

The making of the “Russian Doctrine” (2000-2005) Political sociology of “dynamic conservatism”

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Introduction

In the beginning of the 2000s, the young Russian conservative thinker Vitalii Averianov (1973-) formulated a political theory called “dynamic conservatism”. This ideology blended religious traditionalism with the promotion of economic growth and technological modernity. Averianov’s dynamic conservatism fitted a broader effort pursued by members of his political generation, the “Young Conservatives”, to formulate a new type of Russian conservatism. In 2005, Averianov created the “Centre for Dynamic Conservatism” and brought together a coalition of over forty intellectuals to publish a collective manifesto, the “Russian Doctrine”, which acknowledged dynamic conservatism as its foundational ideological framework. The doctrine provided a detailed policy programme to implement its vision of the Russian nation, “soul”, state, economy, and path towards development.

This paper researches the social and doctrinal gestation of the political theory of dynamic conservatism. It analyses the emergence of dynamic conservatism as part of Averianov’s individual and generational trajectory, its career in the public sphere and its evolution into a group doctrine.

How did dynamic conservatism grow into a formal and institutionalised doctrine over the years 2000-2005? How did his main theoretician and his generation of young conservative intellectuals acquire representation in the public sphere? What are the social and doctrinal mechanisms involved in the production and circulation of political ideas in post-Soviet Russia? More generally, how does a political ideology consolidate in an authoritarian context?

The sources studied include all the articles published by Vitalii Averianov in the period from 1995 to 2005,¹ the 2005 edition of the “Russian Doctrine”,² as well as landmark publications by other members of the “Young Conservatives”, which contributed to draw the lines of the ideological framework of modern Russian conservatism to which Averianov’s theory belonged.³

¹ The archives of Vitalii Averianov’s articles since 1994 are available on his website at <http://averianov.net/sii/?h=604>.

² Other editions have followed. The 2005 version is available here : ‘Tezisy Russkoi Doktriny’, November 2005, <http://averianov.net/sii/510/?h=604>.

³ Such as Mikhail Remizov’s article on the field of Russian conservatism: Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor’, *APN.Ru*, 30 January 2006, <https://apn-nn.com/analytic/konservatizm-segodnya-analiticheskii-obzor/>; or the collective report “Counter-Reformation”, published in 2005, available here: ‘Kontreformatsiia’, *Russkii Obozrevatel*, <https://www.rus-obr.ru/ru-club/4066>.

Methodologically, this research draws on Quentin Skinner's contextualist approach to the production of political ideas.⁴ The contextualist method was initially developed to reveal the "broader networks of beliefs" and "intellectual frameworks" that irrigated political thought from distant historical periods, in order to avoid various "mythologies".⁵ Although this study deals with contemporary history, an understanding of the conventions structuring the argumentative situation of the texts is necessary to shed light on the different meanings that political categories can acquire in the Russian context. This paper develops a contextual – rather than a predetermined – definition of contemporary Russian conservatism in order to retrieve its meaning in the discourse of young intellectuals in the early 2000s. In addition to the analysis of texts, it relies on information gathered during a series of interviews held with Vitalii Averianov and other Young Conservatives in 2018-2019 in Moscow.⁶ Other important materials include past interviews and testimonies of the authors archived on their websites.⁷ These sources allow retrieving information on the "making-of" the political ideology of dynamic conservatism and the illocutionary intentions of its authors.⁸

Furthermore, this research follows recent attempts of the "new sociology of ideas" at engaging Quentin Skinner's essentially semantic definition of contexts with an analysis of the social conditions of production and circulation of ideas.⁹ Beside an analysis of the doctrinal content of discourses, this approach is attentive to the social situation in which they are displayed. This paper examines discourses as positioned in a threefold situation: its temporal situation within the biographical trajectory and professional career of its author, its material place of publication and the sociological

⁴ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁵ Skinner: 4. On the "mythologies", see Paper 4: "Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas".

⁶ Series of interviews held in Moscow with Vitalii Averianov (July 2018, February 2019, July 2019), Mikhail Remizov (June 2018, February 2019), Egor Kholmogorov (July 2018, August 2019), Boris Mezhev (October 2019), Konstantin Krylov (November 2019), Dmitrii Volodikhin (October 2019).

⁷ See the section "Interview and articles" on Averianov's website: <http://averianov.net/sii/>. See also the collection of interviews of the signatories of the the "Counter-Reformation" held in 2015 and published on the website Politconservatism.Ru: <https://politconservatism.ru/tag/kontrreformatsiya>.

⁸ Quentin Skinner defined illocutionary intentions as "what [writers] may have intended in writing in a certain way" and the "acts that the writer may have been performing in writing in a particular way", see Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume 1: Regarding Method*, pp. 99-100; on the role of archives and interviews in providing access to the "making-of" the production of texts, see Mathieu Hauchecorne and Frédérique Matonti, 'Actualité de l'histoire sociale des idées politiques', *Raisons politiques* N° 67, no. 3 (24 October 2017): 9.

⁹ Charles Camic and Neil Gross, 'The New Sociology of Ideas', in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, ed. Judith R. Blau (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004): 236-49; For similar attempts in France, see Arnault Skornicki and Jérôme Tournadre, *La nouvelle histoire des idées politiques* (Paris: la Découverte, 2015); Chloé Gaboriaux and Arnault Skornicki, eds., *Vers Une Histoire Sociale Des Idées Politiques*, Espaces Politiques (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2017); Hauchecorne and Matonti, 'Actualité de l'histoire sociale des idées politiques'.

“location” of its author’s generation.¹⁰ The different semantic, social and material environments in which dynamic conservatism has been formulated inform its multifaceted meaning, which is shaped as much by its theoretical content as by the type of issues, milieus and audience it addressed in each situation.

While the literature has extensively covered the more recent period of Russian conservatism, with a focus on the 2012 “conservative turn” of the Russian regime, this paper provides insight onto the social and doctrinal origins of the circulation of conservative discourse in the Russian public sphere. It stands in contrast with some of the major assumptions of academic research on Russian conservatism. Scholars tend to interpret the Russian regime’s conservative discourse as a pragmatic strategy deprived of genuine value adhesion.¹¹ In contrast to this interest-driven approach to ideology, other studies have focused on Russian conservative intellectuals to highlight their normative commitment to a set of principles and beliefs.¹² This paper seeks to challenge the opposition between instrumental and idealist explanations of ideological discourse. In contrast to the idealist approach, this paper argues that ideological discourse is not limited to purely theoretical concerns. Its meaning is not solely retrieved from fixed substantial categories, but rather through an interactive process with other concepts and the actors that use them.¹³ Dynamic conservatism, and the broader current of “Young Conservatism” it belonged to, were shaped in relation with other ideological groups competing for representation and legitimacy in the public sphere. The conservative intellectuals’ position within this competition was informed by their past experiences, networks, and biographical trajectory. Their discourse was driven by instrumental concerns to advance their situation and career within this social reality. Moreover, the production of ideas in contemporary Russia is placed under outside constraints such as the authoritarian state control over the media and information space and the legacy of elite polarisations inherited from the late Soviet period.

If intellectuals are subject to external constraints derived from the specific political context with which they interact, conversely, their discourse is not just instrumentally driven. It directly shapes the social reality in a performative way. Through their application of concepts to specific groups and organisations, intellectuals contribute to the objectivisation and politicisation of the identity of elite groups, such as the “liberals” and the “post-modernists” as opposed to the “conservatives”.¹⁴ This paper therefore argues that ideological production is a production of the political. Following this, it proposes to study ideology not from the

¹⁰ On the concept of a generation’s “location”, see Karl Mannheim, ‘The Sociological Problem of Generations’, in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959).

¹¹ Marlene Laruelle, ‘Conservatism as the Kremlin’s New Toolkit: An Ideology at the Lowest Cost’, *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 138 (8 November 2013): 3; Richard Sakwa, *Putin Redux: Power and Contradiction in Contemporary Russia* (Abingdon, Oxon ; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2014): 125.

¹² See “Introduction” in Katharina Bluhm and Mihai Varga, eds., *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe*, Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series 85 (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019); see also Paul Robinson, *Russian Conservatism*, NIU Series in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (Ithaca, New York: Northern Illinois University Press, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2019).

¹³ On this relational approach to concepts, see Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008).

¹⁴ I am grateful to Aleksandr Lutsenko for suggesting this argument.

viewpoint of sociology of knowledge, but from that of political sociology. The study of ideology is a study of the interaction of actors around the definition of concepts and polarities, which are constitutive of the political order.

