutting edge information on useful and amusing topics in Russian and English, and reinforces the city's credentials as both a place of historic culture and modern living. Not only should it change perceptions of Moscow, it should also attract tourists and talented professionals from abroad to the city and thus help reverse the 'brain drain'.

While Russian business has sometimes been considered an arm of Russian foreign policy, a report by Chatham House (2011) suggests the need for caution with such assumptions,

⁸⁹ <http://www.ketchum.com/profile/kathy-jeavons> Accessed 9th December 2012.

⁹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/wowmoscow/info>, <http://wowmoscow.net/en/> Accessed 9th December 2012.,

noting 'it is difficult to find examples of Russian businesses abroad serving Russian state interests. The businesses are careful to follow Western rules as they know they have quite a high barrier of suspicion to overcome. Russian businessmen speak in favour of their own country and modernisation'. In this vein, Russian oligarch Vladimir P. Evtushenkov was cited '[w]e have plans to develop everywhere, according to two principles: One, it must be within the law and, two, make a profit [...] We have no preferences, because in business you cannot be emotionally attached. Business is not a woman' (Smale 2012). As such, businesspeople may distance themselves from more civilisational narratives.

5.4.2. Approach: Promotion of an 'Objective Image'

This approach is more oriented towards the political world, and the background to it is the perception that Russia's renewal as a recognised global power is impeded by an international image more negative than is warranted. Frequently, this poor image is perceived as resulting from a conscious strategy of 'information war' against Russia (Karaganov 2007; Rogozin 2010; Tsygankov and Fominykh 2010; Tkachenko 2011; Putin 2012) on the part of certain other geopolitical players, specifically the West, which seek to contain Russia by keeping it weak and promoting 'geopolitical pluralism' in its neighbourhood (Brzezinski 1997:51). A key thrust in this regard is countering the perceived propagation of a sense of illegitimacy around the Russian regime, by comparing the country with the standard principles of affluent and established democracies. Accordingly, under the priority rubric of 'information support for foreign policy initiatives' the Foreign Policy Concept states,

An important part of the foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation is communicating to the broad world public full and accurate information about its stand on

the main international problems, foreign policy initiatives and actions by the Russian Federation, its domestic social and economic development processes and plans, as well as on the accomplishments of Russian culture and science.

In public diplomacy, Russia will seek its objective perception in the world, develop its own effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad, strengthen the role of the Russian mass media in the international information environment providing them with essential state support, as well as actively participate in international information cooperation.

To this end, the Kremlin has established a number of communications outlets in recent years, which seek to help foreigners to better understand the logic of Moscow's actions, even if they disagree with them (Feklyunina 2010: 9), as well as acting as much-needed, authoritative sources of good news stories about Russia. These include media outlets such as RIA Novosti, Russia Today,⁹¹ Russia Profile, Voice of Russia, Russia Beyond the Headlines. There are also various discussion fora whose activities are directed in this direction, such as the Russian International Affairs Council,⁹² the Valdai Club, the Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, some aspects of the work of the Russkiy Mir Foundation and the Institute for Cooperation and Democracy in Paris and New York.

While cultural elements may be perceived faintly between the lines, they are downplayed to the advantage of more 'pragmatic' concerns, since such organisations are keen to promote Russia as a predictable, strong and reliable partner to influential representatives of foreign states. In presenting a diversified view on Russia, they aim to become a credible voice shaping global perceptions of the Russian state, its policies and life in Russia.

⁹¹ Forrest, A. (2012). "Russia's Answer to Al-Jazeera." *The Big Issue* April 23-29: 20-22.

⁹² <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/>

5.4.3. Approach: Compatriot Policy

The need for a policy on Russia's compatriots became acute with the disintegration of the Soviet Union into 15 successor states, which resulted in millions of ethnic Russians and nationalities historically identifying with the territory of the defunct state, finding themselves resident in newly independent states (Zevelev 2001; Zevelev 2008). Particularly in the Baltic States and Central Asia, Russian-speaking compatriots were often made to feel like second class citizens, as nation-building regimes frequently invoked anti-Russian 'othering' motifs as a means to help define the new nation. Cast as potential fifth columnists, non-titular national Russophones were often denied civil rights, such as the ability to acquire full and equal citizenship, due to strict citizenship laws requiring knowledge of the local language.⁹³ 'Shamefully' legally identified as 'stateless persons,' they were subject to restrictions on employment and property ownership. Nationalising measures also curtailed opportunities for communication and education in Russian, which had an impact on social mobility. In short, the situation of such persons was felt to be highly undignified (Putin 2012), and all the more so since they had shifted from being the main nationality of a multinational superpower to an external minority of a greatly weakened state. Despite a certain amount of rhetoric critiquing this state of affairs, during the 1990s the Russian state did not prioritise redressing the concerns of its country fellows abroad. Having regained state capacity, however, this issue has been thrust onto the agenda and Russia now seeks to unite its compatriots, who are extremely diverse in terms of their experiences and reasons for emigration, and hence rather disparate as a

⁹³ As a Finno-Ugric language, Estonian is completely different from Russian and hence rather difficult to learn, especially as most Russians are locally concentrated in the north-east of Estonia and hence have less contact with the Estonian language. Latvian is a member of the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family. The issues are quite similar there.

community, into a more consolidated diaspora that might support Russian development (Chepurin 2009).

Early post-Soviet attempts to build relationships with country-fellows abroad focussed on cultivating 'pro-Russian' groups in society, or cultivating elite links, driven by the notion that the more compatriots abroad 'need' Russia, the better for Russia's international position (Zevelev 2008). Such relationships have often rested on the provision or future expectation of material incentives, thereby giving rise to the notion of 'professional compatriots' (Kudors 2010: 2; Makarychev 2011). However, despite receiving funds from the RF, such groups tended to act in their own interests, sometimes pursuing an agenda detrimental to the long-term interests of Russia (Hedenskog and Larsson 2007: 36). Rather than harnessing 'hearts and minds', the strident tone and activities of such groups have often tended to alienate the overall majority of citizens in the newly independent states.⁹⁴

In recent years, the Kremlin has sought to develop a more coherent, proactive approach, and incorporated the provision of 'comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad' into its 2008 Foreign Policy Concept. The aim has been to offer legal support and veteran pensions to overseas compatriots, and a resettlement policy was also enacted, although far fewer compatriots than expected were enticed to repatriate themselves to the far-flung participating cities. Such

⁹⁴ For instance, slogans such as 'Forever with Russia!' [Naveki s Rossiei!] and 'For the Russian Language, Unity and Dignified Living' (by the Russian *Obshchina* of Crimea) and 'Party of Slavic National Unity' (by *Russkii Blok*) might be seen to suggest lack of loyalty to Ukraine. Although these banners were on display in Simferopol, when broadcast around Ukraine, there is a likelihood of their being associated with the Russian community more broadly. Yun, S.-H. and E. L. Toth (2009). "Future sociological public diplomacy and the role of public relations: evolution of public diplomacy." *American Behavioural Scientist* 53(4): 493-503.

approaches touch upon kin-state policy, but overlap with endeavours to cultivate culturally-rooted relations with compatriots.⁹⁵

5.4.4. Approach: Humanitarian Cooperation

In the Russian-language context, the term most commonly used to describe *activities* that may be considered under the rubric of 'soft power' is 'humanitarian cooperation' which has increased in prominence over the course of this thesis. It includes collaborative activities in the spheres of education, culture and science. The background to this approach is recognition of the need to revive the 'humanitarian' potential of Russia, which is seen not only as an attribute of a great power but also as a basis upon which to cultivate relationship with compatriots and foreigners. And indeed, some Russian experts are optimistic that their country has very strong possibilities to pursue a humanitarian strategy (Kevorkova 2009; Bokan 2010: 150).

Culture is identified as having a determining influence on the quality of the nation's 'spiritual unity', image and ability to offer an attractive unifying agenda through two areas of significance to soft power; namely both resources (humanitarian: relating to society, education, science) and tools (information provision) facilitating the export of Russian cultural output to the CIS states. According to the National Security Strategy of 2009,⁹⁶

[m]eeting the challenges of national security in the sphere of culture in the medium to long term is achieved by recognizing the paramount role of culture for the revival and preservation of cultural and moral values, for strengthening the spiritual unity of the

⁹⁵ This approach is expressed in such documents as the Programmes of Work with Compatriots 2006-2008 2009-2011 and 2012-201, as well as the Programme of Assistance for the Voluntary Resettlement in the Russian Federation of Compatriots Living Abroad (<http://www.fms.gov.ru/programs/fmsuds/>) approved by President Putin in 2006 and the 1999 Federal Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation in relations to compatriots abroad

<http://www.rg.ru/2009/07/28/polit-dok.html> (accessed 31st August 2009) Compatriot affairs are handled by the Government Commission for Matters Concerning Compatriots Abroad.

⁹⁶ Article 84: http://www.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/424

multinational people of the Russian Federation and the international image of Russia as a country with a rich traditional and modern dynamic culture, for the establishment of a system of spiritual and patriotic education of citizens of Russia, and for the development of a common humanitarian and information-telecommunications environment in the space of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States and in adjacent regions.⁹⁷

Through pursuing measures developing the humanitarian dimension of foreign policy, interaction and collaboration with influential persons beyond Russia's borders should be established, which may well facilitate increased bilateral cooperation. This approach includes cultural diplomacy, and hence the activities of the Russkiy Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo, narrowly defined.

Numerous measures are being considered in the spheres of educational exchanges (Fominykh 2008), the establishment of a CIS Network University in 2008 (Filimonov 2010), regeneration of Russian theatre abroad (Mikhailov 2009) and film and cinema⁹⁸ industries (Filimonov 2010) as well as a range of initiatives to promote the Russian language to name just a few steps on the road to renewing Russia's soft power potential.

5.4.5. Approach: Dissemination of a Civilisational Discourse

The background to this approach lies in the search for post-Soviet discursive resources capable of reconciling Russia's imperial past with the realities of the present, while creating a framework for a stable future. Indeed, Russia has never existed as a nation-

⁹⁷ A document entitled the 'Main Vectors of the Policy of the Russian Federation in international Cultural-Humanitarian Cooperation' was also approved by President Medvedev on 18th December 2010, but was criticised for being lacking consecutive logic, systematic objectives and clear, measurable indicators for implementation (Dolinskiy 2011). In an interview, Dolinskiy revealed that he considered the reason to this to lie in the factor that if the authors of the policy did not establish criteria, they could not be condemned for failing to achieve them.

⁹⁸ Filimonov (2010) notes, drawing upon the 'sovereignty' motif, that government funding and extra-budgetary sources should focus, as well as high culture, on the 'wider production and export of domestic products of mass culture, but not through cheap imitations of Western patterns of different trends in contemporary music, choreography etc, but by cultivating original, exclusive styles based on all available formats. He also notes that '[c]inema must be approached as a political tool – the experience of Hollywood may well serve as a worthy example for Russian film makers to follow.'

state, but rather functioned historically as a centre, engaged in a 'gathering of the lands'. While there was revanchist talk in the 1990s, by now the contemporary borders of the RF are officially accepted. Yet there are objective and subjective reasons behind the desire on the part of Russia's elites for the country to re-assume at least a regional, if not global leadership role. Nowadays, however, this role should be facilitated as far as possible by soft power means.

The rest of this chapter will focus on the civilisational approach to Russian soft power, on the grounds that this is the most interesting philosophically and politically, as well as not being thoroughly explored in the soft power literature.

5.5. Sovereignty of Spirit: A Russian Perspective on Soft Power

Despite the diversity of interpretations, it is suggested that there is an understanding of soft power prevalent in the Kremlin that coincides with the definition proposed in this thesis, even if discourses framing the notion of soft power as a way of working are not themselves hegemonic among those representing the wider state structures.

The formulation which best encapsulates this approach, if not necessarily most commonly used in practice, may be summarised as 'sovereignty of spirit' [*suverenitet dukha*]. Although receiving far less attention in the English-language literature, this is an integral component of the sovereign democracy concept.⁹⁹ 'Sovereign democracy' is not a stand-alone ideology as such, but rather a largely coherent set of assumptions that constitute a

⁹⁹ Having been the central theme of Surkov's 'secret speech' to the 'Delovaya Rossiya' business forum in July 2005, Surkov's concept was first officially presented in a speech before 'United Russia' in February 2005. The proceedings of these 'February Theses' were published as a report 'Sovereignty: a synonym for the ability to compete' (2006), which in turn was elaborated upon in the articles 'Nationalisation of the Future' (2007), and 'A View from Utopia' (2008). For the purposes of this thesis, these documents will be analysed as statements representing the official views of the Kremlin and by extension the 'Russian approach'.

Russian official worldview; a normative framework within which more specific, practical measures towards realisation may be debated; a narrative whose elements lend themselves to both liberal or conservative interpretations within the same core discursive paradigm.¹⁰⁰ Its key premise is that Russia has the tangible resource basis (vast territory, energy and mineral resources, a large if sparse population, nuclear capability) upon which to renew its status as a great power in the contemporary world, which is seen as irrevocably multipolar. As an independent or 'sovereign' power, Russia is not required to kow-tow to the West, which is perceived as attempting to impose to criteria and standards deemed inappropriate for Russian specificities.

Soft power, as understood in this thesis, corresponds with the cultural aspect of sovereign democracy; the idea that Russia can and must maintain its *samobytnost'*; the uniqueness and distinctiveness of its culture. This has been referred to as 'sovereignty of spirit'. While the term as such does not feature prominently in the public discourse of the leaders of the Russian Federation, the idea now flows between the lines in speeches and its significance is demonstrated in the consistency and increasing regularity with which culture, spirituality and *samobytnost'* are mentioned in major foreign policy texts. Cultural contributions by no means trump the pursuit of traditional military and economic interests, but it is clear that Russia also intends to make its contribution to international competition in the cultural-civilisation dimension. Indeed, ultimately this should serve the pursuit of the hard power objectives (Putin 2012, Filimonov 2010), although as will become apparent, it is also valuable for its own sake.

¹⁰⁰ It was described as a 'constitutional idea of Russia at the 21st century' [sic] in press release 87 dated 30th October 2007 subsequent to a conference of professional lawyers and academics with the same title at the Research Centre of Constitutional and Law Problems of Sovereign Democracy at Chelyabinsk State University. http://un.csu.ru/release_eng/1/2531_1.html (accessed 11th May 2009).

In advancing this argument, I draw on the writings of Vladislav Surkov (2005; 2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2009),¹⁰¹ who as chief ideologist to both Presidents Putin and Medvedev was charged with the responsibility of reshaping the Russian public sphere (Sakwa 2008: 4).¹⁰² Although his notion of sovereign democracy has had its share of critics (Medvedev 2006; Pavlovsky 2010),¹⁰³ no clear alternative has emerged to this concept, whose precepts have become the guiding principles of Russian policy-making despite the term being cited with less regularity today (White 2008; Hayoz 2009; Pavlovsky 2010). The success with which it has assumed the position of official ‘common sense’ about Russia today is most likely due to its capacity to reconcile beautiful words with the interests of big business and thereby rhetorically co-opt the larger section of the political elite.¹⁰⁴ Or, in Surkov’s words, ‘[i]n such a task, there is pragmatism and romanticism. Allies and adversaries will be found. And it may constitute a mission’ (2009: 11).

As was argued in the conceptual framework, soft power is ultimately about leadership and sovereignty in the sphere of culture broadly defined. This does not preclude interaction and even hybridisation with manifestations of other cultures, but overall the flow of influence of metanarratives - key assumptions and values – irradiates from the

¹⁰¹ Vladislav Surkov is widely regarded as the *cardinal gris*, the ideological driving force behind the Putin-Medvedev leadership, and considered by some to be no less than the second most powerful person in the RF (Russia Life article). Initially appointed as Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration in 1999, then promoted to First Deputy Head on 8th May 2008 under the Medvedev presidency, he remained in this influential until his recent promotion to Deputy Prime Minister for Modernisation and Innovation, which now places him in an advantageous position to oversee the implementation of change.

¹⁰² Robert Skidelsky (2007) has noted a ‘virtual identity of vision between the leader of the liberal ring wing party (SPS) Anatolii Chubais and Surkov, the ‘Kremlin’s chief “politologist”. We may uphold this claim if we examine the notions of sovereignty and Russian cultural values in Chubais’ 2003 article ‘*Missiya Rossii v XXI veke*’, though perhaps the emphasis is more on sovereignty than liberalism in Surkov’s work. However, it is Surkov who has written so prolifically on the topic in recently years, though in cooperation with other elites. Chubais, A. (2003). *Missiya Rossii v XXI veke*. Nezavisimaya Gazeta. 1st October, http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2003-10-01/1_mission.html (accessed 30th September 2009).

¹⁰³ Also see the interview given by President Medvedev to Valery Fadeev, *Ekspert*, 24th July 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Surkov (2009) notes in the post scriptum to his article that the sovereign democracy concept was developed collaboratively with a range of stakeholders.

centre to the periphery. To be a sovereign in this sense – all while recognising that sovereignty, like power, is never absolute or unidirectional – is to assume a leading role in matters of culture in a given space; whether that be national, regional, global or even diasporic in scope. Kosachev (2012) acknowledges this aspect to soft power in his comment, '[e]levating one's own values to the rank of global standard is also a task and a result of soft power.'

The relevance of the phrase 'sovereignty of spirit' to soft power becomes apparent in this citation by Oleg Matveychev,¹⁰⁵ who states in a 2009 book of the same title that,

to lose spiritual authority is to lose power. Real power is there where coercion is not required. On the contrary, the use of force [*sila*] speaks rather of weakness... sovereignty is precisely and only spiritual sovereignty. Such sovereignty of spirit is better than any army, atom bomb or economy. (142-3)¹⁰⁶

Matveychev, who is not only Vice-Governor of Volgograd Oblast but also political consultant to 'United Russia', acknowledges the potency of immaterial forms of power. Vladimir Putin stands behind this approach, having quoted prominent nationalist scholar Dmitry Likhachev in his 2007 address to the Federal Assembly, stating 'state sovereignty is defined by cultural criteria' (Putin 2007).

By this understanding, a polity is not truly sovereign if it defines itself exclusively in terms of the value structures provided by another civilisation.¹⁰⁷ This desire for cultural sovereignty is reflected in Surkov's perspective on the future directions of the global

¹⁰⁵ Mr Matveychev is also very active on live journal: <http://matveychev-oleg.livejournal.com/>

¹⁰⁶ Surkov shares this view, criticising the status quo: 'We have a rapidly expanding bureaucracy coupled to oil pipelines. Few of the people in leading positions in our society, in both the private and the state sector, are oriented towards the third wave. Raw materials are valued more than knowledge. Culture and education have not yet become the basis of the economy or of politics and as before are regarded as unprofitable social programs, peripheral to the raw-materials complex. There is no understanding that political, economic, and military advantages have no separate existence: they are always components and consequences of cultural superiority,' (2008: 94)

¹⁰⁷ Yet simultaneously there is an argument that once a discourse has reached a certain stage of hegemony; that is, its validity is widely recognised and its value precepts cease to encounter resistance, then it stops being the thetical property of a given actor and becomes common material.

system of states. Having dismissed the prospect of a future in which globalisation has dissolved national boundaries, Surkov incites Russian readers to,

[d]ream of a global federation based on treaties among free states. All the units of such a federation must be equal. This does not mean that the federation will be cultural and economically homogenous: some units will be more equal than others. As a unit of a utopian global federation, I would like Russia to be a donor region, a leading nation, one of the centers of intellectual life. (2008: 93-4)

On this basis, the management of Russia's image, in its diverse facets, clearly assumes an important role. It requires Russia to re-enter the world stage as a subject-creator of history; an originating source of attractive narratives of representations about history, as opposed to being an object of discourses created by other civilisational centres (Pronin 2009; Matveychev 2009: 141). This preoccupation with 'global meta-projects' (Ostrovskii and Shchedrovitskii 1999) is something clearly different and of a higher order than the advertising processes associated with 'nation-branding'. The will and the ability to create such attractive cultural narratives successfully are surely defining criteria for a major global power.

However, assertions of Russian distinctiveness should not necessarily point to the conclusion that the Kremlin is inherently or absolutely anti-Western. Indeed, Surkov has presented himself as an admirer of the West and in many respects his vision for Russia's future incorporates the best the West has to offer. Yet there is a tension:

Here in Europe are the intellectual resources, and without an access [sic] to them the modernization of our country is impossible. Cooperation in the spheres of science, technology, higher education as well as among transnational corporations in the science-intensive and high technology sectors could connect our economy with the European and the transatlantic economies more reliably and to greater advantage than the primitive deliveries of raw material.

To Russia's west, let me repeat, there are people of different kinds: while some seek to subdue Russia, others count on mutually advantageous partnership. Our democracy is capable of responding to the former with determination to uphold our sovereignty and to

the latter with openness, flexibility and productive cooperation. Not to fall out of Europe, to hold on to the West is an important element in building Russia. (2009: 19-20)

In addition to fortifying the material bases of state power, Russia needs to develop its own discourses with which to frame solutions to the major questions of the day. Surkov notes that Russia 'must create a new society, a new economy, a new army, a new faith. It must demonstrate that it is both possible and necessary to think and speak about freedom and fairness Russian-style' (2006). Here, he starts from existing Western discourses which place the values of freedom and fairness as core criteria for judging value and legitimacy, and not without reason, since as Prozorov has noted 'a discourse *against* freedom appears to us today to be manifestly impossible' (2007: 1), which seems to be recognised in Moscow (Kosachev 2012). He thereby proposes their reinterpretation under Russian ideational leadership. Indeed, in terms of implementing a discursively oriented strategy,¹⁰⁸ the following words are perhaps Surkov's most explicit public endorsement of soft power:

Russia must say what it does, not do what others say, in the role not of an ordinary philistine but of a coauthor and coactor of European civilization. The production of meanings and images that interpret pan-European values and name Russian goals will enable us mentally to reunite our unsettled nation [...] In the polemic of cultures, the Russian message must be weighty and distinct, free by nature, just in essence, attractive in form and acceptable in tone. It is necessary to affirm our own position in the philosophical and socio-political discourses of the West. We must claim our own positions in the philosophical, sociological, and politological discourse of the West. And through support of the Arts (above all, cinema and literature) we must gradually recover the conquering charm of Russian culture. (2009: 16)

While he is rather thin on practical guidance for implementation, Surkov clearly understands the need for a 'charm offensive' to promote Russian culture as 'an organism of meaning-formation and intellectual influence' (2009: 16). Russia should emerge as an independent centre of thought since tacking too closely to the Western position on

¹⁰⁸ This interpretation was shared independently by Elena Panova, an employee of Russia Today who received her PhD from MGIMO on a topic related to 'soft power' in 2011/12.

cultural, value-related and spiritual matters erodes the claim to the sovereignty, not to mention the dignity that becomes a leading civilisational centre.¹⁰⁹ The message contains a demand for respect of Russia as an equal, valid embodiment of European heritage, rather than a deviation from a 'true' path monopolistically claimed by EU-Europe and the wider West. Russian culture should generate narratives capable of fostering a sense of legitimacy and attraction as a prelude to leading the way for others, simultaneously fostering intellectual underpinning for the model of political and economic development deemed necessary to hold the federation together. Indeed, many writers' musings on topics related to what is understood here under 'soft power' appear to indeed follow Surkov's recommendation to integrate Russian narratives with Western philosophical discourses. Accordingly, it is common in this body of literature to find recognised Western thinkers referenced; Carl Schmidt, Francois Guizot, Arnold Toynbee, Jose Ortega y Gasset among others are drawn upon to frame a critique of the unsustainability of modern, globalised, even 'dehumanised' society (Chadaev 2006; Kazin 2008). This can be seen as an example of intertextuality, whereby the legitimacy of new interpretations is bolstered by reference back to accepted authorities. That is not to say that these theorists and the particular aspects honed in upon by Russian commentators are uncontroversial to Western eyes; frequently it is the illiberal, elitist, traditionalist elements that are elucidated, yet with this bibliographic pedigree, Russian thinking stakes a claim to a legitimately grounded development of the 'other' European heritage (Krastev 2007; Hudson 2009). Furthermore, it is on this basis that Russia resists attempts to frame it as

¹⁰⁹ Matveychev expounded upon this point, noting '[b]y measure of the extent we use alien discourse, we are the slaves of those who created this discourse or ascribed themselves the right to speak in the name of the creators. That's why "sovereign democracy" about which many speak nowadays is possible only for Washington' (2009: 141-2).

an anti-European power, instead advancing an image as a force for the renewal of European tradition.

It is noticeable that 'spirit' is not a word stem which Surkov himself uses in his writings; perhaps such religiously inspired terminology would be too loaded with 'pathos' for he who is associated with cynicism even as he is said to have written poetry and lyrics. Yet the notion of spirituality features heavily in the commentaries of Oleg Makveychev, Patriarch Kirill and others, and their use of the term blends seamlessly with the essence of Surkov's conceptualisations, which should be appealing to more pragmatic, less emotionally committed constituencies, too (e.g. business, energy sector, military-industrial complex).

What, then, does 'spirituality' signify at the nexus of the sovereign democracy-'soft power' project? Like much of the sovereign democracy concept, sovereignty of spirit appears to have a dual aspect.¹¹⁰ On one hand, the renewal of the 'Russian spirit' relates to domestic consolidation and unity (hegemony in Gramsci's terms), and nods to the ROC's enhanced role in nurturing moral values in Russian society as a means to strengthen the fabric of society. Yet sovereignty of spirit also has an external aspect, which is the particular concern of this thesis, although the domestic and foreign policy aspects are certainly linked. Apparently attentive to the 19th century warning by Konstantin Leontyev that "Russia's death can come in either of two ways – from the East, by the sword of the awakening Chinese, or through voluntary merger with a pan-European republican

¹¹⁰ See: Medvedev, D. (2006). "'Intervyu. Dlya protsetaniya vseh nado uchitivat interecy kazhdogo'. [An interview with Valery Fadeev]." *Ekspert* 24th July.
'As regards sovereignty, one shouldn't forget that it signifies the supremacy of state power within the country and its independence beyond state borders.'

federation” (cited in Yefremenko 2010: 37), Surkov stresses the ‘national’ – indigenously Russian – design for the future:

The project of sovereign democratic is one of those that admit of a future – and not just any kind, but a distinctly national future. For the nation has not given currently living generations the right to terminate its history; the citizens of a country renowned for its great civilizing work are entitled to a worthy place in the world division of labor and profits. According to the principle “the one who rules determines the faith” a ruling nation that has not lost faith in itself will live. (2009: 18)¹¹¹

In this sense, sovereignty of spirit signifies national self-belief; faith in Russia. Surkov implicitly rejects the prospect of Russia succumbing to Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ scenario through dissolution into the ‘universal’ model extolled by the West. Reminding Russian readers of the sacrifices made by their forefathers for Russia as a great historical subject and the dishonour done to them by renouncing this birthright, he also garners support by indicating the potential rewards of individuals’ national self-confidence.

Indeed, in order to avert the danger of lack of confidence resulting in a self-fulfilling prophesy, there are calls for a nationally-oriented elite (Fadeev 2006: 133), which is ready to work to rebuild Russia and be rewarded for it. Looking at the country more widely, Russia is seen to require a renewed ‘creative class’:

The creative class as a leading class of the nation, renewed through the free contestation of citizens and their political, economic and non-governmental associations. The synergy of creative civil society groups (entrepreneurial, scientific, culturological and political) in the common (that means, national) interest resembles a positive alternative to the pretenders of the offshore aristocracy and their defeatist psychology. Manipulation and corruption can but poorly support the illusion of a state. Only a creative class of free people, united by values, capable of innovation (that is, competition) and motivated by personal advantage in service of national goals can seriously renew the state in a strong way. (Surkov 2009)

In this sense, Surkov uses ‘creative’ to refer not only to the ‘impactful’ technical engineers of modernisation, but also the intellectuals, and thereby establishes a parity of esteem

¹¹¹ My own translation seems closer to the Russian language original: ‘According to the ancient principle: “he who believes, rules”, those who do not lose faith in themselves will become the ruling people (Surkov 2006)

between them, in resistance to those who have lost faith in Russia. Kosachev (2012) also recognises that soft power lays the basis for political projects by co-opting what Gramsci might have called organic intellectuals (Surkov 2007b).

5.6. Importance of Ukraine for Russia's Civilisational Project

Yet while the Kremlin elite nurture the conviction that Russia is a great power on the world stage, the claim to any particular identity is not a unilateral process; it requires the recognition of significant others (Zevelev 2002: 450). Above all, these others are its presumed equals and would-be 'followers'. In the case of Russia, and in consideration of the focus on soft power, the main target audiences are (1) the West and (2) those states upon which the Russian gaze falls primarily, namely the states of the post-Soviet space, and in particular the fellow East Slavic countries.¹¹²

Indeed, the status of great power is not merely declaratory; it entails inclusion in all number of prestigious international clubs of powerful states. It is remarked that Russia seeks affirmation from the West of its status¹¹³ as a worthy and morally equal competitor through the inclusion of its elites at the highest levels of the international political and business communities.

If recognition by the civilisational 'other' is important for Russia's claim to be a global leader, this importance is surely matched by that of the recognition of those who are envisaged as being in the front line of followers. From the Russian perspective, if a national culture is to justify its claim to wider civilisational leadership it should be sovereign; 'made in Russia'. Further, if a polity is sovereign, there must be those to whom

¹¹² Russian soft power does target a far broader spectrum of countries, but foreign policy documents, practical measures and statements suggest these are the primary audiences.

¹¹³ This tendency is seen to characterise Russia much more than China which is in a comparable position.

one is the sovereign; the sun under which others jostle for place (Matveychev 2009: 147). By this, one has in mind those countries considered by the Russian leadership to be within what Medvedev called Russia's 'sphere of privileged interest';¹¹⁴ namely the areas historically part of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, and in particular, the regions populated by fellow Orthodox East Slavs.

Today, however, as a result of Western drives to promote pluralism in the post-Soviet region, Russian narratives of being encounter the soft power discourses of other political actors. One of the key sources of Western attraction, alongside improved living standards, has been the promise of state sovereignty in terms of political independence. Rooted in *Realpolitik*, the sovereign democracy narrative disputes this as a flattering political illusion, Surkov claims:

Of course, far from all nations crown their political creation with the acquisition of real sovereignty. Many countries do not even set themselves such a goal, traditionally existing under the protection of other nations, periodically changing protectors. The apparently artificial replication of "revolutions" as entertainment and of managed (from without) democracies is in fact quite natural for such countries (2009: 13).

The expression 'managed democracy' (Herd 2005; Karaganov 2007)¹¹⁵ has often been applied to Russia to describe the imperfectly implemented model of checks and balances characteristic of that political system. By Surkov's reading, however, the phrase rather indicates the global majority of smaller states who have received international recognition but are essentially steered by external forces more powerful than themselves. The colour revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine are thereby understood as a

¹¹⁴ Charles Clover 'Russia announces "spheres of interest"'[sic], Financial Times, 31st August 2008, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e9469744-7784-11dd-be24-0000779fd18c.html#axzz2Gx7LRK6j> (accessed 3rd January 2013)

¹¹⁵ Karaganov (2007) explains the preference of managed democracy in some capitals as follows: "An authoritarian state finds it easier to manipulate its energy and other assets for foreign-policy purposes. In this sense, democracy, especially weak democracy, is more convenient for partners, as it is less suited for such manipulation'.

switching of alliances, facilitated by the use of 'soft power technologies' to create a critical mass of demand for an alternative and to mobilise people to achieve it. This is acknowledged as a failure of Russian public diplomacy, and was the catalyst for serious engagement with the challenge of renewing Russia's soft power attraction. In this regard, Nicolae Popescu summarises the views of Konstantin Kosachev, Head of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, for whom,

'the situation is absurd' when post-Soviet states enjoy more benefits from cooperating with Russia and still they want to 'enter into the straitjacket of European institutions and to fall under the diktat of Brussels.' This happens because Russia 'cannot explain the purpose of its presence in the post-Soviet Union... The West is doing this under the banner of democratisation, and one gets the impression we are doing it only for the sake of ourselves... Our activeness is following too openly Russian interests. This is patriotic but not competitive.' (Popescu 2006)

There is a need for a positive discourse to explain Russia's role in the world generally, and in individual country's such as Ukraine specifically. This reflects that fact that by the mid-2000s, the limits of pure pragmatism appeared to have been reached. In 1996, Yeltsin had initiated a search for a 'national idea', but the focus of activity remained mostly on practical issues, such as privatisation, the 1998 crisis and IMF loans. Similarly, during the first term of the Putin presidency, the problem of Russia's image was raised, but economic growth continued to be the central political issue. Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' proved that utilitarian and intransparent engagement with so-called pro-Russian elites along the lines of promoting interests in the energy and business sectors was insufficient to secure Russia's overall, long-term interests in the region (Okara 2007; Hudson 2009; Solovyev 2010).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ For further information on the history of relations between Ukraine and Russia see also: Solchanyuk, R. (2001). *Ukraine and Russia. The Post-Soviet Transition*, Rowman and Littlefield.
Yekelchyk, S. (2007). *Ukraine. Birth of a Nation*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

The objective, geostrategic grounds for Russia's particular interest in Ukraine have already been mentioned in the methodology. Yet there are further, rather subjective reasons for Moscow's desire to retain Kyiv in its sphere of civilisational influence. Russia traces its statehood back to the state of Kievan Rus founded in about 880; Kyiv is the cradle of Eastern European Christianity, the mother of all Russian cities (Richters 2012: 99) and home to some of the most prestigious shrines in Orthodoxy; a favoured destination for pilgrims. While official discourse accepts the current political constellation of independent statehood, Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are seen as fraternal nations, 'one people'¹¹⁷ of Orthodox East Slavs, bound together by a common history and shared linguistic and culture heritage. These issues weigh all the more heavily for the fact that pre-1991, Russia had not existed as a nation-state but rather occupied the role of centre for a multinational empire. For many Russians, the mental image of 'their' country has been co-extensive with the borders of the Soviet Union, with Kyiv a particularly integral part of that. Ukrainians are often regarded affectionately, although the notion of being 'Little Russians'¹¹⁸ [*maloruskii*] is resented due to its perceived paternalistic, chauvinistic or neo-imperial associations. Without Kyiv, Russia would be uprooted from its emphasised self-image as a country with a long historical tradition. Loss of direct control over 'brotherly' Ukraine in 1991 signaled a lapsing in Russia's status as great power (Leontiev 2009; Roman Solchanyuk, cited in Richters 2012: 101); the idea that Kyiv might renounce its place in the Russian civilisational realm and gravitate towards the West is thus intolerable for some.

¹¹⁷ Interview with an independent researcher in Moscow, June 2011.

¹¹⁸ Indeed, President Yushchenko actively strove to encourage Ukrainian citizens to renounce such a framing of their identity. (2009). Yushchenko poprosil ukraintsev ne byt' khokhlami i malorossami. Segodnya.ua. 23rd December <http://www.segodnya.ua/ukraine/jushchenko-poprosil-ukraintsev-ne-byt-khokhlami-i-maloroccam.html> (accessed 6th January 2013).

In this regard, a young, independent researcher expressed the feeling of needing to 'get Ukraine back'.¹¹⁹ However, he also stressed that there was no need to incorporate the country into the RF. Rather, Ukraine should be reintegrated into Russia's ideological and cultural space; in short by means of soft, not hard power (also see Lomagin 2012). Russia's soft power work may thus be viewed as a way to deal with Ukrainian independence in the manner of networked ties that are seen to better benefit the 21st century. The co-option, rather than the coercion, of the Ukrainian elite and population may serve objective and subjective Russian interests better.

5.7. Renewed Engagement with Ideas in the Kremlin

Given Russian sensitivities concerning the fate of Ukraine, the events at Kyiv's Independence Square may thus be seen to have acted as a trigger, forcing Moscow's political elite to go beyond its 'sporadic and contradictory attempts' (Volkov 2005: 18), and take seriously the need to engage creatively with political ideas, transcend dead-end pragmatism and return 'meaning' (Okara 2007) or in Surkov's terms, 'romanticism' (2006: 32) to national political life. Since then, there seems to have been a rekindling of the political debate on the Russian idea as a focal point for such endeavours.

Russia has a tradition of intellectual reflection on national identity, always connected with a need to make or justify historical choices by elites. The search of direction for soft power strategy is no exception. The 'Russian idea' coined by Vladimir Solovev in 1888 aims to explain how Russia is different, who are Russia's friends, allies and enemies, and what are the implications for policy. It comprises 'a set of basic ideas that constitute the self-identity of Russians across social divisions and coalesce into a national project or

¹¹⁹ Interview with independent researcher conducted in Moscow, 2nd July 2011.

historical mission' (Volkov 2005: 18). In seeking inspiration in historical reflection on Russian identity, Moscow's approaches to soft power can be seen as a part of the country's aspired-to 'conservative modernisation', which should 'bring about modernization – without losing traditional values or, more importantly, tampering with the country's political regime' (Nikonov and Shakhrai 2003; Trenin 2010: 27). Although Russia does not presently offer a particular, distinct model of development, its ideational offerings are posited as emerging as a result of a dialectical process, whereby the 'extremes' of the West's liberal modernisation are balanced through an appreciation and conservation of certain historically rooted values. This notion also has echoes of historical notions of Russia as a space where East and West not only meet, but also fuse and emerge richer from the interaction. The project seems premised on the belief that in spite of the great wells of socio-economic attraction possessed by contemporary Western countries, this civilisation is accumulating ideological, political and structural contradictions that will provide the conditions for future turmoil. Russia's claim to the avant-garde is an attempt to pre-empt this crisis with an alternative model that reconciles all that is appealing of modernity with the traditions that many in the world are unwilling to leave behind. It is conceived, in principle, as a less prescriptive route to modernisation that may appeal to countries with a different value tradition from that of the West. As Karaganov envisages it,

As it turned out, competition is not over: the defeated planned socialist economy has been replaced by a new model, which potentially is very attractive, especially to the former Third World countries – that is, the majority of humanity. This model is authoritarian semi-democratic capitalism, effective economically and acceptable politically... many neighboring societies, tired of poverty, chaos and uncertainty, are eager to emulate the sovereign system of Russia, which is showing growth and is better governed. In addition, authoritarian rulers of many states prefer to have a tough yet predictable Russia that would not encroach on their sovereignty as their neighbor. (2007)

Despite views to the contrary, the Kremlin's understanding of Russia's role in the world is that the country 'at all stages of its development, [has] sought to achieve a more equitable world order' (Medvedev 2009). Indeed, themes expressed by phrases such as 'justice' [*spravedlivost'*], unity or conciliation [*sobornost'*] and *soglasie* [concord] pepper the discourse. Further, as will become apparent in the following chapter, one of the key themes said to differentiate Russia from the West is spirituality, in the sense of religiously-inspired moral and cultural consciousness. In his contemplation of Russian political culture, Surkov (2008) refers intertextually to how established figures of Russian thought who have articulated this theme:

The definition [of Russian culture] of Ivan Il'in [...] is astonishing in its brevity and profundity: "Russian culture is the contemplation of the whole." We find something similar in [Nikolai] Berdiaev: "It is the mission of the Russians to give... a philosophy of the whole spirit... If a great and original culture is possible in Russia, then it can only be a religious-synthetic and not an analytic-differentiated culture." [Prince Evgenii] Trubetskoi agrees: "More characteristic of the Russians in knowledge of the world through religious intuition as an organic whole, in contrast to the West, where philosophers have penetrated the mysteries of the world by breaking it down rationally into components for analysis." Joseph Brodsky spoke of a "Russian chiasm" that assumes the "idea of change in the world order as a whole" and even of the "synthetic (more precisely: nonanalytic) essence of the Russian language."

While it may be characterised as an instrumental raid on the treasure chest of history; with all the selective forgetting and memory that is so intrinsic to identity building, this reflection strives to reinforce a particular reading of what Russia culture is like. The intertextual references to familiar and established names from 'our own' tradition impart a sense of authenticity that lends authority and mobilising power to those words. Moreover, these phrasings indicate and perpetuate the valuation of a distinct cultural epistemology; a mode of thought depicted as 'holistic and intuitive and [...] contrasted with [the] mechanistic, reductionistic consciousness' (Surkov 2008: 82-3) attributed to the West; simultaneously placing Russian profundity in an elevated position on the hierarchy

of esteem. Russian political culture, he states, strives towards concord and unity over individualisation, which must be reflected in the political system. Surkov describes the nature of the Russian mentality, and strives to historicise it by retrospectively interpreting Russian history as an embodiment of the same values. For instance, he asserts that Russian political culture is characterised, among other features, by an 'idealisation of the goals of political struggle' (2008: 83). The fact that Russia may be less materially refined than the West doesn't matter as the Russian outlook is characterised by,

a romantic, poetic long-sightedness. It has an indistinct perception of what is nearby – a rickety fence, a bad road, the litter in the nearest gateway – but a detailed knowledge of what shines in the distance, of mirages on the horizon. Paying more attention to the wished-for than to the real, this view of things leads to a quest for the sole truth, for supreme justice. It creates a sense if not of exclusivity then of being special, different from one's neighbours. This sense of being different is both appealing and extraordinarily inspiring. This search for a special truth of one's own, this need to live by one's own intellect, compels one to act with marked independence. The whole history of Russia since the reign of Ivan II [1462-1505] is a demonstration of intellectual independence and state sovereignty (2008: 85).