The paper develops its argument in five parts. The first part looks at the elaboration of dynamic conservatism in the early period of Vitalii Averianov's intellectual career from 1995 until 2000. It shows that dynamic conservatism has been elaborated at the crossroads between scholarly, militant, and journalistic discourse. It resulted from the politicisation of Averianov's adhesion to Orthodox traditionalism. The second part demonstrates that Averianov's dynamic conservatism belonged to a broader generational effort pursued by the "Young Conservatives" to formulate a new type of conservatism that would stand in contrast with the national-patriotic ideology of the older generation active in the 1990s. The third part examines how Averianov contributed to and benefited from the empowerment of his intellectual generation in the public sphere. It contends that the "Young Conservatives" used the publishing opportunities provided by the Internet and the support of key established figures in the field of online journalism to foster their career as media intellectuals. The fourth part displays that dynamic conservatism built its morphological specificity in a context where conservative discourse had become increasingly hegemonic in the public sphere. The "Young Conservatives" discourse addressed a competitive ideological environment, where they argued with other groups for the representation and legitimacy of their ideas in the state policies and power institutions. Averianov particularly pitted dynamic conservatism as an alternative to the "liberal-conservatism" advocated by rival religious and intellectual milieus. The final part of the paper focuses on the publication of the "Russian Doctrine" and the Young Conservatives' "Counter-Reformation" report in 2005. It argues that these collective manifestos established Young Conservatism as a formal social and doctrinal group identity in the public sphere. Beyond mere written materials, the documents aimed to practically implement the young conservative intellectuals' entry strategy into the political realm through discursive means. While the "Russian Doctrine" became one of the landmark publications of modern Russian conservatism, it paved the way for the development of dynamic conservatism as a specific social and doctrinal ramification within this ideological field.¹⁵

1. Dynamic conservatism as the result of the politicisation of Averianov's discourse and intellectual trajectory

From the mid-1990s until the early 2000s, Vitalii Averianov formulated his conception of "dynamic conservatism", which blends religious traditionalism with the promotion of technological and industrial modernity. Averianov tested and developed his ideas in different types of publication places: scientific, ideological, and journalistic. The re-characterisation of his worldview – from Orthodox philosophical traditionalism to the ideology of dynamic conservatism – displayed the politicisation of his discourse and of his intellectual trajectory.

After having graduated from the Faculty of Journalism of the University of Moscow in 1996, Averianov started a PhD in philosophy. His dissertation researched "The problem of tradition in 20th century Russian philosophy: the Russian

¹⁵ For a simplified reading, inverted commas are no longer used for the terms Young Conservatives, Young Conservatism, Russian Doctrine and Counter-Reformation in the rest of the text.

Diaspora”.¹⁶ Throughout his PhD course, Averianov pursued a wide-ranging publication strategy, which earned him a reputation as a specialist of the concept of tradition in different social and intellectual milieus. First, Averianov published a series of articles in non-academic ideological journals such as *Volshebnaia Gora* [The Magic Mountain] and *Pravoslavnoe Knizhnoe Obozrenie* [The Orthodox Book Review], of which he became the editor-in-chief in the years 1998-1999. Through these publications, Averianov socialised himself into the circles of the older generation of the so-called “national-patriotic”¹⁷ ideologues. The journal *Volshebnaia Gora*, created in the aftermath of the events of October 1993,¹⁸ gathered some of the key ideologues of the anti-Yeltsin coalition, such as Aleksandr Dugin (1962-), Geidar Dzhemal (1947-2016) and Evgenii Golovin (1938-2010). Together with other journals such as *Zavtra* [Tomorrow] or *Den Literatury* [The Day of Literature], *Volshebnaia Gora* provided a publishing platform for authors otherwise excluded from mainstream newspapers and academic journals. While *Zavtra* focused on contemporary political issues, *Volshebnaia Gora* was devoted to philosophical and metaphysical discussions on the concept of “Tradition” involving a wide variety of worldviews – religious thought, esotericism, Gnosticism...¹⁹ As the editor-in-chief of the journal *Pravoslavnoe Knizhnoe Obozrenie*, Averianov also published a number of homages to the Orthodox priest and ideologue Father Dimitrii Dudko (1922-2004).²⁰ A controversial figure known for his praise of Stalin’s religiosity and his promotion of the Soviet authorities, Dimitrii Dudko was also the spiritual father of the journal *Zavtra* and one of his active contributors.²¹ By claiming his legacy, Averianov further marked himself as an Orthodox thinker of a radical orientation and entrenched his affinity with the representatives of the older generation of conservatives. In addition, Averianov developed intellectual references of his own by claiming a filiation with alternative sources of the Russian history of thought. For instance, in the article “Traditionalism in the avant-garde”, he provided an original interpretation of the work

¹⁶ See the profile page of Averianov’s dissertation on the Russian dissertations register: <https://www.dissercat.com/content/problema-traditsii-v-russkoi-filosofii-xx-veka-russkoe-zarubezhe>

¹⁷ As explained by Vitalii Averianov during an interview with the author, this term was used by members of the older generation to call themselves: Vitalii Averianov, interview by Juliette Faure, 28 July 2020.

¹⁸ A political crisis occurred in October 1993 when the Parliament – supported by the national-patriotic ideologues – opposed the constitutional changes proposed by Boris Yeltsin. The standoff was resolved by military force.

¹⁹ About the profile of the journal, see for example: Andrei Okara, ‘Nezrimoe Siianie “Volshebnoi Gory”’, *Russkii Zhurnal* (blog), 12 October 2009, <http://russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Nezrimoe-siianie-Volshebnoj-Gory>; Vladimir Bondarenko, ‘Volshebnaia Gora’, *Zavtra* (blog), 24 October 2012, <https://zavtra.ru/blogs/volshebnaia-gora-2012-10-24-000000>.

²⁰ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Neoborimaia Krotost. Ob o. Dimitrii Dudko’, *Pravoslavnoe Knizhnoe Obozrenie*, December 1998, <http://averianov.net/sii/538/?h=670;%20http://averianov.net/sii/483/?h=670>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Kogda Bog Izbiraet Nemoshch... (Otets Dimitrii Dudko i Ego Propoved “Cherez Pozor”)’’, *Pravoslavnoe Knizhnoe Obozrenie* 1–2 (1999), <http://averianov.net/sii/483/?h=670>.

²¹ See Dimitrii Dudko's biography: Oliver Bullough, *The Last Man in Russia: The Struggle to Save a Dying Nation* (New York: Basic Books, a member of Perseus Books Group, 2013).

of the avant-garde poet Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922).²² He identified Khlebnikov's literary style as a "rejection of 'modernism'" and a return to "the principles of archaic, pre-written eras".²³ Khlebnikov therefore is taken as an example of the persistence of "spontaneous Russian traditionalism" within avant-garde, innovative creations.²⁴

Beside his publications in marginal ideological journals, Averianov also contributed to academic journals as early as in 1994.²⁵ His two most mature scientific articles were published in 2000, the year of his PhD defence. In these pieces, Averianov delved into the concept of tradition and the philosophy of tradition from the point of view of an intellectual and historiographical debate in compliance with common academic standards and formats. The article "Tradition and traditionalism in scientific and social thought in Russia (1960s-1990s)" provides a literature review and contributes to a scholarly debate with Soviet sociologists and philosophers.²⁶ In another article, "Tradition as continuity and service", Averianov seeks to address an "urgent methodological task" by providing a definition of the category of tradition and of the "ideal model of the modern 'traditionalist'".²⁷ He defends an Orthodox theological conception of the "Sacred Tradition", as opposed to the "modern tradition". In addition, he claims continuity with the work of the Soviet culturologist Eduard Markarian, whom he referred to as "one of the most authoritative researchers of the problem".²⁸ He builds up on Markarian's "dynamic view," according to which "traditions and innovations practically dissolve into each other", for "tradition gives innovation its general direction and innovation turns into tradition".²⁹ However, instead of a balanced competition between the principles of tradition and innovation, Averianov argues for a philosophy that primarily works within the "Sacred Tradition" and fundamentally relies on it as its sole and inner principle. In this understanding, the Sacred Tradition can never be "subordinated" to "external tendencies". Rather, any innovation is to be understood from the primary standpoint of the Sacred Tradition as a "revelation" and a "kind of God's action".³⁰

By the end of his PhD studies, Averianov also started using generalist media outlets to spell out his ideas to a wider audience. In 2000, he published a series of three articles in the religion section of the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Gazeta's* website. In the article "On the 'synthesis' of Orthodox ideology," he reiterated his understanding of the concept of tradition in more vernacular terms:

²² Vitalii Averianov, 'V.V. Khlebnikov: Traditsionalizm v Avangarde', *Volshebnaia Gora V* (1996), <http://averianov.net/sii/484/?h=478>.

²³ Averianov.

²⁴ Averianov.

²⁵ Vitalii Averianov, 'Zhitie Veniamina Blazhennogo', *Voprosy Literatury* 6 (1994), <http://averianov.net/sii/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, 'Fenomenologia Smutnogo Vremeni: Otkuda Zhdut Minina i Pozharskogo?', *Obshchestvennye Nauki i Sovremennost* 3 (1996): 95–103.

²⁶ Vitalii Averianov, 'Traditsiia i Traditsionalizm v Nauchnoi i Obshchestvennoi Mysli Rossii (60-e - 90-e Gg. XX Veka)', *Obshchestvennye Nauki i Sovremennost* 1 (n.d.): 68–77.

²⁷ Vitalii Averianov, 'Traditsiia Kak Preemstvennost i Sluzhenie', *Chelovek*, no. 2 (2000): 38–51.

²⁸ Averianov.

²⁹ Averianov.

³⁰ Averianov.

Tradition does not avoid innovations and does not fight against them, but presupposes the determination of clear boundaries within which the effect of innovation is possible and beyond which it cannot go.³¹

He used for the first time the formula “dynamic conservatism” to describe his worldview, which he pitted as a solution to the arbitration between the country’s preservation of identity and its necessary development. Averianov further claimed that this type of conservatism conformed to the “Russian religious and socio-philosophical ideal” developed in the 20th century by major philosophers and theologians.³² Besides, he urged to move on to a more combative attitude to concretely promote and implement this intellectual legacy:

We retreated for a very long time. It’s time to finally push back and create a truly conservative ideology.³³

In application of his principle of the alliance of traditionalism and innovation, Averianov called a “conservative Orthodox ideology” that would take an authoritative and instrumental approach towards modernity:

What is relevant for the Church is not to adapt to the requirements of modern institutions, but that modern means and methods adapt to its inner spiritual requirements. Orthodoxy must arm itself with the entire arsenal of weapons of the modern liberal civilization and put its powerful and effective technology at its service.³⁴

In this article, the theory that Averianov had elaborated as a theoretical argumentation in his scientific papers is framed as a socio-political doctrine relevant for the country’s contemporary challenges. The evolution of Averianov’s choice of words to qualify his position, from the philosophy of Orthodox traditionalism to the ideology of dynamic conservatism, displayed the politicisation of his discourse.³⁵

In the following years, Averianov sustained his strategy of concurrent contribution to three different types of publication places: the ideologically inclined institutions of the older generation of national-patriots such as *Zavtra*, *Volshebnaia Gora* and *Moskva*,³⁶ scientific philosophical journals such as *Istoriia Filosofii*,³⁷ and mainstream media outlets which provide opinions and expertise to a general audience such as *Ekspert* and *Russkii Zhurnal*.³⁸ The ideology of dynamic conservatism has

³¹ Vitalii Averianov, ‘O “Sinteze” Pravoslavnoi Ideologii’, *NG Religii*, 7 March 2000, <http://averianov.net/sii/479/?h=639>.

³² “This conviction is quite clearly expressed by M.M. Tareev, P.A. Florenskii, L.P. Karsavin, N.S. Trubetskoi, P.N. Savitskii, I.A. Ilin, G.V. Florovskii, V. V. Zenkovskii, N.S. Arseniev and many others”. Averianov.

³³ Averianov.

³⁴ Averianov.

³⁵ On the politicisation of philosophical theories, see Frédérique Matonti, ‘La politisation du structuralisme. Une crise dans la théorie’, *Raisons politiques* no 18, no. 2 (2005): 49.

³⁶ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Rossiia - Ne Ot Mira Cego’, *Zavtra*, no. 425 (8 January 2002), <http://averianov.net/sii/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Kastratsia Germafrodita - Konetz Postmoderna?’, *Volshebnaia Gora VIII* (2002), <http://averianov.net/sii/472/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Metafizika Podopolovogo Nachala V. V. Rozanova’, *Moskva 2* (2002), <http://averianov.net/sii/531/?h=478>.

³⁷ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Russkaia Istoricheskaia Traditsiia v Neokonservatizme I. A. Ilina’, *Istoriia Filosofii* 9 (2002): 110–19.

³⁸ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Otchaiane Brillianta’, *Ekspert* 1–2, no. 309 (14 January 2020), <http://averianov.net/sii/471/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Tretii Polius’, *Ekspert* 10, no. 317 (2002), <http://averianov.net/sii/532/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Vavilonskoe

therefore been elaborated in different social and intellectual milieus, at the crossroads between scholarly, militant and journalistic discourses.³⁹

Beyond the Russian domestic context, dynamic conservatism was also framed to mirror similar attempts overseas to update the conservative political thought to the new theoretical challenges brought about by the theorisation of “post-modernity”. For this reason, young conservative intellectuals felt at first a situational proximity with American “neo-conservatism” and replicated their appellation by using the term “Russian neo-conservatism”, until they realised their strong conceptual inconsistencies.⁴⁰ By 2005, when Averianov’s elaboration of dynamic conservatism was complete and formalised in the Russian Doctrine, he maintained a certain affiliation with the neoconservatives’ ambition to frame a conservative programme adapted to the modern conditions of the 21st century, but posited the doctrine as a specifically Russian counter-reaction against foreign variants of neo-conservatism:

If we try to look for parallels to the genre and functions that are characteristic of the [Russian Doctrine], we can, with a certain degree of convention, mention the program “Japan in the 21st century” or the programmatic documents of the Project for the New American Century developed by American “neoconservatives” under the leadership of P. Wolfowitz, D. Cheney and others. However, the spiritual and ideological charge of the Russian Doctrine and the Sergei project as a whole is deeply unique and associated with the traditions of our culture.⁴¹

In addition to the theoretical considerations involved in the elaboration of dynamic conservatism, the following part argues that the formation of Averianov’s ideology also stemmed from a broader generational effort by young conservatives to distinguish themselves from the older generation of national-patriotic ideologues.

2. Dynamic conservatism as an ideological product of a new political generation

Osvobozhdenie’, *Ekspert* 33, no. 339 (9 September 2020), <http://averianov.net/sii/533/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Rossiia i Chelovechestvo’, *Russkii Zhurnal*, 2002, <http://averianov.net/sii/470/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Tsivilizatsiia v Labirintakh Kosmizma’, *Ekspert* 5 (2003), <http://averianov.net/sii/528/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Vdokh i Vydokh Rossii’, *Ekspert* 30, no. 337 (2002), <http://averianov.net/sii/527/?h=478>; Vitalii Averianov, ‘Ot Dumy k Soboru (Politologicheskaia Fantastika Blizhnego Deistviia)’, *Russkii Zhurnal*, 29 December 2003, <http://averianov.net/sii/468/?h=478>.

³⁹ On the mix of scholarly and militant discourse, see Hauchecorne and Matonti, ‘Actualité de l’histoire sociale des idées politiques’, 6.

⁴⁰ This early tentative positioning towards American neo-conservatism is recounted by Boris Mezhev: “The word ‘neocon’ sounded rather tempting, and soon many supporters of the revival of the Orthodox monarchy, or something equally superpowerful, began to call themselves ‘Russian neocons’. Since the idea of these very ‘neocons’ remained very vague in Russia, the use of the name of the popular ideology with the prefix ‘neo’ seemed to bode well. Then it soon became clear that the true ‘neocons’, the American ones, were the least inclined in the world to love the Russian superpower.” Boris Mezhev, ‘Neokonservativnii Proekt Dlia Rossii’, *APN.Ru*, 16 March 2007, <https://www.apn.ru/opinions/article11658.htm>.

⁴¹ ‘Sergievskii Proekt’, Russkaia Doktrina website, accessed 11 July 2020, <http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/page95505.html>.

Averianov belongs to a generational group of conservative intellectuals approximately born in the years 1965-1980. Starting from the early 2000s, this group has been designated as the Young Conservatives (*mladokonservatory*) by external commentators as well as the group's members themselves.⁴² Beside Averianov, other prominent members of this group include Konstantin Krylov (1967-2020), Boris Mezhuev (1970-), Egor Kholmogorov (1975-) and Mikhail Remizov (1978-). Notwithstanding certain ideological nuances and divergences between Averianov and other members of the Young Conservatives, his theory of dynamic conservatism fitted the broader “location” constitutive of his political generation. As per Karl Mannheim’s sociological theory of generations, a generation can be defined as a unity “constituted essentially by a similarity of location of a number of individuals within a social whole”.⁴³ Beyond a mere age coincidence, the concept of similarity of location implies that generation members share common experiences of specific historical and social circumstances and that they react to and participate in these events as an integrated group through specific modes of behaviour, feelings and thought. In this respect, the Young Conservatives are “sociologically significant” as a political generation to the extent that they have “[worked] up the material of their common experiences” in similar ways.⁴⁴

First, the Young Conservatives went through similar life trajectories. They have spent their youth during the late Soviet period. They were trained into social sciences during the 1990s and early 2000s. Most of them attended the University of Moscow in philosophy (Averianov, Krylov, Remizov, Mezhuev) or history (Kholmogorov). It is in this academic environment that the embryo cells of the movement were created in the late 1990s, when Krylov and Kholmogorov met at a philosophy seminar taught by Aleksei Boldyrev, a specialist in the history of Russian

⁴² This term has been widely used by external commentators as well as members of the group. For examples of the use of the term by members of the group, see: Konstantin Krylov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 10 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/experiences/kontreformatsiya-predystoriya-i-posleslovie>; Egor Kholmogorov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 10 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/kontreformatsiya-zhizn-bez-maiatnika>; Boris Mezhuev, ‘V Soznanii Minutnoi Sily’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 23 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/v-soznanii-minutnoy-sily>; Mikhail Golovanov, ‘Mezhdu Paternalizmom i Tvorcheskoi Siloi Natsii’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 7 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/experiences/mezhdu-paternalizmom-i-tvorcheskoy-siloy-natsii>; Iliia Brazhnikov, ‘Vopreki Nazvaniu Doklad Nes v Sebe Dukh Istinnoi Reformatsii’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 2 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/prognosis/vopreki-nazvaniyu-doklad-nyes-v-sebe-duk-istinnoy-reformatsii>;

For examples of the use of the term by external observers, see Mikhail Diunov, ‘Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istoriia Ego Znachenie’, *Russkii Zhurnal*, 5 December 2009, <http://www.russ.ru/pole/Mladokonservatizm.-Ego-istoriya-ego-znachenie>; see also Alexander Pavlov’s article on the Young Conservatives and the parallel he draws with the German Young Conservative movement of the 1910-1920s: Alexander Pavlov, ‘The Great Expectations of Russian Young Conservatism’, in *Contemporary Russian Conservatism. Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives*, ed. Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 153–76.