It is these elements, which seem to provide a framework for the Russian difference; they infuse cultural narratives and provide the background assumptions. When contrasted with Western philosophies of knowledge, these elements provide greater scope for the societal validation of discourses drawing on tradition, religion and spirituality. Yet, again, Surkov, aware of the need for Western technologies for modernisation, is careful to stress that the difference from the West is relative, not absolute.

Indeed, while Russia has long constructed its identity in contradistinction to Europe and the West, today pronounced anti-Westernism is problematic; not least since a large part of the Moscow elite are reflexively pro-Western and look to the West as a reference point

of relative worth (Chatham House 2011),¹²⁰ not to mention the recognised futility of serious international confrontation at this time (Karaganov 2007). Thus, in order to circumvent this apparent contradiction, Russian leaders have sought to construct the country as one of the three pillars of European civilisation. As Natalia Narochnitskaya put it, 'we are an inalienable part of Europe, but at the same time, we are an alternative to the Western Christian Catholic-Protestant civilization'(2007b). Accordingly, Russia, EU-Europe and America have all developed the European tradition, and while the latter two may be classed as 'Western', Russia declines this descriptor for itself. In this way Russia is in a position to lay a claim to belonging to Europe as an identity club, with all its positive associations of progressiveness, high standards of living and civilisational achievement. Simultaneously, Moscow reserves space to take this legacy – the European or Western thesis - and develop it further, synthesising other elements from Russia's historical experience to create an attractive cultural-ideational product to offer the world, backed up by Russian hard power (Krastev 2009). In this sense, Russia strives to present itself not as an 'anti-West', but rather as an 'other Europe (Krastev 2007) or even the 'new West' (Karaganov 2007; D. Trenin, cited in Chatham House 2011: 23); offering benefits and a cultural corrective.¹²¹ This self-conception has the potential to reconcile both the Kremlin's critical rhetoric of the West that appeases nationalists and others with its pro-Western overtures, while preserving space for Russian distinctiveness. This discursive scope should be borne in mind when considering aspects in the following chapters that appear to advance an anti-Western line.

¹²⁰ It is observed that this is especially the case for Russia, historically, and is reflected in the way that the notion of Europe and the West remains a reference point against which Russia, begrudgingly perhaps, compares itself and evaluates its relative worth.

¹²¹ Interview with A. Zolotov conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

5.8. Russkiy Mir – Contours of Russia’s Civilisational Vision

The previous section has presented the ideational motifs of Russian soft power, arguing that rather than offering a utopian ideological blueprint, Russia’s contemporary civilisational vision constitutes a synthetical corrective of the Western model of politico-social development. In recent years, Moscow has often couched this vision in terms of the Russkiy Mir.

The term Russkiy Mir¹²² has made increasingly frequent appearances since around the turn of the millennium and was discussed in the Kremlin in 2007.¹²³ Yet, the object referred to under this label differs depending on who is speaking and their intentions. Vyacheslav Nikonov, Director of the Russkiy Mir Foundation, has used the term to refer to all friends of Russia anywhere in the world, that is, all people interested in the languages, cultures and history of Russia.¹²⁴ By contrast, Patriarch Kirill has used the term more narrowly to signify Orthodox believers of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan and elsewhere (Patriarch Kirill 2009). Thus there is an inherent ambiguity about the term, which has thus not been translated to preserve the multiplicity of meaning inherent in the original, which stems not only from differences in usage, but also of the sliding meanings of its constituent parts.

¹²² The foundation is widely referred to as the ‘Russkiy Mir Foundation’, including on the English language version of its website, and hence this designation is used here as it is a proper name. Elsewhere the Russian word for ‘Russian’ is transliterated, as appropriate, as either ‘*ruskii*’ or ‘*rossiiskii*’ in line with CREES transliteration guidelines.

¹²³ Interview with an independent researcher conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

¹²⁴ According to the website of the Russkiy Mir Foundation, ‘[t]he Russian world is much more than the territory of the Russian Federation and the 143 million people living within its borders. Millions of ethnic Russians, native Russian speakers, their families and descendants scattered across the globe make up the largest diaspora population the world has ever known. Russkiy Mir reconnects the Russian diaspora with its homeland through cultural and social programs, exchanges and assistance in relocation. The Russian world also includes the millions of people worldwide who have chosen the Russian language as their subject of study, those who have developed an appreciation for Russia and its rich cultural heritage.’ ‘About Russkiy Mir Foundation’: <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/fund/about> (accessed 6th January 2013)

Indeed, the word '*ruskii*', for Patriarch Kirill, signifies Holy Rus' as a whole; an epithet to describe the medieval kingdom of three sister states and their spiritual legacy. Yet this signifier may also be interpreted by those who would see it as an implicit nod to the unspoken primacy of ethnic Russians in national projects; a reflection of the on-going negotiation of the place of the Russian ethnic group in contemporary Russian society (Surkov 2009). While the ambiguity of the term can serve as a useful panacea to the potentially explosive tensions surrounding this issue domestically, the phrasing is also open to the suspicion abroad that for all the nice words, '*ruskii*' actually means '*rossiiskii*', and thereby associating the term with an imperial intent of the part of the Russian Federation.

'Mir' also has a number of potential translations and connotations in English. Broadly, it speaks inclusively of the friends and admirers of Russia as they are dispersed across the world. More narrowly, it indicates '*mir*' as the global community or '*obshchina*' of Russians or Russian-speakers, which Moscow would like to coalesce as a more closely-knit diaspora. Some scholars hint at the use of '*mir*' to signify 'empire'['*imperiya*'], albeit a peaceful one (Ostrovskii and Shchedrovitskii 1999; Shchedrovitskii 2000). Indeed, while '*mir*' also proclaims a peaceful approach by Russia in its interactions with the world, Alexey Dolinskiy also conveyed the insight that the Russkiy Mir is also about peace for Russians.¹²⁵ Here peace may be seen to indicate relief from the agony of crises of orientation, provoked both by the perceived humiliation of a statehood shrunk far smaller than the traditional reference point of Russian identity construction and the loss of historical mission resulting from the sudden end of the Cold War and subsequent demoralisation. Yet despite this ambiguity about the presumed members of the Russkiy

¹²⁵ Interview with A. Dolinskiy conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

Mir and aims of engagement with them, activities to realise the distinct visions articulated by Nikonov and Kirill are not inherently contradictory, but may proceed in parallel, even overlapping and complementing one another, as may be the case with the different approaches to soft power highlighted above.¹²⁶

Russian debates on national identity have historically and in the contemporary period revolved around whether Russia should turn to the West or focus on the 'East'. But the eastern dimension is not homogenous; alongside Pan-Slavism and notions of Russia development with its Orthodox brethren, Eurasianism is a significant current of thought. This study focuses on the Pan-Slavism elements as the case study is Ukraine and this aspect is expressed most closely in Orthodox discourses of cultural unity in this country. However, the discourse does not seem to preclude or be contradicted by Russia's development of closer ties in the Eurasian space. On the contrary, Patriarch Kirill has asserted the role of the Russkiy Mir as a delegate in a 'dialogue of civilisations' with other ethno-religious communities, in which the secular world – predominantly the West – is seen as 'the Other' against which more spiritual people might find unity (Patriarch Kirill 2011: 33-8).

In relative proportion to vitality of the Russkiy Mir there emerge opportunities for Russia to reassume the role of 'union-forming' state by exercising legitimate leadership as a civilisational centre. As presumed by the logic of 'sovereignty of spirit', a civilisation worthy of the name must offer a unique and distinctive worldview to humanity capable of providing answers to the pressing questions of the age.

¹²⁶ The target audiences of Russian soft power initiatives may therefore be conceptualised in terms of concentric circles, the rings of which are arranged in different orders of precedence by different actors.

5.8.1. Discursive Strand: Culture of the Russkiy Mir

The discourse on the Russkiy Mir is predicated upon the assumption that the distinctive culture and traditions of ethno-national communities are and should be maintained as relevant and meaningful categories in human society and political interaction. The finger is thereby pointed at the expansive dynamics of globalisation – frequently interpreted as little more than a cloaked phrasing for Americanisation - which stands accused of advancing an agenda of economic, political and cultural homogenisation.

Cultural prestige is an element in the credibility of an aspirant soft power, and the Russkiy Mir Foundation's website seeks to cultivate a positive association of Russia with some of the best global examples of high culture. By informing users of developments in this area, the website becomes a source of 'good news' about Russia, counterbalancing the morale-sapping flow of critical and negative coverage emanating from foreign and Russia-based sources alike. Although not uncritical of carefully selected aspects of Russian political life, critique tends to be relativised and placed in a context of a trajectory of progress in the right direction. The site also provides 'evidence' that Russia is still a focus of great interest among foreign citizens. On such themes, however, the website generally provides pieces of relevant information for the digestion of readers themselves, rather than foisting familiar, pre-determined condemnatory conclusions that would likely alienate the more refined target audience. Similarly, the website also contains a diversity of materials which might prove useful to students and teachers of Russian language and culture abroad that have in many cases been generated by user-driven projects supported by grants from the foundation. Russia thus emerges in the attractive light of a provider of assistance, while simultaneously *potentially* helping to occupy a space which might otherwise be filled by

language learning products generated without Moscow's input. Since these grants are run on a competitive basis and more applications are received than grants available, this presumably enables the foundation to select the projects more supportive of its objectives and discourses.

Closely connected with the nurturing of Russian culture abroad is the preservation, development and dissemination of Russian perspectives on history, and in particular, key moments in contemporary debates about the nature of relations with neighbouring states. If one follows the logic that 'history is written by the winners' then academic debates about the unfolding of past events are drawn into the competition for primacy. In this context, debates about history assume geopolitical significance, since 'those who want to split the unity of Russia and Ukraine need to reshape the past of the basis of historical mythology and political ideology' (Martyshin and Bespalov 2010).¹²⁷ Maintenance of WWII narratives of liberation helps to vindicate the Soviet era, indicating it was not a complete black hole in course of Russian history. Indeed, admitting negative elements would involve 'reconfiguring the whole groundwork of Russian national identity,' which is not a priority at the moment.

The promotion of the Russian language is significant for soft power not least because the number of speakers of a given world language is used as a proxy quantitative benchmark of prestige and civilisational attractiveness. The great classical works of literature in Russian represent part of the claim to greatness of the *Russkiy Mir*. Definitions foregrounding language make positive overtures to Ukraine, since many of the greatest

¹²⁷ Indeed, in 2009 President Medvedev signed a decree establishing the controversial 'Commission against the Falsification of History' as a result of the sense that Russia was losing ground to revisionist narratives, and especially those emerging relating to the role of the UPA/ONU in Ukraine during the Second World War, which called into question the role of the Red Army as liberators and hence the legitimacy of Russian post-war relations with Ukraine. This commission was abolished in 2012.

proponents of 'ruskii' literary heritage were Ukrainian, and thus via the *Ruskiy Mir*, Ukrainians become bearers of cultural legacy whose creative works make a defining contribution to the expanse of global civilisational development.

Yet a language may be learned for quite pragmatic reasons as well as sheer cultural attraction. Thus the popularity of a language for learners is also indicative of their perceptions of the opportunities it may create for them; arguably a measure of attraction, although considered rather closer to 'hard' economic power for the purposes of this study.

In the contested cultural space of Ukraine, a choice for English classes instead of Russian is not necessarily a rejection of Russia since the two East Slavic tongues are often considered mutually intelligible. However, falling statistics on the numbers of pupils, students and candidate teachers learning Russian in Ukrainian educational establishments gives the impression of civilisational decline. This is also a cause for alarm among interested persons as it is believed to lead to a reduction in Russian literacy and the proliferation of hybridised forms such as '*surzhyk*', which can be negatively evaluated as a non-literary form. Since the tendency toward less refined language use is also an issue related to the quality of education across all social strata in Russia itself, this represents a bifurcation of contemporary cultural norms from the high culture upon which Russian claims to world-leading agenda-setting standards of civilisational achievement are based, and is represented in the 2009 Russian National Security Strategy.¹²⁸

The Russian language is advanced as the natural *lingua franca* of choice among citizens of the states of the former Soviet Union for historical reasons, and is today projected as a

¹²⁸ (2009). *Strategiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda*. 13th May, http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_note/424/print (accessed 1st March 2011).

means whereby the cultural heritage of small nations might become readily part of world culture (Verkhoturov 2010). Yet given the rise of variants of English – including ‘Globish’¹²⁹ – as a international language, the continuation of this trend cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, a shift would be a huge blow; as well as breeding a confidence-dulling sense of being on the global margins, such a state of affairs might auger in a vicious circle of decline. A language is the intrinsic bearer of not only culture, but also mentality and worldview; a fundamental symbolic marker of cultural identity (Verkhoturov 2010) that binds individual together as a community. Indeed, language emerged as an important factor linking participants to a notion of the Russkiy Mir in the focus groups. Further, maintaining Russian as an international language is, however, not only important for its own sake as a cultural and emotional binder; it is also important as a medium of communication enabling the easy export of cultural and media products; excellent conduits of soft power ideational discourse.

5.8.2. Discursive Strand: the Values of the Russkiy Mir

This section examines a traditional source of value orientation in society; the Church, in particular the perspectives offered by Russian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Kirill. The task of the churches’ ideational-informational work seems to be support the affirmation and development of the privileged place of narratives of spirituality, morality and tradition within the framework of public discourse, both in Russia and the countries under its canonical jurisdiction, especially Ukraine.

While the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church is seems to be the driving force, this value discourse is often not overly religious in terms of its specific content. God is

¹²⁹ ‘Globish is not ‘pidgin’ or ‘broken’ English but it is highly simplified and unidiomatic.’ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2006/dec/03/features.review37> accessed 13th April 2012.

referred to, but the spirituality with which the narratives are infused relates more generally to modes of living. In this sense, the narratives expressed so prominently in the Patriarch's public discourse are more 'national-spiritual' than 'religio-spiritual' in nature.

Members of the *Russkiy Mir*, or Holy Rus', to use the Patriarch's preferred expression, are invited to avow themselves to an identity as part of a spiritual people anointed with the task of reclaiming and preserving a presently neglected part of Europe's heritage. The bearers of this spiritual-cultural tradition are simultaneously offered a sense of moral superiority that helps generate politically beneficial collective self-esteem (Feklyunina 2010: 5).

An interesting aspect of Patriarch Kirill's notion of the *Russkiy Mir* as a transborder Orthodox community is that rather, unlike typical nationalist variants, this vision is not necessarily defined by Russia. Accordingly,

the Holy Patriarch sees *Russkiy Mir* as a wider integral space, and people are expected to serve the development of this integral space as a whole and each of its countries in particular. [I]f there is a small Russian community somewhere in Scandinavian or Latin America, it is not an object of Moscow's actions, but a subject of relationships within *Russkiy Mir*... *Russkiy Mir* is not equal to modern Russia. (Ryabykh 2011)

Rather, the philosophical claims to knowledge provided by Eastern Orthodoxy should underpin a project with a more universal purpose, and, as indicated above, persons of any nationality may in principle contribute to that. Nevertheless, despite the claims not to be specifically Russian, it seems that opportunities for Russia to reassume the role of 'union-forming' state emerge in relative proportion to the vitality of the *Russkiy Mir*.

Thus, the *Russkiy Mir* asserts its civilisational standing. While working to preserve tradition and identity, its thinkers strive to engage with ideas coming from the secular world and to which of its features enhance modern living and should be embraced and

what should be resisted. It offers a critique proceeding from the observation of the ultimate unsustainability of the Western liberal model of development, highlighting a tension between cultural-spiritual identities and liberal claims to universal interpretations of human rights and freedoms (Patriarch Kirill 2011). The ROC advances the claim that it is possible to think about a progressive and just world system based on universal principles differently defined. The proposition and implementation of a viable alternative to the Western (neo-)liberal project is a vital constituent part of Russian claims to sovereignty of spirit; a fertile kernel of soft power.

It has its Russian specificities, but the aim is to seek shared positions for a common platform among those in the world who likewise question the viability of the current order. It is clear that thinkers within the Kremlin do see the potential for their country to assume a leading role in global inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue. Looking even beyond the Ukrainian case study, Russia has created opportunities for cooperation with countries who share the conviction that religion, cultural identity and tradition maintain value that should not be erased or even outlawed as normative guiding factors in human society. Patriarch Kirill has stated his belief that there are core values shared by different cultural and religious groupings that can serve as a basis for a new normative order. Articulating these values in unison can give them credence and give life to them as an alternative reality.

5.8.3. Discursive Strand: Russian Foreign Policy

As previously discussed, the most overtly political aspects of the soft power discourse, labelled 'sovereign democracy', present a commentary on contemporary global affairs, which should co-opt support abroad. This Russian vision proceeds from a critique of the current global trajectory of military-strategic, economic, cultural and spiritual development. While such narratives have been interpreted as manifestations of 'anti-Americanism,' this is not the case in an absolute sense since, as previously argued, it is more expedient for Russia to frame Western countries as competitors than enemies. From this perspective, the USA is appraised from a political angle, and deemed to have squandered the chance at global leadership it was given at the end of the Cold War, and again after 9/11, when rather than re-shaping world affairs for the good of all humanity, it allegedly opted for political opportunism; triumphantly seizing the moment of unipolarity to impose its will on others under the illusion of the universalism of its model (Karaganov 2008; Ivanov 2011).

Sovereign democracy then reflects Russian *konkurentosposobnost'*; the ability to resist Western pressure to implement 'arbitrary' benchmarks imposed from abroad, in preference of political models inspired by domestic traditions. One facet of the ambiguous understanding of sovereignty was explored already in the previous chapter, and argued to indicate in that context a disparity of sovereign independence of action between 'centre' and 'periphery' countries as an inherent attribute of realist political order, viewing all else as unsustainable idealism (Surkov 2009). However, sovereign democracy is also argued to suggest a discourse of equality; albeit one that functions on normative-moral level. It is a reaction against the democratisation agenda of the West,

which is framed as assuming *a priori* the inferior standing of political relations in non-Western countries. States seeking to integrate in the Western politico-economic and security communities are expected to unquestioningly adopt the corresponding 'progressive' policies, some of which are deemed to reflect 'non-traditional' value orientations in the Russian discourse. By contrast, while not denying the universality of certain core values across diverse human communities, the Russian model is posited as allowing culturally specific interpretations thereof. This typically concerns value interpretation relating to understandings of human rights and freedoms. For instance, in this sense, equality and freedom refer not to the individual, but to the collective. 'The anti-liberal measures are designed to secure freedom, but instead of liberating the individual, the concern is the freedom of the common will, the national self-fulfilment by means of a great state' (Morozov 2009: 223).

5.9. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has approached soft power as one of the foreign policy components of Russia's wider modernisation strategy, that should be based on, among other things, a 'faith in Russia' (Trenin 2010: 28) to serve as testimony to the country's 'sovereignty of spirit'. As such, it forms the cultural component of the sovereign democracy project. This implies, on one hand, that Russia maintain its own cultural traditions and implements policies that express indigenous values rather than supposedly universal international models. On the other hand, it also hints that Russia act as a sovereign leader, exercising a preponderance of cultural influence over other states.

Although soft power is by definition interested in exploring the dynamics of ideational hegemony as they pertain to the international sphere, such international cultural work is

equally significant to domestic politics. Hence soft power is also interesting for the way it holds a mirror up to Russian internal politics, revealing much about the ambitions, self-understandings, insecurities and competing narratives of the country's ruling elites in the course of a discussion of the issues impeding a flourishing of Russian soft power.

Stressing the sovereign uniqueness [*samobytnost'*] of its model, Russia sees itself as a historically-rooted civilisational centre. However, such a claim relies on the existence of others who also form part of the civilisation. Ukraine has been argued to be of primary importance in this regard. Thus, while it seems accepted that Ukraine is formally an independent state, there is a strong will to renew cultural ties and ideational influence so that the country's centre of civilisational gravity remains toward Russia, even if it might engage in some pragmatic cooperation with Europe. The symbolism of Ukraine's ultimate loyalty to Russia, with whom it shares profound spiritual and cultural ties, may serve to assuage the sense of loss and humiliation experienced with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The new orientating idea to serve as the kernel of the Russian soft power project appears to have been found in the belief in the possibility of synthesising the positive aspects of modernity in terms of human development, with tradition and spirituality. In this sense, Russia strives to pose as an alternative to the Western model of societal progress. The Russian 'soft power' discourse is not inherently anti-Western. In fact, it is explicitly respectful of some aspects of European civilisational achievement. Yet, while some elements in the discourse share the universal values proclaimed by the Western, the narrative simultaneously and pragmatically offers sufficient flexibility to exercise sharp

criticism of certain manifestations thereof, or, at the very least, the right to choose how to implement such values.

This chapter has cast light on the guiding inspiration behind Russia civilisational discourses, revealing numerous themes that help to understand the origins of today's discourse. The next step is to examine an example of how these narratives are disseminated in Ukraine, namely the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and its local branch, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Chapter Six: The Moscow Patriarchate as a Tool of Russian Soft power in Ukraine

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored Russian conceptual approaches to soft power, and identified and analysed the key elements of a contemporary, forward-thinking Russian civilisational soft power discourse. This chapter will cast light on the methods of the wider diffusion of this worldview by examining what is argued to be one of the principal agents of Russian soft power; namely the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). While the previous chapter also discussed the *Russkiy Mir* and sovereign democracy foreign policy narratives, here the focus will rest solely upon the activity of the ROC. This is because although the civilisational discourse appears to have tacit state sanction, the Church is taking the lead in disseminating this worldview, leaving the state free to engage in politics pragmatically. Funded by the state budget, the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation cooperates directly with the Church, although it emphasises cultural community over value issues. In terms of power, profile and financing, however, it is dwarfed by the Church, which essentially has its own power base and self-consciously assumes some responsibility for the fate of Russia. It is thus valuable to look into the ROC's soft power work in a depth that could not be accomplished for all three strands within the limited scope of this study.

The practical realisation of a Russian soft power approach will be explored by looking more closely at the work of the Church. It is suggested that the activities of the Church are gathering momentum under the leadership of Patriarch Kirill; furthering the dissemination of its outlook through interaction with both the secular authorities and direct civil society engagement. As a 'tool' of Russian soft power, the ROC, it is argued, is

striving to extend both its capacity and the effectiveness of its work. Further, seeking to hone its authority and credibility as an opinion former, the Church is paying careful attention to its image, both by developing a more strategic approach to media engagement and by paying attention to public opinion in its self-positioning. It appears that an effective learning process is underway with regard to the quality of informational work, permitting the supposition that the methods of soft power work are being productively imbibed by the Church. Nevertheless, while the ROC may be spearheading modernisation in Russian relations with the public, it is not immune from the impact of wider dynamics of Russian 'soft' influence in Ukraine, as will become apparent upon perusing the findings of the audience reception work in the next chapter.

It is argued that the discourse of the Orthodox Church dovetails with the civilisational assumptions of the Russian state. The ROC is engaged in the business of soft power *par excellence*; not only working to increase the *attraction* of Russia and its culture, language and historical legacy, but are simultaneously striving to set the agenda by asserting the right to contribute to the conceptualisation of issues of normativity and legitimacy – in short the definition of 'attractiveness' itself. Thus, while the Russian state has often been deemed incompatible with the very notion of 'soft' power, the close examination presented here suggests that within Russia tools of soft power are being developed that *may* prove capable of increasing the attraction and agenda-setting potential not merely of the Church but of the country more widely.

6.2. Networked Interaction between Church and State

Chapter five implied a symbiotic relationship between the Church and State in Russia, which will be explored in greater detail here. Indeed, while the Church is considered a ‘tool’ of Russian soft power in the terms of this thesis, this should not imply a ‘master-servant relationship’ (Ryabykh 2011), or that the Church is instrumentalised in a purely unidirectional manner. Indeed, although the Church declares itself, in the words of the late Patriarch Aleksey, ‘ready for further cooperation with the [S]tate because we only have one homeland, one history and one future’ (cited in Blitt 2008: 777), it does not envisage itself as a junior partner in the arrangement. Rather, as Hegumen Philipp Ryabykh, Deputy Chairman of the DECR, asserted ‘we see that in the modern world, the more stable and sustainable systems are the ones that are based on several centers of decision-making that coordinate activity’ (2011).

Both Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill have compared the post-Soviet period to the ‘Time of Troubles’ [*smutnoye vremya*] (Patriarch Kirill 2012b; Putin 2012b); the decades of the seventeenth century characterised by an undermining of spiritual identity, state weakness and overshadowing external influences; a framing which chimes with Russia’s deficiency of ‘sovereignty of spirit’ diagnosed in a previous chapter. While the Russian Federation has recovered from the cataclysmic shocks unleashed by the end of the Soviet Union, the state’s utilitarian role in society as a balancer and delegator of power has ultimately proven insufficient to ensure societal coherence by creating shared meanings that bind a society together and lend it stability (Okara 2007; Hudson 2009), to the point of posing a threat to the stability and security of the state. Thus, as Makarin has suggested, unlike the subordination of former times, today the relationship is mutual with

‘the state [counting] not just on the loyalty of the Church but also on its active political support’ (2011: 8). Richters (2012: 8) concurs, observing that the ‘post-communist ROC [has] its own agenda which it has formulated independently of the state and which it seeks to implement by all available means’. Now, as in the interregnum, the Church, by its own interpretation, believes it should exercise a special responsibility, assuming a leading role in fostering unity in society. Accordingly, in December 2009, the Russian Orthodox Church, supported by United Russia, announced its expectation that the ‘government would not merely consult with the Church, but “must jointly decide... what their common values are and what modernization tasks must be accomplished”’ (Blitt 2010: 1365).

Russia’s leaders have signaled their support for such an approach, with President Medvedev using a speech on the day of Patriarch Kirill’s inauguration in 2009 to promise that ‘the special, trustful relations with the [ROC] will be kept and further developed to the benefit of the Fatherland’ (Blitt 2008: 777). Furthermore, Vladimir Putin has spoken with reference to the deprivations of the communist period of the ‘debt’ owed to the Church¹³⁰ and has acted accordingly; not only granting the church various long-strived for opportunities, but signaling a broader movement in policy with support for the construction of 200 new churches in Moscow alone.¹³¹ The Moscow Patriarchate has also received assistance in the re-acquisition and construction of Churches abroad.¹³² Significantly, the Russian Ministry for Economic Development and Trade has submitted a draft bill on the restitution of property confiscated by the Bolsheviks and now held by the state. The bill would turn the ROC into one of the largest, and therefore most powerful

¹³⁰ ‘State will go on paying its debt to the Church – Putin,’ 2nd February 2012, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=9032> (accessed 11th January 2013)

¹³¹ ‘Program 200: church next door,’ 18th April 2012 http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_04_18/72123418/
<http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/news/common/news3137.html> (accessed 11th January 2013)

¹³² Controversially the one in Paris on the Champs Elysees which also contains a cultural centre

landowners in the country¹³³, which would help underwrite its financial independence¹³⁴ and secure the Church's future as a steady force of societal influence independent of shifts in party political conjunctures.

In its Social Concept of 2000,¹³⁵ the Russian Orthodox Church asserted its right to be consulted on issues relating to society. In order to facilitate this, the Church has, under the leadership of Patriarch Kirill, reinvigorated its mechanisms for communication and interaction with most key state institutions through establishing new consultative organs and appointing senior clergy to existing ones; in short, linking in to networks of influence. Networks are organised around dominant nodes, whose power is predicated upon their ability to leverage and connect to other channels of 'soft' influence, shaping their 'programming' (Castells 2009: 72). Judging by the extent and quality of interaction between the Kremlin and the Danilov Monastery (Blitt 2008: 743, Makarin 2011: 8), the Russian Church is becoming an increasing potent such node. This chapter will examine how the Church is networked in to the state power structures, which provide some of the 'hard power' resources backing the initiatives, as well as providing access to switching and programming capacities.

¹³³ Interview with A. Okara conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

¹³⁴ Sophia Kishkovsky (2010), 'Russia to Return Church Property,' 23rd November <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/world/europe/24iht-moscow.html? r=0> (accessed 11th January 2013).

¹³⁵ The ROC apparently decided to formulate a social conception in 1994, but did not organise a committee to do so until 1997. It was headed by Kirill Gundayev (Richters 2012: 18). The social concept should remain valid for an 'unspecified, but relatively long period of time' (Richters 2012: 30). Significantly, this document is said to have facilitated the reunification with the ROCOR, which interpreted its section on church-state relations as renouncing Patriarch Sergei's declaration of loyalty to the Soviet state in 1927 (Richters 2012:22). The Basis of the Social Concept of the ROC: <http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/>

Such fora of interaction include the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations,¹³⁶ the Working Group of MFA and ROC,¹³⁷ the Government Commission for Religious Associations,¹³⁸ and Expert Council of the State Duma Committee for Public Associations and Religious Organisations,¹³⁹ as well as the Synodal Department for Church-State Relations.¹⁴⁰ In May 2012, the ROC signed a one-year renewable cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Culture, establishing targets.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, within Church structures a Council for the Arts has been formed to ‘unite the efforts of the Church, representatives of cultural institutions of civil society in an effort to overcome the negative phenomena in our society, including in the cultural sphere’.¹⁴²

Such bodies have not only enabled the Church to reinforce its de facto privileged position vis-à-vis other religions and outlooks, but have also placed it in an advantageous position to potentially support the ‘reprogramming’ of the networks supported by the individuals who compose these bodies. Apparently, this strategy is bearing fruit, as according to Vsevolod Chaplin, the phenomenon of the ‘*podsvetchnik*’ (slang for politicians who

¹³⁶ Established in 1995, on 28th May 2009, Archbishop Ilarion (Alfeyev), Archpriest Vselovod Chaplin and Kremlin insider Ivan Demidov were made members of this organisation [*Sovet po vzaimodeistviyu s religioznymi obedineniyami pri Prezidente Rossiiskoi Federatsii*]

¹³⁷ According to Pyotr Kasatkin (Interview conducted in Moscow in June/July 2011) this active working group [*Rabochei gruppy po vzaimodeistviyu Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi I Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossii*] meets several times a year on the basis of an agreement between the DECR and the MFA. It focuses on work with compatriots, church property abroad, and interreligious and inter-civilisational dialogue. By Kasatkin’s estimation (Interview in June 2011), the group is a ‘very fruitful’ body.

¹³⁸ On 15th February 2012 the leadership of the commission [*Komissiya po voprosam religioznykh obedinenii pri pravitelstve RF*]. was assumed by none other than Vladislav Surkov. Surkov simultaneously acquired a number of other positions with relevance to matters of ‘soft power’ also previously held by Alexandr Zhukov, including Vice Chairman of the Board on the development of national cinematography and deputy head of the Coordinating Board of Veterans' Affairs, as well as joining organizing committees for the Day of Slavic Written Language and the 150th anniversary of Peter Stolypin. <http://lenta.ru/lib/14159273/full.htm> accessed 25th June 2006.

¹³⁹ [*Komitet po delam obshchestvennykh obedinenii I religioznykh organizatsii gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federalnogo Sobraniya RF*] <http://komitet2-22.km.duma.gov.ru/> (accessed 25th June 2012)

¹⁴⁰ Founded 31st March 2009, two months after the enthronement of the new patriarch, and headed by Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin [*Sinodalnyi otdel po vzaimootnosheniyam Tserkvi I obshchestva*]

¹⁴¹ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2199116.html> accessed 11th May 2012

¹⁴² <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2029569.html> (accessed 11th May 2012)

pandered to the Church but lacked an understanding of Orthodox faith) ended under Putin's rule, and that 'among politicians, there are now more and more people who read the Gospels[,]... go on pilgrimages and attend [C]hurch services' (cited in Blitt 2008: 737). This study does not go so far as suggesting that the constitutionally secular and ideologically neutral Russian state may be assuming a religious motivation, but certainly the neo-Slavophile, political aspects of the 'spirituality-infused' discourse are referred to by senior government officials (Blitt 2011: 373). Putin, although in regular contact with the Patriarch, and consistently making reference to spirituality and culture, does not expand on these themes in explicit depth in his public speeches.

The Church also contributes actively to Russia's foreign policy. The Patriarch receives ambassadors before departure to their host country, and Foreign Minister Lavrov would like the ROC to 'consider the preparation of a series of lectures on the role of religion in world politics' for students of MGIMO and the Diplomatic Academy (Lavrov 2011).¹⁴³ The ROC also participates in dialogue with international organisations, such as World Public Forum 'Dialogue of Civilisations', the Council of Europe (which adopted a White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue in 2008), the World Russian National Assembly and the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group as well as supporting Days of Slavic Literature and Culture.

Such elite liaison work is also taking place in Ukraine specifically. For instance, it is well-known that President Yanukovich has met with Patriarch Kirill several times; most significantly on the occasion of his pre-inauguration blessing. However, the spectrum of Church-elite interaction has a much broader dimension in Ukraine, as in Russia. For

¹⁴³ For more on the role of MGIMO in shaping Russian identities see: Mueller, M. (2009). Making Great Power Identities in Russia. An Ethnographic discourse analysis of education at an Russian elite university. Berlin, LIT.

instance, on 13th July 2009, at a seminar at the Kyiv Percherska Lavra, the Ukrainian translation of the 'Basic Teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church on Dignity, Freedom and Human Rights' was presented to a high-profile audience including Metropolitan Lazar of Simferopol and Crimea, former Ukrainian President Kuchma, and Human Rights Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada, Nina Karpacheva. The gathered company also included Vadim Kolesnichenko, chairman of the inter-fractional organisation of Deputies of the Verkhovna Rada in support of the canonical Orthodox church, who is well-known in Ukraine for his 'pro-Russian' orientation (Pelnēns 2009). He noted that 'the "fundamentals" create a broad opportunity to conduct enlightening and human rights activities in society, referring to spiritual roots, beyond the political dynamics and artificially created conditions' and proposed that each Deputy should refer to the document in their work, with the aim of returning core principles of justice and morality to society.¹⁴⁴

In this we may observe the strengthening of the position of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukrainian society. Elite engagement is particularly significant in this regard since elites have the capacity to act as gatekeepers, facilitating or impeding the wider dispersion of this ideational position within their jurisdiction. For their part, Ukrainian politicians appear to welcome opportunities to cooperate with the church as they perceived that this increases their chances of winning elections (Richters 2012: 115). While it is not possible to gain an overview of the full extent of such outreach work among the political class in Ukraine, it seems that such liaison initiatives are bearing fruit. For instance, the website of the Information Department of the Moscow Patriarchate recently reported the

¹⁴⁴ <http://r-u.org.ua/analit/pravoslavie/134-2010-01-12-09-58-50.html> (accessed 12th June 2012)

proposition of a Ukrainian bill against sexual propaganda which recalls that of St Petersburg.¹⁴⁵

Evidently, through the development of such structures the Church is establishing networks with the state and civil society that increase its potential to perform switching and programming functions, and to instil its ideas into the policy-making process, including in foreign relations with the neighbouring states. Yet, Russia would not stand credibly as a spiritually and culturally enriched civilisational centre without real developments on this front domestically, while such steps simultaneously bolster the 'sovereignty of spirit' that the nation was deemed lacking.

¹⁴⁵ 'The Holy Synod ordered a special commission to develop a document that would have expressed the position of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on various topical issues of public life in Ukraine, including the introduction of the issues in the country of the principles of juvenile justice and promotion of sexual orientation. Members of the Synod appealed to His Beatitude Metropolitan Volodymyr requested to bring the fullness of the concerns of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on these matters to the authorities of Ukraine.' <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2211261.html> (accessed 11th May 2012).

6.3. The Church as a Direct Channel of Informational Influence in Ukraine

As a relatively religious country, with 71.4 per cent of the population professing to be a believer¹⁴⁶ and 68.9 per cent of Ukrainians ‘fully trusting’ or ‘rather trusting’ the Church,¹⁴⁷ this institution may be well placed to shape the nation’s consciousness. Simultaneously, however, the legacy of the country’s historical and geopolitical cleavages is also played out in the religious sphere. Accordingly, since the rescinding of the prohibitions on religious freedoms, a ‘competition for souls’ has been fought between the various Orthodox denominations, not to mention a plethora of other, mostly Evangelical denominations, frequently branded ‘sects’.

In this popularity contest it appears at first glance as though the only ‘canonical’ Ukrainian Orthodox Church, that of the Moscow Patriarchate, granted broad rights of self-governance (Makarin 2011: 23) by Bishop’s Council in 1990,¹⁴⁸ is in first place, with more than 11,000 parishes in Ukraine (2009). By this measure, the UOC(KP); branded ‘schismatic’ following its establishment in 1992 by a unilateral declaration of autocephaly by Metropolitan Filaret, trails behind with only approximately 4,000 parishes. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) had 1183 parishes. The Greek Catholic Church, which was founded in 1595 as a compromise, and answers to the Pope while practising Orthodox rites has 3566 parishes. However, believers of this latter faith are

¹⁴⁶ http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/journal.php/expert.php?news_id=2597 accessed 9th July 2012. This represents an increase from 57.8 per cent of the population in 2000. There are regional differences reported, however, with the proportion of believers varying from 89.2 per cent in the West, 67.3 per cent in Central Ukraine and 65.6 per cent in the East. Among those with higher education or incomplete higher education, 70.5 per cent were believers in 2010 and 11.7 per cent convinced atheists, a figure that has decreased substantially from 27.8 per cent in 2000.

¹⁴⁷ http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/journal.php/poll.php?poll_id=83 accessed 9th July 2012. Figures from December 2011.

¹⁴⁸ The Bishops’ Council of 25-27th October 1990 granted the Ukrainian Exarchate granted independence and self-governance. The name "Ukrainian Exarchate" was cancelled and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was granted the title "Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine." Ukrainians are represented in the Moscow Patriarchate, whose Synod is composed of one quarter Ukrainian delegates (Makarin 2011: 23).

mostly concentrated in relatively pious Western Ukraine, where the Church has acted as a pro-Western voice.

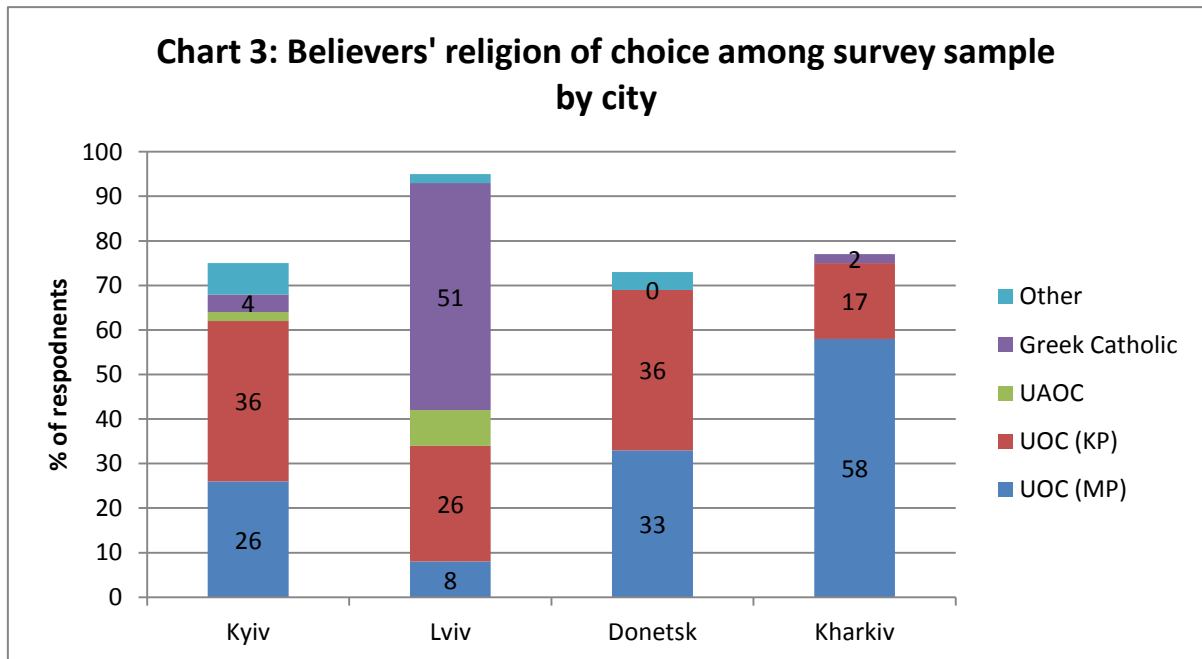
However, examination of figures on the number of *adherents* to these denominations suggests a somewhat different picture.¹⁴⁹ A survey¹⁵⁰ undertaken by Kyiv's Razumkov Centre observes that of Orthodox believers, 67.3 per cent are attached to the Moscow Patriarchate, and 24.6 per cent to the Kyiv Patriarchate.¹⁵¹ Among my sample, however, the picture seems more balanced, with 50 per cent and 47 per cent of Orthodox believers confessing to the Moscow and Kyiv Churches respectively. Adherents of the Moscow Patriarchate constitute roughly a third of all respondents in Kyiv, half in Donetsk and approximately three-quarters in Kharkiv. In Lviv, less than ten per cent considered themselves members of the Moscow Church. The relative over-representation of the Kyiv patriarchate is perhaps due to the youthful demographic studied, who have only ever known an independent Ukraine ruled from Kyiv. Furthermore, as Richters (2012: 98) observes, since churches do not clearly proclaim their institutional affiliation, believers may be unaware whether they are technically a parishioner of a Kyiv or Moscow affiliated

¹⁴⁹ During my fieldwork visits I observed the construction of several new Orthodox churches of the Moscow Patriarchate in significant locations such as next to the railway station and the university in Donetsk. However, there were rumours of some parishes having 'ghost churches' with few actual parishioners. Yet while the size of the average congregation remains unclear, I observed long queues in the street to gain entry to the main church in Donetsk on Artem Street when some relics were on temporary display there during my visit in November 2011.