⁴³ Mannheim, ‘The Sociological Problem of Generations’. P. ?

⁴⁴ Mannheim. P. ?

philosophy, who later on wrote scholarly articles on the Young Conservatives.⁴⁵ In the focus of their studies and publications, the Young Conservatives demonstrated a mutual interest for specific research areas: Russian philosophy, Russian Orthodoxy, the Russian “national idea”, political conservatism and the concept of tradition.⁴⁶

The Young Conservatives also shared mutual reactions to a set of key events that have impinged on their self-consciousness as a group. As put forth by Remizov, the fall of the Soviet Union and the defeat in the Cold War constituted “a factor of crystallization” of the new Russian conservatism.⁴⁷ In this regard, he stressed the emotional aspect of the unity of the group:

Modern Russian conservatism was undoubtedly born as a reaction to the destruction and disintegration of the Soviet empire. [...] The commonality of the experience of loss is of great emotional significance.⁴⁸

Further, the Young Conservatives related to each other by a radical rejection of the political legacy of the 1990s. They expressed a sentiment of alienation from both sides of the spectrum, the Yeltsin’s ruling elites on the one hand and the “national-patriotic” opposition, on the other. As explained by Krylov, their use of the term “conservatism” was meant as an alternative to this bipolar ideological confrontation:

Talk about “conservatism” began in the very late nineties, when the decline of ideologies born in the White House [the Russian Federation Government House] became apparent — that is the “democratic” model of 1991 and the “red-brown” model of 1993. This was completely inevitable, since both ideologies were associated with Yeltsin and Yeltsinism, either positively or negatively. Yeltsin’s time was drawing to a close, and everyone felt it.⁴⁹

Similarly, in an article that served as the programme for the short-lived “Club of conservative analysts” founded in 1998, Averianov claimed that the formation of a genuine conservatism should first rely on the “cleansing” of the ideological paradigms

⁴⁵ Aleksei Boldyrev, ‘Russkaia Doktrina’, in *Russkaia Filosofii. Entsiklopediia* (Mir filosofii Moskva, 2019), 595–96; Aleksei Boldyrev, ‘Averianov’, in *Russkaia Filosofii. Entsiklopediia* (Mir filosofii Moskva, 2019), 9–10.

⁴⁶ In 1997, Boris Mezhuev defended his thesis for the degree of candidate of philosophical sciences on the topic “The domestic origins of the philosophy of Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov (socio-cultural context of the 70-90s of the XIX century.)” See his profile on MGU: <https://philos.msu.ru/node/289>.

Some of his other early publications include articles on the “Russian idea” and “national interest”: Boris Mezhuev, “‘Russkaia Ideia’ Pered Vyzovom Sovremennosti’, *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta*, no. 6 (1993): 29–34; Boris Mezhuev, ‘Poniatie “Natsionalnii Interes” v Rossiiskoi Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoi Zhizni’, *Polis*, no. 1 (1997): 5–31; Mikhail mentioned that Konstantin Krylov published an article entitled “Tradition” in the journal *Volshebnaia Gora* in 1998, see Mikhail Duinov, ‘Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istoriia Ego Znachenie’, *Russkii Zhurnal*, 5 December 2009, <http://www.russ.ru/pole/Mladokonservatizm.-Ego-istoriya-ego-znachenie>. In 2004, Mikhail Remizov defended his thesis on the topic “Criticism of universalism in the philosophy of the French ‘new right’”, see the Russian dissertations register: <https://www.dissercat.com/content/kritika-universalizma-v-filosofii-frantsuzskikh-novykh-pravykh>

⁴⁷ ‘Novie Konservatory: Budushchee Rossii?’, *Moskovskii Vestnik*, no. 4 (2004), <http://averianov.net/sii/458/?h=670>.

⁴⁸ Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor’.

⁴⁹ Krylov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie’.

of the 1990s, which he described as “illusions”.⁵⁰ Beside his sharp criticism of Yeltsin’s regime, Averianov also targeted the “pseudo-conservative political forms” represented by anti-Yeltsin oppositionist figures such as the leader of the Communist Party Gennadii Ziuganov:

The “patriotic” opposition to the regime tried to play the conservative card, but was inconsistent in this striving. [...] Zyuganov's “patriotic bloc”, despite the promising nature of the idea of a “red-brown” synthesis, as his enemies called it, turned out in practice to be sluggish and lacking in initiative. Rationally understanding the necessity and historical legitimacy of such a synthesis, the communists were neither spiritually nor emotionally fit to create fresh, suggestive, charismatic forms of conservatism.⁵¹

Young Conservatives did claim the legacy of a few founding figures of the generation of intellectuals which preceded them. For instance, they have repeatedly paid tribute to Vadim Tsymburskii (1957-2009), a geopolitician and theoretician of Russia’s isolationism.⁵² Some of the Young Conservatives have also demonstrated close personal or intellectual affiliation with different types of spiritual mentors, such as Father Dimitrii Dudko (1922-2004) for Averianov,⁵³ or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008) for Mezhuev.⁵⁴ Despite these connections, the explicit effort of the Young Conservatives to distinguish themselves from the previous generation of national-patriotic ideologues is a key definitional feature of their movement. As put forth by Averianov, the use of the etiquette “Young Conservatives” was meant to design a new political identity in contrast to other labels such as “neo-conservatism”, already used in the 1990s:

Neo-conservatism is not a new term in the history of ideologies. Actually, many social movements in emigration after 1917 were “neo-conservative” in Russian political history: for example, representatives of Eurasianism, I.A. Ilin or I.L. Solonevich. In post-Soviet Russia, the “neoconservative” tendency was represented by a whole trend within the national-patriotic movement: V.V. Kozhinov, Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev) and many others. The concept of a “Young Conservative” wave implies that it is a creative work of a truly new generation.⁵⁵

Semantic and stylistic considerations weighted in the self-designation of young intellectuals as “conservatives”. Looking back at the foundation of the movement in an article published in 2015, Krylov explained that their choice of the term “conservatism” was meant as an identity marker to “delimit the new ideology from

⁵⁰ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Konservativizm - Ochishchenie Ot Illiuzii (Programma Kluba Konservativnykh Analitikov)’, *Zolotoi Lev*, no. 11–12 (2000), <http://averianov.net/sii/477/?h=670>.

⁵¹ Averianov.

⁵² See Krylov, “‘Kontsrreformatsiia’: Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie’. Tsymburskii’s essay *Ostrov Rossiia* was the first book published by the Institute for National Strategy led by Remizov in 2004. In 2011, Mezhuev published a monograph on Tsymburskii: Boris Mezhuev, *Politicheskaiia Kritika Vadima Tsymburskogo* (Evropa, 2011).

⁵³ Dimitrii Dudko wrote the preface of Averianov’s 2003 book: Vitalii Averianov, *Priroda Russkoi Ekspansii* (Moscow: Lenta-Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ Boris Mezhuev, ‘Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn i Russkoe Budushchee’, *APN.Ru*, 25 July 2005, <https://www.apn.ru/index.php?newsid=1485>.

⁵⁵ See Averianov’s footnote 1 in ‘Novie Konservatory: Budushchee Rossii?’.

other existing ones.”⁵⁶ In his view, the word conservatism aimed to avoid the terminology associated with more radical anti-liberal ideologies, such as “traditionalism” or “red-brown”:

“Traditionalism” had already been captured by several other people. [...] Compared with the eclectic and ridiculous “red-brown” idol of the nineties, [conservatism] gave the impression of being strong and beautiful.⁵⁷

While the older generation had consolidated itself as a group through their shared experience of protests and opposition against the Yeltsin regime, the new generation was not engaged in deviant behaviour. In contrast with previous forms of political extremism, the etiquette “conservatism” was meant to carry a sense of respectability.

Furthermore, in terms of ideological programme, a significant distinction between the two generations lied in their relation to Russian nationalism. The younger generation shared a concern for the promotion of ethnic Russian national feelings and interests. As put by Krylov,

Most Young Conservatives were not in a hurry to declare themselves nationalists, and some categorically did not want to. However, everyone understood that Russian national feelings and interests should, if not be put at the forefront, at least be rehabilitated, decriminalized, and legalized. This program [...] was perhaps the most powerful part of the young conservative program.⁵⁸

This position strongly opposed the older generation’s heteroclitic interpretation of tradition and national identity, which included for instance the Islamic fundamentalism of Geidar Dzhemal and the multi-ethnic civilisational ideal of Eurasianism.

Another major point of contention between the Young Conservatives and their elders was their relationship towards the Soviet Union. The young generation did not share the latest’s nostalgic feelings and ambition to restore the Soviet Union. In his article on “Conservatism – cleansing of illusions”, Averianov underscore the need to get rid of the illusions of the “apologists” of the Soviet Union. While he acknowledged that “against the background of the 1990s, the Soviet system would really seem like a ‘traditional society’, a stronghold of conservative values”, he also insisted on the inability of the Soviet regime to provide an environment for the formation of a conservative movement:

The Soviet system was pathologically incapable of generating a strong conservative idea. The mentality of the elite did not leave any chance for the transition from socialist through social democratic to traditional national-state and religious values. This is despite the presence of certain conservative sympathies of the Soviet intelligentsia of the late 1960s and 1970s, despite the peasant traditionalism of village writers, the national conservatism of Solzhenitsyn and others, certain sympathies of a number of dissidents towards Orthodoxy, etc. All of this turned out to be decisively insufficient for the formation of a consolidated neoconservative force in Russia by the 1990s.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Krylov, “‘Kontrreformatsiia’: Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie’.

⁵⁷ Krylov.

⁵⁸ Krylov.

⁵⁹ Averianov, ‘Konservatizm - Ochishchenie Ot Illiuzii (Programma Kluba Konservativnykh Analitikov)’.

In general, Young Conservatives were critical of what they perceived as the older generation's daydreaming and phantasmagorical discourse about the restoration of the past. Instead, they put forward their political realism and pragmatism. In an interview, Kholmogorov argued that their discourse was primarily based on the "rejection of the paradigm of conservatism that Dugin created", contrasting their "very technical" objectives and solutions with "Dugin's metaphysics".⁶⁰ Similarly, in contrast to older conservatives' *passéism*, Krylov has emphasized the Young Conservatives' focus on their political relevance in their contemporary context:

The Young Conservatives did not feel any sympathy for the close past, whether Soviet or post-Soviet, and generally considered the historical experience of the Russian Empire irrelevant. They were exclusively concerned about the tasks of their time.⁶¹

The distinctiveness and consistency of Young Conservatives as a generational political ensemble were formally pitted during a joint meeting of the young and older generations of conservative thinkers held in April 2004 at the Central House of Writers, in Moscow. In his address at the meeting, a representative of the older generation, Iurii Solozobov (1958-), commented on the work of Remizov and Averianov and their commonality as members of a "new, young conservative generation". Quoting Averianov, he stated:

They understand their task not only in restoration, but in the reconstruction of Tradition. Here conservatism is understood as "the endless ability and readiness of tradition, which has one and only source, to renew its manifestations".⁶²

Averianov's dynamic conservatism belonged to this broader generational effort to formulate a new type of conservatism.

Theoretically, while Averianov has been an active commentator of the work of the older generation of traditionalist thinkers, such as Aleksandr Dugin, Geidar Dzhemal, and Iurii Mamleev (1931-2015), he echoed the attitude of his generation by explicitly detaching his type of conservatism from theirs.⁶³ His position towards them blended tributes to their significance as Soviet non-conformist thinkers with critical reviews of their contradictions with Russian Orthodoxy.⁶⁴ Although he positively described Dugin as "one of the most prolific postmodern traditionalists in Russia" and Dzhemal as "one the brightest Russian 'traditionalists'", he also firmly spelled out strong criticisms against their doctrine, which he pejoratively portrayed as a "fashionable" reaction to the "neoliberal" ideological environment of the 1990s:

In the 1990s, against the background of the neoliberal revolutions that burst into the post-Soviet space, it became fashionable to talk about "traditionalism". The very meaning of this term on the Russian cultural soil

⁶⁰ Kholmogorov also critically mentioned "Prokhanov's dreamy discourse about the reincarnation of a somewhat fantastic new red empire". Egor Kholmogorov, interview by Juliette Faure, 16 September 2019.

⁶¹ Krylov, "Kontreformatsiia": Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie'.

⁶² 'Novie Konservatory: Budushchee Rossii?'

⁶³ Averianov describes his attitude towards the older generation as "evolutionary". "I had to write about them quite harshly sometimes. [...] However, my tribute to them is undeniable". Averianov, interview, 11 October 2020.

⁶⁴ Vitalii Averianov, 'Metafizika Nichego. Ob Opyte Sviashchennogo Pisaniia Bezdny G. Dzhemalia', *Metacultura.Ru*, 1999, <http://averianov.net/sii/482/?h=670>.

refers to Orthodoxy. For this alone, many "traditionalists" began to associate themselves with Orthodoxy, but they understood it as "one of" the confessions, one of the possible religious paths in a wide field of free choice.⁶⁵ Averianov further denounced Dugin's instrumental and incidental use of Orthodoxy as characteristic of the attitude of "postmodern traditionalists" who behave as "free artists' and revolutionaries who do not recognize discipline, filial responsibility and accountability to Tradition."⁶⁶ Against what he called "postmodern counterfeits" of "fake Orthodox traditionalism", he offered his understanding of "dynamic conservatism" as a "movement" firstly originating from the primacy of the "Sacred Tradition" and eventually evolving "to outside, worldly ideologemes and theories."⁶⁷ The semantic move of his political language from traditionalism to dynamic conservatism purposely performed an act of differentiation from the older generation.

In addition to similar morphological characteristics between Averianov's dynamic conservatism and other Young Conservatives' worldviews, their unity as a generation was also based on similar habits, regular contacts, emotional affects and friendship.

Indeed, while Kholmogorov recognized certain theoretical divergence with Averianov – which he perceived as "closer to Dugin" than him, he emphasized:

Despite all that, we became friends and constantly interact. We have many points of divergence, but there are simply other factors such as human sympathy and generational sympathy. He is a person of our generation.⁶⁸

Moreover, Averianov was also involved in the construction of his political generation's identity in the public sphere. He contributed to and benefited from their empowerment and career as a group, which evolved from an informal network in 2000 into one of the main institutionalized and mediatized intellectual movements in 2005.

3. From an informal network to an institutionalised intellectual movement: the career of the Young Conservatives in the public sphere

The early steps of the career of the Young Conservatives in the public sphere occurred in the end of the 1990s. They were prompted by the new opportunities offered by the appearance of the Internet in Russia. In an interview, Krylov stressed the turning point that this event marked in his life path. While Krylov's discourse was constrained by scarce access to the public sphere, the Internet launched his career as a public intellectual by opening up to him a free, deliberative space for testing and spreading his views:

In the 1990s I practically did not participate in politics. I was studying at the Faculty of Philosophy. [...] I didn't make any public appearances. It probably would have remained like that, but around 1998 the Internet appeared in Russia. [...] I quickly realised that there is some kind of political life on the Internet, that there are forums and so on. Basically it was some kind of American forums but in Russian language. It was possible to communicate

⁶⁵ Vitalii Averianov, 'Raznye Konservatizmy, Raznye Traditsionalizmy', *Pravoslavie.Ru*, 4 September 2001, <http://averianov.net/sii/475/?h=670>.

⁶⁶ Averianov.

⁶⁷ Averianov.

⁶⁸ Kholmogorov, interview.

there and there was absolutely no censorship. [...] I started to write something there. And then it turned out that I don't write badly. People liked it.⁶⁹

With the Internet, Krylov earned access to an autonomous public speech, which he developed on his own website, "Traditio". This new resource allowed him to circulate for the first time some of the written materials that he had failed to publish before, such as the article "Civic Russians [Rossiiane] and Ethnic Russians [Russkie]". As Krylov reported, despite his "extensive acquaintances in the milieu", even the "patriotic press" such as Aleksandr Prokhanov's journal *Zavtra* had refused to print this piece at the time of its writing, in 1993.⁷⁰ The article delves on the difference between the ethnic [Russkii] and civic [Rossiian] definition of the Russian people. Krylov argues that the confrontation between the "democrats" and the anti-Yeltsin "patriots", which reached its peak during the events of October 1993, was fundamentally a confrontation between two different nations competing for a single territory. He subsequently alerted that the ethnic Russian people was being replaced by a "new people", the "Rossians", which he depicted as adversaries of the ethnic Russians and carriers of different "behaviour models, ethical systems and attitudes towards other peoples".⁷¹ The eventual publication of the article on Krylov's website in 1998 marked a significant turning point in the generalization of the militant use of the ethnic word for "Russians". According to Natalia Androsenko, a political scientist close to the Young Conservatives,⁷² the article triggered an important change in the "patriotic" discourse:

Krylov's article initiated a peculiar campaign of symbolic disobedience.

Representatives of the patriotic ideology began to constantly emphasize that they were "not civic Russians [Rossiiane], but ethnic Russians [Russkie]", that ousting the word "Russian" [Russkii] from official circulation and replacing it with "Russian" [Rossiskii] is an act of Russophobia and discrimination. In this context, Krylov's article was repeatedly quoted.⁷³

The Internet allowed for the emergence of the first collective actions of the Young Conservatives. In 1998, Krylov and Kholmogorov established a collective publishing platform, the Russian Doctrine website, which, according to their creators, was "one of the first Russian nationalist projects of the Runet [Russian Internet]".⁷⁴ As argued by the historian Mikhail Diunov, the creation of this site represented a significant challenge to the generally liberal orientation that dominated the political discussions held on the Internet:

The site immediately caused a stir, since there had not been any political sites of this kind on the Russian network until that moment. Krylov and Kholmogorov's works were published there, while the main trend of the Russian Internet was liberalism of varying degrees of radicalism.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Konstantin Krylov, interview by Juliette Faure, 28 November 2019.

⁷⁰ See his introduction in Konstantin Krylov, 'Rossiiane i Russkie', *Traditio*, accessed 11 August 2020, <https://traditio.wiki/krylov/rossian.html>.

⁷¹ Krylov.

⁷² Natalia Androsenko is the wife of Egor Kholmogorov since 2011.