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.uceps.org/eng/journal.php?y=2011&cat=166>

¹⁵¹ The picture is further complicated by the expression of confusion or indifference regarding belonging to the Kyiv or Moscow Patriarchate. For instance, a survey has noted that a significant number of people professing adherence to the Kyiv Patriarchate did not know that Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) was the head of their church (49 per cent of respondents), or named Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine Vladimir (Sabodan) or Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' (23 per cent) as occupying this post. <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/ru/news/common/news11378.html> (accessed 21st July 2010) Indeed, in my surveys a small but significant number of respondents among those not interviewed or directly supervised when completing the form who ticked the boxes for both the Kyiv and Moscow patriarchates of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church when asked about their religion. <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/ru/news/common/news11378.html> (accessed 21st July 2010)

Church, but call themselves a member of the Kyiv Church to emphasise their Ukrainian identity.¹⁵²



However, in addition to the significant proportion of non-believers,¹⁵³ the potential direct impact of the Moscow Patriarchate on my sample group is considerably reduced when we consider the number regularly practicing their religion; an indicator of the priority people attribute to religious matters in their life. While one might argue that the identification with a religion could be important in indicating political outlook, irregular church attendance, for instance, limits the potential for clerics to communicate directly with this group of parishioners. Indeed, the proportion of those regularly engaging in religious practice is significantly lower among the students from Donetsk (11 per cent) and Kharkiv

¹⁵² The notion that Ukrainians do not make such strong differentiations between the churches as the hierarchs themselves do is demonstrated in the way that, for instance, the greatest number of Ukrainians – regardless of affiliation, thought that the head of their Church was head of the UOC(MP) (Richters 2012: 98).

¹⁵³ In the cities of Kyiv, Donetsk and Kharkiv, nearly a third of respondents did not profess a religion. While in Kyiv a total of 17 per cent of these respondents couched their approach to religion in terms of atheism (10 per cent) or agnosticism (7 per cent), in Donetsk and Kharkiv a corresponding number chose the answers 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' instead.

(10 per cent) and indeed among adherents of the Moscow Patriarchate generally (12 per cent). By contrast, in L'viv, where the more Western-oriented Greek Catholic Church is most popular (51 per cent), over a third of believers regularly practice their faith, potentially giving that Church greater potential to exercise direct influence.

Table 3: Frequency of religious practice of respondents indicating a religion by city and religious denomination (%)

City	N	Don't practice	Practice on religious holidays	Practice regularly
Kyiv	72	17	56	28
L'viv	95	16	48	36
Donets'k	92	11	78	11
Kharkiv	73	16	74	10
UOC (MP)	133	18	70	12
UOC (KP)	120	10	72	18
Greek Catholic	57	14	49	37

Note: UAOC and other confessions not included in breakdown by religion due to small sample size.

Clearly, with such low numbers of higher education students of the UOC(MP) regularly practising, religious services and other church events have limitations as a means of communicating the Orthodox message, let alone generating Russian soft power. Even if we consider that the doctrine of the other Orthodox churches is the same, still direct communication between clergy and believers appears to be a stunted means to achieve the ambitious society-level ends intended.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Indeed, although commentaries on religious affairs in Ukraine tend to have stressed the antagonism between the different denominations, one might also consider the way in which the spiritual message of the other Ukrainian Orthodox Churches might actually help reinforce the message of the Moscow Patriarch in terms of the need to resist materialism (see section 5.10. for a discussion of the values-oriented discourse being promoted). Nye himself (2004: 82) accounts for this, observing that European soft power can also be a 'source of assistance and reinforcement for American soft power and increase the likelihood of the United States' achieving its objectives. Soft power can be shared and used in a cooperative fashion. European promotion of democracy and human rights helps advance shared values that are consistent with American objectives.'

6.4. The Moscow Patriarchate's Wider Societal Engagement

While the number of religious communities of all denominations, and particularly the Moscow Patriarchate, has increased in Ukraine, it is recognised that such quantitative measures are insufficient, with the Patriarch noting shortly after his investiture that 'the work of the Church must now be assessed not only in terms of the number of churches and monasteries but also in terms of the influence that the Church has on people's lives and on society' (11th March 2009, Tula, cited in Filatov 2011: 28). Accordingly, the Church should expand its pastoral role, which is relatively weak, and develop beyond places of worship to become centres for the provision of social support.¹⁵⁵

In his 'Prison Notebooks,' Gramsci (1971) wrote of the apparatuses of political and cultural hegemony, which have a positive educative purpose in society, creating social consent for a particular order of things by disseminating, in the terms of this thesis, a particular discourse. In recent years, the church has succeeded in gaining access to these apparatuses. In July 2009, President Medvedev signalled his support for the restoration of the military priesthood; the assignment of chaplains of Russia's four main faiths to army units deployed in battle or abroad. Funded by the Ministry of Defence, the initiative should attract the strongest – physically, culturally and intellectually – from among the clergy and contribute to the modernisation of the army by encouraging spiritual revival and boosting morale with the dropping in of parachuting chaplains and air-dropped mini-churches, complete with a 'life-sustaining module' and ritual utensils.¹⁵⁶ In Ukraine, the UOC(MP) has also obtained the right to send military priests into the Ukrainian army, and

¹⁵⁵ According to Richters, Orthodox norms have traditionally encouraged the ROC to remain silent on social issues. Apparently the other Eastern Orthodox churches have not welcomed the increased competitiveness that must ensue as a result of the ROC's shift away from this position (2012: 33).

¹⁵⁶ <https://rt.com/news/flying-church-army-russia-055/>

as such is the only religious organisation with access to this institution. This was organised through the UOC(MP)'s Department for Relations with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Ukraine (DRAFLEA).¹⁵⁷

In another return to pre-revolutionary tradition, on 22nd February 2011 the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service and the Synodal Division for Prison Ministry of the ROC (established 5th March 2010) concluded an agreement on the provision of chaplaincy services in Russia's prisons and training resources for prison clergy.¹⁵⁸ Similar collaboration was established between the Moscow Patriarchate and the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine in August 2011.¹⁵⁹ An inter-faith roundtable under the auspices of the Committee on the Legislative Support of Law Enforcement of the Verkhovna Rada resulted in the resolution entitled 'the participation of religious organizations in shaping the legislative initiatives in the area of penal policy' on 28th May 2012.¹⁶⁰ DRAFLEA's access to penal institutions has also excluded other Ukrainian denominations (Richters 2012).

Perhaps the most significant triumph for the Church in its forays into the public space has been the introduction of compulsory religious education in schools in Russia. From 2012 all Russian schools must offer pupils in the fourth and fifth years twice weekly classes in a choice of one the following three modules: 'Foundation of Religious Culture' (focused on Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism or Buddhism), 'History and Cultural Background of the World's

¹⁵⁷ According to Richters, sources on this topic are extremely scarce, but she reports that the Archbishop facilitated the department's creation by signing an agreement with the state during Kuchma's first term in office. He is said to have received the Order of St Andrew the First Called, a very prestigious and rarely awarded decoration from the RF for his efforts. The activities of military priests include: dispensation of sacraments, catechism, measures to inoculate military personnel in the values of self-sacrifice and homeland, morality, wisdom, fight drug abuse, bless flags of Ukraine, etc.

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1414730.html>

¹⁵⁹ http://sinod.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&id=68

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.kvs.gov.ua/peniten/control/main/uk/publish/article/637818>

Great Religions' or 'Foundations of Secular Ethics'. The courses should be led by teachers having attended special further training courses. Deacon Andrei Kurayev has designed a textbook 'Foundations of Orthodox Culture' published in 2009, which Filatov argues says more about neo-Slavophile ideas than Orthodoxy (2011: 42).

Beyond involvement in these more traditional institutions of civil society, the ROC has also entered the cultural sphere more broadly, including sectors likely to attract the attention of young people. An Orthodox youth movement has been founded, based on the Orthodox corps of the *Nashi* movement. Russian Orthodox Church's Education Committee co-supports the International Charitable Film Festival 'Radiant Angel' which has an eye to the 'Development of spiritual-moral culture of the young generation of Russia'.¹⁶¹ Showing innovation in church outreach to diverse audiences (Makarin 2011: 20), Deacon Andrei Kurayev has been known to preach at rock concerts (Papkova and Gorenburg 2011: 4), while Metropolitan Kirill and others met with musicians Konstantin Kinchev and Yuri Shevchuk to discuss the compatibility of rock music with Orthodoxy.¹⁶² Vsevolod Chaplin has also floated the idea of a 'national' dress code that would reflect religious sentiment of different confessions, combining 'elegance and style' with modesty.¹⁶³ By occupying physical space with people attired with respect to religious sensibility, a strong visual message would be conveyed about 'normal' values in the

¹⁶¹ The 8th such festival took place on 8th November 2011 in Moscow. 62 films produced in Russia and other countries were seen by 25 thousand viewers. The festival is also conducted with the support of Russian Ministry of Culture, the Moscow Government, the Socio-Cultural Initiatives Foundation and other organisations.

(http://www.spc.rs/eng/metropolitan_hilarion_takes_part_closing_8th_international_film_festival_radiant_angel accessed 13th May 2012).

¹⁶² Official site of the Moscow Patriarchate: 'Metropolitan Klimet met with rock musicians K. Kinchev and Y. Shevchuk, 15th June 2006 (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/105287.html> accessed 11th May 2012)

¹⁶³ Alexandrova Alexandrova, L. (2011). Orthodox Church recalls eternal values, urges universal dress code. ITAR-TASS: <http://itar-tass.com/eng/prnt.html?NewsID=15899347> accessed 15th February 2011. 28th January.

community. This would contribute to the visual decentring of permissive views, and shift the normative balance understood to define the community.

In terms of innovation in the Church's civil society engagement, the 'Orthodox Initiative'¹⁶⁴ is particularly worthy of mention as it indicates clearly the growing sophistication of Russian soft power approaches and the associated financial commitment to these measures. First initiated in 2005 by the Foundation of St. Seraphim of Sarov, the Orthodox Initiative is a grant competition for projects in the spheres of education and training, social services, culture and information activity. Both secular and religious organisations based in the canonical territory¹⁶⁵ of the ROC are invited to apply for grants of up to 500,000 Russian roubles (just under £10,000). In different ways, the projects envisaged are intended to make Orthodoxy a positive aspect of people's lived experience in the territories concerned, through promoting traditional values and patriotism¹⁶⁶ and through the provision of services inspired by Christian charitable purpose aiming to address key social problems. Since 2010 when Patriarch Kirill became chairman of the steering committee, the initiative has, in its own eyes, assumed a qualitatively new level. Purely quantitatively, from examining 1,500 applications and allocating 380 grants worth altogether 73 million roubles between 2005 and 2009, in 2011 alone the 'Orthodox Initiative' received approximately 2,000 applications and granted funds totalling 164 million roubles for 580 projects in Russia and the CIS.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Competition 'Orthodox Initiative': <http://www.pravkonkurs.ru/>

¹⁶⁵ Here, this is stipulated to include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

¹⁶⁶ Seminar regional'nykh koordinatov mezhdunarodhogo grantogo konkursa 'Pravoslavnyaya Initsiativa' <http://www.pravkonkurs.ru/novosti/115-2012-05-12-17-16-52> (accessed 12th June 2012)

¹⁶⁷ <http://www.pravkonkurs.ru/home/o-konkurse> (accessed 12th June 2012)

However, the project is about more than the simple allocation of funds. Rather, the initiative seeks to bring the Russkiy Mir alive in a more profound, sincere and professional way by creating networks. Firstly, the organisation centres on the idea of a partnership between representatives of the Church government, social, scientific, cultural and media circles to create joint projects on a local level.¹⁶⁸ To this end, coordinators have been appointed in almost every diocese in the Russkiy Mir, with a particular focus in 2012 on Ukraine. Indeed, speaking at the first training seminar for regional coordinators in April 2011, the Metropolitan of Saransk and Mordovia Barsanuphius noted that the regional coordinators should become the 'first assistants of the diocesan bishops in the search for diamonds in the rough who are ready to benefit the Church and the Fatherland.'¹⁶⁹ Here we may perceive the construction of the network of 'friends' rather similar to that described in normatively-intoned articles on Russian soft power. Here, however, the nature of the relationship appears technically professional in nature, with an emphasis on social partnership, not 'service' (Ryabykh 2011) to Russia, to fulfil specific and positive aims, which may lend it a less politicised aura. Furthermore, in accordance with the notion of the Russkiy Mir as a borderless spiritual space, in addition to individual projects, the competition also welcomes collaborative applications for 'network projects' from two or more regions and 'infrastructural / system projects' for those willing to offer meta-

¹⁶⁸ This outlook is reflected in the composition of the Steering Committee, which is composed of the following individuals: Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill (Chair), Sergei Kirinenko (Executive Director of Steering Committee, Director of RosAtom), Metropolitan of Saransk and Mordovia Barsanuphius (Managing Director of Moscow Patriarchate), Metropolitan Kliment of Kaluga and Borovsk, Metropolitan Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas Georgy (Chairman of the Foundation of St. Seraphim of Sarov), Bishop of Rostov and Novocheerkassk Mercury, Bishop of Smolensk and Vyazemsky Pantaleon, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, Lyubov Glebova, (Head of the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science), Vladimir Legoida (Chairman of the Synodal Information Department), Andrey Klishas (Member of Federation Council), Alexander Kononov (Minister of Justice), Vladimir Sungorkin, (Editor of "Komsomolskaya Pravda") and Valery Fadeev (Director of the Institute of Public Planning, member of the Public Chamber, editor of 'Russian in Global Politics').

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1445639.html> (accessed 12th June 2012)

level methodological support to organisations conducting projects.¹⁷⁰ Such a dense, interlinked organisational structure offers opportunities to set the agenda of issues deemed societally significant and propose correspondingly attractive solutions. The existence of effectively interlinked networks also strengthens their potential to achieve objectives as the nodes can lend mutual logistical and rhetorical support. This is not only practically useful, but may also help reinforce the sense of the target discourse as ‘common sense’ apparently widely dispersed in society.

This initiative is particularly interesting from the point of view of soft power, which emphasises the formative role of civil society over state-led initiatives. Devolving some responsibility for the advancement of Church messages to locally initiated projects in the dioceses may offer greater potential for success since such co-opted partners lend ‘authenticity’ to the project through the personal conviction and initiative of the individuals involved and their pre-established proximity and hence greater authority to the target audience. In this way, if successful, the narrative may cease to be perceived as an overt top-down ideology, and become ‘common sense’ as a discourse, diffused through horizontal, capillary-like action in society.

Castells (2009: 194) observes that ‘messages, organizations, and leaders who do not have a presence in the media do not exist in the public mind.’ As a key means of reaching people, they are pre-requisite for agenda-setting. The Church has its own religious media organs (e.g. ‘Spas’ TV channel), however, their audience is almost by definition limited. Therefore, to better occupy the information space, the Church seeks to extend its influence beyond its own media outlets. Proactively seizing the initiative the ROC extends

¹⁷⁰ Network projects are encouraged through the availability of larger grants; up to one million roubles.

the hand of friendship to secular media outlets on the basis of cooperation around common human values shared by many groups in society. As Patriarch Kirill has noted,

Our country is secular and free. Of course, we cannot expect that the media industry will bear only Christian values. However, there are universal values - for example, love of ones neighbour, compassion, and creativity. If in the mass media today, a call to creativity and to searching were to sound, if the media renounced its destructive pitch, it would be a huge plus. They would form creators.¹⁷¹

While recognising the plurality of outlook in the media landscape, there is an appeal to sympathisers in the wider secular realm to consider these arguably uncontroversial ethical values in their work. In this way, the Church can hope to shape the programming of the network; the editorial decisions and the choices of the professional journalism corps (Castells 2009: 200) in a way that is 'self-configuring' – not through diktat but by demonstrating the attraction of its position. This offers the advantages of unity of purpose, but also the benefits from flexibility of execution (Castells 2009: 21).

Approaching this goal from another angle, the church is also seeking to build relations with those training the media professionals of the future. For instance, Metropolitan Kliment of Kaluga and Borovsk gave a public lecture on the role of the media industry in shaping the civic space at the Moscow State University of Printing Arts. Furthermore, the Synodal Information Department has begun to provide monthly media training sessions¹⁷² with experienced PR experts, to 'reduce the communications gap with colleagues from other publications' including those in the secular sphere, as well as to encourage focusing attention on the social and public activities of the dioceses, rather than inter-church affairs. Indeed, the Patriarch has stressed the need to improve the Church's information

¹⁷¹ Speech by Metropolitan of Kaluga and Borovsk Kliment at a meeting with students of the Moscow State University of Printing Arts on 13th March 2012 (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/2062578.html>) (accessed 4th January 2013)

¹⁷² For instance, the four-day courses for employees of the Orthodox media in St Petersburg.

policy, going beyond reacting to challenges in the information environment, such as scandals, to providing positive news; information about the Church's social, educational and cultural activities in society.¹⁷³ To assist in this regard, opinion polls are being conducted in order to understand public perceptions of the Church, for instance by the FOM and Kyiv's Razumkov Centre.¹⁷⁴ With this knowledge, the Church is in a better position to react quickly to criticism.

6.5. The Moscow Patriarchate as a Credible Meaning-Maker in Ukrainian Society

The previous part of the chapter examined some of the means by which the Russian Orthodox Church may disseminate its worldview in Ukraine. However, as ascertained in the conceptual framework, it is not sufficient for an individual to merely become familiar with a narrative to be convinced by it, to internalise and to reproduce it as his or her own worldview. While success depends in part on the ability of the discourse to persuasively account for the demands of the contemporary circumstances, a highly significant factor affecting audience disposition is the perceived authority of the agent.

The conditions for credibility are largely dependent on the social context of the audience. In principle, Russia has significant soft power resources in Ukraine deriving not least from the history of shared statehood, common language and culture, and the attraction of Russia's world culture. However, in post-Soviet Ukraine, these facts have often been turned against Moscow. Indeed, the history of Ukraino-Russian relations has often been

¹⁷³ Greater sophistication is expected from the media, for instance, not putting a photo of a girls choir singing folk song next to an advertisement for a nightclub and associated image, or not flanking a feature about peace and conflict with an article about youngsters throwing toilet paper at a home for war veterans. (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/2062578.html>)

¹⁷⁴ Fond obshchestvennoe mnenie. (2012)., Otnoshenie k RPTs i patriarkhu Kirillu. <http://fom.ru/obshchestvo/10434> (accessed 24th May 2012). 4th May.

re-framed by nationalising elites in negative terms of heavy-handed imperialism; a discourse which has frequently been used to the detriment of relations with Russia today. In independent Ukraine, discourses supportive of Ukrainian statehood has been reflected in the teaching curriculum in schools – in place during the education of my respondents and participants – as well as the media and public memorials.

However, the creation of such discourses is not unilateral and entirely without foundation, but has often been supported by the statements of Russia's representatives abroad. Although Ukrainian sovereignty is formally recognised by Russia, numerous examples point to an 'inability to reconcile itself to coming to terms with Ukraine as an independent state', and 'an attitude of denial to an independent Ukrainian identity' (Leigh 2011), and hence a lack of sincere conviction behind official public statements.¹⁷⁵ Such attitudes are perceived not to be mere policy statements and rhetoric, but a reflection of ingrained modes of thought prevalent among the political elite in Russia, including even some clergy. Independent Ukraine is not seen straightforwardly as an equal, as Okara commented;

In Russia, it's only possible to be the older brother, horizontal relations are impossible, that is to say, equal relations are impossible, anyway, that's how Russia behaves with others, relations can only be top-down, like with a younger brother.¹⁷⁶

Indeed, such centre-periphery type attitudes appear to be expressed in the *Realpolitik*-inspired narrative of sovereign democracy, which is quite dismissive of the quality of the sovereignty of smaller states (see discussion in chapter five), making a clear distinction

¹⁷⁵ The state apparatuses are composed of a diverse range of individuals, and while some are familiar with and adhere to the 'soft power' discourses, others may express contradicting views that call into question the sincerity of the official position. Clustering particularly in the 'force structures', such individuals with such a background may consider that the interests of the state are better pursued by following a 'harder' more coercive line with antagonists and competitors. The failure to reconcile, as yet, both hard and soft power narratives means that the state's soft power position can easily be contradicted and thereby undermined.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with A. Okara conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

with that of true great powers. Such incidents reinforce stereotypes about Russia as suffering from a post-imperial complex to the extent that the country – if not by military, then by political, economic and cultural means – constitutes a revanchist threat to its neighbour.

While proximity to the state offers the Church many material and strategic advantages in terms of ‘switching’ and ‘programming’, it is also in some respects a liability. As a consequence of the history of close cooperation and collaboration with the Russian state in imperial and Soviet times, not to mention the Russian Patriarch’s resistance to the autocephaly of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Moscow Patriarchate is easily cast the light of a ‘tool’ of foreign policy; a dependent agent instrumentalised by the Kremlin for political gain. Interpretations drawing on anti-imperialist critique are not conducive to the development of trustful, productive and close relations, and the impression of close ties taints the Church with suspicion of political intent; impeding its ability to work effectively in Ukraine. For its part, and despite the synergy of interests, the Church claims a relatively high level of independence vis-à-vis the Russian state.¹⁷⁷ Vladimir Legoida, Head of the Synodal Information Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, states that ‘the Russian Church has never in its history been so independent of the state as it is now. It treasures this independence.’¹⁷⁸ However, in order for this soft power tool to appear credible in the eyes of some Ukrainian audiences, there should be not only some level of reality, but moreover the impression of distance from the power structures of the RF and from political interests on the part of the Church.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with P. Kasatkin conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Russian Church says it remains independent of state’, Interfax 25th February 2011, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=8228> (accessed 29th May 2012)

Perhaps for this reason there appears to be a conscientious strategy to differentiate the Moscow Patriarchate from the Russian state in the eyes of Ukrainians. For instance, upon the Patriarch's return to Moscow after his first official visit to Kyiv in July 2009, both President Medvedev and Patriarch Kirill sent letters to the Ukrainian president which could scarcely have been more contrasting in nature. While Medvedev's was searingly critical of Viktor Yushchenko's presidential leadership and conveyed Moscow's intention to withhold sending an ambassador to Kyiv,¹⁷⁹ Kirill's communication contained a message of gratitude, blessings, and the compliment that 'despite of the all difficulties, Ukraine is successful consolidating its statehood'.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, having appeared to support Putin for the presidency (despite claims to stay out of party politics), the Church has shifted to more critical public stance towards the political elite, stressing, for instance, the need to listen to the population¹⁸¹ and to engage with Ukraine in a spirit of equality and respect (Ryabykh 2011¹⁸²). In this way, the Church takes steps towards establishing the sense of itself as a distinct personality in an emerging multi-voice civil society; bolstering its own credibility as an independent actor.¹⁸³ This is significant not only in the

¹⁷⁹ Dmitry Medvedev (2009) 'Poslaniye Prezidentu Ukrainy Viktoru Yushchenko', 11th August <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/5158> (accessed 3rd January 2013)

¹⁸⁰ 'Church and State' Power Vertical blog by Brian Whitmore, 21st August 2009 http://rferl.org/content/Church_And_State/1805023.html (accessed 10th September 2009)

¹⁸¹ Although the Patriarch does appear to have transgressed Church policy of remaining aside from party politics by likening the 12 years of Putin's power in the Kremlin to a 'miracle from God' in the run up to the Presidential elections, his tone after the elections does not suggest a relationship of subordination:

The legitimacy of the President is based on the trust of the people. You have that trust. But it means that the highest goal of Presidential service is the service of the people. For this service to be successful, it is necessary to be able to hear the voice of the people [...] We prayed today that your closeness to the people, your ability to hear people's voices will become sharper with every day of your government, bringing manifest benefits to our Fatherland and our people. (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2206277.html> accessed 13th May 2012)

¹⁸² 'The equality in Russkiy Mir –as I see it – is that you don't receive directives from the center, but everyone can generate ideas that can be useful. One should learn to accept reasonable, sober proposals from one's partners. It is one of the tasks for the Russian elites – to perceive the centers of Russkiy Mir as equal partners.'

¹⁸³ Likewise, after 2008, the ROC apparently refused to set up own institutions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as it continues to recognise them as the canonical territory of Georgian Orthodox Church. ROC as

eyes of the domestic constituency, but above all for foreign audiences; in order to be accepted as an authoritative voice and to win the trust of foreign citizens, the Patriarch should not be seen as a representative of the Russian Federation kow-towing to state diktats.

While Russians may stress their sincere affection for ‘Little Russians’, narratives presuming Ukraine’s ‘friendship’ as a Russian prerogative are not well received, particularly when compared with Western discourses emphasising respect, equality and security also circulating widely in Ukrainian society via the media etc. Indeed, acute awareness of the negative aspects of the historical interaction between Russia and Ukraine create a demand for security, and Western narratives offering NATO and EU membership as a route to prosperity, well-being and sovereignty. The Church must account for such factors when formulating its own discourse of attraction.

The Russian Orthodox Church has traditionally supported Slavic unity. However, since the Church’s stake is in spiritual, rather than overtly political or economic influence, it is far less constrained by the ‘great hard power’ discourse enveloping elites in the force structures, for it to embrace the present conjunctures. Accordingly, as Father Philipp Ryabykh, the Moscow Patriarchate’s representative to the EU, reports,

The Holy Patriarch’s idea is that we can accept the current forms of political arrangements, the sovereignty of the post-Soviet states, but we should nonetheless acknowledge the existence of this value-based community, and each nation can use this common resource in order to most successfully implement the projects of its national development. (Ryabykh 2011)¹⁸⁴

sole channel of communication between Russia and Georgia (Makarin 2011: 10). Cynics have suggested this might only be so as to avoid setting a precedent inconducive to Russia’s domestic situation.

¹⁸⁴ The Church does acknowledge that the Russian Federation ‘already occupies a special place in [the Russkiy Mir] because it is the largest and economically the mightiest country of the Russkiy Mir. However, this point may be overlooked in discourse as a mere technicality.

This value-based civilisational community – the Russkiy Mir – is perceived to transcend state frontiers, and is touted as a unifying resource in the sense that the implementation of the spiritual project provides a direction and rallying point for activity both within and across national borders.

Today's Moscow Patriarchate maintains a discourse grounded in its own logic. Where Russian discourse has often cast Ukraine in the follower role of 'younger brother' who would soon return to the fold like the prodigal son, this narrative casts the status quo as a natural and promising development, in much the same way that the collapse of the USSR is framed in Putin's discourse as being facilitated by Russians' choice for freedom. This rhetorical step likewise helps deflect the sense of humiliation associated with the loss of what many Russians effectively consider to be their Jerusalem. The positive aspects are reinforced by the stress now placed on Ukraine's equality in the Russkiy Mir, as the Patriarch stated at the IV Assembly of the Russian World in 2010,

Ukraine should not and cannot be a slave or a junior partner in this historic case. It is designed to be a responsible heir to Rus and to create the Russian world on an equal footing with its other heirs.¹⁸⁵

In a symbolic gesture to underline this equality, upon his investiture Patriarch Kirill ordered that all flags of the states within the Moscow Patriarchate's jurisdiction, not just that of the Russian Federation, be displayed on equal height below the Church standard in his throne room.¹⁸⁶

Keen to appeal to Ukrainians and dispel the notion that the Moscow Patriarchate seeks to shepherd the country back into the ranks of Russia's satellite states, Ukraine has rather been cast as a trailblazer of the Russkiy Mir. Ukraine, the Patriarch has stated, recognised

¹⁸⁵ Patriarch Kirill, speech to the IV Assembly of the Russkiy Mir

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.macfound.org/press/commentary/zevelev-russias-future/> (accessed 31st May 2012)

itself as an inheritor of Kievan Rus sooner than Russia did, designating 'Baptism of Rus Day' as a national holiday in 2006, while Russia and Belarus waited until 2010 and 2011 respectively. The celebrations on this day (such as concerts) seemed designed to increase awareness of the peoples' common origins in the civic consciousness and give the day positive associations. Since his investiture, the current patriarch has always underlined his respect by marking the occasion in Ukraine, where he has lauded that it is easy to pray and makes profuse kind remarks about the faithful. By way of demonstration of the priority he accords to Ukraine, in addition to these four annual visits, the Patriarch has made a further five official and pastoral visits to Ukraine, visiting not only Kyiv, but also Rivno, Crimea, Odesa, Dniepropetrovsk, Chernobyl, Donetsk, Luhans'k, Alchervs'k, and Chernivtsi. The message is clearly that Ukraine matters, not merely as a lowly investment destination or a chip in a geopolitical game, but in its own right, for its elevated cultural and spiritual merits, of which its citizens are readily encouraged to be proud. In a further show of enthusiasm in 2009, the Patriarch announced his willingness to adopt dual Ukrainian citizenship.¹⁸⁷

Thus, despite its strong patriotism, the Russian Orthodox Church, especially under Kirill, considers itself a supra-state church, not merely amicable but also indigenous to Ukraine (Filatov 2011: 33). Patriarch Kirill has expressed his 'fervent desire [...] that all countries associated with the Russian civilization, [...] realize our common heritage's value, not as a threat to their autonomy, but as a valuable resource in a global world.'¹⁸⁸ In elevating Ukraine for particular praise, the discourse of the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine strives not to undermine, but rather to reinforce Kuchma's argument that

¹⁸⁷ <http://rian.com.ua/politics/20090805/78186712.html>

¹⁸⁸ Speech by Patriarch Kirill to the IV Assembly of the Russkiy Mir.

‘Ukraine is not Russia’ (2003). Instead, rather than becoming a vassal of Western Europe as Yushchenko’s vision entailed, Ukraine is offered a more esteemed position in the implementation of a unique and forward-looking integration project. Since Ukraine is considered to be more developed in terms of its level of consciousness within the civilisational history of *Rus*, Ukraine is amongst the forerunners, rather than lagging behind as would be the case in the European model, which must surely be considered a plus. Indeed, the *Russkiy Mir* narrative has potential because it does not *in principle* – if still potentially in practice – privilege Russia.¹⁸⁹

The Russian Orthodox Church therefore offers a reframed view on the relationship between Russia and Ukraine, and simultaneously, as the purveyor of this more ‘attractive’ and acceptable discourse, strives to construct itself as a positive force, rather than posing a rhetorical challenge to Ukraine’s dignity and self-identity as an independent state. In distancing itself from discredited discourses, the Moscow Patriarchate may pre-emptively deflect and diffuse criticism, and thereby bolstering its authority and credibility as an opinion former in Ukraine.

6.6. Cooptation of Clergy

However, while senior clerics may have committed to this ‘politically correct’ discourse, it is not necessarily the case that the remainder of the clergy are supportive of these contemporary messages. The views discussed here and attributed to Kirill and his team are essentially the official account, developed in cooperation with Russian state actors. Yet it appears that opinion in the UOC(MP) is not homogenous, but is as diverse as

¹⁸⁹ Russia is recognised to have a special status due to its economic and territorial magnitude.

Ukrainian society as a whole.¹⁹⁰ While clerics in Eastern and Southern Ukraine are loyal to Moscow, the legitimacy of MP influence on the UOC(MP) has been questioned, and MP clerics in the western and central regions may look to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople for support (Richters 2012: 99, 109).¹⁹¹

Further, as a reformer, Kirill's positions are still controversial in some ecclesiastical circles, not least with regard to his perceived interest in missionary activity and worldly concerns over spiritual matters. Indeed, some clergy have been removed from their posts for criticising his political involvement. However, the fact that priests may 'defect' to the UAOC or UOC(KP) if dissatisfied, has pushed the Russian hierarchy to develop 'softer' means of keeping them on-board and reducing internal divisions; involving 'positive incentives, rather than threats' (Richters 2012: 113). This has involved granting more freedom to UOC(MP) priests relative to their Russian counterparts, in the form of turning a blind eye to involvement in politics, as well as stressing what the MP has to offer; the ideas of canonicity, the Third Rome theory and simple inertia (Richters 2012: 113).¹⁹²

In recent years, a significant part of the communicative activity of Kirill's team has worked to co-opt clerics themselves into the renewed discourse and modes of speech and behaviour more appropriate to fostering soft power to avoid counterproductive inconsistencies in the Church's message. Since it is through the media that the general public gains its impressions of the Church, guidelines and training have focussed on this sector. In response to various 'off discourse' public statements, clergy are asked to work

¹⁹⁰ Interview with A. Zolotov conducted in Moscow in June 2011.

¹⁹¹ The relationship between the Moscow Patriarchate and the UOC(MP) is under-researched (Richters 2012: 99). Richters notes that pro-Russian hierarchs such as Illarion, Agafangel and Lazar (2012: 16) may be balanced by moderates such as Metropolitan Volodymyr (2012: 117).

¹⁹² 'Ledeneva points out that these practices allow for the breach of certain laws, but that they uphold their own order as the punishment for the illegal activities is suspended rather than annulled.' (Richters 2012: 113)

under the guidance of the diocesan authorities in their cooperation with the media, but where opinions nevertheless diverge from the Church's teaching, they are instructed to make clear that this is a privately held view.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the Church also seeks to raise the intellectual level and professional sophistication¹⁹⁴ of media products, and to end church sponsoring of 'dubious' literature, that is, material on the extremist fringes (Filatov 2011: 29, Richters 2012), aiming to effectively phase out off-discourse materials that damage the credibility of the official narratives.¹⁹⁵

Emphasis is also placed on ameliorating the spirit in which Church representatives engage with the wider world. Where the dispute with the Kyiv Patriarchate has created suspicion of the Church's purposes in Ukraine, the Patriarch exhorts clerics to conduct their ministry bearing in mind 'not self-promotion or trying to achieve weight and recognition in society, but the feeling of responsibility for the future of the people, the execution of his vocation in the world' (Ilarion 2012).¹⁹⁶ Clergy are likewise asked to avoid darkening of relations by unjustified refusals to allow journalists access to information or by over-sensitive reactions to correct and proper criticism.¹⁹⁷

In response to the identified need to increase the effectiveness of its contributions in the media space, the Church is investing in training events, not only for clergy but also those

¹⁹³ The Basis of the Social Concept Part Fifteen 'Church and Mass Media'
<http://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/xv/> (accessed 3rd January 2013)

¹⁹⁴ Concretely, he has pointed to avoidance of features which could undermine efforts to promote through the overtly contradictory emotions aroused, drawing attention to steps such as not putting a photo of a girls choir singing folk songs next to an advertisement for a nightclub and associated image, or not flanking a feature about peace and conflict with an article about youngsters throwing toilet paper at a home for war veterans. (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/2062578.html>)

¹⁹⁵ According to Mitrofanova (2005, cited in Richters 2012: 23), the orientation of the contemporary ROC, expressed in the social concept distances the MP from 'radical groups' named 'the political Orthodox' and 'starts to define an ideological mainstream that differs from the extremist fringes'.

¹⁹⁶ Metropolitan of Volokolamsk Hilarion (2012). Rozhdestvo Khristovo - ne prosto povod dlya svetskogo torzhestva. Official site of the Moscow Patriarchate: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1934484.html> (accessed 12th January 2013). 12th January.

¹⁹⁷ Basic of the Social Concept (Part XV Church and Mass Media): <http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/xv/> accessed 15th May 2012

involved in Orthodox media more widely, and regional coordinators of the Orthodox Initiative.¹⁹⁸ At the V Festival of Orthodox media in Donets'k in May 2012, for instance, Vladimir Legoida read aloud an address by the Patriarch, calling for responsibility in communications, both Orthodox and secular to avoid unnecessarily inflaming passions:

The church mission is being conducted in many areas of public life, which often causes the undisguised irritation at those who seek to limit the participation of the Church in modern life. Under these conditions, you must understand that our thoughtless and careless words spoken at times not only can give rise seeking an occasion (2 Cor. 11:12) blaspheme the Holy Church and its canons and ministers, but also to discourage people from Orthodoxy, alienating them from God. Aware of the responsibility resting upon us, we must strive to make our witness of faith has been measured and effective response to any aggressive rhetoric, sounding to the Church.¹⁹⁹

In this way, the Church as a whole should establish itself as an originator of best practice in society, a source of attraction in the wider world too.²⁰⁰ Although the Russian Orthodox Church has demonstrably modernised its approach to societal influence; identifying and addressing certain obstacles to its emergence as an authoritative societal leader placed to encourage the coalescence of the Russian World as a value community, certain frictions beyond its control nevertheless remain. Indeed, the Church's ability to exert hegemony in

¹⁹⁸ To this end the organisers of the Orthodox Initiative are running training seminars and 'master classes' for regional coordinators and have invested in impressive online 'digest' to widen the audience of such events, with an attractive, professional online brochure with key quotations from speakers and hyperlinks to the full version in both text and video format.

¹⁹⁹ The festival was dedicated to the theme "The participation of the media in the diocesan church-wide information projects" and gathered an audience of about 90 people, including) representatives of the Synod and the diocesan outreach department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, church publications editors, designers, film and television directors, Orthodox journalists. (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/2207817.html> accessed 11th May 2012)

²⁰⁰ Indeed, the application process is designed with a high professional standard in mind, insisting upon projects responding to societal need among specifically targeted beneficiaries with concrete and measurable results. The guidelines require the substantiation of the initiator's capacity to fulfil the proposed project, and request concisely formulated applications attentive to the need to be easily comprehensible and eye-catching to the reader. (<http://www.pravkonkurs.ru/rek> - accessed 12th June 2012) Further progress on the part of the ROC is developing a soft power arsenal is evidenced by the emphasis placed on raising quality. The role of regional coordinators is taken seriously, and while the Patriarch praised improvements in the Committee's work in 2011 at a training seminar, he urged the attendees to do better, noting that the 'Orthodox grant competition should be conducted on an impeccably professional level, be completely transparent, and, of course, attract the attention of all of society.' Likewise, Vsevolod Chaplin, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church and Society, while expressing the hope that, encouraged by the Orthodox Initiative, the religious worldview will be articulated in society by its bearer, insists that this must be done 'without any enmity, without any aggression, without anything that might alienate people from the Church.'

the Ukrainian information space is impeded by the fact that the target discourses do not circulate in an informational vacuum, but rather in interaction with the alternative narratives of contending interest groups.

6.7. Access to Alternative Viewpoints

Despite the full reasoning behind the resonance or otherwise of a particular message among the members of given target audience never being *truly* knowable, as argued in the conceptual framework, exposure to contrary ways of thinking is a significant factor identified in the communication literature. Here, it will be argued that the credibility of both the discourse and the Church as a source of value leadership in society are affected not only by media narratives oppositional to the Church and its message, but also significantly by content from Russia itself, including even that which might be deemed 'pro-Russian' in character.

Based on this research, it is not possible to state the degree to which the civilisational narratives expressed in this chapter and the previous one shape the worldview informing the editorial lines of mainstream Russian media products in Ukraine. Certainly, the current Patriarch has made quite a few televised appearances since his enthronement, not to mention receiving considerable coverage in the printed media. However, while such appearances are relayed in the Ukrainian media, it should not be assumed that they are readily received by the youthful, educated target audience examined in the following chapter. No viewing figures are available for church media products, but it seems likely that they would predominantly be accessed by practicing believers, which represent a relatively small proportion of my sample. Furthermore, if Moscow's clerics believe that Russian TV channels would give the church's message a sympathetic framing, then they

would be disappointed to learn that among the sample a relatively limited proportion regularly access Russia-based channels; even in Donetsk and Kharkiv only 26 per cent watch Channel One Russia regularly.

Table 4: Respondents regularly viewing the following channels by city (%)

Channel	City			
	Kyiv	L'viv	Donets'k	Kharkiv
Inter	27	23	37	33
Channel One Russia	13	6	26	26
Fifth	11	13	8	13
K1 / K2	9	16	12	18
NTN	13	8	12	18
Megasport	12	18	18	17
Noviy	33	65	56	51
ISTV	13	36	17	*
M1 / M2	21	42	34	48
BBC	18	15	18	15
STV	39	53	56	48
Ukraina	13	15	28	29
Ukrainian First Channel	7	6	8	6
Rossiya	7	2	11	6
Donbas	1	2	14	20
RT	2	3	2	0
Kultura	2	3	3	2

Notes:

Regularity is defined here as frequency of viewing evaluated as '4' or '5' of a possible '5', corresponding to viewing the channel 'often' or 'as a main source'.

* No data available for Kharkiv.

However, some Ukrainian channels are considered to be 'pro-Russian', although what this actually means is contestable. For instance, 'Inter' bills itself as the 'main channel of Ukraine' and is part owned by Channel One Russia. Controversially, for instance, the channel twice showed a three-hour liturgy by Patriarch Kirill in place of its usual coverage of Ukrainian parliamentary debate. However, while TV remains the most significant channel of communication among the Ukrainian population at large, among my sample it

is far from the most popular means of accessing information about current affairs, with an average of only 45 per cent turning to television as a source of information about world events. In the focus groups it emerged that this is for many people the case because they have no time or live in a student hostel. Instead, students tend to use the internet, the usage of which has 'come into its own in the 2002 and 2004 elections' among this group much more than among society as a whole (Kuzio 2006: 56).