⁷³ Nataliia Androsenko, 'Rol Mladokonservativnoi Publitsistiki v Preodolenii Rusofobii v 2000-Kh Gg. Vozvrashchenie Slova "Russkii"' (Russkii universum v usloviakh globalizatsii, Arzamas-Sarov, 2016).

⁷⁴ Konstantin Krylov, 'Obo Mne', accessed 11 August 2020, <https://krylov.cc/about.php?id=72>.

⁷⁵ Diunov, 'Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istoriia Ego Znachenie'.

The practice of debate on the Internet shortly proliferated with the development of social networks and blogs. The first Russian social networking service and diary, “Live Journal” (*Zhivoi Zhurnal*), created in 1999, became the main platform through which the Young Conservatives were trained into debate and acquired fame as opinion-makers. In an interview, Krylov stated:

I quickly became a local star. I was commented, scolded, or, on the contrary, praised, and so on. This way I met many new people.⁷⁶

Similarly, Kholmogorov claimed:

[In 2000], I was 25 years old. By the standards of the time, I was already a bit of a star on the Russian political Internet.⁷⁷

Furthermore, the Internet contributed to the professionalization of the Young Conservatives as public intellectuals. Up until the mid-1990s, some of them mentioned the weight of economic hardships on their giving up on the ambition to pursue a career as an academic.⁷⁸ However, the Internet opened up new financial and job opportunities to them. Being among the pioneer users of the Internet allowed them to make profit out of their technical and practical knowledge of the Internet functioning. Krylov mentioned that he “made several servers for different people for money.”⁷⁹ Likewise, Averianov was involved in the creation of the Orthodox informational portal “Pravoslavie.Ru”, launched in 2000.⁸⁰ Beyond mere economic resources, this opportunity socialized him into the milieu of influential figures within the Russian Orthodox Church, such as the editor-in-chief of the website, Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov), who has been rumoured to be Vladimir Putin’s personal confessor.⁸¹

While allowing the Young Conservatives to break through the informational space, the Internet also influenced the type of their public speech. Although they reported that their language was comparatively less constrained by the norms and rules prevailing in the printed press, it was shaped by the discursive mechanisms of live forums. In contrast to printed materials, online publications focus on daily matters. Furthermore, their interactive nature encourages a polemical, interpersonal and emotional type of discourse. As Krylov put forward, this type of publication matched his appetite for provocative and aggressive modes of discussion:

There was complete freedom, it was very inspiring. Very different people sat there and scolded each other’s views. The opportunity to do it in such a public mode turned out to be very exciting. I am by nature choleric, and the opportunity to scold someone seemed to me funny and pleasant.⁸²

⁷⁶ Krylov, interview.

⁷⁷ Kholmogorov, interview.

⁷⁸ This has been reported by Kholmogorov and Krylov during interviews. Krylov mentioned: “I would have liked to become a candidate of science [Doctor of Philosophy] but I had to work to provide for my family. I then had my first wife and two small children. The 1990s were a very hungry time in the most physical sense of the word. All these academic things took time. I realized that my family would starve.” In Krylov, interview.

⁷⁹ Krylov.

⁸⁰ Other members of his generation of intellectuals earned financial resources by creating Internet websites such as Aleksei Chadaev for then Vice-President Boris Nemtsov.

⁸¹ Marlène Laruelle refers to Tikhon Shevkunov as Vladimir Putin’s personal confessor in ‘The Izborsky Club, or the New Conservative Avant-Garde in Russia’, *The Russian Review* 75 (October 2016): 626–44.

⁸² Krylov, interview.

By the end of the 1990s, the young generation of conservative intellectuals had accumulated an academic background in social sciences, sometimes up until the PhD degree, and started being actively contributing to and leading the emergence of political discussions on the Internet. Their combination of a learned discourse, scholarly references and polemical style formed a new type of authoritative opinion-maker. Their career as “intellectual bloggers” flourished in the early 2000s as a result of the upsurge of online socio-political journalism with a mass audience. In this aspect, the discourse of Young Conservatives differed from the radical rhetoric used by the older generation. As put by Remizov, as practitioners of “intellectual journalism” by Young Conservatives stood out in contrast to what he called the “politically unfortunate and conceptually anachronistic” language of the “national-patriotism of the 1990s”.⁸³

The Young Conservatives’ introduction to online journalism was supervised by the founding figures of the major political and intellectual Internet outlets. In particular, Gleb Pavlovskii (1951-) played a central role. A former liberal Soviet dissident, Pavlovskii’s trajectory is exemplary of the career reconversion of the discharged liberal intelligentsia into the practice of commercial political consulting and media projects.⁸⁴ In 1995, together with his colleagues Marat Gelman (1960-) and Maksim Meier (1967-), Pavlovskii created the Foundation of Effective Politics (FEP), which aimed to provide information and analytical services for the political elite.⁸⁵ As put by Pavlovskii in an interview with Galia Ackerman, the FEP became the pioneer of the concept of “political technology” in post-Soviet Russia:

In order to differentiate ourselves from the Soviet system, we started to use a so-called "technological" approach. This is based on several instruments: lobbying, the placement of good candidates for strategic positions, "image-making" and the systematic denigration of our political opponents. We have acquired a very thorough competence in this discipline, to the point of making it a real science. Our aim was to try, for the first time, to influence the election results by bringing together people who had knowledge in social sciences. The intelligentsia had been completely removed from power. But a royal road now opened before her: that of the media. Our first test was the parliamentary election in December 1995.⁸⁶

The FEP was the major orchestrator of Yeltsin’s campaign during the presidential election in 1996. By the end of the 1990s, the organisation specialised in the creation of official political sites for members of the government such as Anatolii Chubais and Boris Nemtsov. The FEP created Vladimir Putin’s election site Putin2000.Ru and

⁸³ Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor’.

⁸⁴ About the discharge of the liberal intelligentsia in the 1990s, see Guillaume Sauvé, *Subir La Victoire: Eessor et Chute de l’intelligentsia Libérale En Russie (1987-1993)* (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2020).

⁸⁵ See Gleb Pavlovskii’s biography in Sergei Domushchii, ‘Naklikali Pobedu. Kak FEP Igral Na Vyborakh v 90-Kh i Vyigryval’, *Secretmag*, 15 November 2019, https://secretmag.ru/stories/naklikali-pobedu-kak-fep-igral-na-vyborakh-v-90-kh-i-vyigryval.htm?fbclid=IwAR2_uo0m8g6DebDFVINbtxtmLF9B7ff6z8tkEeJ7h2VCRJ1alUBOngZCRsg.

⁸⁶ Galia Ackerman, ‘Un Héros Au Kremlin. Entretien Avec Gleb Pavlovski, Directeur de La Fondation Pour Une Politique Efficace’, *Politique Internationale*, no. 98 (2003).

Pavlovskii subsequently became one of the main advisers of Putin's government up until 2011.⁸⁷

Along with the FEP, Pavlovskii's strategy relied on his pioneer use of the Internet as a public political platform. In 1997, he launched two Internet political journals, the *Russian Journal* [Russkii Zhurnal] and the website Polit.Ru, with the aim to create the Internet version of the Russian journalistic tradition of "thick journals".⁸⁸ In order to do that, the *Russkii Zhurnal* recruited its team among graduates and academics with a background in social sciences.⁸⁹ As claimed by its deputy editor-in-chief, the journal was meant as a "permanent platform where absolutely different communities regularly met, whose representatives simply did not frequent each other in other situations".⁹⁰ Pavlovskii's media became the main place for publication and debate among a large community of intellectuals. By encouraging ideological diversity, Pavlovskii played an instrumental role in the inclusion and promotion of the Young Conservatives in the established intellectual public sphere. As put by one of his former employees, Pavlovskii, as "genetically dissident, always tried to give a platform for those who are officially considered marginal."⁹¹ Other key figures involved in the organisation of the post-Soviet intellectual and political public sphere have played an essential role in the authorization of the Young Conservatives' participation in the milieu of online journalism. Stanislas Belkovskii (1971-) for instance, after having made a career working as a political consultant for members of Yeltsin's entourage, especially the businessman and newspaper tycoon Boris Berezovsky, provided the Young Conservatives publication access to his Internet media, the *Agency of Political News (APN)* [Agentsvo politicheskikh novostei]. While coming from the liberal milieu of Yeltsin's ruling elite, Belkovskii established contacts with the Young Conservatives when they were still marginal authors. In an interview, Krylov mentioned his first meeting with Belkovskii in 1999 and underscored their mutual interest for heated debate and provocative ideas:

Working with Stas [Stanislas] was very interesting. He was open to new ideas. He loved to, let's say, give the go-ahead for some completely hooligan antics and this is sometimes nice.⁹²

The Young Conservatives therefore benefited from the support and connections of the established liberal elites to foster their career as public intellectuals. Pavlovskii's *Russkii Zhurnal* and Belkovskii's *APN* became central publication platforms for the Young Conservatives. Typically, during the years 2000-2005, Vitalii Averianov's publishing places included several mass audience online media such as *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, *Russkii Zhurnal*, *Ekspert* and *APN*. His publications included, for instance, a series of articles regarding his understanding of

⁸⁷ Tom Parfitt, 'Gleb Pavlovskii: Putin's World Outlook. Interview by Tom Parfitt', *New Left Review*, no. 88 (2014), <https://newleftreview.org/issues/II88/articles/gleb-Pavlovskii-putin-s-world-outlook>; See also Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

⁸⁸ Domushchii, 'Naklikali Pobedu. Kak FEP Igral Na Vyborakh v 90-Kh i Vyigryval'.