Table 5: Respondents declaring they have regularly used the following sources to gain information about what happens in the world, over the past 12 months by city (%)

City	TV	Radio	Print Press	Internet	Blog	Social Media	Friends	Family	Colleagues
Kyiv	28	9	25	67	13	32	58	59	43
L'viv	35	13	14	59	14	42	53	57	42
Donets'k	56	11	26	63	23	50	66	71	50
Kharkiv	60	39	16	74	44	55	69	*	55
Average	45	18	20	66	24	45	62	62	48

Notes:

Regularly' is defined as those evaluating their viewing frequency as '4' (often) or '5' (main source) on a five point scale. Respondents could select as many options as applied to them. * Data not available for Kharkiv.

What's more, Ukraine's new generation of future leaders are strongly

involved in social media and online networking sites.

Table 6: Respondents indicating regular use of social media internet sites by city (%).

Social Media	City			
	Kyiv	L'viv	Donets'k	Kharkiv
Facebook	26	28	22	64
Vkontakte	65	78	86	87
Live journal	10	5	8	46

Notes:

Regular use defined as frequency of access evaluated as '4' (often) or '5' (main source) on a five point scale.



1: 'Patriarch Kirill: I'll show you "mixed-up layers". Putting me, a Holy man, to shame...' In stocks: 'ROC photo-shopper'.

Image 1: Memes inspired by the scandal surrounding Patriarch Kirill's \$30,000 watch.



2: Well-heeled clergy point the way



1: 'Photoshop for Dummies' featuring the now infamous watch, only visible in the reflection on the polished table.

In recent years, internet sources have been used effectively against the patriarch, if the findings from my focus groups are anything to go by (see section 7.6.7.). The story of the scandal of Patriarch Kirill owning a luxury watch appears to have spread round the internet with the aid of various memes, some of which are depicted in Image 1. While the Church may have invested many words in explaining how the Patriarch came to be wearing such an expensive watch, the diffusion of a doctored image showing the watch on his wrist airbrushed out but still reflected in the highly polished wooden table nearby sends a much stronger message; instantly conveying the idea of church duplicity and

hypocrisy.²⁰¹ Although the Church conceivably possesses reasonable arguments, in an era of images, they may be drowned out by the easy flow of punchy captions hammering home a blunt message of hypocrisy and scandal in the church and ridiculousness.

Representatives of the 'patriotic' Ukrainian media tend to take an oppositional stance to positions advanced by the Russian state and the Moscow Patriarchate on a range of political, religious, cultural, linguistic issues, often stressing the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration, the distinctiveness of Ukraine's historical, cultural and linguistic experience, and depicting Russia as an aggressor and antagonist. It is also necessary to consider the antagonistic role of non-political media products that promote lifestyles and values contrary to the spiritual teachings of the Church.

Generally speaking, oppositionally-minded media and their representatives tend to frame Russia as a potential threat not only to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereign independence, but to the country's very national identity as such across a wide variety of cultural, political, economic, religious and linguistic themes. In addition to the perception of imperial longing for Ukraine on the part of Russia, part of this anxiety stems from the relative size and weight of Ukraine's Eastern neighbour across a range of indexes. The media landscape is one such sphere. 'Ukraine sees the world through Moscow's eyes' said Natalia Gumenyuk, referring to the determining role of Russian publishers and producers in the Ukrainian market. However, the current situation is not a complete boon to Russian soft power. For instance, when coverage is viewed as so overtly 'pro-Russian', it enables opposition journalists to stir unease among audiences by drawing attention to the way in which Ukrainian culture and language appear to be endangered by Russian pressure. The

²⁰¹ Patriarch Kirill is represented on facebook. As of 12th January 2013 his page had 6,415 'likes'. <https://www.facebook.com/PatriarhKirill>

unspoken implication behind the remarks of journalist interviewees seemed often to be that this influence is intentionally foisted unidirectionally by Russia for illegitimate political purposes. Resentment is thereby fostered that is corrosive of soft power efforts.

However, although Volodymyr Kulyk²⁰² observes that Russian programming does project a Russian worldview, he questions the extent to which this is a component of a joined-up strategy imposed by Moscow. Rather, he notes, Ukrainian TV companies are keen to import Russian media products since they are cheaper than domestic or, especially, Western productions. Moreover, Ukrainian producers are often driven by similarly commercial concerns in the creation of their own programming, which is likewise designed with export markets in mind. Even shows intended for Ukrainian prime time viewing may be made with a Russian audience in mind. It is assumed by production companies that profit margins will be too low without the Russian market, which can provide 80-85 per cent of revenues, in comparison with approximately 10-12 per cent in Ukraine, and 1 per cent each in Belarus and Kazakhstan. Consequently, the first priority is to please Russian audiences – not only viewers, but also TV managers and the authorities – a fact which is reflected in the worldview assumptions of the programming (see also Kulyk 2010). The idea is that whatever is received well in Russia will also be received well in Ukraine, not vice-versa. Even purely entertainment programmes have certain taboos which may not be broken, even to the point of being hostile to Ukrainian identity and independence. In TV series, for instance, the action is frequently set in a generic post-Soviet space, and text such as signposts that are visible in shot may well feature words that are the same in Russian and Ukrainian for ease of export, thereby perpetuating the sense of a shared living space. Programming with a more patriotic, Ukraine-specific

²⁰² Interview conducted in Kyiv in July 2011.

orientation is limited in terms of its geographic appeal and potential profitability, and hence its attraction to producers.

In such cases, programming is created with a focus on business and the profit imperative, not diplomacy. This has significant implications for the 'attraction' of Russia in Ukraine as certain themes, such as the apparent lack of difference between the two countries that may be gratifying for Russian audiences, but offensive to Ukrainian patriotic sensibilities. This is particularly the case as controversial films, such as *'My iz budushchego 2'*²⁰³ and *'Sevastopol'*²⁰⁴ for instance, were widely discussed and criticised in the Ukrainian media, and gave renewed fuel and continued relevance to critical media narratives.

Hence, although Ukrainian TV scheduling may contain what could be considered a large amount of 'pro-Russian' programming, it is not necessarily 'on discourse' from the ROC's point of view, and may well not cultivate positive emotions towards Russia generally, possibly even undermining efforts to move towards a more acceptable discourse among Russia's neighbours. Given close proximity of Church and State, it is likely to cast a shadow over the level of perceived sincerity of Russian cultural diplomatic overtures.

²⁰³ *'My iz budushchego 2'* ['We are from the future 2'] is set in the contemporary period at a military reconstruction event of a battle near L'viv, except the four protagonists – two Russians from St Petersburg and two Ukrainians from Galicia – are sent back in time to the real thing in 1944. According to the blurb of the DVD: 'Each of them had to perform a heroic deed and join forces in the face of the common enemy [the Nazis] in order to return home and save their Future. So that our future won't be like the past.' The film caused offence in Ukraine both through its emphasis on Russo-Ukrainian unity and the way the film attributes very negative characteristics to the Ukrainians (cowardice, fascism, violence, frippery, confrontation) and contrastingly positive traits to both the Russian protagonists and the Soviet forces of 1944 (bravery, honour, reason).

²⁰⁴ American films sometimes have alternative sequences where the domestic rendering certain scenes might prove unpalatable to foreign audiences.

6.8. Concluding Remarks

In this section, the Orthodox Church has been taken as an example of a 'tool' of Russian soft power, and analysed with the aim of demonstrating how soft power and the attendant considerations are taking root in Russia.

Reconciling the Church's part in Russia's fate with its insistence upon independence, the chapter has examined the re-invigorated fora for interaction between the two institutions. Further, although Ukraine is a relatively religious society by Western standards, direct Church communication via sermons and religious media has little potential to achieve its ambitions as the audience is limited. Thus, with the mission to shape national culture broadly, the UOC(MP) strives to communicate with society as a whole, engaging civil society apparatuses, particularly those that involve to the youth. Initiatives are being taken to construct networks of influence that devolve some responsibility to local agents and should become 'self-configuring', thereby diffusing power in society and rendering it less visible. The UOC(MP) also strives to co-opt Ukrainian clergy into its soft power approaches by stressing incentives for cooperation over threats and implementing media guidelines to help ensure the Church's communications are not self-sabotaging by straying 'off-discourse'. The Moscow Patriarchate also appears to have recognised the need for credibility and to take into account the concerns of the target audience. As such, it recognises the alienating effects provoked by the paternalist, overbearing overtures by the RF's representatives, and counters this with the notion that in the *Russkiy Mir*, Ukraine is not a 'younger brother' or even a co-author but in many ways a civilisational trailblazer.

Thus, while some of Russia's would-be 'tools' have pursued their goals myopically and without due consideration of all relevant factors, provoking feelings of insecurity and rejection among ostensible target audience, the actions and pronouncements of the senior hierarchy of the ROC, seem to reflect understanding of the relevant issues and a long-term, intelligent and systematically considered approach to the realisation of the overall goals of Russian soft power work. Crucially, the Church appears to be aware of certain weaknesses, which enables it to act practically and through its narratives to account for criticism that is levelled at it and thereby deflect it. The sophisticated, multi-faceted communication strategy exists in cooperation with growing network structures and resources that aim to provide support appropriate to the social and pastoral role of the Church, hence providing a material base for attraction.

Yet, in spite of the increased coordination and resources of the Church to promote this civilisational agenda, there remain question marks over the Church's ability to reach the higher education students targeted by this study. Whether such developments will be reflected in the audience's reception of these discourses will be examined in the next and final chapter.

Chapter Seven: Findings of the Audience Reception Research

7.1. Introduction

Overall, this thesis has sought to examine the extent to which Russia may be deemed to have soft power in Ukraine. Attempts to evaluate the extent of Russia's soft power in Ukraine today depend critically on what one considers to be Moscow's objectives with regard to this country and its citizens. Having identified five Russian approaches to soft power broadly understood, the civilisational approach has been explored in more detail. By this measure, Moscow's ambition has been to secure Ukraine's continued belonging to the notion of a '*ruskii*' civilisational space. It has been argued that the physical re-integration of Ukraine into the political space of Russia, either as a satellite state or in terms of shared statehood is not the immediate aim of Russian policy. Thus, the salience of soft power in Ukraine does not depend on indicators such as an expressed willingness to integrate with Russia. While in the long-term the ambition may be to secure Ukraine's commitment to some form of post-Soviet integration project such as the Custom's Union, in the first instance the aim is meta-political; to re-constitute the cultural basis for cooperation, namely to preserve and develop ideological and cultural-civilisational discourses framing Ukraino-Russian cooperation as logical, desirable and historically-rooted.

As was argued in chapter four, Moscow's vision of national security demands that Russia be sovereign, not only in terms of preserving and developing its '*samobytnyi*' civilisational contribution, but also by performing a cultural-ideational leadership role for other states and people in the international system. As outlined in the methodology, the extent to which Russia is able to do this constitutes a measure of Russian soft power in Ukraine.

Hence, it was necessary to enquire how 'hegemonic' Moscow's civilisational discourses are in Ukraine. Accordingly, surveys and focus groups were conducted in four Ukrainian cities in September-November 2011, with a view to gaining insight into audiences' negotiations of the target narratives, whose content was presented in chapter five. Both methods elicited attitudes towards the three elements relevant to soft power as highlighted by Joseph Nye: culture, values and foreign policy stance.

A considerable body of previous research has highlighted an East-West attitudinal cleavage in Ukraine regarding Russia and related political issues, which this thesis does not in principle dispute. Yet on more apparently politically neutral points, such as values issues, Ukrainians do share elements of a worldview, and indeed one that continues to have much in common with Russia. Hence it appears there are some grounds to speak of the continued existence of what might be considered a '*ruskii*' civilisational space.

Soft power – essentially the ability to wield ideological influence – rarely works in a vacuum. There are almost always existing and competing sources of influence. In Ukraine, the main competitors to Russian cultural-ideational influence are Western ideas and indigenous nationalist narratives. Given the concern with relative gains attributed to soft power by the conceptual framework of this study, it is useful to consider the negotiation of Russian discourses in interaction with those of the significant others, particularly the Western narratives, as these are in any case referred to in the stimulus materials. Given that a certain facet of Russia's sovereign democracy idea doubts the ability of smaller states to be truly independent of great power blocs, the extent to which Ukrainians consider themselves different from Europeans or Westerners seems, by default, to cluster them with Russia.

In essence, the reception research sought to elicit insights into the extent to which Ukrainian students identified with (i) the notion of the Russkiy Mir (ii) Orthodox traditional values as opposed to Western ones (iii) the foreign policy positions articulated by the Russian president. The extent to which the ideas expressed were seen as attractive and shaped the participants responses is seen as an indicator of soft power. While the focus groups contextualised responses and allowed core themes to be elicited, the survey produced a quantified perspective permitting comparison between the cities.

The resonance of the ideas propagated by Russia's soft power agencies may be discerned not only from the way in which participants responded positively and affirmatively to the stimulus material, for instance by repeating its arguments. The highest level of soft power influence may be observed in the way that some individuals went beyond plain statements of agreement, beyond repetition or paraphrasing of the ideas presented, to 'filling in the gaps': statements reflecting what may have been hinted at, but remained unsaid in the stimulus clip, drawing thus on wells of collective knowledge. These unsaid ideas may constitute the fringes of the discourse, elements that are not officially sanctioned, but reflect shared assumptions. These ideas flow from what is said, resulting from what the soft power agent may generally assume to be common knowledge among the target audience because of the tone and content of the communication history.

Based on the survey findings, Russia is argued to have soft power in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kyiv, although in declining magnitude; to the extent that it is more marginal in Kyiv. These findings were reflected in the focus groups, although the participants in the L'viv group with familial ties to Russia also expressed themselves in ways that indicated a more positive reception.

The focus groups showed how some participants wholeheartedly accepted and embraced the message proposed by the stimulus materials to the extent that it appeared to correspond to their 'common sense' outlook on the world. Yet, relative to the survey findings, participants more frequently approached the stimulus material from a critical perspective, especially in Kyiv and in the Galician group in L'viv. Their reasoning for this scepticism more often than not drew on certain negatively-weighted narratives of 'what Russia is like'. These elements appear equally to have coalesced into a stable discourse, a body of common sense knowledge on this topic. It appeared difficult for a good number of individuals to seriously entertain the possibility that the communication could have some merit; they filtered the message out for dismissal *a priori* due to the associations with the Russian Federation.

Thus, it is suggested that while Russia does have potentially powerful soft power resources, realisation is hindered by the widespread circulation of oppositional discourses that cast Russian initiatives by default in the light of a threat and thereby subtract from positive narratives. However, while there are certainly grounds for such perceptions, it is not simply the case that these narratives objectively reflect unattractive realities. Rather, such discourses are partly due to a process of constructing such realities as unattractive by oppositional actors.

7.2. Overall Picture of Russian Soft Power in Four Cities of Ukraine

This sections that follow present the empirical findings of the empirical research in Ukraine. The survey and focus group guide and stimulus materials employed to elicit this data may be found in the appendices.

The quantitative findings presented in the table below indicate that Russia may be seen to have soft power in three out of the four case study cities, since the average Russian soft power score of respondents from Kyiv, Kharkiv and Donets'k totals more than three; the score deemed to indicate a level of attraction and agenda-setting ability. Admittedly, the Kyiv city average barely exceeds this threshold, and the standard deviation is significantly higher than in the other cities, suggesting greater variance in attitudes there. By contrast, L'viv has the lowest standard deviation, an indicator of the lowest average variance from the average score, which suggests a greater level of uniformity in the generally more negative verdict on Russian soft power messages among L'vivians. In Kharkiv, the average overall Russian soft power score rests mid-way between the scores of Donets'k and Kyiv; with scores on individual questions sometimes sharing the middle-ground with Kyiv and sometimes verging towards a pole closer to Donets'k.

Table 7: Mean Overall Russian Soft Power Score

City	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Kyiv	100	3.08	0.64
L'viv	101	2.83	0.51
Donets'k	127	3.58	0.54
Kharkiv	100	3.32	0.55

Note:

Excludes cases in which individuals gave no answer at all for a whole section.

Looking at the table below, we may observe that the relative differences in overall average Russian soft power score are reflected in the percentages of respondents whose answers bracket them in the positive category. In L'viv only 34 per cent of respondents expressed an overall positive attitude to the Russian soft power messages polled in the survey. This figure rises to 59 per cent and 65 per cent in Kyiv and Kharkiv respectively, and is highest in Donetsk, where 82 per cent indicated a generally positive overall response to Russian soft power messages.

Examining the distribution of the overall Russian soft power score data, it is clear that the great majority of responses fall into the two middle quartiles, with an average of 53 per cent of respondents falling under the middle quartile (2.5-3.49) across the four cities. Only 7 per cent in L'viv indicate a very negative overall response (<2), in comparison with 4 per cent in Donetsk. 21 per cent of Donetsk respondents indicate a very positive response (≥ 4) to Russian soft power messages while only a single respondent answered so positively in L'viv, with Kharkiv and Kyiv returning mid-range scores.

The sections that follow will explore the quantitative and qualitative fieldwork findings in more detail.

Table 8: Individuals' mean Overall Russian Soft Power Score grouped by percentage

City	Soft power score grouped									
	No	Yes	1-1.49	1.5-1.99	2-2.49	2.5-2.99	3-3.49	3.5-3.99	4-4.49	4.5-5
L'viv	67	34	0	7	19	41	23	10	1	0
Kyiv	41	59	3	2	14	22	28	27	4	0
Kharkiv	35	65	0	0	4	31	32	21	8	4
Donets'k	19	82	2	2	6	9	25	36	19	2

Note:

Category boundaries rounded to two decimal places.

Due to rounding, percentage scores in some cities may not add up to 100.

7.3. Presentation of the Fieldwork Findings for the Cultural Strand

This sub-chapter presents the survey and focus group findings concerning the reception of the culture-related aspects of Russia's projected soft power discourse.

It needs to be recognised that for many citizens of Ukraine, 'Russian' culture is indigenous; either because their ancestors adopted the Russian language at some point, or because they migrated from Russia, not to mention the history of shared statehood of varying durations. Furthermore, the cultures are in any case rather close, sharing as they do centuries of interaction in their recent past. As such, the presence of large numbers of Russophiles or at least Russian-speakers is not necessarily evidence of the vitality of contemporary Russian soft power in Ukraine, but a legacy gifted from the previous era.

Nevertheless, while cultural models may seem ingrained to the point of appearing an essential feature, culture is not static and future developments in Ukraine may prove to reveal its profound undecideability and arbitrariness. For instance, a significant number of formerly Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens living in Kyiv appear to have switched to Ukrainian as their language of preference and with it often embraced a more 'Ukrainian'

worldview, and all that this implies in terms of the relationship with Russia.²⁰⁵ Consequently, at this moment in time, the intent of Russian soft power in Ukraine must be not so much encouraging familiarisation with Russian language and culture – although in Western Ukraine some of the current young generation are indeed growing up without learning Russian – but rather with stemming the shift towards a more ‘nationally-oriented’ Ukrainian worldview and the tide of likely political consequences of such a trend. This should, it is argued, occur through a re-articulation of a civilisational discourse.

In fact, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, with its limited budget and profile, can have only a relatively small part to play in this process. However, as a source of information, it provides a direct insight into the quasi-official position on questions of culture. Furthermore, it serves as a focal point for the elicitation of opinions on ‘Russian’ [*ruskii*, of *Rus’*, and *rossiiskii*] culture, the Russian Federation as a state and the relations between the two.

The stimulus clip for this section was a promotional clip from the website of the Russkiy Mir Foundation,²⁰⁶ which presents the organisation’s establishment, aims and activities in support of Russian language and culture across the world. Moreover, the clip also presents the foundation’s ideational orientation. While the discussion also elicited

²⁰⁵ In Kyiv, some Russian-speaking students from Eastern and Southern Ukraine had started to speak Ukrainian upon arriving in Kyiv. This topic was explored in greater depth in an interview with Oleg Yatsenko, conducted in Kyiv in January 2010. Yatsenko described himself as a ‘typical Russian speaker born in Kyiv’, whose grandfather was ‘a pillar of the Soviet regime, an NKVD officer’. As part of the Kyiv elite, it is apparent that following perestroika, a shift in consciousness occurred in his family. Where ‘only some very remote relatives who were from the village were, I thought, on a lower stage of development, they were speaking Ukrainian, or some kind of language I couldn’t understand,’ following independence, ‘everything changed [...] and the same thing was with the majority of Kyiv people, all of them spoke Russian, they’ve never heard Ukrainian, but when this transformation came, we felt ourselves Ukrainian, despite [the fact that]my mother is pure Russian.’

²⁰⁶ The stimulus clip is available from the Russian version of the Russkiy Mir Foundation website: <http://ruskiymir.ether.tv/> From the options available, select ‘Выбор программы’ from the menu on the top, then open ‘А. ФОНД’ from the menu that opens on the side, then choose ‘Ролики о Фонде’ and then choose ‘Презентация Фонда Русский мир’ from the submenus that open. The clip is transcribed in the appendices.

opinions concerning the foundation and its activities, this write-up will focus mainly on the insights provided into the wider theme: the participants' relationships to a wider '*ruskii*' cultural sphere.

Table 9: Mean Russian Soft Power Score (Cultural Strand) by city

City	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
L'viv	101	2.40	0.69
Kyiv	100	2.99	0.77
Kharkiv	100	3.58	0.63
Donets'k	130	3.80	0.75

When it comes to cultural issues, attitudes are more polarised. Russia does not have soft power on a cultural level for 88 per cent of respondents in L'viv, while more than a third indicated a very negative attitude. In Kyiv, a more balanced picture emerges, with 49 per cent expressing views allowing them to be counted under the Russian cultural soft power umbrella, with 85 per cent of respondents falling into the two central quartiles (a score of 2.5-3.49 for this section). Strong support for Russian cultural soft power is observed in Kharkiv and Donets'k, where 84 per cent expressed views affirming the salience of Russian soft power (≥ 3), while 20 per cent and 38 per cent indicated very positive views (≥ 4) respectively. In all cities the standard deviation for the cultural strand is higher than for the overall average, hinting at greater variance of views on this topic.

Table 10: Individuals' mean Russian Soft Power Score (Cultural Strand) grouped by percentage

City	No	Yes	1-1.49	1.5-1.99	2-2.49	2.5-2.99	3-3.49	3.5-3.99	4-4.49	4.5-5
L'viv	88	13	8	26	31	23	3	9	1	0
Kyiv	51	49	5	5	19	22	22	22	4	1
Kharkiv	16	84	0	1	3	12	32	32	12	8
Donets'k	15	84	0	4	3	8	10	36	27	11

Note: Category boundaries rounded to two decimal places. Due to rounding, percentage scores in some cities may not add up to 100.

Let us look firstly at the language issue, which, as argued previously, is a key marker of soft power as well as a predictor of its future viability. While in L'viv more than 80 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement 'Russian is my preferred language of interethnic communication' over two-thirds agreed in both Donets'k and Kharkiv, while there was a fairly even balance between supporters and opponents of this statement in Kyiv. In Donets'k and Kharkiv, 20 per cent expressed neutrality towards this statement, perhaps suggesting openness to Ukrainian.

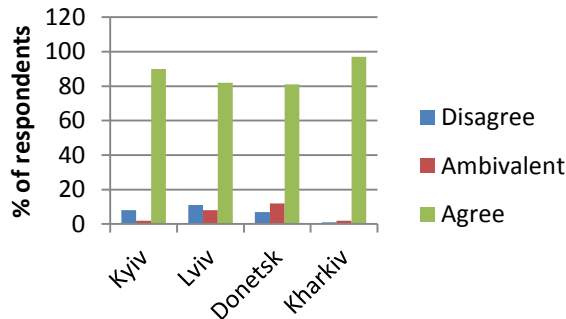


Nevertheless, when asked about the significance of a mastery of Russian, Ukrainian and English for their career prospects, a slightly more nuanced picture emerged. Over 60 per

cent of respondents in Kyiv and Kharkiv declared the importance of fluency in Russian for their careers, slightly exceeding the number in Donetsk, where it is possible the question was misunderstood by some as the city is almost entirely Russian-speaking. Less than one third agreed with the statement in L'viv. Correspondingly, Ukrainian language enjoyed strong support across the country with the exception of Donetsk where only 40 per cent affirmed the importance of the national language for their future. Most interestingly, however, is the level of importance accorded to English which exceeded 80 per cent in all cities, reaching 97 per cent in Kharkiv. Whereas mastery of Russian is taken for granted in Eastern Ukraine, knowledge of English is seen to add a plus, differentiating an individual as a strong candidate on the employment marketplace.



Chart 7: Responses to the statement 'fluent knowledge of English language will be crucial for my career' by city



Furthermore, in spite of the sporadic complaints about discrimination against the Russian language in Ukraine on the part of the RF and reproduced by the media, it seems that they have not succeeded in framing the debate on this topic in Ukraine, since even in Kharkiv and Donetsk only 33 and 25 per cent of respondents respectively expressed support for the statement.²⁰⁷ This is not to say that concrete steps which might over time objectively weaken the position of Russian in society have not been taken, but only that such measures have not been subjectively interpreted as discrimination on a broad scale.

Aleksey for instance asserts the contrary, that it is Ukrainian that is squeezed:

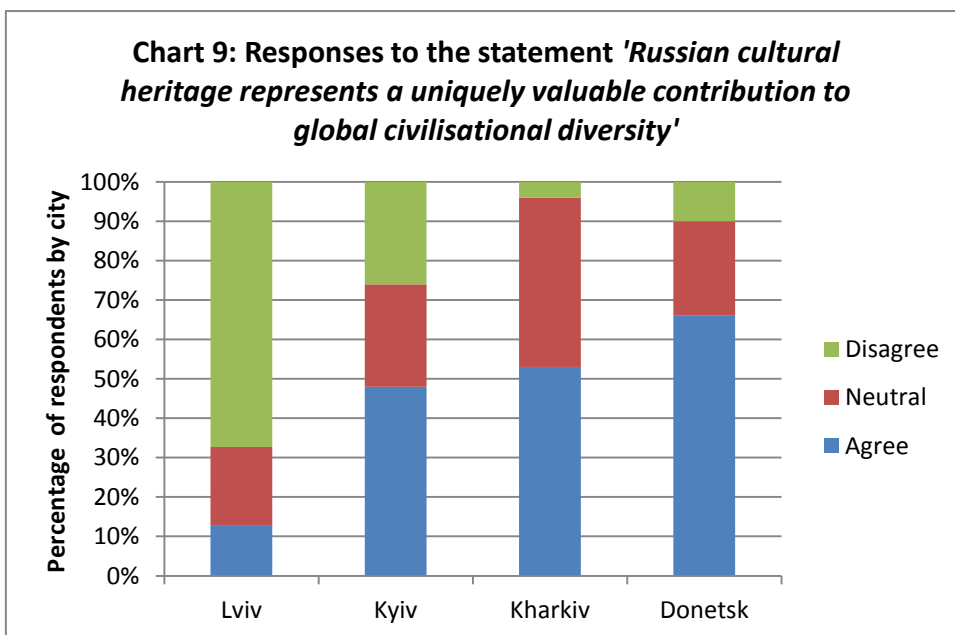
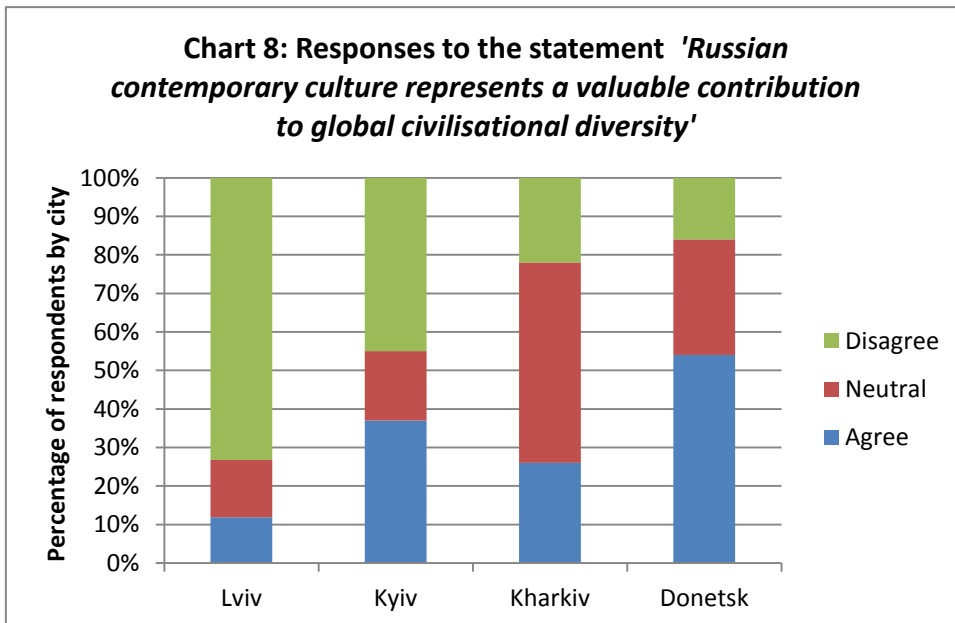
Again we are Ukrainians, we're an independent people. Russian is in no way infringed upon in Ukraine, even the opposite; rather it's possible to observe some infringements against the Ukrainian language. (Aleksey, Russian speaker, Kyiv 2)

Furthermore, while 51 per cent of Donetsk respondents and 53 per cent in Kharkiv²⁰⁸ supported making Russian the second official language, the fact that only one single person mentioned this issue in the entire course of the focus groups, suggests it is not an

²⁰⁷ This figure falls to 10% in Lviv and 18% in Kyiv.

²⁰⁸ This figure dropped to 2% in Lviv and 15% in Kyiv.

issue of foremost significance in people’s minds; a fact which is supported by other studies too.



When it comes to Russia’s civilisational radiance, upon comparison of the two charts above, we see that contemporary Russian culture is perceived significantly worse than Russia’s historical cultural heritage. The focus groups suggested that Russian literary greats of the past continue to be enjoyed, but when it comes to contemporary artists,

then indigenous Ukrainians are preferred. For Lara, this seemed to be something of a forward-looking patriotic choice.

I also really love Russian literature; my favourite writer, Dostoevsky, is a Russian and I really love Turgenev. But in general I read contemporary Ukrainian literature. The last things I read were by Zabruzhko and Shlyapa. That's why we should create our own [Ukrainian] competitive idea. That's it. So whatever gives us something useful, as the girls said, we just take for ourselves. As Shevchenko said, 'don't shun your own' and learn from the foreign, to paraphrase it somewhat. That's how it works. (Lara, Ukrainian speaker, Kyiv 1)

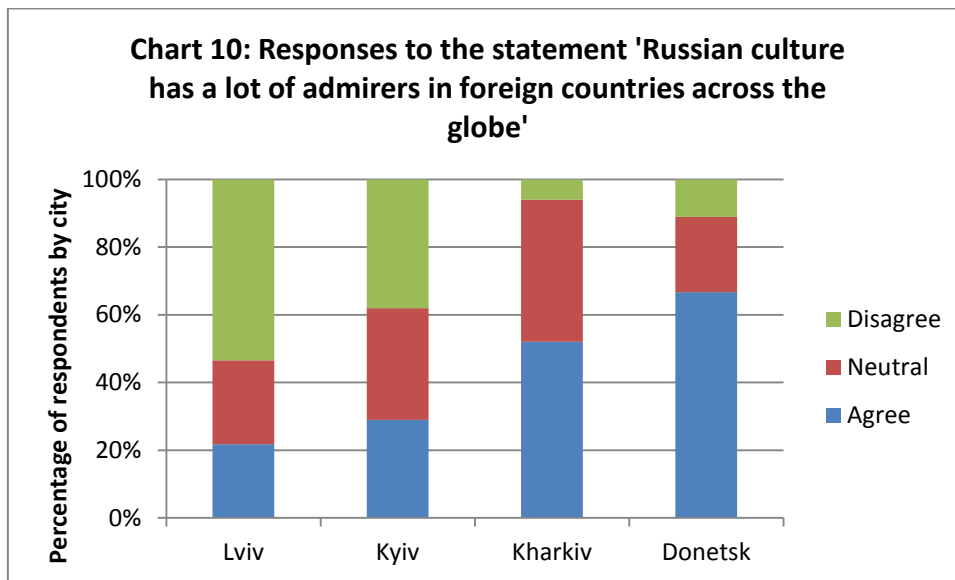
This inequality seems to be a motivating factor for many of those who advocate for Ukraine and its culture, and there is a recurrent sense of needing to support 'our own'. Indeed, despite the overall positive connotations associated with Russian culture itself, the impression gleaned from even some Russophone Ukrainians was that enthusiasm for things Russian has an aura of the past about it. Natasha explains,

It's true, there are people [for whom the work of the Russkiy Mir Foundation will be interesting]. For example, my grandfather celebrates the New Year at 23.00, by Moscow time. Here it isn't 0.00, it's 23.00. He has a separate television, we have a separate one. That's how we mark the New Year. [Laughter] We do have people who feel the culture, those people who lived in the USSR. Probably they're middle-aged and more than 50. But less than 50... I don't they are too interested in the Russian language. They exist, but not en masse. Only those people who remember Stalin, Khrushchev, they want to return to that time. That's why it's interesting for them. They dream, 'if only Stalin was here in politics now!' That's what my grandmother says. (Natasha, Donet'sk 2)

Again, 'pro—Russian' sentiment is associated with the past and looking backwards nostalgically to a 'golden era' that doesn't exist as a reality in the minds of these young participants, and hence may be regarded somewhat ironically. Those holding such views seemed to be viewed with the affection afforded to those who can pose no threat.

Herein lies something of a problem for Russian efforts to nurture soft power particularly in Ukraine, since cultural prestige is an element of international leadership. This has been particularly significant for Russia where culture has formed the basis for a sense of moral superiority when standards of living lagged. Among my Ukrainian participants, however,

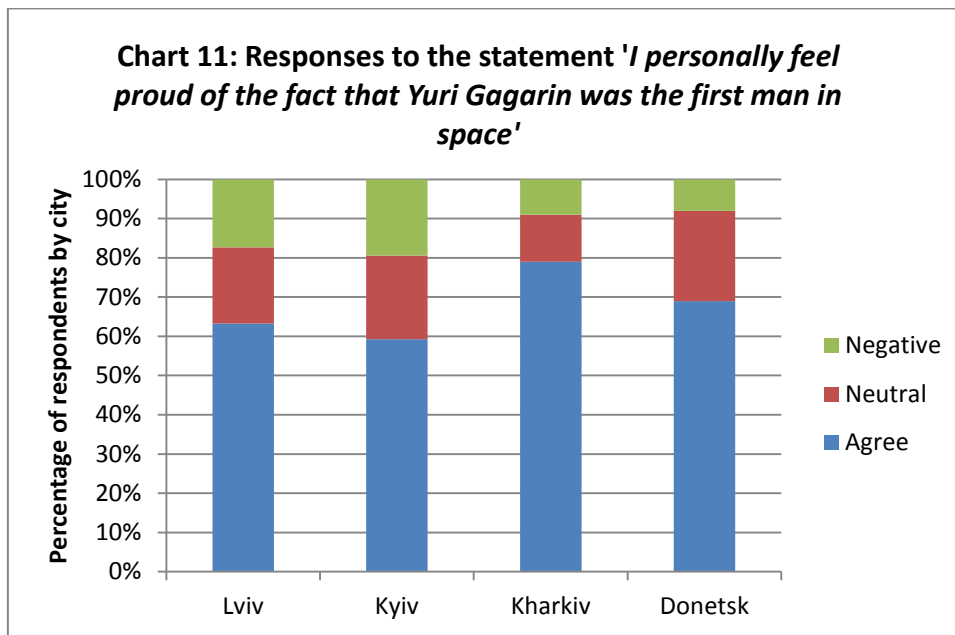
the perception of Russia's striving to be the best was framed in rather negative terms; perhaps unsurprisingly, as unequal competition, arrogance or simply unquestionable strength can easily evoke resistance, especially when not framed in soft power's legitimating discourses.



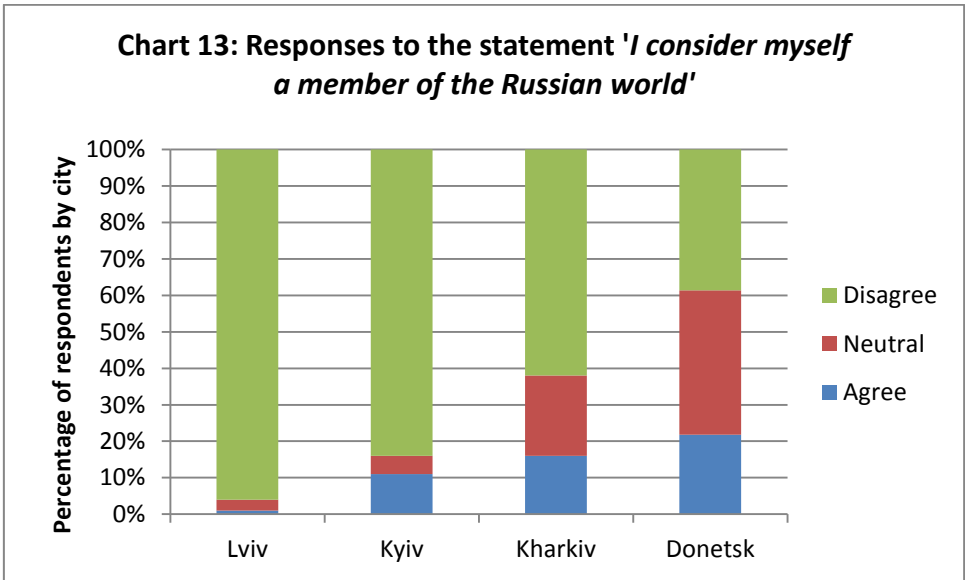
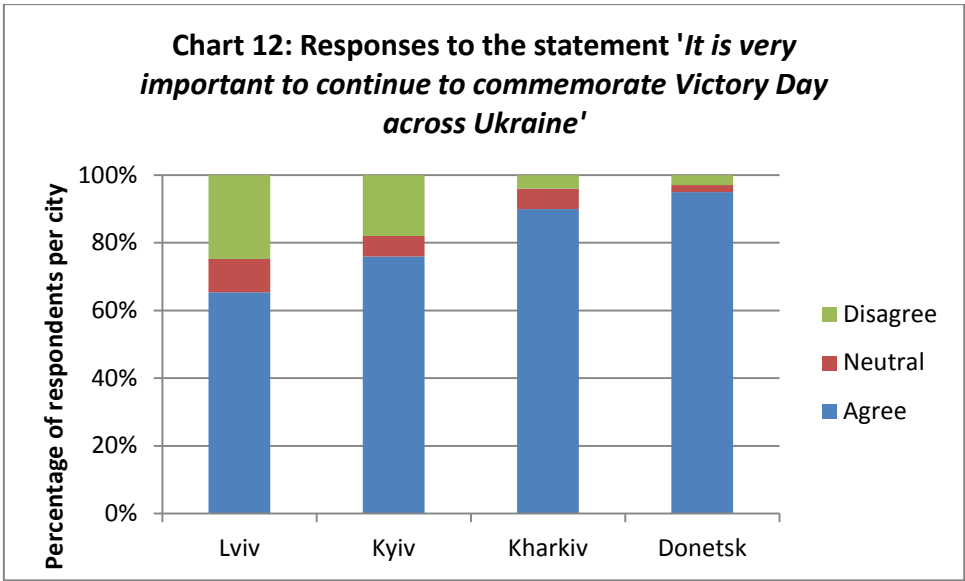
The Russkiy Mir website showcases the work of the foundation and in doing so, shows how Russian culture is relevant and attractive in the most diverse locations. Low levels of disagreement to the statement 'Russia has a lot of admirers in foreign countries across the globe' tend to suggest exposure to sources that perpetuate this idea, at least in the East.

While the figures are clearly divergent on prominent cultural-linguistic issues, reflecting the contrasting perceptions of historical realities across Ukraine that have (re-)emerged since independence, when it comes to questions relating to *certain, non-political* legacies of the Soviet period, greater consensus appears to exist. In L'viv, more than 60 per cent responded affirmatively to the statement 'I am personally proud of the fact that Yuri Gagarin was the first man in space'; a relatively high approval rating for this city. Similarly,

in spite of the furore that surrounded the celebration of Victory Day in L'viv in 2011,²⁰⁹ two-thirds of the respondents from this city affirmed that it continues to be important to celebrate Victory Day across Ukraine, although this figure rises to approximately 95 per cent in Donetsk.

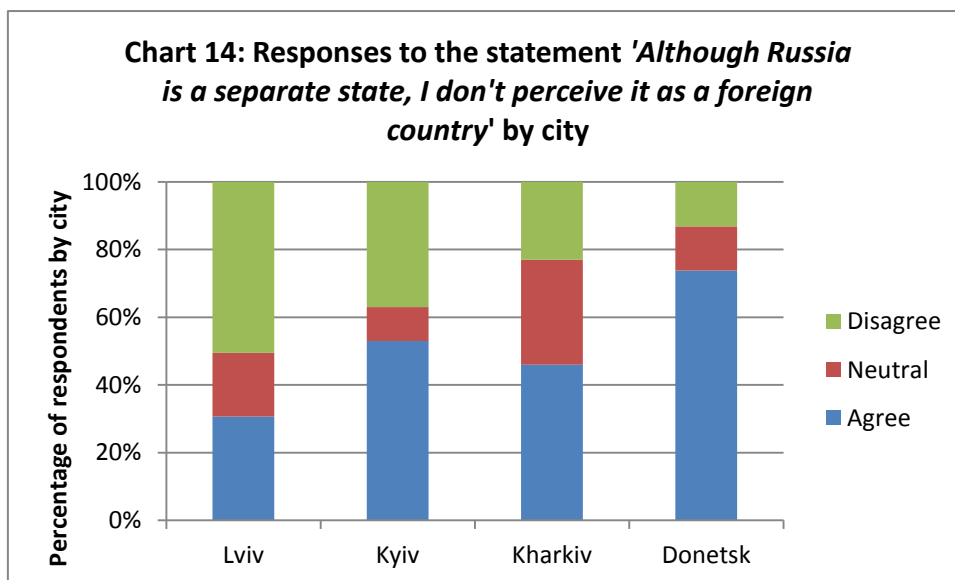


²⁰⁹ The Verkhovna Rada passed a law allowing the Red Army banner to be flown on Victory Day, along with the Ukrainian national flag. This decision was later reversed, but not before it sparked controversy, with the L'viv local council responding by stating that it would not celebrate Victory Day at all and banning marches on that day. Critics argue this step is anti-constitutional as it contradicts a federal law stating that Victory Day is to be celebrated across Ukraine (2011). Prism of history – Ukrainian city split over WWII commemoration. RT: <http://rt.com/news/victory-day-lvov-nationalism/> (accessed 5th January 2013). 8th May. (2011). Ukrainian Court Bans Use Of Soviet Red Flag [Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty: http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-court-bans-use-of-soviet-flag/24238302.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-court-bans-use-of-soviet-flag/24238302.html) (accessed 5th January 2013). 17th June.



Judging by the responses above on whether the respondents consider themselves as members of the Russkiy Mir, it might be concluded that there is particularly low level of attraction in this sphere. However, it is also likely that this distancing is a result of unfamiliarity with the concept of 'Russkiy Mir'. Across Ukraine, 84 per cent of my respondents claimed not to have heard of the foundation. Furthermore, in the focus group discussions, participants expressed a low level of awareness of both the term and the eponymous foundation. Prior to viewing the stimulus clip, very few focus group participants were able to offer substantive comments on the foundation, although,

interestingly, those that did tended to be rather critical, perhaps suggesting that oppositionally-oriented media may have reported the centres' opening. Thus, it is unsurprising given this lack of familiarity that few survey respondents should have chosen to identify with the concept. Yet this belies the sense of cultural closeness between Ukrainians and Russian beyond this label. For instance, when faced with the statement 'although Russia is a separate state, I do not perceive it as a foreign country' considerable numbers of participants from Kyiv, Kharkiv and Donetsk gave an affirmative evaluation, and even in L'viv nearly a third shared this view.



Clearly, then there is still some sense of shared community still between Russians and Ukrainians, although this is not necessarily to the exclusion of nationally-rooted identification. Citizens of Ukraine and Russia find they have good mutual understanding, both linguistically and culturally. Indeed, towards the end of the focus group section on culture, the question of being a part of, or 'close' to the Russian World was put to the participants. On the whole, once more familiar with the concept, the proportion of participants identifying with the concept of the Russian World increased. Speaking

generally, among my participants, most Russian native speakers in L'viv, Kharkiv and Donets'k considered themselves to be part of the Russkiy Mir:

I consider myself [a part of the Russkiy Mir] because I speak Russian. If I spoke in Ukrainian, I'd feel myself to be a part of the Ukrainskiy Mir [with laughter]. But I'm a part of the Russkiy Mir, for me Russian is closer than Ukrainian. I consider myself a part of the Russkiy Mir. (Sergei, Donets'k 2)

The Orthodox Church is also what unites us. And the Russian language. That's why I consider myself a small part. [of it]. (Sasha(f), Donets'k 2)

While the Russian language seems to play an important part in this identification, it doesn't necessarily imply any further identity. Indeed, Olena for instance explicitly distances herself from the Russian language through use of the third person possessive pronoun:

I'm only a part of some Russkiy Mir in so far as I know their language and my grandfather came from Russia, that's it. (Olena, Donetsk 1)

Interestingly, participants did not necessarily consider belonging to the Russian World as a matter of free will. Taras, from the Galician group in L'viv, emerged as one of the most consistent and hardest critics of Russia, yet even he considers the 'Russian World' label applicable to himself:

I think that perhaps we are all to a certain degree included in this idea of the great Russian world, in so far as we use Russian language literature, Russian language music, TV... and even the same site 'Vkontakte'. Everyone to a greater or less extent is included in this idea, even in spite of our will, even perhaps without realising it. (Taras, Galician Ukrainian-speaker, L'viv 2)

While Taras accepts the term, in depicting Russian influence as ubiquitous and of subconscious character, he effectively emphasises its scale and potency, as if to create a straw man as a focal point of resistance. The themes of being incorporated against one's will and an almost paranoid sensitivity to the brainwashing of less-knowing citizens was a recurring theme.

Other resisted or questioned the term 'Russkiy Mir' as being unfamiliar, but their articulations essentially draw upon the notion of some level of pre-existing affinity or commonality which is essentially what is promoted by the Russkiy Mir Foundation.

As for whether I consider myself a member of the Russkiy Mir, well, because I didn't know about this organisation before, of course, I can't answer affirmatively. But as for whether I consider myself a member of some kind of Russian community, well, I am a bearer of the Russian language and it binds me to it. But at the same time, I'm a citizen of Ukraine. (Olya, Donetsk 1)

Despite the at times ambivalent attitude expressed towards the Ukrainian language among monolingual Russian speakers, some participants pre-emptively resisted the notion that there could be a contradiction between loyal citizenship of Ukraine and belonging to a Russian cultural 'community'. For Irina, use of the Russian language is an issue of practicality, rather than emotional connection:

I was born in Ukraine, so I feel somewhat part of the culture, and on the other hand I don't esteem the Russian language as a part of the soul, but rather just as a tool that I use. (Katja, Russian background, Kharkiv 1)

In sum, belonging to a kind of 'Russian world' or community seems to be defined by kinship, religious affiliation and especially language; factors that are in a sense given as historical legacies, aside from current state activity. However, how Ukraine's young people perceive these issues, and how their life choices are informed by them, is something that may be affected by Russian soft power activity.

While it is not possible to make quantitative generalisations on the basis of focus group data, the findings do reveal certain tendencies among the participants. While a significant proportion of the participants considered themselves to belong to some kind of wider 'Russkiy Mir' community, what that meant to them differed greatly. Based on the focus groups with the higher education students from across Ukraine, four broad approaches to belonging to the Russkiy Mir could be discerned.

1. Russkiy Mir as the historically rooted indivisible cultural, linguistic, spiritual zone.
2. Russkiy Mir as expressing an inbetweenness, Russian but not Russia and rooted to Ukrainian territory
3. Russkiy Mir as a post-colonial condition from which Ukrainians should be liberated
4. Rejection of belonging to the Russkiy Mir

These will now be explored in greater depth.

7.3.1. Russkiy Mir as a historically rooted, indivisible cultural, linguistic, spiritual zone.

The sense of the 'Russkiy Mir' as a historically rooted indivisible cultural, linguistic, religious zone perhaps corresponds most closely to an embodiment of this notion as its proponents would like to see it, narrowly defined. Thus, in the case of this densest identification with the Russkiy Mir, the borders between Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are considered vague at best, and in some cases senseless. The referent space of identity construction is less specifically Ukraine or Russia, but the wider space associated with 'Rus'; the medieval polity to which all three modern East Slavic states trace their ancestry.

A student in Kharkiv, Alena, for example, when asked about her identity, replied:

In principle, I don't know, let's say, for instance, Slavs are closer: Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. It seems to me there is some sort of distinction – but why? Just if we speak about culture, and not only language, then it seems to me that our history is very closely connected and we shouldn't just be divided up; "those are Russians, those are Ukrainians, and those ones Belarussians". We are very closely integrated with one another in terms of history, culture and politics. If they are talking about the period of the USSR,

are they also talking about Russia? Or, let's say, the time of Kievan Rus – is that Russia or not? Well, it's not clear. I think things shouldn't be clearly divided. I would rather not say Russian, but perhaps Slavic. (Alena, Ukrainian-background, Kharkiv 2)

Alena expresses the slight mystification as to why these 'fraternal peoples' have been divided into different states. Clearly, she draws on a different vision of reality from that promoted by Ukrainian nation-builders, and overall her responses in the focus groups have tended to be among the most 'on discourse'. Nevertheless, she doesn't identify as 'Russian' as such, but rather favours the more inclusive term 'Slavic' to describe her identity orientation.

Even with this concept of identity that seems more 'on message' from the point of view of Russian soft power, there was no indication that these individuals might behave as 'pro-Russian fifth-columnists' or were hostile towards Ukrainian statehood. Among my participants, only one individual suggested their identification was rather with specifically Russia instead of Ukraine, and even this was somewhat tentative.

7.3.2. Russkiy Mir as a Liminal Identity

For some participants, the sense of belonging to the Russkiy Mir was allied with a sense of living in a space that was neither fully Ukrainian, nor Russian. Here, it is accepted that Ukraine and Russia exist as formally separate entities, but also that people live in this space in ways that do not correspond with the borders. As such, Eastern Ukraine may be seen to represent a liminal space, a point of reference of a hybrid identity that finds its inspiration in both Ukrainian statehood and Russia, but is something distinctly other to both of them.

Asked how she identified herself, this Russian-speaking student from Kharkiv replied:

Well, I would say that I consider myself a citizen of Kharkiv or even Eastern Ukraine. Certainly it's neither Ukraine or Russia, it's something liminal and vague. (Zheniya, Russian background, Kharkiv 1)

Alyona elaborates on the same question, noting how the essential facts of her family background meet with a civic loyalty to Ukraine, resulting in a dual identity.

My parents are also Russians, and, of course, Russian culture is very close to me, but I am a citizen of Ukraine and I love Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian people and Western Ukraine, so I think, 50-50. (Alyona, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

Likewise Anna, who despite some childhood familiarity with Ukrainian traditions, nevertheless feels closest to her native language community; a fact which feeds into this sense of a liminal identity.

I also see myself as a resident of Kharkiv and also partly Ukrainian and partly Russian, because, for instance, my grandmother speaks Ukrainian and my childhood was connected with such bearers of Ukrainian traditions, and for me it is close to a certain degree, but on the other hand there's the literature and the fact that I speak Russian – this makes me closer to Russian, so there's something dual here. (Anna, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

Anna and Alyona seem very at ease with Ukrainian traditions alongside their Russian native language, expressing no desire for further Ukrainianisation or to make the shift to Ukrainian native language. Yet, whereas for Alyona and Anna the sense of identification is dual in nature, with a sense of identifying with both Russian and Ukrainian culture, for Zheniya, local identification has a greater hybrid character. While the two girls cited above both seem at ease with Ukrainian traditions and language. In Zheniya's case, the impression is one of distancing from 'that' Ukraine; the Ukraine of the West, while her previous comments indicate she doesn't consider herself as belonging to Russia.

As for the use of Russian language, for instance, Russian language and Russian people are much closer to me than those nationalists and Ukrainian speakers from Western Ukraine.

As for communicating with Russians and with Ukrainians, I prefer speaking with Russians. (Zheniya(f), Ukrainian background, Kharkiv 1)

Milana expresses a similar sentiment, giving a feeling of non-commonality with and distance from Ukrainian speakers. Again certain negative connotations are expressed; whereas for Zheniya it was comparative distancing from 'nationalists', Milana expresses the feeling of difference in terms of her non-comprehension of Ukrainian speakers.

I absolutely agree with Zheniya that Eastern Ukraine, it's not Ukraine and it's not Russia, but something else. But as for whether I consider myself Russian – I consider myself half Russian and half Ukrainian, but living in Ukraine. And I agree with her that it's much more agreeable to speak with people who speak Russian; and well, when people come from Western Ukrainian and start talking in Ukrainian, I sometimes don't even understand them. (Milana, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

In Donetsk a slightly different picture sometimes prevailed. Here, too, participants often expressed identification with their city or region, but expressions of feeling at one with Ukrainian cultural tradition were rather absent in their testimonies. Participants gave the impression of being cut off from feeling more Ukrainian due to their lack of confidence in speaking the language and a lack of exposure to Ukrainian tradition,

It's very hard for us to learn the language because in Donetsk there are a minimum of Ukrainian-speaking people, who could urge the others to speak Ukrainian. We need a kind of critical mass, like in Kyiv, where half can speak Ukrainian when they choose to. (Pyotr, Donetsk 2)

I consider myself a citizen of Donetsk. I can't make myself say 'citizen of Ukraine' because I don't even speak Ukrainian. (Misha, Donetsk 2)

We've been living in Ukraine since Independence Day only 20 years ago, we've not been subject to some kind of Ukrainian influence so that we feel state power [*derzhavnist'*]. We learnt the history of Kievan Rus, we understood that all these peoples lived together. (Oleg, Donetsk 2)

Nevertheless, participants often pointed to their citizenship of Ukraine to indicate their loyalty and belonging here and not elsewhere, despite being a Russian speaker.

Indeed, such dual identities were most commonly expressed in the East of Ukraine, but a sense of liminality was also expressed by members of the Russian minority in L'viv,

I would say [I feel partially a member of the Ukrainian world], but 60-40, more to Russian. My father is also Russian, at some point I myself lived in Novosibirsk for half a year. My mum speaks Ukrainian and my father, Russian, but somehow Russian is generally closer to me 'by spirit'. I don't know why. (Vlad, Mixed background, L'viv 1)

Parallel to the issue of affinity with the Russkiy Mir, other spatial identities also emerged in the discussion. In addition to the aforementioned city or regional identities, the notion of a supranational or transnational identity was popular among the participants from Eastern Ukraine in particular, perhaps as a way of circumventing the awkwardness of this hybrid identity space. Specifically, the notion of 'citizen of the world' was a popular identity designation. On one hand, this conceptualisation of identity has strong precedents in the more sovietised East, being reminiscent of the 'homo sovieticus'.²¹⁰ Expressions of such cosmopolitan identities did not seem to specifically indicate the attachment of these participants to Russia, although they often coincided with more favourable reception of the soft power discourses. The way in which the notion of the borderless citizen has been survived beyond Socialist internationalism, suggests that independent Ukraine has not yet won full emotional loyalty. Simultaneously, progressive sounding and positive-weighted (except, perhaps, in the eyes of a Ukrainian nationalist), a de-territorialised, cosmopolitan identity²¹¹ seems convenient, spacious and comfortable. Transcending parochial borders, such an identity opens a window to the world. It skips around the folksiness attached to Ukrainianess by nationalists and patriots, which must seem quite foreign to urban dwellers in the industrial heartlands whose collective

²¹⁰ (2005). Thorny legacy of 'Soviet Man'. BBC: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4529073.stm> (accessed 5th January 2013). 9 May.

²¹¹ However, the notion of 'citizen of the world' shouldn't necessarily be automatically equated with Western cosmopolitanism, as the following sections suggest that a sense of shared liberal morality is not to be taken for granted.

memory linking back to the rural past has been severed. Simultaneously, it avoids 'inappropriate' links to Russia and the negative connotations of 'sovok'. Perhaps Kharkiv, even more so than Donetsk, is conducive to such a hybridisation of identities, as there both Ukrainian and Russian are both widely spoken. Yet, some Russophones in Kharkiv and Donetsk expressed a certain sense of Ukrainophone Ukrainians as the 'other'. The fact that even members of this post-Soviet generation mentioned that they find communicating with West Ukrainians less comfortable than with Russians, suggests that maybe this 'wall in the heads' isn't going to change soon.

In this section we explored the views of those whose identities are rooted to the territory of Ukraine, but do not consider themselves exclusively Ukrainian if this is defined by language, in the sense they are often content to continue speaking Russian and this forms a part of their identity. These individuals appear content to be part of the wider cultural community that has been labelled the 'Russian World' and have expressed a sense of sharing the 'Russian soul'. This by no means suggests that these individuals are fully under the overall Russian soft power umbrella – indeed, many such participants in this study responded quite critically to the second and third strands – but it is clear that '*ruskii*' culture maintains its attraction.

7.3.3. Russian World as a post-colonial condition

In this approach, belonging to the Russian World was interpreted as an inherited characteristic, but one that was no longer appropriate to independent Ukraine. Such individuals – regardless of their ethnic background – tended to have a clear sense of belonging to Ukraine and apparently desire to support that distinct national consciousness and build upon that tradition.

I believe that we are a part of the “Russian world”. I myself am Russian by nationality that’s why I see myself as a part of the “Russian world”. But I think that here in Ukraine there should be Ukrainianisation, we should try to support our native language more than Russian. (Masha, Donetsk 2)

Many participants, despite the question having been posed to individuals in terms of whether they personally identify with the Russian World, spontaneously responded with reflections on a collective cultural orientation.

I don’t agree [with being part of the Russkiy Mir]. Because we are already TOO MUCH a part of the Russian World. That was then, 19-20 years ago. But now it’s Ukraine – we should learn Ukrainian more [...] At least in this part of Ukraine, in the Donbas. My view is that we should move away more, promote our culture, and not copy or just accept what Putin foists upon us. It’s nothing to do with him. (Misha, Donetsk 2)

In the both preceding citations, the participants highlight their associations with the Russkiy Mir not only as something that ‘we’ – presumably residents of Eastern Ukraine – are part of, but something that should be moved away from. In this view, being part of the Russian World is perceived as an inherited legacy of the past that somehow does not sit quite comfortably with an independent and sovereign Ukraine. There is the feeling that more should be done to promote Ukrainian language and tradition.

- In so far as we speak of the ‘Russkiy Mir’ as a propaganda shell then I’m also a part of it. For me,... Russian language is native, I grew up in a Russian-speaking region, in the ‘Odeschchina’²¹² so I became a part of that world at birth, but..... I like speaking Ukrainian and I do so.
- So, your own ... decision?
- Yes, it’s my own decision, as an exit from this ‘Russkiy Mir’.
(Dima, Ukrainian-speaker by preference, Kyiv 1)

Such views don’t exist solely in the more Ukrainianised regions. Mikhail from Donetsk expressed a similar sentiment, albeit unrealised:

In so far as I’m just a speaker of Russian, but I would happily... I, crudely put, dream of the day when the community I live in speaks its native language, that is to say, native for me is Ukrainian anyway. (Mikhail, Donetsk 1)

²¹² Odesa region.

In Donets'k, one got the impression of individuals trapped in a Russian language zone, preventing them from feeling fully Ukrainian. Only one student in Donets'k expressed confidence in speaking Ukrainian, and she was rather proud of herself, as if it was rarity there. Certain comments seemed to suggest Ukrainian was not taken completely seriously. Yet this was in the minority. The lack of a critical mass of Ukrainophones in Donets'k is compounded by lack of opportunity: my interview with a Dean at DNTU revealed that the students at the university received only one term of Ukrainian language training.²¹³

7.3.4. Non-Inclusion in the Russkiy Mir

Having focused on those who related, one way or another, to the notion of belonging to a Russkiy Mir, it is useful to give voice to those who rejected this association and to explore their motivations. Among my participants, it was primarily those with some kind of innate connection to Russian culture that felt they were in some way part of the Russkiy Mir. The exceptions were those who described themselves as Russian native speakers in Kyiv, who, like most Ukrainian native speakers in L'viv, and the capital tended to distance themselves from the idea without further comment, as if not even really taking the notion seriously, so far was it from their normative conceptualisations. As one female student in Kyiv (group 1) put it: 'It's not close to me. I absolutely don't want it to be close to me'.

As we saw above, a significant number of those that did see themselves as part of the Russkiy Mir, perceived it as a collective membership, and often involuntary. Yet Rustam, an outspoken and critical member of the first group in Donets'k chose to see it as a subjective, by implication, individual matter. He acknowledges his connections to Russia,

²¹³ Interview with Daur Sergeevich Zuhba at Donets'k National Technical University in November 2011.

but because of his take on the subject, feels able to reject incorporation into the Russkiy Mir.

The idea isn't close [to me], and so I don't consider myself a part of the Russian world. [...] It's a very complicated question, connected with a subjective choice. I count myself as a Ukrainian because I was born in Ukraine, I'm a citizen of Ukraine, I have Ukrainian roots. But I also have a certain relationship to Russia because I have relatives from Russia and my mum is Russian. (Rustam, Donetsk 1)

A number of participants were unwilling to associate themselves with the Russkiy Mir due to the formulation itself, and its connotations with the Russian Federation:

- I think that the word '*ruskii*' itself comes from '*Rus*'. If you take it to mean that, then we are a part of the 'Russian World', but few people see it like that. I don't consider myself a part of the Russian ['*rossiiskiy*'] World.
- But the Russian ['*ruskii*'] World?
- Russian ['*ruski*']? Yes, but *Rus* isn't Russia. '*Ruskii*' but not '*rossiiskii*'. (Vasilisa, Ukrainian-speaker, Kyiv 1)

The suggestion by an interviewee in Moscow²¹⁴ that the Russkiy Mir Foundation was doomed as soon as it was named seems to have been borne out by the focus groups, with the involvement of Putin in this non-governmental organisation affirming suspicions of the political intentions of the foundations.

7.3.5. Concluding Remarks

The research shows that the many participants in this study felt a sense of affinity with the Russkiy Mir as a cultural, language and kinship community, although the degree to which this was accepted as a level of identity varied. Similarly varied was the level of acceptance of the need to embrace the markers of Ukrainian national identity, such as a sense of clearly delineated state borders, language and traditional culture. However, the participants often demonstrated resistance when the discussion turned to the Russian Federation's efforts to popularise Russian culture and language in Ukraine. While such

²¹⁴ Interview with A. Pionkovskiy in Moscow, June 2011.

cultural work was valued for its own intrinsic merits, the involvement of the Russian state cast an altogether less favourable light on these activities.

As such, it seems apparent that among this target demographic, various expressions of closeness to the 'Russkiy Mir' – even if not framed in such terms - is by no means necessarily synonymous with a stereotyped 'pro-Russian' attitude or uncritical identification with the broader palette of narratives considered here to be part of Russian soft power discourse.

The research provided insights into not only how participants articulate their affinity to the culture of the 'Russkiy Mir', but also the discourses they draw upon to contest the narratives proposed. Indeed, attitudes towards Russia's activities in this regard were conditioned by widespread counter narratives articulating a highly critical view on 'what Russia is like'. To the extent they are widely dispersed, such discourses serve well to inoculate many Ukrainians against Russian discourses of soft power by engaging a filter that allows Russian activity to be cast in the light of neo-imperialism or otherwise provoking of distrust. This will be explored further below.

7.4. Presentation of the Fieldwork Fielding for the Foreign Policy Strand

This sub-chapter presents the fieldwork findings of the research devoted to exploring Ukrainian attitudes towards Russia's foreign policy outlook. Examination of the mean scores of the individual participants reveals a familiar pattern. Once more the L'viv and Donetsk cases stand out as attitudinal poles, with both also having a lower standard deviation than the other two cities, suggesting again a greater homogeneity of opinion there. In L'viv, 62 per cent of respondents provided an overall negative evaluation of the

statements, with only 9 per cent giving a more positive overall average score than 3.5. Conversely, in Donetsk 77 per cent of respondents gave a positive overall evaluation, with only eight per cent returning a score lower than the middle quartile. In terms of the number of respondents giving an overall positive average score for this strand, there is little to differentiate the figures in Kyiv and Kharkiv; 50 per cent and forty seven per cent respectively, while the standard deviation were also comparable, at 0.75 and 0.77 each.

Table 11: Mean Russian Soft Power Score(Foreign Policy Strand) by city

City	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
L'viv	101	2.88	0.57
Kyiv	100	2.95	0.75
Kharkiv	100	3.12	0.77
Donetsk	133	3.50	0.64

Note: Cases with zero responses excluded

Table 12: Individuals' mean Russian Soft Power Score (foreign policy Strand) grouped by percentage

City	N	Distribution of scores by category									
		No		1-1.49		2-2.49		3-3.49		4-4.49	
L'viv	101	62	39	1	8	13	40	30	6	3	0
Kyiv	100	50	50	5	7	16	22	30	16	2	2
Kharkiv	100	53	47	0	4	24	25	17	19	5	6
Donetsk	132	23	77	0	1	7	15	32	27	12	6

Note: Results significant at 0.001, Pearson's Chi Square: 87.8

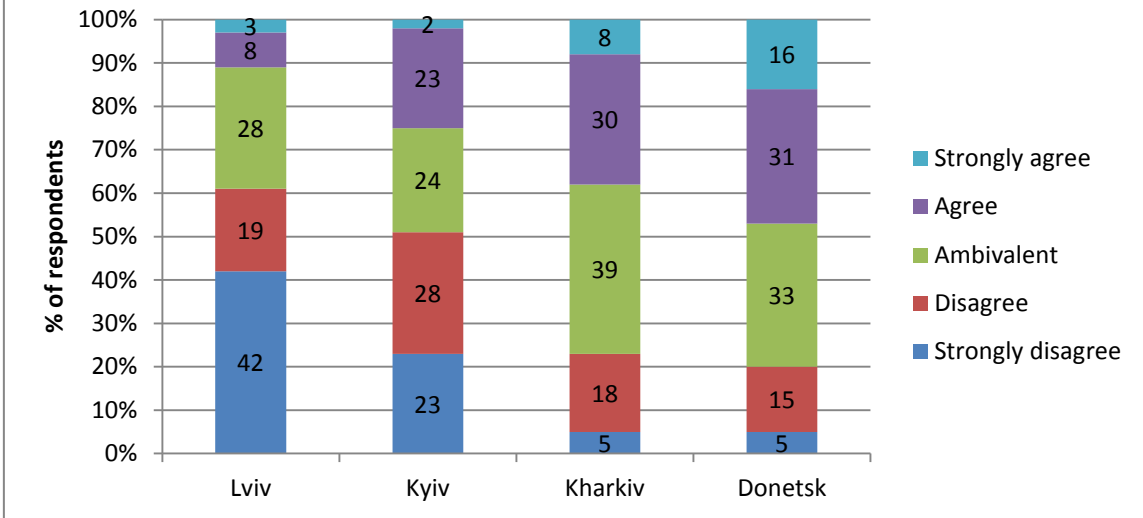
Category boundaries rounded to two decimal places. Due to rounding, percentage scores in some cities may not add up to 100.

Focus group participants were asked to respond to an audio-visual stimulus featuring an excerpt from Vladimir Putin's famous speech to the Munich International Security Conference in 2007. In the five-minute section concerned, the then President of Russia

pointedly highlights the issue of unipolarity, the dangers it poses to the world and as such a rather thinly veiled critique of the USA. In terms of the arguments advanced by Vladimir Putin, it may be said that by those who approached the speech in a relatively favourably disposed manner, the main analysis was largely found to be correct. Some individuals criticised the speech on various specific grounds (e.g. oil wars, Vlad), but by and large his argument was accepted as 'objective'. However, the clip did not arouse great enthusiasm, probably since the participants tended to have a rather cynical perspective on Putin's role in this context. Indeed, participants were in no hurry to rally round in support against the USA. Rare were the examples of focus group participants expressing any kind of glee in Putin's admonition or supporting a reinforcement of an 'us and them' cleavage. This was perhaps due to the fact that in the excerpt Putin was perceived to be simply 'adding water' [*lit' vody*]; padding his speech with words without offering new insights.

The survey findings suggest that approximately two thirds of the respondents feel that the world is indeed becoming more multipolar. Yet far from a majority of respondents were convinced that Russia deserves a more significant role in the global political leadership in this multipolar order. A mere 11 per cent agreed in L'viv, and while a third in even Donets'k pronounced themselves ambivalent on this question. Nevertheless, in Kharkiv and Donets'k, there was more support for this view with 38 per cent and 47 per cent expressing agreement respectively.

Chart 16: Responses to the statement 'Russia deserves a more significant role in the global political leadership' by city



The problem in this regard is likely to be a lack of trust in Russia. Even Mikhail who spoke in favour of Russian positions on a number of significant occasions is cynical in this regard:

Yes, so he says that unipolarity is bad, but still it's absolutely clear that he wouldn't mind if this unipolarity favoured Russia. (Mikhail, Donetsk 1)

While Vladimir Putin used his Munich speech as an opportunity to cast Russia in the light of a state that stands up against undemocratic developments in global affairs, relatively few respondents felt convinced that 'Russia plays an important role in the establishment of justice in international politics'.²¹⁵ Indeed, despite Russia speaking out relatively consistently against NATO military involvement in the Middle East, for instance, Vasilisa from the Ukrainophone group in Kyiv was one of the few participants to explicitly credit Russia in this regard:

Honestly, sometimes I support Russia when such a cunning organisation as the UN tries to introduce various sanctions against other countries, and Russia actively counteracts this. It's worthy of attention, of respect that they have their own opinion, and won't be led by Western countries. (Vasilisa, Ukrainian-speaker, Kyiv 1)

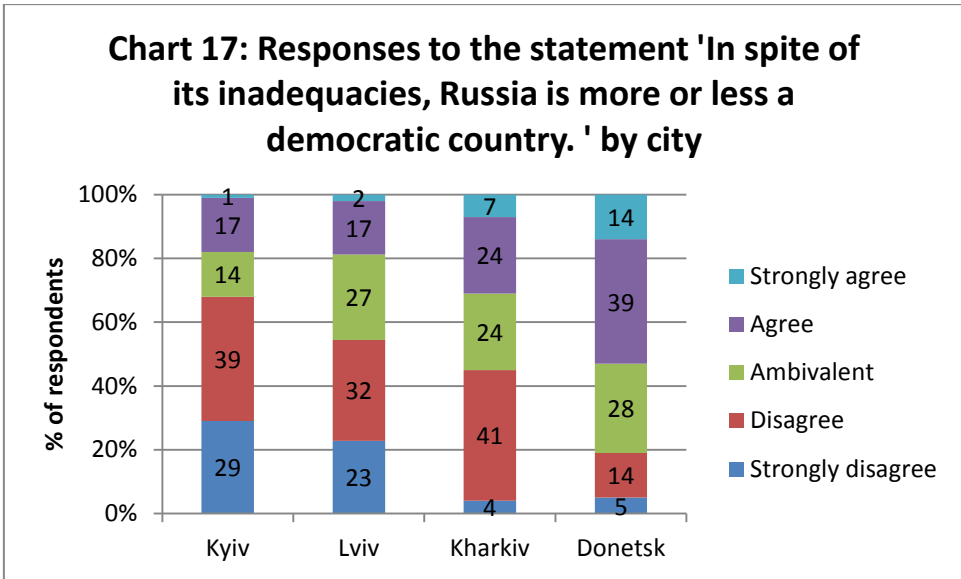
²¹⁵ The percentages of participants responding positively to this statement were as follows: L'viv 13%, Kyiv 16%, Kharkiv 29%, Donetsk 33%. In L'viv and Kyiv two-thirds of respondents actively disagreed with this statement, while about 40% were ambivalent in Kharkiv and Donetsk.

Similarly, a Galician student, Volodymyr, expresses respect for the way that Putin defended Russia's interests and justifies his positive evaluation on the grounds that,

Insomuch as I think that here he did everything very well, as he defends his own interests. And if a similar kind of situation occurred in Ukraine, then any head of state must defend their interests. And concerning the words of Vladimir Putin, he did just that, he defended the interests that America infringes. (Volodymyr, Galician Ukrainian Speaker, L'viv 2)

Volodymyr was not the only Ukrainophone participant in L'viv to agree with Putin's logic, although he was rather more generous in his overall approach than most. Other L'vivian participants agreed with the analysis, but the speech frequently did not succeed in garnering their support because they noted a contradiction between Putin's normative criticisms and their perception of his own policies. Likewise, Donetsk student Sasha, who had shown sympathy for Russian points in some areas, did not warm to the speech either, noting 'Everyone has their inadequacies, right? The West has one set of issues and Russia another.' Likewise Galician Taras, one of harshest critics of Russia among my participants, and no particular fan of the West, is not particularly swayed: 'Maybe it is the case that America teaches Russia democracy, while itself introducing democracy by the tomahawk, but they deserve one another.'

Indeed, when it comes to democratic development within Russia, which Putin refers to as being the subject of hypocritical lectures from abroad, the picture is somewhat inconsistent. A relatively consistent figure of 20-25 per cent of survey respondents across Ukraine agreed that 'to a large degree, Russian democracy is criticised by other countries for their own benefit'. Similarly, this narrative of a Russia treated unjustly by cynical players – a variation of the more historical 'Russia surrounded by hostile forces' narrative – doesn't seem to resonate strongly with the focus group participants in any cities.

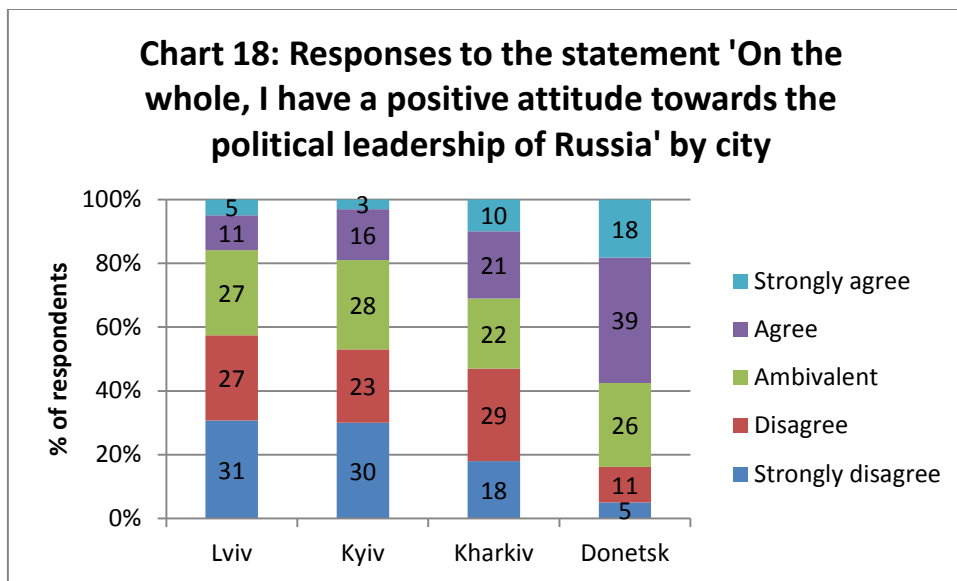


When asked directly whether they agreed that ‘in spite of its inadequacies, Russia is more or less a democratic country,’ only in Donetsk did a clear majority of respondents come out in support. During the focus groups, many participants likewise took a rather sceptical stance in this regard. However, despite their reluctance to endorse Russian democracy when questioned directly on this subject, when the matter was raised indirectly participants seemed rather less critically disposed. Indeed, responses often echoed Moscow’s insistence that democracy in Russia would be implemented according to a pace and model best attuned to the historical, cultural and social particularities of that society. As Rinat put it, ‘we have our own kind of democracy, that is, it’s more characteristic of our mentality, our particularities so to speak’. Viktoriya concurs, linking in to the related argument that countries like Ukraine are not ready for democracy as is embodied in the West:

Well, yes, I agree. Our stage of development does not quite coincide with the Europeans’, and even less so with the Americans’. And that’s why imposing their point of view on us is rather foolish. Whose business is it if we have democracy or authoritarianism? They live as they want, so be it. (Viktoriya, Ukrainian background, Kharkiv 2)

As such, we may observe that the core principles of sovereign democracy seem to be acknowledged. Furthermore, when speaking about whether Putin was an appropriate

person to make such speeches, participants in the focus groups tended not to dispute his democratic legitimacy, considering him to on the contrary to ‘[represent] the interests of the majority of the population of Russia’ (Viktoriya). Still, as regards the survey respondents’ approval of the Russian leadership, the figures are rather polarised, with 57 per cent of respondents in support in Donetsk and a mere 16 per cent in L’viv.



However, again, when given the opportunity to express a more nuanced position in the focus group discussions, a slightly more diversified position emerged. Accordingly, although Putin’s approach to foreign affairs, particularly as regards Ukraine, is resented, as the President of Russia he enjoys approval, even in L’viv. Tanya notes,

I have quite a negative impression. One of my first thoughts was that if we had such a president who would have pushed us so, then things would be more or less all right. As president, his country’s domestic politics are quite good, but I don’t like his foreign policies. (Tanya, mixed background, L’viv 1)

Shura expresses a similar view, although it should be noted her view did not go uncontested by her fellow group members.

In principle, for Russia he is the ideal president, but in foreign policy he is focused on some kind of, if not expansion, then something close to it. Yes, it’s clear that he wants to impose Russian culture on other states, and I think this is negative, because although cultural boundaries are becoming blurred by globalisation, they don’t have to be completely erased, Russia should be a separate country, Belarus a separate country, any

other separate state that wants to preserve its identity. I don't know, it's not worth saying if he's a very bad politician or a very good one. First of all, he's a good president for Russia. (Shura, mixed background, L'viv 1)

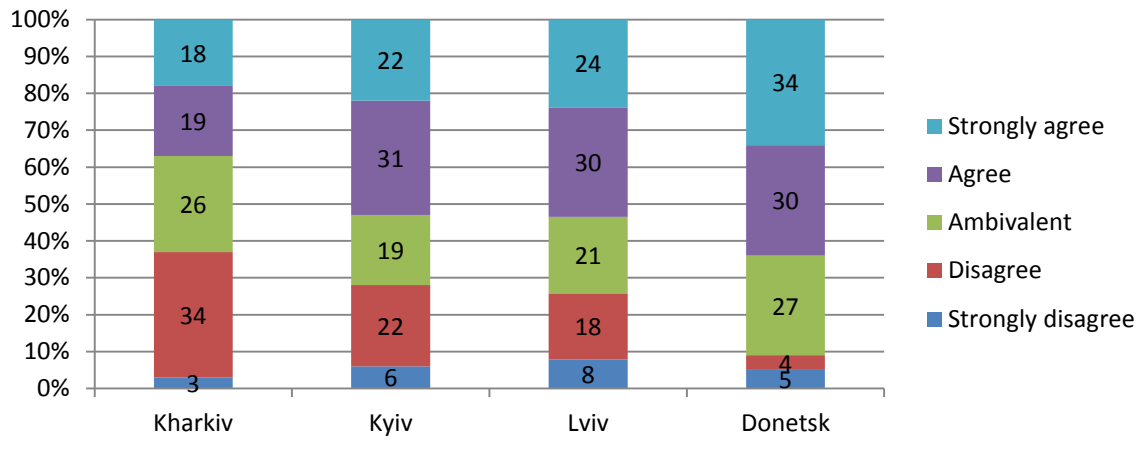
Furthermore, the president's personal charisma also helped trump reservations for some participants.

And I really liked the video. Of course, what he said was wild nonsense, but Putin is such a cutie, I like him. (Liza, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

When quizzed about specific issues that might actually have given rise to concerns about Russian democracy, survey respondents did not seem overly perturbed. One reason for this endorsement of Russia's development under Putin, although not explicitly stated or referred to in the discussions, may be that the Putin regime has supported domestic stability; an aspect which respondents tended to evaluate positively. Across Ukraine, 52 per cent of all respondents supported the statement 'the preservation of domestic stability is the most important task of a country's political elites and should be achieved at any cost', while only one quarter opposed it.²¹⁶ Such notions are frequently opposed to democracy-oriented ideas, whereby democracy is seen as necessarily a bit 'messy' and all the more healthy for it. Yet recollections of being on the sharp end of the creative chaos of the 1990s still loom fresh in Ukrainian collective memory, continuing to shaping the generation that was very small at the time. Indeed, similarly supportive views were expressed with regard to the issue of whether 'despite international criticism, Russia was right adopt a tougher policy against oligarch acting against the national interests of Russia'.

²¹⁶ Curiously, the overall average might have been higher were it not for the returns from Kharkiv, where a clear third of respondents evaluated the statement with a four to indicate their disagreement; 35 per cent and 47 per cent more than Kyiv and L'viv respectively. Again, as discussed above, it would be overly forward to draw firm conclusions from this point as one must bear in mind the possibility that it results from a sampling error.

Chart 19: Responses to the statement 'The preservation of domestic stability is the most important task of a country's political elites and should be achieved at any cost ' by city.



7.4.1. Concluding Remarks

Rather than examining opinions on specific political topics, the spread of which is rather familiar, this study has sought to harvest views on political themes more broadly defined; seeking insight into the general attitudinal preferences that may shape reactions to particular issues.

When it comes to whether people share Putin’s geopolitical assessment of the world, it appears they do, although positive feelings slumped when the focus shifted to *Russia’s* place in the world, about which responses were much more ambivalent. In spite of this the strength of Russia, and of Putin as its leader was admired by participants and constituted part of its positive image, although, as will become apparent, Moscow needs to use this capital much more responsibly to gain more efficient soft power benefits. Indeed, Putin’s attempt to engage in negative ‘othering’ of the USA did not meet with enthusiasm among this demographic; perhaps because they did not live during the Cold War and may have most to gain in their future’s from the West. Above all, the impression

was of a low level of trust and extensive cynicism towards Russia, neither of which bodes well for Moscow's attempts to glean the benefits of soft power.

7.5. Presentation of the Fieldwork Findings for the Values Strand

This section of the study will present the findings of the survey and focus group discussions dedicated to exploring responses to the values-related aspect of Russian soft power in Ukraine. Both methods sought insight into the extent to which some of the issues central to the position advanced by Patriarch Kirill are shared.