⁸⁹ On of the co-founders of the *Russkii Zhurnal* was the MGU philosophy student Marina Litvinovich.

⁹⁰ Domushchii, 'Naklikali Pobedu. Kak FEP Igral Na Vyborakh v 90-Kh i Vyigryval'.

⁹¹ Aleksei Chadaev, interview by Juliette Faure, 6 November 2020.

⁹² Krylov, interview.

Orthodox political ideology⁹³ and a series of articles dedicated to the intellectual sources of his political theory of dynamic conservatism.⁹⁴ Through these online publications, the discourse of Young Conservatives gained access to a new and larger audience among the intellectual, cultural and political elites, as well as among the urban youth. The publication of Krylov's article, "Rus and Nerus" in October 2003, to mark the 10th anniversary of October 1993, which reproduced the theses of his previously self-edited article "Civic Russians [Rossiiane] and Ethnic Russians [Russkie]", testified to the conquest of legitimacy of his discourse in the informational space.⁹⁵

Beyond greater media outreach and the legitimation of their discourse, online outlets provided important job opportunities to the Young Conservatives. From 2003 to 2009, Krylov was the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Spetsnaz Rossii*, owned by the military Association of Alfa veterans. Mikhail Remizov took the head of the Politics department of Pavlovskii's *Russkii Zhurnal* in 2003, before being recruited as editor-in-chief of Belkovskii's website *APN* in 2004. The successful admission of the Young Conservatives among the cultural elite was exemplified by the launching of a new magazine called *The Conservative* in 2003 by the businessman Viacheslav Leibman. The editorial team included a mix of popular liberal public figures – such as the writer Dmitrii Bykov – and Young Conservatives such as Krylov and Kholmogorov. Although short-lived, the magazine displayed a reunion of formerly marginal young conservative authors with established intellectuals and served the legitimization of the former.⁹⁶

Finally, media institutions contributed to the building of the Young Conservative's identity and its transformation from an informal network into an institutionalised intellectual movement. Young Conservatives had attempted as early as the late 1990s to work collectively as a group of ideologically like-minded individuals. Krylov and Kholmogorov associated with each other to create the website *Russiandoctrine.Ru*. Averianov and others created the "Club of Conservative Analysts" to hold meetings and discussions about "ideological and party projects".⁹⁷ Although short-lived, the Club was survived by his printed and online magazine, *The Golden Lion [Zolotoi Lev]*.⁹⁸ These collective actions were not as impactful as the second wave of structuration of the group's identity, which occurred in 2005. In the meantime, the Young Conservatives were able to invest outside organisations and use them as bases to socialize with each other and progressively constitute themselves as a group. As editor-in-chief of the Politics section of the *Russkii Zhurnal*, Mikhail Remizov laid out the foundations of this group-building by organising a "Conservative Press Club" [Konservativnii press-klub].⁹⁹ The Club gathered intergenerational conservative figures such as Vadim Tsymburskii, Viktor Militarev,

⁹³ Averianov, 'O "Sinteze" Pravoslavnoi Ideologii'; Vitalii Averianov, 'Segodnia Russkoi Tserkvi "Bolshe Vsekh Nado"', *NG Religii*, 11 October 2000,

<http://averianov.net/sii/479/?h=670>; Vitalii Averianov, 'Pochemu My Russkie, Pochemu Pravoslavnye?', *NG Religii*, 12 September 2001, <http://averianov.net/sii/474/?h=670>.

⁹⁴ Averianov, 'Rossiia i Chelovechestvo'.

⁹⁵ Konstantin Krylov, 'Rus i Nerus', *Russkii Zhurnal*, 7 October 2003, <http://old.russ.ru/politics/20031007-kryl.html>.

⁹⁶ Pavlov, 'The Great Expectations of Russian Young Conservatism', 165.

⁹⁷ Averianov, interview, 11 October 2020.

⁹⁸ <http://www.zlev.ru/>

⁹⁹ Remizov, Mikhail, 'Konservativizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor'.

Iuri Solozobov, Boris Mezhuev, Konstantin Krylov, Egor Kholmogorov and Andrei Okara.¹⁰⁰ They held their first two meetings in the office of Pavlovskii's journal in 2003, before moving in 2004 to the hotel of Saint Danilov Monastery with Belkovskii's financial support.¹⁰¹ Subsequently, Belkovskii provided an institutional environment to the Young Conservatives with the creation of the Institute of National Strategy (INS) and the launching of a new version of the *APN*, which recruited a majority of Young Conservatives in its editorial board. Headed by Remizov, the INS turned into an organisational bastion for the movement and recruited a number of its members as employees.¹⁰² Similarly, *APN* became a central and permanent intellectual platform for the Young Conservatives, with Mezhuev (2005-2007) and Krylov (2007-2020) as its successive editors-in-chief. As put by Natalia Androsenko, *APN* published the programmatic pieces that laid the theoretical foundations of Young Conservatism. As she argued, the website became a symbolic marker of the group's identity:

For the next two years [2004-2006], *APN* was the most important intellectual platform for Young Conservatism. [...] For every conservative or nationally oriented intellectual, it became an obligatory "matter of honour" to publish on the *APN*.¹⁰³

Building up on these accumulated resources, the Young Conservatives resumed their initial attempt at building a social and institutional environment to develop their ideas and network. While their early efforts in the late 1990s were unsustainable, in 2005, they were able to successfully organise themselves as a group and complete the publication of two landmark collective programmes, the Counter-Reformation and the Russian Doctrine. The consolidations of the doctrinal core of Young Conservatives and of its identity as a social group were therefore simultaneous. Moreover, the formulation of their group ideology was not limited to a theoretical argumentation but was also meant as a discourse engaged in a competition with other groups for legitimacy and representation within a political struggle.

4. An ideology in competition for legitimacy and representation in a political struggle

The emergence of the Young Conservatives' discourse occurred in a context where conservatism was widely claimed as an ideological identity in Russian politics. As put by the political scientist Sergei Prozorov, conservative discourse was growingly dispersed starting from the late 1990s and reached "hegemony in Russian political space" in 2005.¹⁰⁴ This context provided the Young Conservatives an

¹⁰⁰ Remizov, Mikhail.

¹⁰¹ See the testimony of one of the Club's participants: 'Doklad "Kontsrreformatsiia" v Moei Lichnoi Istorii', *Politconservatism.Ru*, 4 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/doklad-kontsreformatsiya-v-moey-lichnoy-istorii>.

¹⁰² Such as Pavel Sviatenkov and Vladimir Golyshev, see Diunov, 'Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istorii Ego Znachenie'.

¹⁰³ Natalia Androsenko, 'Publitsistika Mladokonservatorov v Sovremennom Kommunikativnom Prostranstve Rossii', *Kommunikologiya* 4, no. 1 (2016): 160–72.

¹⁰⁴ Sergei Prozorov, 'Russian Conservatism in the Putin Presidency: The Dispersion of a Hegemonic Discourse', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 10, no. 2 (June 2005): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310500097224>.

opportunity to spread their discourse in the public sphere with the task to define it in contrast with other forms of conservative discourse.

Dispersion of conservative discourse: an opportunity to contribute to public discourse and requisite to distinguish from other conservatisms

First, the late 1990s provided conservative discourse with a new, larger audience among the Russian population. As put by the scholar and researcher on Russian conservatism Paul Robinson:

For many Russians, the Yeltsin years were a humiliating period of extreme poverty, state weakness, and rampant corruption. Since Yeltsin claimed to be building a liberal democratic order modelled on that of Western states, both liberalism and democracy were badly tainted in Russian eyes by the end of the 1990s.¹⁰⁵

The Young Conservative Krylov further identified the American use of force against Serbia in 1999 and the subsequent “Primakov U-turn”¹⁰⁶ as the historical and “emotional” starting point of a “new conservatism” among the Russian population:

If you ask what gave birth to the “new conservatism”, then I would say the American bombing of Serbia, the “Primakov U-turn” and the ensuing outbreak of anti-American, anti-Western and anti-liberal sentiments that spilled over into popular demonstrations in Moscow and others cities. It was then that a complex of feelings (and behind every idea there is a strong feeling, however chilled and dissected), arguments, opinions and train of thought developed, which later turned into the conservative doctrines known to us today.¹⁰⁷

According to Krylov, in contrast to their predecessors who lacked an “audience” for conservative ideas, the Young Conservatives met a concrete crowd of supporters in April 1999, during the protests held in front of the American embassy.¹⁰⁸

In addition to its increased resonance among the population, the conservative discourse also became progressively invested by the political authorities. Vladimir Putin’s Presidency prompted a shift of political context, which was widely theorised and referred to as a “new course”.¹⁰⁹ Putin’s first steps were identified as characteristic of a conservative turning point. The political scientist Leonid Poliakov qualified Putin’s programme, which he developed in an article published in December 1999, as “exemplary conservative” by the standards of Samuel Huntington’s definition of “situational conservatism”, that is anti-radicalism and defence of the status quo.¹¹⁰ Other commentators, such as the journalist Aleksandr Morozov, identified a series of gestures testifying to Putin’s allegiance to a more substantial, religious and traditionalist conservatism :

¹⁰⁵ Robinson, *Russian Conservatism*, 184.