Upon consideration of the mean of individuals' overall scores for the statements in this strand by city, it is immediately apparent that there is considerably greater consensus on the values-related narratives than was the case with the other two strands. Indeed, region is not a statistically significant variable in cross tabulations with the values score. While the general picture of a range of opinion remains; with L'viv on the sceptical, and Donets'k on the more sympathetic end of the spectrum with Kharkiv and Kyiv in the middle, in this case, there is only 0.26 of one grade difference in the mean scores between the most and least sympathetic cities. Figures from all cities indicate attraction towards the ideas proposed.

Table 13: Mean Russian Soft Power Score(Value-oriented Strand) by city

City	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
L'viv	101	3.21	0.67
Kharkiv	100	3.28	0.52
Kyiv	100	3.31	0.69
Donets'k	133	3.47	0.59

Table 14: Individuals' mean Russian Soft Power Score (Values-oriented Strand) grouped by percentage

City	N										
		No	Yes	1-1.49	1.5-1.99	2-2.49	2.5-2.99	3-3.49	3.5-3.99	4-4.49	4.5-5
L'viv	101	41	60	3	2	7	29	23	28	9	0
Kyiv	100	30	70	3	3	2	22	27	31	12	0
Kharkiv	100	35	65	0	0	6	29	34	23	6	2
Donets'k	133	24	76	1	1	2	20	29	35	8	4

Note:

Category boundaries rounded to two decimal places. Due to rounding, percentage scores in some cases may not add up to 100. The figures represented in this chart are not statistically significant, for information only.

Given that the statements used in the survey were drawn from the articulations of a religious leader, and thus ostensibly reflect value-orientations based on the Bible, this distribution might seem curious given the lesser religiosity of the respondents from Donets'k in comparison with their L'vivian counterparts.

Religious affiliation is statistically significant with regard to the value-oriented score, but not greatly (40.525*). As one might expect, the non-religious are less likely to agree strongly with statements generally favourable to a more 'moral' or religion-oriented approach in society; and accordingly, the greatest number of non-religious respondents²¹⁷ were only mildly in agreement (44 per cent of this category had an average score of 3-3.49) with the statements. Although the greatest number of Greek Catholics – who are concentrated in Western Ukraine – had a slightly negative overall opinion on the statements posed (32 per cent in 2-5-2.99). Furthermore, among those who professed a

²¹⁷ Here, non-religious respondent means those that ticked 'agnostic' or 'atheist' in response to the corresponding question in the survey. Those who tick 'don't know', 'prefer not to say' or another religion were classed as missing values for this question.

religion, the extent to which they practiced their religion – regularly, only on religious festivals or not at all - was not significantly associated with their views on these issues.²¹⁸

Overall then, the survey suggests that among the target sample religiosity itself is not a significant factor informing attitudes towards the value-related issues polled in this study. The purpose of this study is not to try to argue what is the main factor shaping the opinions of Ukraine’s young people – indeed, this would methodologically be impossible – but rather to explore the extent to which the ideas advanced by Russian soft power actors resonate with this particular audience, and what discursive resources they draw upon in their interpretations.

In this section on values, the stimulus material consisted of comments made by Patriarch Kirill during a talk show broadcast live on the Ukrainian television channel ‘Inter’ on 28th July 2009. Symbolically, this date coincides with ‘Baptism of Rus Day’, which has been marked as a state holiday in Ukraine since 2008, and fell during the Patriarch’s first foreign visit in an official capacity since his investiture as Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia on 1st February 2009. The studio audience was composed of members of Orthodox youth groups in Kyiv and prominent representatives of Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian society.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ This was the case when we explored degree of religious practice across Ukraine. In fact, when results were analysed on a city-by-city level, they turned out to be statistically significant in Kharkiv, only. Given the previously discussed issues surrounding the Kharkiv statistics, great weight will not be placed on the them alone when the reasons for their difference cannot straightforwardly and logically be explained without further research.

²¹⁹ Namely: Fyodor Bondarchuk, Nataliya Varley, Boris Korchevnikov, Vladimir Gostyukhin, Olga Bogomolets, Pyotr Tolochko and Oleg Karamazov.

In this excerpt,²²⁰ Patriarch Kirill presents the notion of a ‘civilisational project’; a ‘struggle for a way of life’. His tone seems moderate, reasoned and the content of the whole speech seems to be designed to account for a range of attitudes; believers and ‘those who will look at the screen with annoyance’. Accounting for Ukraine’s diversity was particularly necessary as the talk show aired at prime time on ‘*Inter*’, the self-proclaimed ‘main channel of Ukraine’. In terms of the participants’ reception of the excerpt, speaking generally, the core ideas of the Patriarch’s speech – the discomfiture with the notion of the consumerist ideology, the sense of being culturally different and not wishing to renounce that difference, ambivalence about European integration – enjoyed some considerable resonance with the audience.²²¹ When it came to opposition to the Patriarch’s discourse, participants tended to refer to a rather standard set of critiques about what Russia’s representatives are like, much in the same way as we saw in the previous sections, rather than engaging critically with the content of his speech. Frequently, these lines of argument were aimed at undermining the authority and credibility of the Patriarch, as a way of dismissing the content of his words.

In the stimulus clip, the Patriarch referred frequently to Europe and the West. He did appear to be engaging in ‘othering’ practices since while his words were measured and his tone moderate, the comparisons with the *Russkiy Mir* reflected unfavourably on the West, given the members resources on this theme.

²²⁰ The excerpt utilised in the focus groups was extracted from close to the end of a question and answer session, and came in response to the following question by Oleg Karamazov, guitarist with the Ukrainian rock group ‘Karamazoff Brothers’: ‘Your Holiness, could “Baptism of Rus’ Day” which we are celebrating today become an all-national (*obshchnarodnyi*) and state holiday for modern Ukraine, Russia and Belarus? Could it become a symbol of a people’s spiritual unity; a reminder that we are all spiritually and culturally kindred, that we are all brothers and sisters?’ The five minute stimulus clip presented just under half of the Patriarch’s response to this question. It is worth noting that the band ‘Brothers Karamazov’ played a concert in honour of Baptism of Rus’ Day. http://www.karamazoffbrothers.com/o_nas.htm

²²¹ Evidence for this also took the form of reports of tacit endorsement based on the native-speaking moderators’ observed impressions of the participants’ body language, eye contact, significant silences and so on, rather than an argued justifications on tape.

Hence, it is very useful to consider notions of the West and of Europe in the discussion on values; not least since these concepts have frequently been drawn on in Russian discourse as the civilisational other. The issue of European integration was considered a specific political issue, and was hence not specifically accounted for in the soft power scores, which sought to gain a broader, less explicitly political picture of the attitudinal landscape. However, attitudes on this topic were harvested during the survey nevertheless.²²²

As argued in the chapter five, Russia seeks to maintain its civilisational *samobytnost'*, both for its own sake, and to underpin its distinct sovereign democracy political model, which is premised on the notion of Russia's civilisational uniqueness. Some degree of value consensus is an important component of a community's culture, and serves as one of the markers that differentiates 'us' from 'them'. Thus, a sense of difference from wider European or Western culture is important for Russia to warrant a sense of cultural leadership. The matter of whether Ukraine remains under the Russian civilisational umbrella is, therefore, a question of how far the country's citizens share what are touted as shared '*ruskii*' values, or turn away to embrace the liberal outlook of the West. Clearly, in principle, it should not be necessary to choose between a Western or Eastern orientation, and as far as possible Ukraine under President Yanukovich has sought to tread the middle ground, maximising benefits from both directions. However, once issues become securitised, there is a tendency for political analysts to see things in zero-sum terms: to the extent values' Europeanisation of Ukraine occurs, Russia is seen to be bereft of the discipleship of a historically kindred polity.

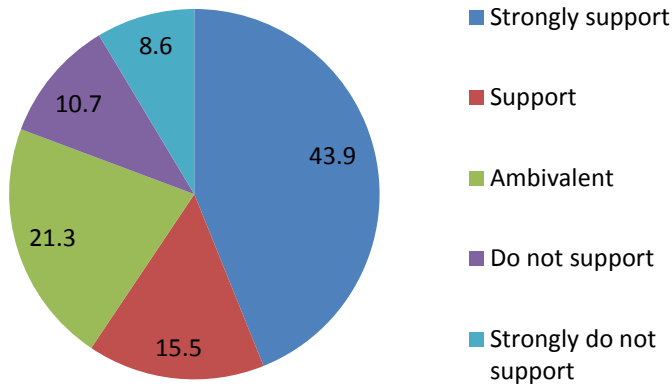
²²² The aim was partly to serve as a control, as the existing polls may serve as a 'known' against which my own findings might be compared, thereby allowing estimations of how the attitudes of my participants fit in to the broader picture.

Setting EU membership as a state policy goal, as Ukraine has done, is often seen as an indicator of soft power. European Union Studies scholars propose that the EU's soft or normative power emanates from its values (Manners 2002; 2006; 2009), and indeed such attributes are frequently cited as part of the community's power of attraction. By this rendition, young Ukrainians would be drawn towards Europe by the prospect of living in a liberal, democratic society, and the unspoken assumption seems to be that they would embrace all that goes with it in terms of cultural change. Russia is often presented as the negation of these positively-weighted attributes, with the implication that Ukraine should embed itself in the West to stave off possible revanchism.

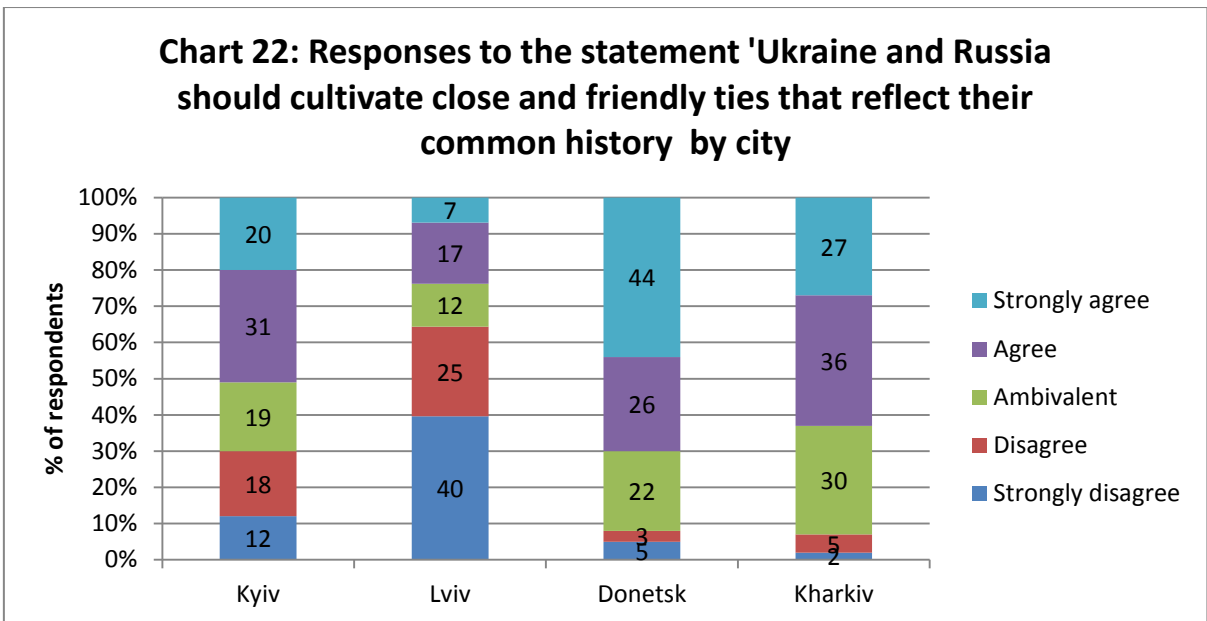
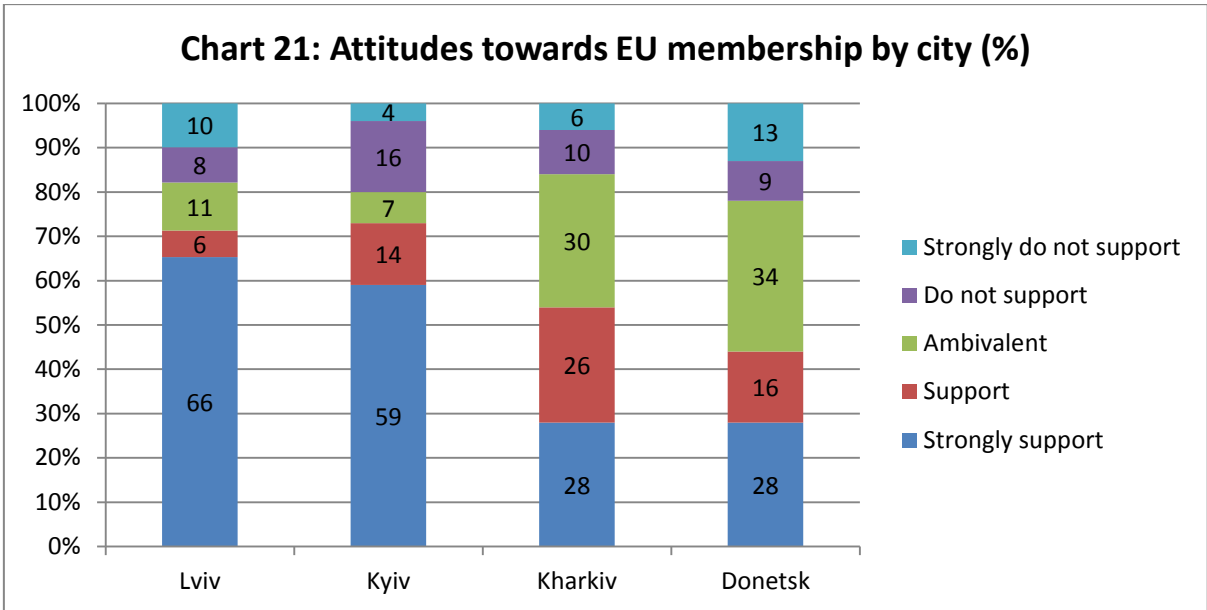
While existing literature on this topic has suggested a rather tepid response to the prospect of EU membership among the Ukrainian population, it must be noted that European integration appears to enjoy significantly greater support among my young demographic than the population as a whole.²²³ Of the higher education students polled in my survey, an absolute majority – 59.4 per cent - declared their support for membership of the EU.

²²³ For instance, a study conducted by the Eurasian Monitor in April-May 2009 found that only 20 per cent of Ukrainians wanted integration into the EU, while 34 per cent preferred integration into a Russia-Ukraine-Belarus-Kazakhstan union (and 12 per cent back into the USSR), and 23 per cent wanted full independence for their country <http://blogs.euobserver.com/popescu/2009/09/13/russian-and-eu-power-of-attraction/> accessed 17th February 2012. He refers to: <http://eurasiamonitor.org/rus/research/event-158.html>

Chart 20: All-Ukrainian attitudes towards Ukrainian membership of the EU(%)

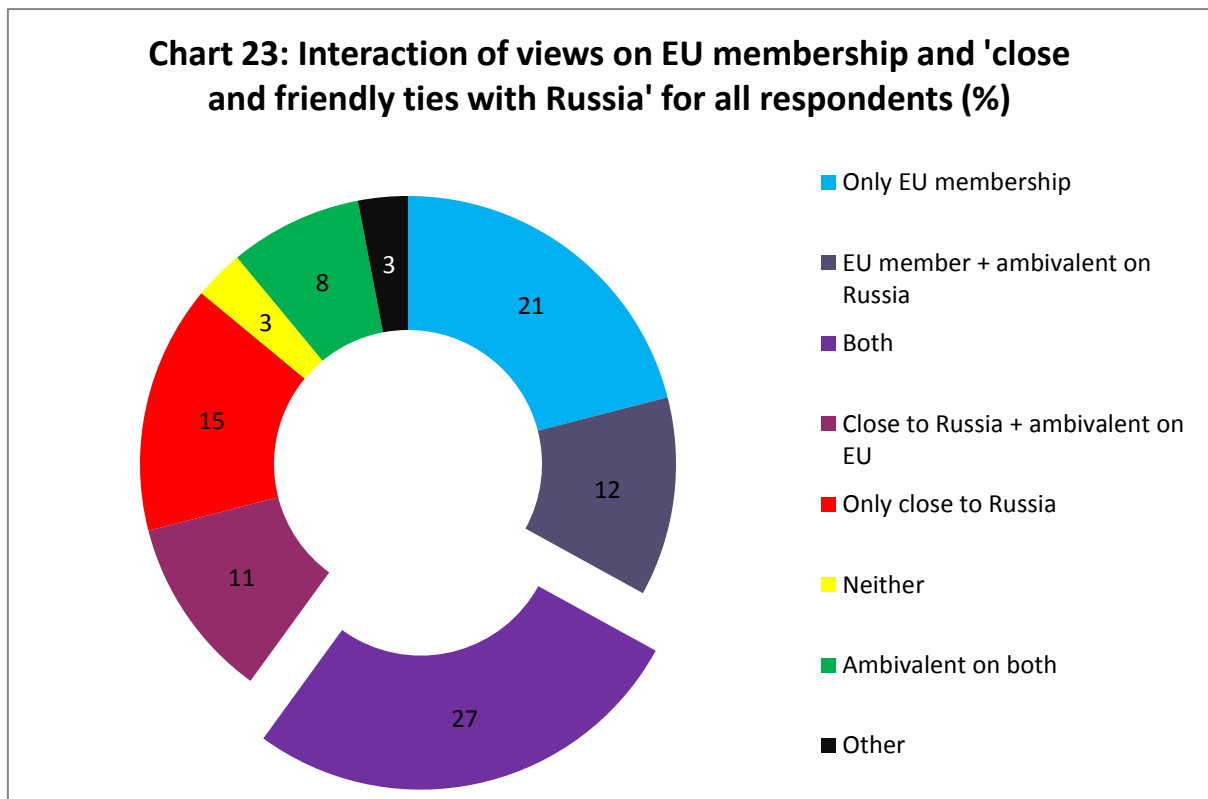


However, exploration of the data along regional lines reveals a differentiated picture. Although over 70 per cent of the young people polled in Kyiv and L'viv supported EU membership, this fell considerably in Kharkiv and Donetsk, to 54 and 44 per cent respectively. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents actively opposed to EU membership was relatively consistent across the country at around 20 per cent, with a third of the students simply ambivalent in the Eastern cities. Overall, the diversity of opinion remaining between cities notwithstanding, it is clear that higher education students are much more open to Europe than the population as a whole.



On the issue of relations with Russia, there is a clear East-West regional cleavage. In Donetsk and Kharkiv, two-thirds of respondents favoured close relations, while less than a quarter did so in L'viv, where 40 per cent were strongly opposed to the idea. Further examination of the data, however, supports Mykola Ryabchuk's argument that the attitudes in Ukraine, and not least among the highly educated youth of today, defy comfortable stereotypes, and do not in fact divide neatly into what might be termed 'pro-Russian' and 'pro-European' camps. Indeed, the largest number of respondents – 27 per

cent - expressed their support both for EU membership *and* close ties with Russia.



Indeed, we see that in three of the four cities approximately a third of respondents concerned expressed a desire for close cooperation with both Russia and the EU.²²⁴ Clearly, Donetsk and Kharkiv seem more drawn to Russia than the EU, while the reverse is true in Kyiv and Lviv, but the differences are perhaps not so polarised as is sometimes suggested. Such impressions have perhaps arisen as a result of the fact that, as Katharina Wolczuk noted in her CREES current affairs seminar on 7th March 2012, neither the EU nor Russia's discourse surrounding the other's offerings in the 'shared neighbourhood' seem to perceive any benefits to Ukraine in the policy proposals of the other.

²²⁴ It should be noted, furthermore, that these figures do not even account for those who expressed partiality to one optional but were ambivalent about the other and who account for 23 per cent of the total sample; it only accounts for those who expressed a clear preference on both issues.

Relative attraction of EU membership and continuation of historically close relationship with Russia by city, showing intersection of preferences

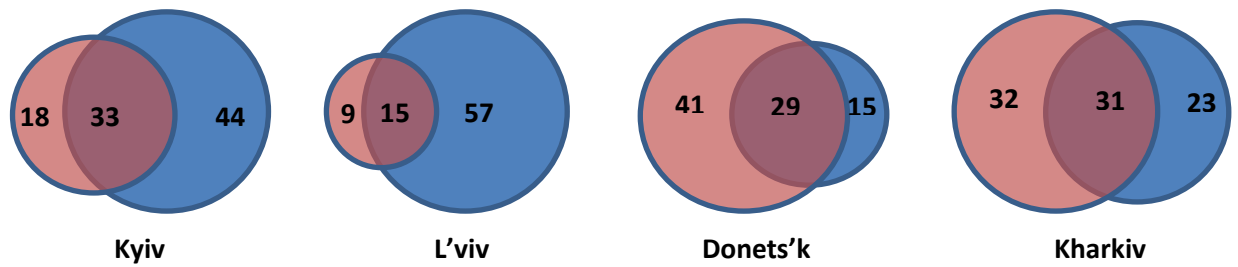


Chart 24. Key: Pink: Positive attitude towards continuation of historical cooperation with Russia, only. Blue: Positive attitude to EU membership, only. Purple: Positive attitude to both. Numbers refer to percentage of respondents by city, to the exclusion of those who did not favour either option.

A further point to note regarding these observations is that it is abundantly clear why the Patriarch – regardless of his own position on Ukraine’s further European accession - could not simply speak directly or absolutely against Europe: young people made up a large proportion of his studio audience. His purpose must have been to incite people to reflect on this matter, rather than alienate them with diktats. This also further supports the arguments about the learning processes underway regarding soft power made in the previous chapter.

These findings were explored further in the focus groups, although the issue of Europe and Ukraine’s relationship to it was raised in a slightly different way, with the participants asked to express their views on Ukraine’s geopolitical choice. Overall the notion of pursuing a European course was the most popular among the focus group sample, particularly in L’viv and Kyiv, although it also found strong advocates in Kharkiv and Donetsk too. The second most popular of the three choices was for an independent, neutral Ukraine, which resonated with students in all cities despite reservations about its viability. Finally, a number of students in Kharkiv and Donetsk expressed the conviction that Ukraine should follow a path closely allied with Russia. No claim to generalisability is made on the basis of these findings for reasons already articulated in the methodology,

yet the focus group data does nevertheless provide some insight into the rationale behind such preferences. Rustam believed he captured the mood of many concerning the East-West question when he stated that,

We talk about how we mustn't sever ties with our neighbours, how we're close, we're brothers and so on, but everyone sees him or herself in Europe, because everyone wants to live like people live there. (Rustam, Donetsk 1)

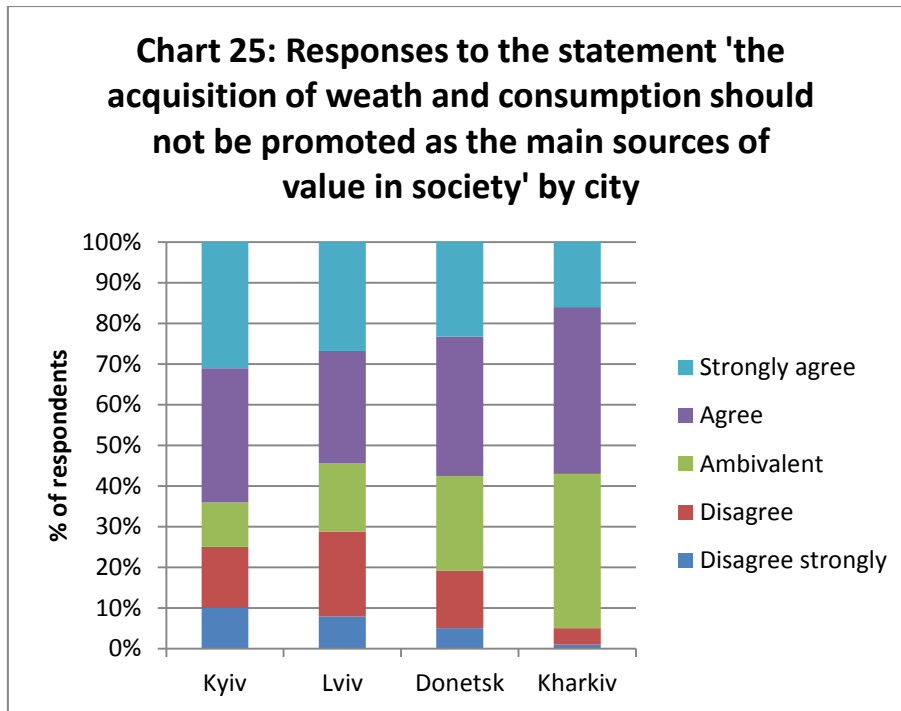
For many proponents of Ukraine's European choice, the reasons were clear and simple:

Well, this question of whether to be closer to Russia or closer to Europe, it's the same as asking whether to go towards stagnation or towards development. Naturally we should go towards development. (Katja, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

Clearly, the EU has succeeded in promoting an appealing image of itself in terms of standard of living, rooted in its economic power, but to what extent might one speak of a community of values? As previously argued, Russia's claim to civilisational distinctiveness rests on the notion of synthesising the construction of modern living standards with the preservation of traditional elements; values, culture. Unlike in the West, Russia seeks to develop the role of the Church in society, and to preserve and foster a traditional sense of spirituality and morality among the population. As the overall soft power scores for this strand have shown, such discourses seem to be relatively widely accepted in all the case study cities of Ukraine. Now, these will be examined in more detail.

The reasons motivating individuals' preferences for joining the EU seem to have been rather material in nature; rooted in a desire for a higher and more secure standard of living. In his discourse, the Patriarch co-opts this discourse, noting the need for improvements in welfare, but nevertheless criticises excesses of materialism and consumerism, which seemed to resonate with the participants. Olena, for example, noted:

If you accept that glitzy trinkets aren't the main thing, and that the spiritual and material need to be kept together, in principle, these thoughts are right, and much of it, in principle, is worth remembering in today's civilisation. (Olena, Donets'k 1)



Likewise, it is apparent that for this student that the categories proposed by the Patriarch and the positive value attributed to them are relevant, acceptable and so attractive:

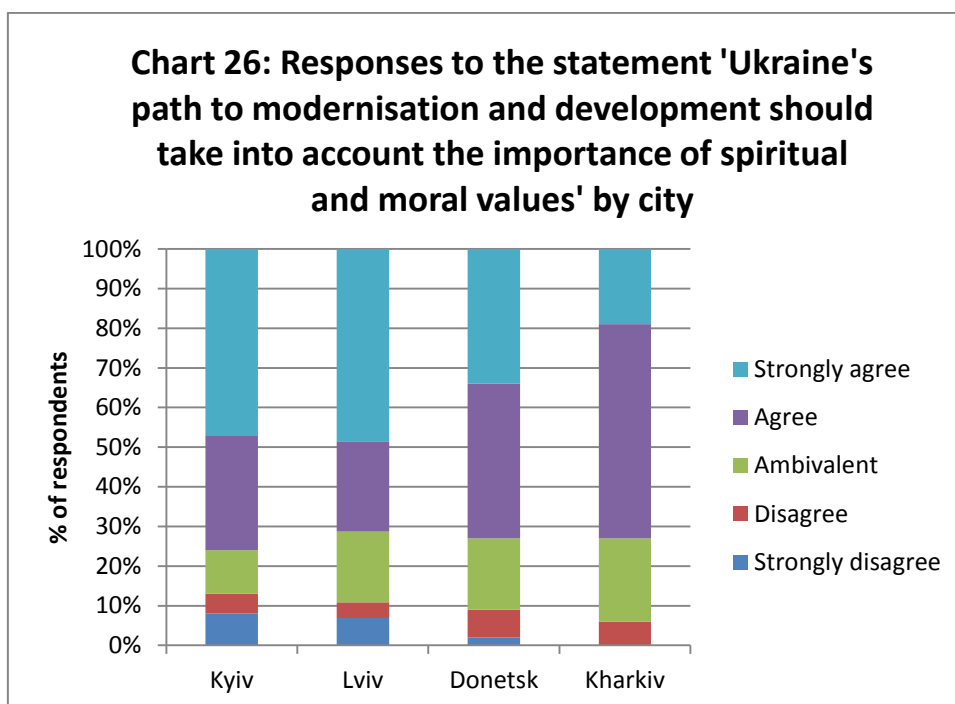
There were some abstract, general phrases, but I liked it; and why not? Everyone should strive away from the material to the spiritual, because it's the fundament, it's a pair of scales, material and spiritual, and if one is overladen, then why not put a stake on the other? (Serega, Donet'sk 1)

Yet not all students agreed with this perspective. A number of participants expressed the idea that the patriarch's speech was a 'utopia' (Katja) and 'delirious ravings' (Viktor). More concretely, for Yulia, a Galician Ukrainian Speaker (L'viv Group 2), the main principle of the speech clearly has not become common sense knowledge: 'He explained well why the material is so bad, [...] but he didn't explain what will be so good about returning to a spiritual life.' Indeed, the sense of not being with the times is a recurrent theme, with some participants feeling the ideas proposed by the patriarch to be simply anachronistic:

These ideas are out of date. First of all, everything's taken from the Bible, with some religious teachings that aren't fit for our times. Now nobody's got any money yet you can't actually do anything. (Tanya, mixed background, L'viv 1)

Yet, there was a strong sense that the core notions of a dichotomy between the 'spiritual', and 'material' were familiar to the participants. The participants are also comfortable using concepts such as 'spiritual,' and do so regularly, especially in Donetsk, which is significant as it underlines the relevance of these categories for people's ways of interpreting the world, despite the lower level of religiosity there.

Indeed, looking at the survey data more closely, we can observe that the respondents predominantly supported the main premise of the patriarch's speech, namely that spiritual and moral values have an important place in contemporary Ukrainian society.



Not only do the participants positively appraise spiritual values, but they also perceive a negative influence from Europe in this regard. This young woman expresses her agreement with the Patriarch, identifying the standard of living rather than traditions or language as the sources of attraction. Simultaneously her use of rather negatively

weighted phrases like ‘throwing themselves’ and ‘run off’ indicates a desire to distance herself from such behaviours.

First of all, he was right to say that young people now are really throwing themselves at everything connected with money and success. The reason why Western Europe attracts many people – it’s because of the very high standard of living. There it’s not so much the traditions or the language that are so attractive, but the quality of life. As he rightly said: a full belly and a stuffed pocket. That’s why people forget about their spiritual values and run off there, where one can live comfortably and with confidence in the future. That’s why I think that this video is a good example of why it’s necessary to preserve spiritual values. You can listen to this video, it conveys positive emotions. (Sasha(f), Donetsk 2)

What’s more, the testimony of Lena from L’viv also affirms the idea that resistance to European cultural influence is not specifically related to a given religious denomination, but rather reflected a narrative more widely dispersed in society, thereby making it more stable:

Myself, I’m believer of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, so in this regards I just don’t have a very positive attitude towards this patriarch, in so far as he absolutely does not support the idea of the unification of [Ukraine’s] churches.²²⁵ On the other hand, I agree with him concerning Europe. Although he’s patriarch, and shouldn’t have a relation to politics, but I agree that in terms of religion, Europe doesn’t offer anything good. (Lena, Galician Ukrainian Speaker, L’viv 2)

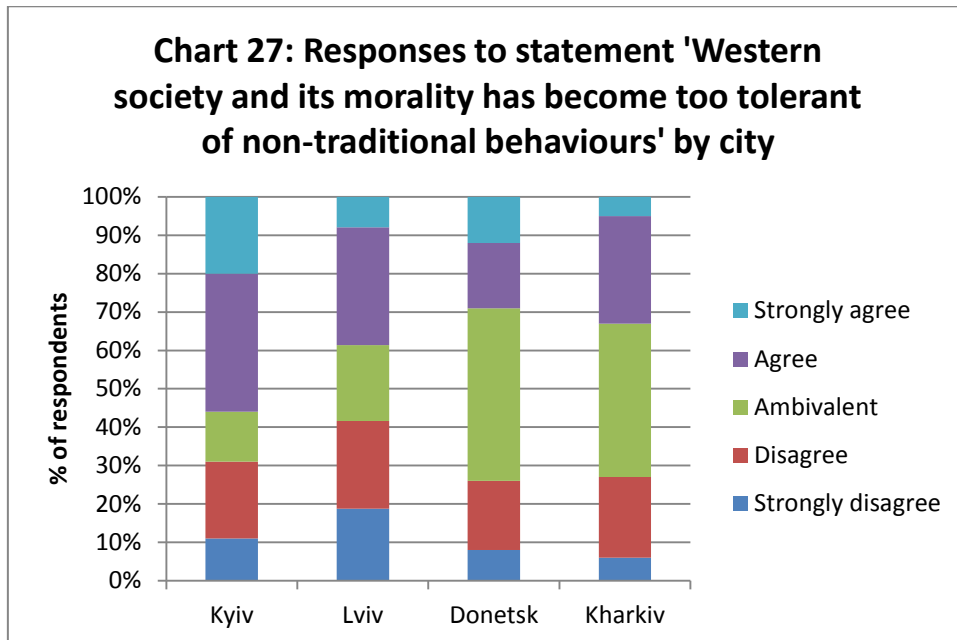
Vasilisa, who had a pro-European attitude towards Ukraine’s geopolitical future, nevertheless expressed similar concerns:

We are striving to join Europe, but I also don’t agree that Ukraine has not, has never had any history and that we should just join Europe and adopt everything European. I don’t even like the phrase ‘*euro-remont*’ [‘overhaul to European standards’]. I think that Ukraine should take the good things offered by Europe and cooperate with it, but Ukraine also has its own history, its own culture, its own achievements that shouldn’t be forgotten as if it never happened, as if this isn’t worth anything, as if it’s just history. And who was it who said that Europe’s the standard, that this model is the best example? Tolerance towards Europe, in my opinion, cannot be universal and all encompassing. All this homosexuality comes from there, and I don’t think that Ukraine should adopt this and support it. (Vasilisa, Ukrainian-speaker, Kyiv 1)

The student seems to be buying into the assumptions proposed by the patriarch. We can observe resistance to the presumed arrogance that Ukraine should simply adopt foreign

²²⁵ Viktor Yushchenko had sought to unite Ukraine’s orthodox churches into a single national church, but this was resisted by the Moscow Patriarchate.

standards without regard to its own history and culture. In particular, there is opposition to 'homosexuality'; presented in terms of the promotion of a controversial set of attitudes and behaviours deemed to be contrary to the norms of Ukrainian culture.



Tanya holds a similar interpretation of the patriarch's speech, underlining the distinctiveness of Ukraine in comparison with the Western countries.

Let just say, I didn't see anything negative in [the speech]. In my view, this monologue wasn't an appeal to any one country. I think rather he appeals to the unity of all the peoples of Kyivan Rus. [...] and just focussed on the way we have a completely different mentality from the countries of far Europe, America and so on, and that we can't build our society the same way they built theirs. So we should develop our society in our own way, according to our traditions, which will be better for us. We won't approach building our society in the same way as them. Yes, maybe it was successful for them, but we need a slightly different path, one that's adjusted for us, I think. (Tanya, mixed background, L'viv 1)

In her response Tanya draws also on one of the ideas at the core of Patriarch Kirill's speech, and a central plank of sovereign democracy more generally. She counters the universalism that is often presumed to characterise the Western model, and reserves the right to rather arrange society in such a way that is best for Ukraine, and in accordance with its own traditions.

Some participants even go further, explicitly complaining about the way in which they feel that Western culture is imposed upon them via the media, which was hinted at in the stimulus:

I think he's really got the right idea about advertising, because it all starts with, I don't know, chewing gum or sweets and ends up imposing a lifestyle; ideas, some goals, dreams are imposed upon you. It turns out that you need a lot of money, that you need something else. Maybe a person has such an inner need, but he didn't have it before, it was just imposed on him, without him even understanding that, and he just lives like he's told and stops thinking. (Alena, Ukrainian-background, Kharkiv 2)

Such ideas reflect the notion of 'information war' and awareness of efforts to integrate Ukraine more fully into the Western capitalist system. This is significant if we follow Norval and Mijnsen in noting 'acknowledging the ways in which one's thinking and acting has been dominated by this or that picture or analogy is a precondition both for successful therapy and a criteria of the correctness of the diagnosis' (Norval and Mijnsen 2009: 45). Vladimir is particularly sharp in his critique, pointing explicitly to the West as the source of this influence, and disparaging a lifestyle placated by consumerism, noting,

[f]or instance, now we are trying to live out Western culture. He [Patriarch Kirill] calls upon Ukrainians, and Slavic people in general to come to their senses and stop being clones of Western culture. Concerning these glossy magazines he said again that we are now consuming information which is simply senseless, and is only intended to clog your brains, so that you sit in front of the television and don't think about anything, and just go on living somehow, without changing anything. (Vladimir, Ukrainian-background, Kharkiv 2)

Where the patriarch linked in more abstractly to the Russian discourse on the need for 'sovereignty of the spirit', Vladimir recognises the critique and brought in his own examples. Indeed, the stimulus clip succeeded in eliciting a critique of Western culture that actually goes further than that articulated by the patriarch, broadening beyond the imbalance towards materialism to criticise cultural relations vis-à-vis the West more generally in a way that was not mentioned in this clip. The way in which some participants took ownership of the patriarch's message, with such fluent elaborations upon the theme

seems to suggest that such discourses were not novel, but rather are indeed circulating in the Ukrainian information space. In this way we see that at least some elements of the Russian soft power discourse is diffused in society, repeated spontaneously by its members— rather than relying on state-led, top-down diffusion – and thereby reinforcing the critique.

As mentioned previously, more participants favoured European integration despite these criticisms. However, a handful of the participants did use cultural matters as criteria of discernment in favour of cooperation with those who share more than just economic interest. Here, Rinat picks up on fears that Ukraine will somehow be exploited if interaction is on a material basis alone, and expresses the desire for a more profound, satisfying level of cooperation

I completely agree with him. The idea there wasn't about joining the EU or something else, he just presented some common things from the point of view of Orthodoxy, based on current problems. That is to say that now there is a problem here concerning joining the EU, and he for instance expresses the view that the EU will only accept us as economic partners, only in the sense of profiting from us, that's it, and there's no idea of unity on some other level, and no possible support. In other words, apart from money, nothing will unify us with them, this was the main idea, I think. So if we cooperate, then let's at least cooperate with those who are closest to us on a cultural and spiritual level. We need to work towards collaboration on a higher level than just something to do with the economy or money, something more than just material stuff, because cooperation isn't strong if it's only supported by money. (Rinat, Ukrainian-background, Kharkiv 2)

Relatively few participants shared Rinat's conviction of the need to cooperate most closely with Russia even in the Eastern Ukrainian focus groups. On the contrary, while recognising a sense of cultural difference and even of a 'struggle for a way of life', the participants seemed very reluctant to acknowledge and take ownership of the notion of a 'civilisational project'. It seems that this is likely to be attributable to some apprehensions about such ambitious terminology, which when discussed in the context of the Russkiy Mir in a previous section, met repeatedly with awkwardness, seemingly on the ground of

its 'pathos'. Indeed, talk of such grand emotional narrative projects seems a bit cringeworthy in these days of ironic distance and understatement. Furthermore, many individuals seemed to pick up on the implied opposition between the successors of Holy Rus' and the secular West proposed by Patriarch Kirill, and were uncomfortable with that. People do not want to be isolated from Europe and its positive associations. Indeed, several participants took issue with what they considered to be an attempt by the patriarch to construct a dichotomy. As Alyona notes:

The main idea is that the West is evil, and that Russians are the most moral people, and that in the 21st century our generation is just completely going against all spiritual values. I think the speech is absolutely incorrect. (Alyona, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

Although many critiques were raised regarding the prospect of EU membership, among the participant sample, most did not disavow this opportunity altogether, but often merely qualified it with hopes of preserving and maintaining Ukraine's distinctiveness. Vlad, on the other hand, finds it unlikely that Europe will ever accept either Ukraine or its values:

I do not see anything good in adopting some European traditions. Why would they do to us if we will still never be in the Europe? This is my opinion. They still will never did take us – it's 100%. And they won't accept our values ever. (Vlad, mixed background, L'viv 1)

7.5.1. Concluding Remarks

Although the patriarch himself received a rather ambivalent reception among the participants, the ideas he represents seemed to have significant currency. As foreseen by the target discourse, the category of 'spirituality' was held up and valuable, and as a characteristic that Ukraine shouldn't renounce without thought. Indeed, there was a sense of perceived tension between integration in the European Union and the material benefits it might bring, and Ukraine's preserving its own heritage that makes it special.

While Russia was often framed in terms of being a purveyor of propaganda, some participants also recognised this characteristic in Western communications. Nevertheless, the participants did not appear to be comfortable with the notion of a resistance to Western values when constructed in such a way that cuts Ukraine off from Europe and the West. The greatest number of respondents wanted to keep ties with both Russia and the EU.

7.6. Discursive Challenges to Russian Soft Power in Ukraine

The previous section has indicated that Russian civilisational soft power discourses do have the potential to be quite attractive in Ukraine. However, this potential is stymied by the negative discourses in circulation concerning 'what Russia is like'. Responses were quite often characterised by a 'hinge', whereby a positive evaluation of a certain aspects would be conjoined with a 'but nevertheless' [*vsye ravno*] type of expression that inevitably led into an enumeration of concerns. Indeed, rejection or negativity towards the narratives in the focus groups often seemed to be less a result of individuals' reflections, though, of course, that was part of it, but moreover, stemmed from wider collective understandings. The consistency with which such criticisms occurred not only within but above all across groups suggests that rather than being the result of individually derived conclusions and research, these narratives are quite probably in circulation in the Ukrainian information space as recurrent pieces of information and interpretative prisms. The mere availability of such information is, of course, not alone sufficient for it to become integrated as a feature of individuals' collective assumptions; 'members' resources' or 'code'. First they must actually access it. That means choosing to use sources that convey such viewpoints, or exposure to credible, authoritative

individuals that relay the information in question.

This section will present the recurring elements that participants more commonly drew upon in their discursive negotiations of the stimulus materials.

7.6.1. Discursive Challenge: 'Zombification'

In many cases, expressions of positive emotion regard the network of Russkiy centres, for example, were heavily hedged with the caveats along the lines that it would exceed the desired mandate and become a politically driven force. For many, it invoked associations with the Russian state, and, moreover, a certain sense of familiarity in the narratives provoked expressions of distrust in Russia, with the stimulus clip variously being pigeonholed with such expressions as 'zombification', 'manipulation', 'brainwashing', 'expansion' and 'propaganda,' rather than the more positively associated 'popularisation'.²²⁶ Part of the reason for this view was the status of the Russkiy Mir Foundation as a state-sponsored initiative, which elicited statements conveying a low level of trust in official organisations and claims that the foundation would have been more welcome if it had been a genuine grass-roots organisation. This sense of veiled political intent behind the foundation's was reflected in the way that the majority of participants, especially beyond Eastern Ukraine, chose to describe its activities. Stas, for instance, expresses, on one hand, agreement with the content, but neutralises the positive value with reference to established tropes about what Russia and its representatives are like.

²²⁶ Interestingly, Richters (2012: 42) notes that this terminology of 'brainwashing' and 'turning people into zombies' was used by the ROC to condemn the proselytisation of Western religious organisations working in Russia and presumably Ukraine in the post-Soviet period.

In principle, he didn't say anything wrong. [...] Nevertheless, there is a particular context to this speech. As was said, you have to read between the lines, and in this case, listen between the words, because at the end of the day, I'd say it's a word game, and between these words you have to look out for something else, something less positive than it appears. (Stas, Galician Ukrainian Speaker, L'viv 2)

The notion that the speech represented a 'play on words' and that it is necessary to 'read between the lines' featured regularly in the narratives of the participants. We have here a rather sophisticated audience, one that is vigilant to propagandistic attempts at manipulation by the authorities; among whom the patriarch is clearly numbered. The participants appeared to be sensitive to a certain ambiguity [*dvuznachnost'*]; a duality of meaning applied to utterances on certain topics. While this isn't so explicit here, there is a sense that participants know what he means, what he intends, what his aim is, even if he does not actually articulate it explicitly.

7.6.2. Discursive Challenge: Political Intent

Here Yulia is explicit in what she feels is political about the speech; it's the underlying drive towards some kind of unification, whether that be getting everyone under the Moscow Patriarchate, or a more general political confluence

But I agree with Stas that really this is a play on words. Even if we read between the lines, [that] he said there that it is not about secularisation, about the separation of the church from politics, that in general it's not about politics, but about the fact that we are losing our spirituality and so on, but nevertheless at the end he returned to politics and spoke of unification and so on. So if you actually read between the lines, it all becomes clear. (Yulia, Galician Ukrainian Speaker, L'viv 2)

Most frequently, participants did not appear even to perceive a need to articulate what precisely was 'political' about the speech, as if they considered it to be self-evident. For some, the perception of the patriarch as a political actor is sufficient to cause suspicions as to his intentions:

This is just full-on brainwashing. Well, for me he is absolutely in line with the party leaders of the Soviet era, with those who sit in the Russian government. It's just a politician.[...] Well, [...] there really wasn't anything new there. Let's say, I didn't find out today that you can confidently place an equals sign between the church and politics. (Ira, Russian-background, Kharkiv 1)

This perspective of the reality not being as it seems is heavily predicated upon the assumption that the patriarch is a representative of the Russian government, and as such is a highly political figure. Furthermore, participants repeatedly drew attention to the patriarch's Soviet past as a '*KGBeshnik*' (Taras, Galician Ukrainian-speaker, L'viv).

7.6.3. Discursive Challenge: Imperial Revanchism

A significant number of participants experienced the clips as rather heavy-hand, which rather than alleviating concerns and stoking interest in Russia, fitted neatly into existing negative perceptions of Russia held by the participants, and thereby helped to reinforce them. Indeed, as Yulia hinted above, many participants perceived the public diplomacy activities as a way of promoting unification and as a cloak for imperialist desires:

If I was a citizen of Russia, then clearly I would view it positively, but as for me, now, then obviously it is a negative phenomenon. I understand that every empire that collapses strives for revenge, and in essence, the "Russian World" is all-in-all really just a part of that plan. (Dmytro, Russian speaker, Kyiv 2)

Likewise, Taras was a particularly vehemently critical member of the Galician group as regards Russia, noting:

"An NGO created by Putin" – Yeah, right! Even the name '*Russkiy Mir*' alludes to the imperial habits of Russia. *Russkiy MIR!*

While in the Eastern cities participants were somewhat uncomfortable with what they saw as the imposition and obtrusiveness of Russia by proxy, they refrained from the stronger language sometimes employed by participants in Kyiv and L'viv, where the same stimulus provoked associations with authoritarianism, imperialism and cultural expansion.

For a number of the more sceptical Russophone participants, the Russkiy Mir Foundation represented an example of Russia trying to prevent countries from achieving national fullness in the sense of successfully retrieving the imagining essence of their culture prior to Russian intervention.

Basically, the movie was about the Russian language, but it also involved such motifs as the promotion of Russian culture itself. In the video we saw Russian dances, Russian balalaika. For what purpose would this fund be created? To start with, for the countries of the former CIS, so that these countries do not manage to recover their identity [bytnost], their true culture, and continue to study the Russian language and Russian literature, and continued to consider themselves citizens of the Soviet Union and nurture some kind of ties with Russia.'(Oleg, Donetsk 2)

7.6.4. Discursive Challenge: Obtrusiveness

Given the association with political manoeuvring, the perception of the foundation as obtrusive was widespread among the participants. Despite the low level of awareness of the foundation and the local 'Russian centres' themselves, participants were sensitive to the notion that the presence of the centres would entail the imposition of Russian language and culture in Ukraine, with the intent of exerting political influence. Yuri, for instance, was not convinced that the activities would be conducted on a purely voluntary basis, and would rather be 'voluntarily-coerced'; suggesting a façade of voluntarism, behind which certain implicit sanctions on non-participation might be found:

On one hand it's possible to see it as support for one's language that any country could undertake, but then again in view of the fact it's Russia and how it was during the time of the USSR, then it's possible to see it as voluntary-coercive²²⁷ imposition of the Russian language. (Dmytro, Galician Ukrainian Speaker, L'viv 2)

Humane, and so to say, unobtrusive, But Russia is more like a vice, it closes all exits and entrances, it puts Ukraine in an unfavourable position, although it too is dependent on us,

²²⁷ 'Voluntary-coercive' [*dobrovol'no-prinudital'nyi*] describes suggests actions that give rise to effects that are technically 'voluntary' but have been brought about by circumstances meaning it would be difficult and unfavourable to do otherwise.

and there's no question of partnership relations here, just a situation whereby 'we stand above you', and that's it. (Nadia, Ukrainian speaker, Kyiv 2)

The practices characteristic of the Soviet times appear to cast a long shadow; reproduced even among those who never lived under that system. Even in supposedly 'pro-Russian' Donetsk, some participants felt uncomfortable with the imposition that the foundation represented to them. Mimicking in a shrill tone, one student expressed her impressions of the patterns offered to Ukraine by similar organisations:

It's pressed upon you: 'come along, learn this Russian language! Come along, open a book! Join our group! Drop Ukrainian language! Leave Ukraine, go to Russia, work there!' (Masha, Donetsk 2)

In spite of this rather widespread impression, it must be noted that not all students perceived that the presence of the foundation's 'Russian Centres' inevitably constituted an imposition or a means of more-or-less forcing people to be attentive to Russian language and culture. Such individuals tended to use a nearly identical core formulation to express this sentiment, along the lines of; 'in principle, it's voluntary: if you're interested, you go, if you're not, you don't. I don't see anything wrong with that.' Most representatives of this less reactionary view were from the East Ukrainian groups.

7.6.5. Discursive Challenge: Exaggeration of Russia's Threat Potential

Yet, these logical arguments went by-the-by for many participants. Indeed, the perception of the threat posed by Russia in the minds of some participants – especially in Kyiv and L'viv – goes quite beyond the credible. Stas, for instance, appears to have a view of Russian strategy quite divorced from a reasoned evaluation of the Russkiy Mir Foundation's capacities,

I consider [the Russkiy Mir Foundation] the quiet before the storm [...] Russia wants to get as many supporters as possible because it's easier to rule the world, easier to control

various aspects of international life. They don't lose by getting as many supporters as possible, but only win. (Stas, Galician Ukrainian Speaker, L'viv 2)

Of course, soft power and diplomacy is indeed about cultivating allies, but in his mind – and not only his – such initiatives could only be designed with ill-intent, illegitimate means and imperial ambition. Here again, we see an example of critics of Russia inflating the threat perception, all the better to take an equally firm stance in opposition. The notion of *mir* ['world'] contained in the title of the foundation strengthened the feeling of its implication in a plan to realise a desire to impose Russian on the entire globe. Indeed, some participants expressed a feeling of pressure from the presence of Russia on many sides.

If you look at it so, then they are interposing not only the 'Russkiy Mir' but in all spheres of life; in the banks, savings banks, in telecommunications – everything is in Russian and everything appears increasingly from within Ukraine. (Nadia, Ukrainian speaker, Kyiv 2)

Clearly, this concern does have some basis in reality, as many Russian companies have holdings in Ukraine, yet, despite symbolising Russian presence, it can by no means be taken for granted that such outlets intentionally serve as 'tools' of Russian soft power or reflect the views of the Kremlin. Nevertheless, as previously noted, this may have the overall effect of magnifying the perception of the apparently relatively modest activities of the Russian Centres. Commercial enterprises commonly do their work for financial not political purposes, and may well not be linked in to the bigger picture of soft power networks and thus don't speak the discourse. Yet, as observed in the conceptual framework, messages reinforcing a person's worldview are more readily heard than those that counter it.

7.6.6. Discursive Challenge: Preponderance of Russian Strength

So, in some respects, although on one hand respected, the very strength of Russia, its culture and prevalence of the Russian language in Ukrainian society may in some ways be seen as an impediment to the enhancement of Russian soft power there. Correspondingly, among those who feel the radiance of that power, reactions are often characterised by fear of the possible consequences of the asymmetrical relationship. For instance, the magnification of the threat posed by Russia corresponds with a feeling that the odds are not evenly stacked, giving cause for concern. One student expressed this concern:

I don't know, to me personally the idea of improving the quality of knowledge of the Russian language isn't in itself bad, of course not, but when the quantity of initiatives to enhance this are greater than the quantity of initiatives to improve knowledge of Ukrainian, then it is a bit inappropriate, I think.

Another impression that emerged quite strongly was that of a Russia which behaved as if superior to all others, with Putin expressing 'necessary things with an accent on the fact that Russia is so good and all the others are so bad' (Viktor, Surzhyk speaker, Kyiv 2). Indeed, magnified by having viewed the two previous clips where the same sentiment was identified, Putin's statements against American use of force provoked Natasha to observe with increasing degrees of sarcasm that:

One sentence immediately came to mind: "we're better than them". "Look, America is expanding into the whole world, but we're better. We don't do it like that, we do it properly – we are quietly propagating our culture, very gently promoting our religion everywhere, we're doing it all so well that you won't even notice it." He somehow pushes this thought all the time, and that's it. Personally, I think that there's the idea that we, "we, we will do everything so well that you won't even notice." (Natasha, Ukrainian speaker, Kyiv 2)

Many participants like Natasha seemed highly sensitised to Russian influence in Ukraine, and hence felt antagonistic towards it. This is suspected to be a result of critical communications by those who would resist this.

7.6.7. Discursive Challenge: Personal Credibility

A final core issue impeding a flourishing of Russian soft power relates to the issues of personal credibility and the corresponding charge of hypocrisy. In particular, this concerned the person of Patriarch Kirill, who did not receive a particularly positive evaluation in any city, especially not in the East where there is presumably less reverence for religious figures.²²⁸ The most damning critiques related to the way in which participants simultaneously perceived a contradiction between said and done:

The first idea suggests that we renounce consumer culture. But on the other hand, in my opinion, these clergymen in no way renounce it. They buy themselves luxurious things and cars. He[the patriarch] certainly didn't go [to the studio] on foot! (Pyotr, Donets'k 2)

Indeed, a significant number of participants in different groups referred to the means of transport favoured by the patriarch. While Russian-speaking Vlad in L'viv also remarked snarkily that 'Yes, he certainly didn't come by bike', his counterparts in the Ukrainophone group observed how the majors of Brussels and London do indeed travel to work by bicycle. Participants seemed to be well-informed about the various brands of luxury car supposedly driven by the patriarch and his entourage, despite allegedly exhorting their parishioners to buy the Russian-made Lada Kalina (Denis, Russian speaker Kyiv 2). Such tales were supplemented by accounts of expensive watches, gold-roofed, three-storey

²²⁸ Indeed, in Kharkiv 69% of respondents gave a negative evaluation of the patriarch, while only 12% expressed a positive view. It is hard to explain this fully. The visit of the patriarch was criticised in opposition media, and provoked annoyance through the traffic chaos caused by the cavalcade, which passed near the university. Students at the Karamzin Kharkiv National Technical University were active during the 'Orange Revolution'. During the same trip, the patriarch also visited Donets'k. One may thus speculate whether the topic was handled in a specific way at the university, possibly by staff too.

holiday villas in the outskirts of Donetsk (Misha, Donetsk 2) and golden robes and crosses worth as much as a flat in Kyiv. The fact that Kirill is at the top of his chosen profession and that these are part of his regalia didn't cut much ice as participants explicitly or more often implicitly applied a rather democratic critique, to reproach his material elevation in comparison to most Ukrainians. Rustam responded to the suggestion that such possessions could be normal for a patriarch in a tone thick with irony:

The issue isn't whether it's normal. Of course, this watch for \$300,000[sic], it's completely normal, I don't dispute it. It's just that he said that it's decadent, that we need to restore Orthodox culture, like he said, that material values aren't the most important. But for a person who wears on his arm a watch that cost \$300,000, it's clear which values are primary. Well, I agree! (Rustam, Donetsk 1)

Besides the political intentions, a number of students expressed cynicism about the financial motivations of the patriarch in his visits to Ukraine: 'Why does the patriarch have such a great regard for Ukraine? It's explained by the fact that he needs Ukraine as a big money box!' (Pavel, Galician Ukrainian speaker, Lviv 2). These narratives are directed against the church in general and the patriarch in particular rather than against Russia, but they do have a negative impact on the ability of these representatives of Russia to serve as credible and authoritative opinion formers.

7.6.8. Summary

In the focus groups, the overall reception of soft power narratives communications was adversely affected by a number of critical discourses about 'what Russia is like'. Frequently, participants expressing an opinion critical of Russia did not appear to feel the need to expand upon their core critique at length in order to justify it. Rather, they often advanced concisely formulated opinions, expecting others to know what they meant, without detailed explanation. On the whole their expectations on this front seemed not

to be disappointed. The sense of such attributes being general knowledge on 'what Russia's like' was also reflected by the knowing, or ironic tone used by participants. The existence of negative discourses impedes the ability of the would-be meaning makers to exercise ideational leadership in society, since they distract from engagement with the actual ideas.

7.7. Concluding Remarks

In general, quantitative findings of this study suggest that Russia has soft power in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kyiv, although in the latter city this attraction is more contested. This means that in these three cities Russia, on the whole, is perceived as attractive and its values and ideas contribute to 'agenda-setting'; that is, they are called upon in formulating interpretations of the world. Russia cannot be described as having soft power in L'viv. Discourses contesting Russia's attractiveness and its potential and credibility as meaning-making are particularly salient there, although they were also discerned to a less degree in the other cities.

Turning to the individual cultural, value-oriented and foreign policy strands of the discourse, a more differentiated picture may be presented.

As a shared cultural and linguistic space, the idea of the *Russkiy Mir* did attract some identification, although what that meant to individuals differs significantly. A key point is that there the sense did not emerge from these findings that being a part of the *Russkiy Mir* was incompatible with Ukrainian *citizenship*; although the sense of being part of an all-Ukrainian national *culture* often seemed attenuated for those in the East. This was due to a lack of Ukrainian languages skills or unfamiliarity with Ukrainian traditions. This gave

rise to various shades of hybrid identities, ranging from a sense of belonging to a variously formulated borderless Slavic community, to liminal identities somehow between Russia and Ukraine as a whole to those who, somewhat reluctantly, acknowledged themselves as inheritors of the Russian cultural legacy, but looked to develop their Ukrainian identity. Although a significant number of the focus groups participants were ethnic Russians, only one said they felt Russian not Ukrainian. Numerous participants identified with a 'citizen of the world' identity, thereby avoiding awkward identity choices. In Kyiv, there seemed to be little to differentiate the native Russian-speakers from the Ukrainophones; there was a clearly delineated sense of Ukrainian national identity, without in principle being antagonistic to Russian culture. A number of participants there had made a shift from their native Russian to Ukrainian as their language of preference. In the Galician group in L'viv, a stronger, more anxious sense of a preoccupation with Ukraine's fate was apparent, and my contact there observed a more exclusionary sense of nationalism there. In the mixed group in L'viv, a range of positions were articulated. On the whole, certain reservations to be discussed below notwithstanding, the value of promoting culture seemed to be acknowledged, but an unstated feeling was imparted that to retain attraction, Russian cultural activity should be future-oriented, not just reliant on the past.

Most common ground between participants in the different cities was found on the issue of values. The notions of the value of spirituality over materialism and the need to preserve traditional culture in the face of Western pressure to liberalise were generally not contested. Thus, a sense of cultural-civilisational commonality binding Ukrainians and Russians and differentiated them from Europe and the West was observed. In this case particularly, though potentially also regarding the others too, it is accepted that these attitudes may not necessarily result from Russian informational work, but possibly from

nationalist movements that are strong in L'viv. However, this is not deemed to represent a methodological problem since, as argued in the conceptual framework, it is theoretically not possible to ascertain for sure an 'true' individual's reasoning for a given belief.²²⁹ Indeed, as already noted, Nye himself takes into account the ability of powers to 'piggy-back'; to glean the benefits of the dissemination of the same or compatible values undertaken by other entities.

With regard to Russia's foreign policy stance, the analysis was accepted as accurate, but again did not really inspire enthusiasm for Slavic unity or similar resistance against a latter-day 'imperialist West' in any group. In addition to the observed cynicism concerning Moscow's motives and sincerity, this may be due to the fact that the West does have significant wells of soft power in particularly terms of trust and and there is little desire for conflict with a civilisation that still exudes socio-economic attraction if not necessarily cultural-spiritual appeal more narrowly defined. By contrast, the sovereign democracy discourse whereby nations have a right to develop their political models in line with their own traditions and culture resonated much more clearly.

The examples given in this chapter have focussed on the moments where the discourse resonated with the audience. Although examples where the meanings given by the Russian narrative were specifically contested were also noted, the final section of this chapter was devoted to the more generic discursive challenges that characterised the greater part of the audience's rejectionist reception of the stimulus materials. The themes of this set of elements were generally rather consist across all cities, although the extent

²²⁹ Further, during my fieldwork I heard rumours that the nationalist *Svoboda* ['freedom'] party is supported by Viktor Yanukovich's Party of the Regions, in order to detract influence from more moderate parties that might succeed in uniting the country round a moderate programme and thereby attenuate the electoral advantage presented by 'pro-Russian' sentiments roused against 'nationalists'.

to which each prevailed varied according to region, tending to be stronger in L'viv and Kyiv as the survey findings suggested would be the case. The negative characteristics attributed to Russia by this rather stable discourse included perceptions of Moscow as obtrusive, chauvinistic, stagnant, lacking in credibility and as a purveyor of politically-motivated propaganda.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis makes three main contributions to the literature on soft power, with a particular focus on its application to the Russian case study. The first is theoretical in nature and consists of the re-framing of Joseph Nye's popular soft power concept with reference to scholars of discourse theory, Cultural Studies and communication whose work gives robust theoretical content and helps explore how attraction is constructed. The second is the application of the re-worked concept to the as yet under-researched case study of Russia as a purveyor of soft power. One aspect of Russia's soft power work, specifically its civilisational approach, is examined. The processes of intended soft power generation are analysed; from rationale and ambition, to the projected narratives, to a significant set of agents and tools of their dissemination to the audience's reception. The third contribution is a sub-case study that investigates *how* Russia's soft power discourses are received by an audience in a selected target country, namely Ukraine. It is on this basis that a judgement is made about the extent of contemporary Russian soft power referring to the case study of higher education students in four cities across Ukraine.

Where Nye's notion has often been presented as a neutral term to describe a progressive practice, this thesis has sought to insert the politics into the concept of soft power. To achieve this it was necessary to deconstruct Nye's diffuse concept of attraction, which has been presented as an essential attribute of certain values and phenomena, and which leads to 'attracted' states and individual foreigners to voluntarily seek the leadership of the USA. By contrast, following theorists such as Laclau, Mouffe and Norval, this thesis has proposed that soft power's attraction might usefully be viewed as an extrapolation of a re-articulated post-Marxist notion of Gramsci's hegemony to the international arena.

Accordingly, the attractiveness of given phenomena may not be 'objectively' appraised, except within the terms of reference provided by discourses of meaning and value. Soft power, it has been argued, is the ability to produce and effectively disseminate such narratives that are capable of becoming hegemonic in a Gramscian sense and thereby set the agenda for how 'attractiveness' is defined. As such, soft power is less a *cause* of cultural influence, than a cultural *effect* of wider power dynamics that facilitate immaterial kinds of influence. In short, soft power is not only the ability to be perceived as attractive, but to shape the very definition of what constitutes 'attractive', valuable and good, and, by contrast, to identify manifestations of evil, repression, and marginality. Where for Nye soft power communicative tools are about informing audiences about 'good' ideas, in this framework, these tools become complicit in the construction of those ideas as 'good'. While Nye sees the profusion of American films abroad as a result of demand and evidence of US attraction, this thesis points to their supply as a factor in the creation of that very attraction. From a discursive perspective, the capacity to determine the framework of reference for value interpretations shapes the conditions for what is politically possible.

Thus, soft power is a valuable resource for any polity. Yet, while soft power is an immaterial form of influence, the thesis has shown that it is reliant on hard power means. Economic and military strength may be required to gain access to audiences, by funding production and distribution channels or even to make foreign territories accessible to these tools. Hard power resources are also required to uphold a *relatively* desirable – that is, secure and sustainable – mode of existence for people, in order to remain 'attractive'. In turn, by winning the consent (passive or otherwise) of foreign populations, a state

wielding soft power should find it requires less economic and military power to preserve its dominance.

Thus, in this thesis, the emphasis of evaluating of soft power has been shifted from the input side – the ‘tools’ and ideas created in an attempt to position a polity as attractive – to the outputs; that is to say, whether those measures are actually effective in terms of their ability to effectively propagate discourses that are perceived as ‘attractive’ and ‘set the agenda’ among the audience.

Turning to the specific findings from the case study, this thesis has argued that soft power foreign policy has been accepted by the Kremlin as an important aspect of national modernisation; both as a means of advancing Russia down a progressive trajectory of growth by encouraging beneficial economic, political and military cooperation, and an indicator of national development in its own right. In principle, cultural engagement is no longer just about leveraging loyalties, but about milieu shaping in ways that can be positive-sum while creating an overall favourable environment for the pursuit of Russian interests.

Russia, it has been argued, is simultaneously pursuing several approaches to soft power as broadly understood. This thesis focussed on a civilisational approach, which corresponds most closely to the definition of soft power articulated in the conceptual framework. While Russian civilisation might be understood in different ways, Ukraine is always at the heart of such notions. Indeed, as a polity that until 1991 had existed for centuries as a multi-national imperial state, many contemporary Russians consider that their country ‘was, is and will be’ a great power. Ukraine, ‘brotherly nation’ of fellow Orthodox East Slavs, is considered to be an integral part of that, not least since Russia

traces its statehood back to ninth century Kyiv. Coupled with the geo-political significance of Ukraine for Russia, these factors have meant that Kyiv's overtures to the West following the 'orange revolution' have provoked feelings ranging from the humiliation of seeing the Cold War enemy dig-in on the territory of its closest ally, to concern for the practical implications for Russian business and the Black Sea Fleet. These events, it has been argued, served as a catalyst for more serious engagement with the principles and mechanisms of soft power.

The debate between pragmatists and nationalists over whether or not Ukraine should be 're-integrated' appears to have generally been answered to the effect that Ukrainian independence and neutrality may be accepted if Ukraine remains within the cultural, ideological and civilisational space that has become known as the *Russkiy Mir*. Given the '*ruskii*' discursive current favouring spirituality over materialism, such an approach may make rewarding claims to moral superiority, whilst positing Russia in the desired light as a country that deals 'normally' – non-coercively – with others. Ukraine's membership of this project is a key element demanded for 'sovereignty of spirit'; whereby in order for Russia to be 'sovereign' – effectively, secure – in the cultural sphere, the country must not only have a vital national culture capable of winning the consent of citizens, but also be able to serve as a cultural leader to other states and nations.

Currently, it cannot be said that Russia is advancing a unique model of development as part of its soft power arsenal; such ideologies do not currently exist that could co-opt widespread support whilst enabling the pursuit of Russian goals in its wider Eurasian neighbourhood. However, it is not the case that Russia has nothing to offer other states, even if its offerings are officially unpalatable to the sensibilities of Western leaders.

Although Moscow has sought to promote an effective image to further cooperation with Europe and beyond, this thesis has approached Russian soft power from a civilisational angle, the gaze of which falls not on Western states (though it seeks to entice their compatriot residents), but on the former socialist and non-aligned countries. Considering itself historically as a proponent of the avant-garde, Moscow seeks to seize the initiative by offering not a distinct alternative to the West, but a mark 2 model; a corrective to the perceived excesses of the US-led original. Russian elites perceive that the sovereign democracy model may appeal to states wishing to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation and even integration projects in the service of national development. Yet, where Western variants have made their financial support conditional upon normative stipulations in apparently unrelated spheres, the attraction of *sovereign* democracy lies in its willingness to leave traditional cultural patterns untouched. This may prove appealing since joint development projects may help avoid economic troubles that create conditions that ferment popular discontent (such as those which powered the Arab Spring and the velvet revolutions), as well as preserve the traditional structures of authority in society; particularly organised religion. In the case of Ukraine, soft power activity has focussed not only on promoting '*ruskii*' culture, but also on raising consciousness of '*ruskii*' cultural values as distinctive from those of the West and as worth preserving. Since the sovereign democracy model rests on the notion that countries need political models in line with their traditions, in strengthening shared and unique cultural discourses Russia seeks to bolster the rationale and hence attraction of its political model and make it more desirable for export.

Although this 'soft' approach has been relatively coherently and consistently articulated by the foreign policy elite, it is, however, hard to know how far it has become the

'common sense' discourse among the wider community of officials and other representatives of Russia abroad. This is an important issue since 'off discourse' statements, behaviours and attitudes embodying unattractive characteristics exhibited by representatives of Russia may even serve to 'inoculate' audiences against genuinely positive overtures by cynically framing them as disingenuous. While imperial-themed narratives may gratify sections of the domestic audience, they play into the hands of anti-Russian actors abroad by providing justifications of oppositional policy positions and strengthening their resistance. In short, such tendencies are counterproductive, but say something about the ability of the Kremlin to co-opt even domestic elites into a broad discourse on where Russia is going in the 21st century.

The results of the quantitative survey presented in chapter seven suggest that Russia does not presently have soft power in L'viv, but continues to have soft power in the other three case study cities, albeit only marginally in Kyiv. Meanwhile, the qualitative data generated through the focus groups has brought nuance to understandings of Ukrainian attitudes towards cultural, value-oriented and foreign policy themes. Analyses have typically focussed on the identity poles of East and West, represented by the notions of sovietised, pro-Russian '*sovoks*' and Ukrainian nationalists of Galicia. This study has shown that the core ideas represented in Russian soft power narratives do resonate as 'attractive' and plausible for many across the country. Contrary to expectations, the discourses the participants drew upon to oppose Russian narratives drew upon a very similar well of ideas in each of the focus groups, with the difference lying above all in the vehemence with which this resistance was asserted. Galician narratives drew on notion of Russian 'chauvinism,' whereas in the Eastern cities, the complaint was more specifically about the sense of unnecessary cultural pressure from their neighbour, even if that

culture was in and of itself attractive. The discourses of spirituality encountered significant acceptance. The fact that the difference between the evaluations on this theme was not statistically significant by city suggests that these values represent a shared 'common sense' across Ukraine.

In short, the problem was most commonly with the way of promotion, not the narratives themselves. While shared statehood and the rhetoric of 'brotherhood' with Russia might be associated with the past, it was rare for the values of culture and spirituality themselves to be critiqued. On the contrary, they were valued as ideals, even if most participants were not likely to be racing to their nearest '*Ruskiy Centr*' imminently.

Indeed, opposition to and rejection of the clips was largely rooted in a shared body of negative discourses on 'what Russia is like', which frequently included interpretative elements of Russia as neo-imperial, chauvinistic, obtrusive, hypocritical, propagandistic and excessively confident. These seemed to be the default mode among a significant number of participants in the focus groups. Thus there is a need for Russia to co-opt members of domestic and foreign civil society who will reproduce the soft power discourse not simply because they are paid to do so, but because they believe in its virtues, recognise audience expectations and avoid the pitfall of allowing their passion for the subject to pigeon-hole them as representing these negative trends.

The beauty of soft power and the factor that distinguishes it from old-fashioned propaganda is that 'it doesn't feel like propaganda' (Parmar 2010). Its virtue lies in its invisibility; soft power is diffused and the ideas reflected do not appear to emanate from a clearly identifiable centre, as is the case with hard power, but rather co-opt local actors to reproduce them throughout society. Further, unlike political pamphlets and the like,

soft power's cultural products don't directly tell audiences what to think. Nevertheless they are imbued with culturally-specific values and judgements. In exposing foreigners to life-styles cast as attractive, viewers are exposed to these value narratives and introduced to new ideas and ways of thinking. Over time and through repetition these narratives help shape what audiences think *about*; what they find relevant to judge various issues, and in turn may transform their desires, hopes and expectations. This, as the 'velvet' revolutions of the past quarter of a century have shown, can have a great political impact.

Clearly Russia is making progress in its endeavour to rekindle soft power. The work of the Russian Orthodox Church suggests that the concepts and mechanisms of soft power have germinated as ideas and steps are underway to put them into practice. The findings of the audience reception research suggest that there is considerable further work required before international impressions of Russia will be consistently guided by the target discourses, even in Ukraine. International leadership requires a degree of trust which, judging by the critical narratives through which Russian soft power activities were interpreted, is not currently forthcoming. Nevertheless, the resonance with which the content of Russia's civilisational soft power narratives suggested that Ukraine remains in a cultural space, which some might call the *Russkiy Mir*, even as it looks to work with the West on certain issues. Those seeking to restore Russia's 'sovereignty of spirit' have grounds for optimism, if certainly not celebration.

If, as some have suggested, the sphere of culture and ideas constitutes the terrain of international competition in the 21st century, then it is necessary to have conceptual tools that allow us to clearly identify and analyse the processes in play. In providing an interdisciplinary theoretical approach this thesis offers a framework that may be applied

to examine other case studies, and as such makes a contribution to an important and interesting discussion.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Content

This is the original English text of the survey which was translated by a native speaker into Russian and Ukrainian for the study.

Survey Introduction to Participants

Dear Participant!

Thank you for your interest in my survey.

I am a PhD student at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom.

This survey forms part of a doctoral research project on the attractiveness and credibility of Russian culture and ideas among students in Ukraine. During this survey you will be asked to evaluate a number of statements which reflect the viewpoint expressed by certain representatives of Russia. Since information about these issues is often disseminated through the media, you will also be asked to share some information about what media you use, as well as some general information about yourself.

This survey should take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete.

I am very interested in your personal opinions, attitudes and feelings; please just answer honestly and openly. You can stop doing the survey at any time without giving a reason. Please, only fill in this survey if you:

- are a citizen of Ukraine and
- are a current student at one of the following participating Ukrainian universities, and
 - Donetsk Technical University, Donetsk
 - Ivano-Frankivsk National University, L'viv
 - Karazin Kharkiv National University, Kharkiv
 - Taras Shevchenko National University, Kyiv
- have lived in the oblast where you are studying for the majority of the past five/ten years (Kyiv region and Kyiv oblast are counted together here) and
- have Ukrainian or Russian or Ukrainian and Russian as your mother tongue and
- have Ukrainian or Russian or mixed Ukrainian-Russian nationality

What's more there is an opportunity to participate in my focus group. If you would like to participate in this innovative research, please complete the form at the end of the survey. The focus groups will last between two and two and a half hours and you will receive a token remuneration of 40 *hryvnia* for your participation.

Although my research project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (granted 2008), this study is conducted entirely independently of the UK government, other authorities, private organisations and foundations, and is not politically motivated. Be assured that your responses are entirely anonymous and confidential.

Your participation is crucial for my research - many thanks in advance!

Section one: Background information

Part 1: [Respondent profile.] This section asks for some information about you in order to put your responses in context.

Please select the option that applies best to you:

1. University of study (Please tick appropriate response for you)
2. Area of study / specialisation (Please choose from the drop down menu)
3. Year of study (Please tick appropriate response for you)
4. Year of birth (Please choose from the drop down menu)
5. Sex: Male / female / prefer not to say (Please choose from the drop down menu)
6. Is your main place of residence over the past 10 years (Please tick appropriate response for you)
 - a city (> 100,000 inhabitants)
 - a town
 - village (< 5,000 inhabitants)
7. What is your nationality? (Please tick appropriate response for you)
 - Ukrainian
 - Russian
 - Mixed Ukrainian-Russian
8. What is the nationality of your parents? (both Ukrainian, both Russian, Ukrainian and Russian, Ukrainian and other, Russian and Other, Others, don't know / prefer not to say)(Please tick appropriate response for you)
9. What is your mother tongue? (Ukrainian / Russian / Ukrainian and Russian) (Please tick appropriate response for you)
10. What language do you usually speak at home? (Ukrainian / Russian/ Ukrainian and Russian, other, please state) (Please tick appropriate response for you)

11. What is your religion? (UOC MP / UOC KP / Ukrainian Greek Catholic / Ukrainian Autocephalous Church/ Roman Catholic / Protestant/ Muslim/ Jewish /Buddhist / Neo-Pagan / other / atheist / agnostic / don't know / prefer not to say) (Please tick appropriate response for you)
12. If you have a religion, do you practice your religion regularly? (yes / no / no religion) (Please tick appropriate response for you)
13. How often do you travel to Russia? (Often, sometimes, rarely, never) (Please tick appropriate response for you)
14. Why do you travel to Russia? (Work, visit friends and family, holiday, shopping, other please state, never travel to Russia) (Please tick appropriate response for you)
15. Do you have family in Russia? (Yes, we are in close contact, Yes, but we are not in close contact, No, don't know)
16. Have you spent a considerable amount of time (more than 6 months in total) over the last ten years living outside of Ukraine? Where?

Part 2: [Media Consumption.] This section asks about the kinds of media you use.

Over the past 12 months, how important have the following media been for you as sources of information about what's going on in the world from?

17. Please tick the most appropriate response for you (main source, regular source, occasional source, rare source, never get information from here)
 - TV
 - Radio
 - Printed newspapers
 - Printed news magazines
 - Internet news sites
 - Blogs
 - Friends
 - Family
 - Colleagues
 - Social networking sites
 - Other (please state)
17. How often do you watch the following kinds of TV programmes? Please tick the most appropriate response for you (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly or less)
 - News
 - Series
 - Political talk shows
 - Social talk shows
 - Sports coverage
 - Films

- Other (please state)
18. How often do you watch the following TV stations?
Please tick the most appropriate response for you (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly or less)
- National Television company of Ukraine (First National Channel)
 - “Culture”
 - Inter
 - Kino-TV / Enterfilm
 - Channel 5
 - Russian First Channel
 - Russia Today
 - TVi
 - K1
 - K2
 - Megasport
 - NTN
 - Novy
 - ICTV
 - STB
 - PressTV
 - Al-Jazeera
 - M1
 - M2
 - Ukraina
 - 1+1
 - 2+2
 - CITI TV
 - TET
 - Kino
 - Donbas regional channel
 - CNN
 - BBC World
 - Don’t watch TV / don’t know
19. How often do you listen to the following radio stations?
Please tick the most appropriate response for you (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly or less)
- National Radio Company of Ukraine
 - “Culture”
 - Russkoe Radio
 - Lux FM
 - BBC Ukrainian
 - Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty
 - Hit FM
 - Kiss FM
 - Voice of Russia

- Russkiy Mir Radio
 - Don't listen to the radio / don't know
20. How often do you browse to the following websites?
Please tick the most appropriate response for you (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly or less)
- KID (<http://zadonbas.org>)
 - Glavred sites
 - Telekritika
 - ProUA
 - Korrespondent.net
 - Politorg.net
 - Novynar.com.usa
 - Afisha.ua
 - Big-Mir.net
 - OBOZREVATEL
 - Tochka.net
 - None of these / other please state
22. How often do you read the following newspapers and news magazines?
Please evaluate each of the following statements, by ticking the most appropriate response for you: (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly or less)
- Uriadovy Kuryer
 - Korrespondent
 - Holos Ukrainy
 - Izvestiya v Ukraine
 - Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine
 - Ekonomicheskiye Izvestia
 - Kommentari
 - Kyiv Weekly
 - Expert-Ukraina
 - Fakty i kommentariyi
 - Sobytiya I luidi
 - Delo
 - Invest gazeta
 - Segodnya
 - Salon Dona I Basa
 - Gazeta po-kievski
 - Glavred
 - Profil
 - Novaya
 - Ukrainska Pravda
 - Dzerkalo Tyzhden
 - Ukrayinsky Tyzhden
 - Vysokiy Zamok

23. When it comes to films made outside Ukraine, how do you define your attitude to cultural products from the following countries and areas (like a lot, like somewhat, ambivalent, dislike somewhat, dislike a lot, don't know)

- USA / Canada
- South and Central America
- China
- Eastern Europe
- India
- Russia
- Western Europe
- Other country / area

24. When it comes to music made outside Ukraine, how do you define your attitude to cultural products from the following countries and areas (like a lot, like somewhat, ambivalent, dislike somewhat, dislike a lot, don't know)

- USA / Canada
- South and Central America
- China
- Eastern Europe
- India
- Russia
- Western Europe
- Other country / area

25. How do you evaluate your level of trust in the information on international affairs presented by media from the following countries (trust a lot, trust somewhat, ambivalent, distrust somewhat, distrust a lot, don't know)

- USA / Canada
- South and Central America
- China
- Eastern Europe
- India
- Russian
- Western Europe
- Ukraine
- Other country / area

Part 3: [Political and societal activeness.] This section asks about your interest in political and societal activity

Please evaluate the following statements by ticking the most appropriate response for you (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, 3 ambivalent, 2 somewhat disagree, 1 strongly disagree, don't know)

26. I am very interested in politics
27. I take part in political activities (clubs, campaigns, information dissemination
28. I attend Ukrainian public cultural events (festivals, camps, meetings, performances etc.)
29. I attend Russian public cultural events in Ukraine (festivals, camps, meetings, performances etc.) often, sometimes, rarely, never, don't know)
30. It is important to me to vote in national elections (for the President, Parliament)
31. I can imagine myself taking part in protests or demonstrations in support of my views

Section 2: Soft power issues

Part 4: [Attraction of Russian Culture.]

The questions in this section reflect the positions expressed on the website of the 'Russian World' foundation, a body sponsored by the Russian government to promote Russian language and culture across the whole world.

Please indicate your attitude to each of the following statements by ticking the most appropriate response for you. (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, 3 ambivalent, 2 somewhat disagree, 1 strongly disagree, don't know)

32. Russian contemporary culture represents a valuable contribution to global civilisational diversity
33. Russian cultural heritage represents a uniquely valuable contribution to global civilisational diversity
34. Russian is my preferred language of interethnic communication
35. I personally feel proud of the fact that Yuri Gagarin was the first man in space
36. It is very important to continue to commemorate Victory Day across Ukraine
37. Although it is a separate state, Russia doesn't really feel like a foreign country to me.
38. Russian culture has a lot of admirers in foreign countries across the globe
39. In my opinion, the notion of the "Russian World" means
 - Russia, its people and culture
 - All ethnic Russians
 - All Eastern Orthodox believers
 - All residents of Russia and compatriots abroad
 - Native speakers of Russian language
 - Any person identifying with Russian culture
 - Don't know
40. I consider myself a member of the Russian world
41. I consider myself to be a Russian compatriot

Part five: [Attraction of 'Russian' value model]

This section asks for your opinion on some issues related to values. These questions reflect some of the positions advanced by Patriarch Kirill in his speeches.

Please indicate your attitude to each of the following statements by ticking the most appropriate response for you: (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, 3 ambivalent, 2 somewhat disagree, 1 strongly disagree, don't know)

42. Western society and morals have become too tolerant of non-traditional behaviour
43. Wealth accumulation and consumption should not be promoted as the main source of value in society
44. Ukraine's path to modernisation and development should take into account the importance of spiritual and moral values
45. I have a high opinion of Patriarch Kirill and consider him a leading authority
46. Discussions of the human rights of minority groups in society should take in account the opinions and sentiments of the majority of society's members
47. All peoples have the right to their own way of life; political correctness is not a reason to interfere with this
48. Compared to other major states, Russia has a praiseworthy track record of preserving the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of its minorities.
49. More should be done to promote spirituality and morality in Ukrainian society
50. The state of interethnic, inter-confessional relations in Russia is a very good example to other states.

Part six:[Attraction of Russian foreign policy discourse.]

This section asks for your opinion of the Russian position on some issues in global politics which have been advanced by the President and foreign policy leadership in recent years Please evaluate each of the following statements, by ticking the most appropriate response for you: (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, 3 ambivalent, 2 somewhat disagree, 1 strongly disagree, don't know)

51. Russian democracy is criticised by other countries mostly for their own benefit
52. It is legitimate for each country to decide how democracy should be implemented there, taking into account its own history, traditions and culture
53. Despite its imperfections, Russia is more or less a democratic country.
54. Today the world is genuinely becoming more multipolar
55. Russia deserves a more prominent role in world political leadership
56. Ensuring domestic stability is the most important task of a country's elites and must be ensured at all costs
57. Despite international criticism, the Russian authorities were right to clamp down on oligarchs acting against Russia's national interests
58. Overall, I have a positive view of the political leadership of Russia
59. Russia plays an important role in standing up for justice in international politics
60. Russia has a responsibility to monitor and support the rights of compatriots abroad

Section three: Attitudes to other topics

Part seven: [Socio-economic attraction of the Russian Federation]

This section asks for your opinion on the attraction of Russia as a place to work and live. As well as asking about your evaluation of your own prospects, the questions also reflect positions sometimes advanced in Russian foreign media.

Please indicate your attitude towards each of the following statements by ticking the most appropriate response for you: (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, 3 ambivalent, 2 somewhat disagree, 1 strongly disagree, don't know)

61. Ukraine would benefit from adopting an approach to modernisation and development similar to that of Russia
62. Generally, people in Russia live better than in Ukraine
63. Assuming equal salaries were available, I would prefer to work for a Russian company, rather than a Ukrainian, or Western one.
64. I would be glad to move to Russia to live and work
65. Although Russia has some problems, life is getting better there
66. Life is probably less comfortable in Western countries than is commonly perceived
67. Russia is an innovative and modern country
68. Fluent command of Ukrainian language will probably be vital for my career
69. Fluent command of Russian language will probably be vital for my career
70. Fluent command of English language will probably be vital for my career

Part Eight: [Attitudes towards high-profile political questions in Ukraine]

This section asks for your opinion on some high-profile debates related to Ukraine-Russian relations in recent years.

Please indicate your attitude to each of the following statement, by ticking the most appropriate response for you: (5 strongly agree, 4 somewhat agree, 3 ambivalent, 2 somewhat disagree, 1 strongly disagree)

71. I support the Kharkiv Accord on the continuation of the stationing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol until 2042.
72. President Yushchenko was wrong to make Stepan Bandera a national hero of Ukraine
73. The claim that the famine of 1932/3 (Holodomyr) was a genocide targeted specifically against the Ukrainian people is a misrepresentation of history.
74. I am personally affected by discrimination against the Russian language in Ukraine
75. Russian language should be made an official language of Ukraine on a national level
76. If I had children, I would want them to attend a Russian speaking school
77. I am against Ukrainian NATO membership
78. I am against Ukrainian EU membership
79. Ukraine and Russia should cultivate close and friendly ties that reflect their common history

Section four: Invitation to participate in a focus group

Thank you very much for your participation in my survey!

I am very interested in your opinions on the topics raised in this survey, and you are now invited to apply to participate in the focus groups. The aim of these focus groups will be to deepen the insights gathered through the survey.

About eight to 12 students like yourself will take part in each of the focus groups. The format is a “round table” discussion lead by a research professional. Participation is voluntary and all your answers will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. We are simply interested in hearing your opinions, which will always be respected. Participants usually find participation in a focus group to be an interesting and enjoyable experience.

Before the focus group takes place, you will need to spend half an hour browsing a website indicated by the survey coordinator.

You would be remunerated for your time with 40 *hryvna*, which will be distributed immediately after the end of the focus group. Light snacks will also be provided before the start of the discussion. The focus groups will last 2-3 hours and will take place in [*time*] at [*place*].

If you would like to contribute to this innovative research, please provide your contact details below:

- Would you like to participate in a focus group? [yes / no]
- First name
- telephone number
- email address
- Language of preference: Ukrainian / Russian / no preference
- Comment (optional)

If you would rather not participate in the focus groups, there is not need to provide this information.

Final Page

If you indicated that you would like to participate in the focus groups, you will be contacted by the survey organiser [when] if your profile meets the target sample – this is because we want to ensure a variety of views in the discussion.

Thank you very much!

Appendix B: Focus Group Guide

This document was drafted in English, translated into Russian by a native speaker and then developed in tandem with the moderator in Kyiv prior to the first focus group discussion. As such, the final version is not available in English. Moderators in Kyiv and L'viv translated into Ukrainian 'off the hoof'.

ГАЙД ДЛЯ ФОКУС-ГРУППЫ

Для налаживания контакта с участниками (2-3 минуты)

Прежде всего, мне бы хотелось немного поближе познакомиться с вами. Не мог бы каждый из вас представиться и немного, хотя бы в общих чертах, рассказать о себе и своей семье, учёбе, интересах, месте где живёте

Вопросы для обсуждения на Фокус Группе: Часть 1 – Русский Мир

Скажите, пожалуйста, Вы что-то слышали о фонде Русский Мир?

Что именно? Чем он занимается?

Введение для первой части:

В этой части дискуссии, мы собираемся посмотреть отрывок из интервью с директором Фонда «Русский Мир», Вячеславом Никоновым, в котором он дает информацию об этом фонде.

Демонстрация клипа Русский мир

Вопрос 1: (разогревочный / установить уровень осведомленности о Фонде «Русский Мир»

АССОЦИАЦИИ

Скажите, пожалуйста, в нескольких словах, какие ассоциации у Вас возникли при просмотре клипа – 2-3 слова.

Оцените, пожалуйста, по 5 бальной шкале свое впечатление от этого клипа 1 – очень негативные эмоции, 5 – очень позитивные эмоции.

Почему у Вас именно такие эмоции, объясните, пожалуйста.

Вопрос 2: Общая реакция

Фонд «Русский Мир» вовлечен в финансирование проектов по поддержке русской культуры, языка и наследия через разные социальные группы и НПО на Украине. Это вас интересует? (если «да», то что именно интересует и почему; если «нет», то почему?)

Думаете ли вы, что такие меры важны, полезны и необходимы Украине?

Вопрос 3: Дискуссия по поводу термина (понятия) «Русский Мир»

Вы слышали об идее «Русского Мира» до этой встречи?

Что Вы понимаете под идеей «Русского мира»

Идентификация

Насколько близка Вам идея РУССКОГО МИРА?

Чувствуете ли Вы себя частью РУССКОГО МИРА?

Кем Вы себя считаете (например, жителем Киева/другого города, украинцем, русским, европейцем, гражданином мира).

Почему?

ВОПРОСЫ ДЛЯ ОБСУЖДЕНИЯ НА ФОКУС ГРУППЕ: ЧАСТЬ 2 – ИДЕИ ПАТРИАРХА КИРИЛЛА

Введение для части второй:

В этой части дискуссии, мы собираемся посмотреть отрывок из ток-шоу, в котором фигурирует патриарх Кирилл. Ток-шоу было показано на «Интер» в феврале 2009 и было снято во время первого визита Кирилла на Украину после своей инаугурации.

АССОЦИАЦИИ

Какое у Вас первое впечатление? Охарактеризуйте свои эмоции несколькими словами, которые Вам приходят в голову после просмотра клипа?

Оцените, пожалуйста, Ваше отношение к услышанному по 5-ти бальной шкале. 1 – совершенно не понравилось, 5 – очень понравилось.

Объясните, пожалуйста, почему Вы поставили именно такую оценку.

Часто ли вы видите патриарха в СМИ?

Вы знакомы с идеями, которые он озвучили или вы слышите эти идеи впервые?

Вопрос 2: Разделяют ли участники мнение патриарха Кирилла о проблемах?

С Вашей точки зрения, какие основные идеи высказывает Кирилл в этом клипе?

Согласны ли Вы с идеями, высказанными патриархом Кирилом?

Почему?

(Что вы думаете о его предположении о необходимости более морального и менее материалистического подходе к модернизации?)

Вопрос 3: Роль «Русского Мира» в мире

Является ли концепция Русского Мира, предложенная патриархом, хорошим способом решения проблем материализации сегодняшнего мира и обесценивания духовных ценностей?

Разделяете ли вы убеждение патриарха, что концепция Русского Мира может что-то предложить для остального человечества?

Этот цивилизационный проект вас лично интересует и притягивает? (почему «да» / почему «нет»)

Вопрос 4: Отношение к патриарху Кириллу

Как вы оцениваете право патриарха Кирилла делать такого рода заявления будучи на Украине? Почему у вас сложилось о нем такое мнение? Где вы взяли информацию об этом?

С чем у Вас ассоциируется Патриарх Кирилл – с русским миром в целом или только с Российской Федерацией?

Вопросы для обсуждения на Фокус Группе: Часть 3 – Мюнхенская речь Владимира Путина

Введение:

Сейчас мы посмотрим несколько отрывков из речи бывшего президента России, Владимира Путина, на важной международной конференции по глобальной безопасности в Мюнхене в 2007. Эта речь вероятно является одной из его самых известных выступлений за время президентства.

ДЕМОНСТРАЦИЯ КЛИПА

Что Вы можете сказать. Выскажите, пожалуйста, свои эмоции 2-3 словами.

Оцените, пожалуйста, этот клип по 5-ти бальной шкале, где 1 – совершенно не понравилось, 5 – очень понравилось.

Почему? Объясните, пожалуйста, свои оценки.

Вопрос 1: Осведомленность с выраженной идеей

Слышали ли Вы эти идеи раньше?

Вопрос 2: Отношения к идеям, выраженным Владимиром Путиным

Как Вы думаете, какая основная идея речи Путина?

Вы согласны с его идеями?

Согласны ли Вы с Путинской критикой Запада? Почему

Что имел в виду господин Путин, когда он говорит, что «нас постоянно учат демократии»? Почему он делает это утверждение?

Вопрос 3: Оценка Путиным роли России в мире

Как Вы думаете, имеет ли право Путин на такие речи? Почему?

Каналы информирования:

Откуда Вы узнаете информацию о тех темах, которые мы сегодня обсуждали (Россия, отношения России и Украины, русский мир....)?

- Газеты, журналы
- Телевидение
- Интернет
- Друзья
- Коллеги
- Семья
- Родственники (в том числе в России)...

ПУТЬ УКРАИНЫ

Как Вы думаете, какой путь следует выбрать Украине? Держаться ближе к России, к Западу или что-то еще?

Благодарности/ заключительные вопросы/ дебрифинг / обратная связь

Часть 1: Дополнительные комментарии по теме

- Мы обсудили все три темы. У вас есть что-нибудь, чтобы вы хотели добавить относительно затронутых сегодня тем?
- Что являлось наиболее важным источником информации, формирующим ваши взгляды на эти темы?

Appendix C: Translated Transcription of Focus Group Stimulus Material: Cultural Strand

The stimulus clip consists of a short promotional video about the Russkiy Mir Foundation and the notion of the Russkiy Mir. A transcription in English is provided here.

It is available from the Russian version of the Russkiy Mir Foundation website: <http://ruskiymir.ether.tv/> From the options available, select 'Выбор программы' from the menu on the top then open 'А. ФОНД' from the menu that opens on the side, then choose 'Ролики о Фонде' and then choose 'Презентация Фонда Русский мир' from the submenus that open.

“Russkiy Mir Foundation.

Do you speak Russian? More 300 million people than all over the world will say ‘yes’. Russian is native language of 160 million people, nearly one fourth of them live outside Russia. Russian is the fifth most wide-spread language after Chinese, Spanish, English and Hindi. At the new millennium, the increased economic role of Russia, revived interest in its language and culture, thus helping promote it abroad. Such promotion is the goal of Russkiy Mir Foundation.

‘I believe it is important to support the Russian language initiative of creating a national foundation of the Russian language, whose key objectives are development of the Russian language in Russia, support of its study programmes abroad and general popularisation of Russian language and literature.’ [Vladimir Putin]

Russkiy Mir foundation was established in June 2007 by the decree of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. It is a non-government organisation whose goal is to provide widespread support of Russian language. Being so complex, beautiful and expressive the Russian language is rightly one of the most important parts of Russia’s national patrimony. ‘The mission of the foundation is to make knowledge of the Russian language fashionable, prestigious, advantageous. It should give undisputable advantage in life so that Russia becomes a country which lives at peace with itself and brings ideals to the rest of the world; ideals of freedom, ideals of good, , ideals of justice, ideals of sovereignty, ideals of dignity and self-respect. Then the Russian speaking world in general and Russian Mir foundation in particular will fulfil their destination.’ [Vyacheslav Nikonov]

In February 2008, Russkiy Mir Foundation opened its first Russian language and literature centre in Yerevan, Armenia. Today there are nearly 30 Russian centres in Tadjikstan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Latvia, China, Japan, Bulgaria and the USA and other countries. The foundation plans to open not only Russian language and literature centres, but also Russkiy Mir rooms. This special purpose programmes will allow anyone to get a complimentary full set of books and fiction books helpful in studying Russian.

[Students speaking]

‘My name is Khe Yu. My Russian name is Anya.’

‘I am twenty. I like Moscow very much.’

‘Russian Language is very beautiful and interesting.’

Russian centres are an open treasury of all possible sources of knowledge about Russia and the Russian language. There is a library, collection of audio records, learning aids, methodological support, plus access to Russian web resources; everything needed to learn Russian language, culture and history. Studying Russian language has never been easier. For every age, the Russkiy Mir Foundation has developed a separate language programme. For example, kids learn language from a series of colourful images, while characters of every cartoon teach them reading, understanding, pronunciation or five to ten words, phrases and sentences.

For adult students there is another multi-media course, ‘Russian for Everyone’. Teaches pronunciation and teaches how to recognise Russian speech. The foundation also sponsors the publication of books, dictionaries, reference books and monographs, which are used in dozens of universities. Every year, there are more and more of those who studying using foundation materials.

‘Currently, 90 high education institutes abroad have their faculties or departments of Russian language. However, there are other non-philologists, 20-30 thousand of them.’

One more area of foundation’s activity is material support of projects aimed at preserving and popularising Russian language and literature. Already the foundation has supported around 500 of such projects. 50 festivals of Russian culture. It uses all sorts of possibilities to support interaction between like-minded people from all parts of the world. Besides large-scale and continuous programmes supporting foreign-language press, the foundation produces its own media products. The two key products are the ‘Russkiy Mir’ printed magazine and the foundation’s web portal. The website is open to all wishing to take a Russian language distance course, to find like-minded people in their country and throughout the world, to apply for a grant, and to get quality help in tracking the projects related to culture and language support.

Russkiy Mir Foundation creates a new global informational and cultural space. Russian World is not only one nation, it is a nation living in peace with itself and with the rest of the world. The key word is peace, as lack of hostility. Russian world reflects Russian conciliation, accord, Russian concord, unanimity, union after the vociferous processes of the 20th century. This conciliation experience imported to Russian by centuries of ordeal is what the country should give to the world.

That is the culmination of the Russkiy Mir foundation.”

[sic]

Appendix D: Translated Transcription of Focus Group Stimulus Material: Values Strand

The stimulus material consisted of comments made by Patriarch Kirill on a talk show broadcast live on the Ukrainian television channel 'Inter' on 28th July 2009.

A transcription translated into English is given below.

The clip used in the focus groups is available here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HI7FmSgTe0&feature=related>. The full text available at: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/706055.html> (accessed 14th November 2010).

Patriarch Kirill:

“Now we face a no less serious challenge. Not only in the times of Miklouho-Maclay were trinkets attractive – a beautiful wrapping is always attractive. The sparkling trinkets of modern life surround one’s head, intoxicating human consciousness; and young people in particular undoubtedly want to live like the women who stares at you from the front of a glossy magazine. People believe in advertising, believe in fashion, believe in stereotypes as if they were reality – it’s a virtual world! Adverts for creams against wrinkles strike me the most: a young woman of 20 odd years promotes a cream against wrinkles, and sure enough there are grown women who believe this – they say, I’ll look like this beauty if I use the cream they advertised! It’s an example of how advertising and the stereotypes it imposes may influence our consciousness.

That’s why our struggle is not against flesh and blood, as said the apostle Paul (see Ephesians 6:12). Our struggle is for the way of life offered to us by Jesus Christ, and against that way of life proposed to us today by a godless civilisation. So-called secularisation is dangerous not in terms of Church-State relations; when the Church is separated from the State. Secularisation is dangerous when the spirit is severed from the flesh, when the spiritual and the material are separated, when a person is given over to the power of material elements. I think that this is the main question, and resolution of which the future of the entire human race depends. We, who emerged from the baptismal font of Kyiv, have something to tell the world. We have a unique experience – nobody else has our experience; the experience of persecution, confessors, martyrs and organised resistance to godless ideology.

Something else amazes me. I am by no means speaking against the Western world; I know the West well and have lived in the West, but why, in dialogue with the Western world do we so easily assume the role of a follower? What values are offered to us? What is unique in what this rich civilisation tells us today? Why do we so easily surrender our birthright? We are ready to join a united Europe, any other Europe. Are we entering to get ideas? To get a shot of a proper lifestyle? Are we entering to eat richly, for the sake of the stomach and the pocket? Probably it’s also not bad, but then let’s take our values with us, only I’m not sure that there they’ll be ready to accept our values. But to enter as

followers, losing our spiritual birthright, forsaking our tragic, but unique, incomparable experience – this gives me serious doubts.

I think that our unity – the unity of the spiritual space of Holy Rus', historical Rus' – is of enormous power as a civilizational project, and it is not destined to be a follower. It is designed to generate ideas, and now this is happening; it is intended to launch philosophical challenges that other must answer. We have the potential to develop a genuine dialogue between East and West, and not the dialogue of "a horse and its rider". Only such a dialogue will lead to the construction of a united Europe. A united Europe cannot be constructed according to patterns not created together with our great civilisation; independent and original. If we want to build this Europe, we must agree on how to create new patterns. Perhaps the Lord will lead us to this and we will be able to make our civilizational contribution to the construction of those fair relations in the world of which many dream."

Appendix E: Transcription of Focus Group Stimulus Material: Foreign Policy Strand

The stimulus material consists of an excerpt from a speech given by Vladimir Putin at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, 10th February 2007.

A transcription is given below.

Source (English language version):

http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml (accessed 22nd February 2012)

Vladimir Putin:

The history of humanity certainly has gone through unipolar periods and seen aspirations to world supremacy. And what hasn't happened in world history? However, what is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making.

It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within.

And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority.

Incidentally, Russia – we – are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.

I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's – and precisely in today's – world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation.

Along with this, what is happening in today's world – and we just started to discuss this – is a tentative to introduce precisely this concept into international affairs, the concept of a unipolar world. And with which results? Unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problems. Moreover, they have caused new human tragedies and created new centres of tension. Judge for yourselves: wars as well as local and regional conflicts have not diminished. Mr Teltschik mentioned this very gently. And no less people perish in these conflicts – even more are dying than before. Significantly more, significantly more!

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent

conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state's legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this?

In international relations we increasingly see the desire to resolve a given question according to so-called issues of political expediency, based on the current political climate. And of course this is extremely dangerous. It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasise this – no one feels safe! Because no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will protect them. Of course such a policy stimulates an arms race.

The force's dominance inevitably encourages a number of countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, significantly new threats – though they were also well-known before – have appeared, and today threats such as terrorism have taken on a global character.

I am convinced that we have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security.

Appendix F: List of Interviews

Here, the interviews conducted for this thesis are listed.

Interviews Conducted in Moscow in June / July 2011

22nd June

Alexey Dolinskiy

Assistant Executive Director at Russkiy Mir Foundation, Assistant Dean at School of Public Administration, Moscow State University, consultant in international affairs industry, PhD on Russian public diplomacy at MGIMO under Prof. M.M. Lebedeva.

23rd June

Prof. Marina M. Lebedeva

Professor of Psychology, Chair, Department of World Politics, MGIMO

23rd June

Dr. Pyotr I. Kasatkin

Head of Department of Postgraduate Education at MGIMO (recent PhD on ROC and its international role)

23rd June

Natasha Touzovskaya

Journalist

24th June

Andrei Piontkovskiy

Political analyst

27th June

Andrei Okara

Political Analyst

27th June(Part I)

Independent Researcher

28th June

Dr. Nina Belyaeva

Head of Public Policy Department, Higher School of Economics

29th June

Dr. Andrei Kazantsev

Senior research fellow (the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Security) and lecturer at MGIMO, particular interest in Central Asian and Russian politics, energy and security aspects.

1st July
Dmitri Babich
Journalist, staff writer for Russia Profile

2nd July (part II)
Independent Researcher

4th July
Dr. Vasilii N. Istratov
Deputy CEO, Russkiy Mir Foundation, former Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan

4th July
Dr. Eduard Solovyev
IMEMO

6th July
Christopher Boian
Director of Foreign Language New Production, RIA Novosti

6th July
Andrei A. Zolotov
Deputy Director of RIA Novosti International Service, advisor to chief editor of RIA Novosti, founding Chief Editor of Russia Profile, recognised expert on Russia's religious affairs and global developments related to Orthodox Christianity.

6th July
Dr. Alexey Gromyko
Deputy Director, Institute of Europe RAN / European Programmes Director, Russkiy Mir Foundation

7th July
Pavel Andreev
Head of International Projects at RIA Novosti, Executive Director of Valdai Club, member of Council on Foreign and Defence Policy

7th July
Dr. Rostislav Turovskiy
Department of Politology, Moscow State University

8th July
Dr. Igor Zevelev
Director of Moscow office of MacArthur Foundation, formerly Washington bureau chief of RIA Novosti, and former Head of Department and Deputy Director at the Center for Developing Countries at Institute of International Relations and World Economy (IMEMO).

10th July 2011

Elena Panova

Post-Graduate student research Russian soft power under Prof M.M. Lebedeva at MGIMO,
now employed at Russia Today

Interviews taken during scoping visit to Kyiv in July 2011

13th July

Pavlo Novikov

Journalist, Director of 'Ukrainska Birzha Blagodiinosti'

26th July

Volodymyr Kulyk

Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies of the National
Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv.

Interviews taken during scoping visit to Kyiv in January 2010

19th January 2010

Oleg Yarosh

Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research

20th January

Yulia Tyshenko

Head of Civil Society Programmes, Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research

19th January

Nataliya Belitser

Researcher, Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy

21st January 2010

Oleg Yatsenko

Head of All Ukrainian Youth Societal Organisation "Students' Brotherhood".

21st January 2010

Myhailo Kirsenko

Professor of History at Kiev-Mokhyla Academy

22nd January 2010

Oleksiy Haran.

Political analyst

Interviews taken during research trip around Ukraine in October and November 2011

October 2011

Mariya Zybrytska

Vice Rector of Humanities Faculty, Ivan Franko University, L'viv

October 2011
Daur Sergeevich Zukhba
Associate Dean of Economic Theory

Other conversations

12th August 2010
Ostap Kryvdyk
Journalist, Political Consultant

13th August 2010
Nataliya Gumenyuk
Journalist, Kyiv

18th August 2010
Kateryna Pryshchepa
Journalist, Kyiv

19th August 2010
Marta Dyczok
Associate Professor of Departments of History and Politics, University of Western Ontario
June 2009
Mikhail M. Vladimir
Director of Russian House of Culture and Science, Berlin

17th March 2011, Helsinki
Vadim Kononenko
Researcher, Finnish Institute of International Affairs

23rd March 2011, Helsinki
Arseniy Svinarenko
M.Soc.Sc., Researcher, examining youth movements in Ukraine.

Appendix G: Elements of the Cultural Strand

The Russkiy Mir Foundation promotes the intrinsic value of culture and cultural identity generally, and of their Russian manifestations specifically. Below are the statements utilised in the cultural section of the survey questionnaire, together with a brief justification of their inclusion.

'Russian contemporary culture represents a valuable contribution to global civilisational diversity'

Although this thesis has argued that focusing on the manifestations of culture to the exclusion of the salience of ideas is unwarranted in analyses of soft power, clearly perceptions of culture do play a part. Positive views in this regard indicate that individuals are receiving a favourable message, which might not be prevalent if they are predominantly accessing critical sources of information, or if Russia was not effectively communicating its achievements or indeed was not distinguishing itself in this area. What's more, the success of cultural activities resonates in other spheres, suggesting financial ability, organisation, inspiration and the moral superiority associated with foregrounding culture. The Russkiy Mir Foundation celebrates and encourages this, both in the activities it supports and its online coverage.

'Russian cultural heritage represents a uniquely valuable contribution to global civilisational diversity'

Similarly to the previous factor, a high score on this point indicates that respondents continue to receive a positive message about Russia's historical legacy in the sphere of art, culture and literature. The mere existence of the prestigious cultural achievements of the past is not sufficient to generate cultural attraction; this knowledge much be disseminated, which is by no means to be taken for granted if we consider that Ukraine sought to teach Russian literature not as a separate subject, but as but one component among others in a course on world literature. The Russkiy Mir Foundation celebrates Russian cultural heritage through special measures, events and features in its media products.²³⁰

'Russian is my preferred language of interethnic communication'

Language is a key marker of national identity and a boundary between information spaces. The choice between Russian and Ukrainian and even English is symbolic of the degree to which an individual has been attracted by alternative patriotic or globalist narratives. As Filimonov (2010) has noted,

A major condition for strengthening Russia's authority in the territory of the former Soviet Union is expanding the Russian cultural presence there Work to preserve the role of the Russian language as a means of interethnic communication between the peoples of the [FSU]... remains an indisputable priority.

²³⁰ For instance, at the time of the fieldwork of this thesis, there were special exhibitions on Vladimir Mayakovskiy.

Although Russia is a separate country, I don't perceive it as a foreign state'

Similar to the Soviet period, there are open, visa-less borders between Russia and Ukraine, which helps perpetuate a sense of being part of a wider shared cultural space that could be labelled as a civilisation which characterised Russia's relationship to much of Ukraine until 1991.

'I personally feel proud of the fact that Yuri Gagarin was the first man in space'

Presidents Putin and Medvedev as well as the Orthodox hierarchy have shared a 'patriotism in which Soviet achievements are given particular attention [...] Putin believes that love for the homeland is a traditional Russian value and that patriotism could unify the country while making it "better, richer, stronger and happier"' (Richters 2012: 68). In this vein, the Russkiy Mir Foundation commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's space flight in 2011 under the slogan 'First in Space'. The event was framed as an a national achievement of which all former Soviet people could justly be proud. Coverage drew attention not only to the space flight as a human scientific and technological endeavour that will stand for all time, but also lionised the endearing personal traits of the astronaut. The 'First in Space' campaign also allowed a celebration of common history of human achievement of the united Soviet people, without any focus on communist ideology.

'It is very important to continue to commemorate Victory Day across Ukraine'

The will to attribute positive valuation to shared history is also expressed in commemoration of the Second World War victory over Nazi Germany. 1945 entered Soviet political culture as a 'source of identification and self-esteem for both the political leadership and the population' and appears not to have diminished in this regard (Richters 2012: 67). The supporting narratives have, however, been subject to revisionist critiques by, among others, Ukrainian nationalists, who have attempted to depict the events of this period in terms that undermine the Soviet discourse of liberation than modern Russia has largely perpetuated. Furthermore, in L'viv in 2011 there was a big debate about whether to commensurate Victory Day there. The Russkiy Mir Foundation in particular, and also Russia more generally, have been paying active attention to the maintenance of existing Russian narratives on the Second World War, presumably to impede a collective forgetting of certain newly inconvenient factors from Ukrainian cultural memory.

'Russian culture has a lot of admirers in foreign countries across the globe'

The Russkiy Mir Foundation's website consistently underscores through its choice of features that people all over the world are interested in Russian culture.²³¹ This demonstrates the civilisational radiance of the Russian world, and seeing such

²³¹ For instance, the interview with Yuri Prokhorov, rector of the Oushkin State Russian Language Institute 'Russian is in demand around the world once again'.
<http://www.ruskiymir.org/en/publications/interviews/index.php?id4=10302> (accessed 3rd June 2009).

phenomena can incite a critical mass type effect, whereby after a certain tipping-point, the concept comes to prominence and attracts a surge in adherents as it becomes an accepted part of the cultural landscape. Respect for a prestigious culture is part of soft power attraction, and resists the idea that Russia is becoming internationally irrelevant.

'I consider myself a member of the Russkiy Mir'

Ideally, as many foreign citizens as possible, and especially in the former Soviet Union would feel an affinity with the Russkiy Mir as an additional tier of identity.

Appendix H: Elements of the Values Strand

Below are the statements utilised in the values section of the survey questionnaire, together with a brief justification of their inclusion. These are particularly based on the discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Western society and its morality have become too tolerant of non-traditional behaviours.

On the whole, the nature of the critique against the West is not absolute in nature. Rather than being portrayed as 'evil' and categorically 'othered'; the civilisation is framed as having lost its way somewhat. The pragmatically minded might well recall Surkov's statement of the need to cooperate with the West, and therefore the need for narratives that frame competitive debate, without invoking enmity. There is significant intertextual potential in this regard, as Richters (2012: 44) notes 'the ROC's dislike of "the West" and liberal democratic principles matches the communists' foreign policy and their autocratic style of government. The Church's wish to close Russia to new or 'Western' religious influence has traces of the isolationism that characterised the USSR for most of its existence'. Resistance to Western cultural influence often expresses a conservative discourse regarding 'non-traditional behaviours;' often a euphemism for homosexuality and other liberal sexual mores. This element also links in to the notion of opposing discourses that favour minorities 'at expense of sentiment of majority'.

The acquisition of wealth and consumption should not be promoted as main sources of values in society.

This may be seen as a re-articulation of the Soviet discourse on bourgeois materialism, whereby notions of the West as placing excessive value on the material, over the spiritual and human draw intertextually Soviet discourse on bourgeois materialism, re-articulating what many people 'know' about the West in ways that preserve its stability and indeed draw authority from the perpetuated nature of this discourse. The Moscow Patriarchate and Orthodox thinkers, Richters observes, have always 'held everything to do with money, profit and calculability in deep contempt' (cited in Richters 2012: 45), which 'turned a widespread concern of the 1990s into an almost desirable characteristic'. Again, the perceived orientation of Western society towards these values provides frequent grounds for criticism, both implicit and otherwise.

The Ukrainian path to modernisation and development should take into account the importance of spiritual and moral values.

The statement seeks to ascertain how individuals appraise the emphasis on spirituality and moral values in society that the Orthodox Church among others strives to promote.

I have a high opinion of Patriarch Kirill and consider him to be a leading authority.

As previously noted, in order to optimally engage in mean-making, credibility and authority are highly recommended. This statement attempts to succinctly evaluate the level of approval of the current patriarch.

In societal discussions on the rights of minorities, it is necessary to take into account the opinions of the majority.

This statement emerges as a response to the perception that Western societies are allowing their cultural integrity to become eroded by integrating value elements that are considered 'non-traditional' in Russian society. This seems to relate in particular to advancing minority sexual preferences, 'at expense of sentiment of majority' opinion. For instance, gomoscope.ru website launched in May 2012 to 'combat the growing terror of sexual minorities' and defend the rights of heterosexuals.²³² Nataliya Narochnitskaya (2007) has also reported that 'the diktat of minority rights contradicts democracy'

All peoples have the right to their own way of life - Political correctness is not a reason for the infringement of this right.

This reflects the key tenant of sovereign democracy that people have the right to live in line with their own traditions, as well as the discussion about political correctness in Europe, which has often had an oppositional tone, framing it as hypocritical and as sign of multicultural decadence (Aliev and Khasmagomadov 2010).

In comparison with other states, Russia has a positive experience of preserving the cultures, languages and uniqueness of its ethnic minorities.

The Russian imperial experience is contrasted with that of Western powers, with the implication that life under Moscow's domination was more equitable for those concerned. As Orthodox commentator Natalia Narochnitskaya (2007b) put it:

The fact that Russia never had colonies] is historical achievement of the Russian world. All territories and peoples of Russia had equal rights. The national culture of ethnic minorities was not suppressed but supported. The patrimonial empire guaranteed ethnic groups protection and helped them to preserve their samobytnost. [...] No racial segregation, no slavery, no religious war, never used atom bombs [...] Russia and the Russkiy Mir have something to be proud of in the sphere of political culture.

Similarly, despite simmering ethnic tensions, Putin has spoken positively about the country's different faiths, including Islam, and says Russians should be proud of their country's diversity. (cited Richters 2012: 53). Based on its favourable experience of religious cohabitation, Russia could, it is believed, contribute usefully to an international inter-faith discussion (Putin 2012).

²³²Claire Bigg, 'Being gay in St. Petersburg gets harder still', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 25th June 2012 <http://www.rferl.org/content/being-gay-in-russia-gets-harder-still/24625561.html> (accessed 3rd January 2013)

It is necessary to take more serious steps to strengthen spirituality and morality in Ukrainian society.

This factor captures the extent to which Ukrainians believe measures to increase spirituality and morality should be *practically implemented* in society.

Interethnic and inter-confessional relations in Russia are a good example to other countries.

It is stressed that Russia must learn from the critical examination of international experiences. One thematic area producing considerable debate is that of migration which has been followed closely by the Russian media. While the official discourse maintains the view of an inclusive federation with various degrees of primacy accorded to ethnic Russians by individual actors, the problematisation of multiculturalism in some Western states has been noted. Accordingly, advocates frequently point to the purported absence of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflict within the diverse realms of Russian statehood, concluding from this that Russia has something valuable to offer the world in this regard. This is considered to qualify Russia to assume a leadership role in the search for solutions to these thorny dilemmas.

Appendix I: Elements of Foreign Policy Strand

Below are the statements utilised in the values section of the survey questionnaire, together with a brief justification of their inclusion. These drew upon official statements by foreign policy representatives.

Every country has the right to decide to implement democracy in line with its own history, traditions and culture.

Although Russia's political system is commonly criticised by Western states as a mere façade of democracy, Kremlin elites do not fully concur. Based on the assumption that Russian history, culture and tradition differ significantly from the Western experience and provide significantly different conditions for development, Moscow reserves the right to implement a model of democracy appropriate for Russian conditions and in consideration of domestically defined priorities.

In spite of all its inadequacies, Russia is more or less a democratic country.

The Russian authorities readily admit failings in the Russian political system, yet they insist that that the country is a democracy, albeit a different kind than in Western countries, and is headed in the right direction. As Surkov frames it,

The time of observation is negligible and it is early for bold conclusions, but the first steps of Russian freedom are reassuring. Democracy has coped with poverty, separatism, societal despondency, legal collapse and has halted the dissolution of the army and state apparatus. It put pressure on oligarchy, went on the decisive offensive against international terrorism and strengthened the economy... it works... (Surkov 2009)

As such, these discourses resist not only Western critiques of Russian democracy, but also domestic elites who would claim that 'greater democracy in Russia would be harmful'.²³³ Levels of acceptance of such statements will give an indicator of the extent to which respondents are co-opted into the Kremlin's explanatory discourse on Russia's achievements concerning democracy, or whether their thoughts are more thoroughly influenced by critical sources.

Today the world has really become more multipolar.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the argument for unipolarity and 'benign' American hegemony (Krauthammer) was presented as in the global interest, since having a single power acting as 'global policeman' was seen to reduce conflict and rivalry in favour of peace. Moscow argues for 'justice for Russia in the world' (Surkov); meaning full representation in matters of major international geopolitical and economic significance.

²³³ Brian Whitmore, 'Russia's hyperactive ideologist' RFERL, 19th June 2009, <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1758417.html> (accessed 6th July 2007).

Russia deserves a more significant role in global political leadership.

The background to this statement is the notion that the West is striving in various ways to keep Russia down, out or otherwise contained, which is against Russia justified aspiration to great power status.

The preservation of domestic stability is the most important task the political elite of the country and should be guaranteed at any price.

The maintenance of state stability and sovereignty are seen as national security priorities. Fear of the turmoil of the 1990s is held up as an example of what must be avoided at all costs.

In spite of international criticism, the Russian authorities are right to have taken a tougher stance against oligarchs acting against the national interests of Russia.

The Khodorkovskiy Affair, for instance, was harshly criticised in the West, and cited as demonstrative of the failures of the Russian political system. *Raisons d'état* and a concern for territorial sovereignty have not been seen as grounds for the selective application of justice. The ROC also supported the vilification of oligarchs who enrich themselves at expense of the population and state (Richters 2012: 45). Surkov summarises the threat perception as follows:

The revanche of the oligarchy – a final decision in favor of the unconstrained transnationalization of Russia's economic and political assets – will doom the country to loss of subjecthood, dissolution into globalization instead of than participation in it. (2009: 17)

On the whole, I have a positive view of the political leadership of Russia.

The question seeks to evaluate the level of approval of the Russian leadership, which has implications for its credibility, perceived legitimacy and therefore its mean-making capacity.

Russia plays an important role in the establishing of justice in international politics.

Russia has accused the USA of imperilling international security and stability through its attempts to achieve absolute security (Putin 2012). In response, Russia has been involved in critiquing the certain behaviours in international politics, with accusations of double standards and breaches of international law. In this way, Russia draws upon anti-imperial motifs that echo those of the Soviet period.

Russia bears responsibility for the monitoring and protection of the rights of compatriots abroad.

In the 1990s, Russia was unable to uphold the interests of those Russians who found themselves living in a foreign country following the collapse of the Soviet Union with regard to their civil, linguistic and political rights. Having regained capacity, supporting Russians abroad – 'compatriots' – has become an important policy objective. The ability

to protect its own not only befits the dignity of a major power, but measures to this end have also given grounds for Moscow to get involved in the domestic affairs of the Soviet successor states, particularly in the Baltic and Ukraine. The assertive protection of compatriots was the ostensible rationale for Russian intervention in Georgia in August 2008. Further, as Putin has noted 'respect for one's country is rooted, among other things, in its ability to protect the rights of its citizens abroad' (2012).

To a large extent, Russian democracy is criticised by other countries for their own benefits.

This question seeks to assess the extent to which audiences are convinced of the charges of double-standards directed at Western political agents by Moscow, which feels that Western values put Russia at a disadvantage (Trenin 2007: 76 cited in Feklyunina 2010: 23). For instance, Vladimir Putin has stated that,

it appears that with the Arab Spring countries, as with Iraq, Russian companies are losing their decades-long position in local commercial markets and are being deprived of large commercial contracts. The niches thus vacated are being filled by the economic operatives of the states that had a hand in the change of the ruling regime.

One could reasonably conclude that tragic events have been encouraged to a certain extent by someone's interest in a re-division of the commercial market rather than a concern for human rights (Putin 2012).

Further, countering critique of Putin's democratic credentials, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has even described Putin as liberal, stating 'Putin is a liberal not in his words but in actual practice [...] In the West, they indulge in branding him "iron", "prophet of authoritarianism" and so on. This is complete nonsense.'²³⁴

²³⁴ 'Putin "liberal" in practice – spokesman' 26th March 2012, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120326/172397365.html> (accessed 26th March 2012).

Appendix J: Questions for Fieldwork Interviews

1. Could you briefly explain your professional position or positions and activities?
2. How do you personally understand soft power and does its application to Russia differ from elsewhere?
3. How widespread and engrained is recognition of Russia's need to develop soft power? (To what extent is it a matter a generation change?) Where are the main bases of support for a soft power approach to international politics? Who are the main detractors / sceptics of this approach? Have soft power's proponents in Russia successfully coopted wider groups of interested persons and opinion formers into the modern 'soft power' foreign policy narratives?
4. It is sometimes suggested that the state plays a more significant role in Russian soft power strategy than elsewhere. Do you agree? Are moves afoot to shift the emphasis towards the civil society sector?
5. It was once said by Vyacheslav Nikonov that Russia could not have soft power as it didn't have an ideational agenda to offer to the world. Do you agree? Is there a distinctive approach to development that Russia might offer to the world, drawing upon its own traditions? Is there demand for such a model? Do you see the ideas of sovereign democracy as something potentially attractive to foreigners (the controversial title aside)? Ideally, what image of Russia would you like Ukrainians to have?
6. What are the most effective tools of soft power at Russia's disposal in Ukraine? How do you see the role of the Orthodox Church in Russia's soft power strategy?
7. What are the main contemporary challenges to Russia soft power attractiveness in Ukraine?
8. How much interaction and coordination are there between measures aimed at the Russian compatriot community in Ukraine and those aimed at the general population? Are different instruments and messages used to target these two audiences?
9. To what extent is the reception of Russian narratives about international relations by audiences in Ukraine monitored and taken into account by Russian communications professionals? Are the insights gleaned from such research successfully fed back into the communication and message generation process?

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