¹⁰⁶ Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov, on his way to Washington, decided to cancel his visit and return to Moscow to oppose the American decision. See John Broder, ‘Conflict in the Balkans: The Russians; A Phone Call from Gore and a U-Turn to Moscow’, *The New York Times*, 24 March 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/24/world/conflict-balkans-russians-phone-call-gore-u-turn-moscow.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Krylov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie’.

¹⁰⁸ Krylov.

¹⁰⁹ See for instance: Aleksandr Morozov, “‘Novyi Kurs’ i Moskovskaia Patriarkhiia”, *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 9 August 2000, https://www.ng.ru/facts/2000-08-09/2_new.html.

¹¹⁰ Leonid Poliakov, ‘Liberalnyi Konservator’, *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 2 February 2000, https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2000-02-02/8_conserve.html.

Putin positions himself as a “neo-conservative” in the following manner: he flies on fighters and repeats the saying of the emperor that “Russia has two allies - the army and the navy”. He not only claims that “Russia is a European country with Christian traditions”, but also flies to the Pskov-Pecherskii Monastery for a blessing from the most revered modern elder, Father Ioann Krestiankin. Putin meets with Solzhenitsyn, and government media outlets interpret the course of restoring the vertical of power through Ivan Ilin's doctrine of the state.¹¹¹

Beyond stylistic and semantic changes, Vladimir Putin manifested his willingness to enact a breakaway from the heritage of the 1990s with concrete measures, such as the dismissal of the former Yeltsinian elite from his administration and government,¹¹² and the repression of the oligarchs associated with Yeltsin's entourage.¹¹³ These acts matched the long-time demands of the national-patriotic opposition, which had repeatedly criticized Yeltsin's ruling elite and the involvement of oligarchs in the political affairs and the management of media. Similarly, Young Conservatives such as Averianov enthusiastically commented what they perceived as Putin's fight against the “strongholds of the liberal opposition” and the symbols of the “old Yeltsin guard”.¹¹⁴ As put by the Eurasianist thinker Valerii Korovin (1977-), Putin's decisions were hailed as an opening up of a new “operational space” favourable to the circulation and adoption of the “patriotic ideas”:

Putin cleaned [the liberals] from power, and equally removed the oligarchs, who were a source of funding and support for liberal discourse. He cleaned away frank liberals, protégés of the West, from power. He dismissed Kasianov and Voloshin. And from that moment on, the systematic opposition to the practical implementation of patriotic ideas ceased.¹¹⁵

By 2005, conservative discourse had explicitly been adopted by power institutions such as the ruling party United Russia, which formally identified as a “conservative party.”¹¹⁶ One of the consequences of this change of political context was the steady normalisation of the national-patriotic ideologues' discourse over the years 2000-2005. An early signal of this evolution was the possibility given to Aleksandr Dugin in 2000 to regularly contribute to an official governmental website,

¹¹¹ Aleksandr Morozov, ‘Politicheskii Konservatizm i Tserkovnyi Opyt’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 October 2000, https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2000-10-18/8_conserv.html.

¹¹² Alexander Voloshin, who was Yeltsin's assistant to the chief of the Russian presidential administration, retained his position as chief of the presidential administration under Putin in 2003. He was replaced by Dmitrii Medvedev. Mikhail Kassianov, who was Yeltsin's Minister of Finance, was dismissed from his position as Prime Minister in 2004.

¹¹³ In 2000, the media tycoon Vladimir Gusinskii was arrested and his TV-channel, NTV, the only Russian state-independent television was acquired by Gazprom Media. Putin's election was also followed by the emigration of Boris Berezovskii and the acquisition by the state of his TV channel, Channel One. Mikhail Khodorkovskii, the owner of the oil company Yukos, was arrested in 2003.

¹¹⁴ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Gensek Vladimir Groznyi’, *APN.Ru*, 20 August 2004, <http://averianov.net/sii/463/?h=670>.

¹¹⁵ Valerii Korovin, interview by Juliette Faure, 13 July 2019.

¹¹⁶ Clémentine Fauconnier, ‘La Mise En Politique sans La Mise En Parti?’, *Politix* 23, no. 126 (2019): 61–83.

Strana.Ru.¹¹⁷ The revision of the rules of the public informational space was paired with a redefinition of the conservatives' attitude towards the political regime, which progressively evolved from radical opposition to varied types of moderate support and attempts at cooperation. Dugin pioneered this move by creating the political movement Evraziia in 2001 and announced his ambition to join a government coalition in the next elections.¹¹⁸

This political environment opened up new opportunities for conservative intellectuals. On the other hand, it required them to elaborate a distinction between their understanding of conservatism and the conservatism advocated by the political system. Indeed, the old and the young generations of conservatives alike purposely sought to dissociate themselves from the conservative discourse adopted by the political regime. As put by Remizov, Young Conservatism was constructed in contrast to the "conservatism of the status quo" associated with the "period of Putin's assertion in power".¹¹⁹ Similarly, Aleksandr Dugin stressed that his critical line towards the regime remained:

Putin reshuffled the cards. All the oppositionist movements against Yeltsin disappeared, because Putin was so much better than Yeltsin. The dividing line had disappeared. We were free to stop hating the authorities. But at the same time, [Putin] was not good enough for us to accept him as he was.¹²⁰

The younger generation of conservatives made their entry in the public sphere by positioning themselves on this ambivalent position towards the regime, which blended loyalism with criticism. This was well spelled out by Krylov:

The Young Conservatives sincerely wanted to be loyal to the Russian state and its higher institutions. This totally coexisted with a critical attitude towards the Russian elites and even the demands for their "change".¹²¹

Furthermore, Krylov argued that dissatisfaction with the regime's policies was a definitional criterion for Young Conservatism:

I would call the birthplace of Young Conservatism a very definite political event, namely, on October 8, 2001, when the Russian Foreign Ministry supported the entry of American troops into Afghanistan, and Putin provided the Americans with material assistance and transit of military cargo through the Russian territory. This signified a final rejection of the "Primakov U-turn" policy and outlined the nature of the new, early Putin regime. Accordingly, those who, for various reasons, were dissatisfied with this decision became "conservatives."¹²²

Averianov also underscored the persistent antagonism between the regime and the conservatives' position. While he acknowledged a series of conservative measures adopted by the regime, he stressed the distinction between the "pragmatic" use of conservatism as a "political technology" by the authorities and a "serious conservative ideology" coming "from below":

The head of state always emphasizes his respect for the Soviet past, for the

¹¹⁷ Marlène Laruelle, 'Alexandre Dugin : esquisse d'un eurasisme d'extrême-droite en Russie post-soviétique', *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 32, no. 3 (2001): 92, <https://doi.org/10.3406/receo.2001.3103>.

¹¹⁸ Laruelle, 'Alexandre Dugin'.

¹¹⁹ Remizov, Mikhail, 'Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor'.

¹²⁰ Aleksandr Dugin, interview by Juliette Faure, 26 February 2019.

¹²¹ Krylov, "'Kontreformatsiia": Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie'.

¹²² Krylov.

civil service, for statesmen, for the Communist Party. It is characteristic that he took a symbolic step, which was very painful for the liberals: the restoration of the national anthem, which is essentially a populist step. And yet it still remains unclear whether the outlined shift towards conservatism is something serious, in line with the Russian historical tradition, or whether these gestures turn out to be temporary companions of populism in the sphere of symbols and pragmatism in strengthening the vertical of power. [...] I am convinced that if a serious conservative ideology does come to the fore in our country, it will be best for it to come from below. In the meantime, conservative moves in politics are used as elements of political technologies, and nothing more.¹²³

A practical political programme

Speaking from this position of loyalist criticism, Young Conservatives meant their ideology as a theoretical system of ideas as much as a practical political programme. Their “new conservatism” carried a critique of the social reality in which it was displayed and an aspiration for political relevance and impact. In his early attempt to organise a programme for the “Club of Conservative Analysts” in 2000, Averianov already had emphasized its operational dimension:

The main tasks of the Club of Conservative Analysts could be, firstly, the consolidation of the neoconservative layer of the intellectual elite in Russia that has developed over the past decade and, secondly, finding specific institutional levers for the implementation in the near future of a neoconservative political, cultural, spiritual and educational program.¹²⁴

Iurii Solozobov, a representative of the older generation of conservatives, has highlighted the influence of Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony on the Young Conservatives’ attitude towards political power.¹²⁵ Likewise, to Remizov, the choice of a meta-political strategy to infiltrate the political realm through intellectual discourse, rather than through direct participation in the power institutions and party system, is a characteristic feature of the “new conservatism”:

For me, “new conservatism” is a qualitative concept that is built in opposition to “traditional conservatism”. [...] I would single out two typological features of the “new conservatism”. First, it is of a “design” nature. That is, it sets as its goal not the restoration or preservation, but the reconstruction of the tradition. [...]

The second feature of the “new conservatism” as opposed to the “traditional” one is the idea that the main current task is not an abstract “seizure of power,” but the conquest of cultural hegemony. [...] New conservatism is learned from the experience of defeats and understands that the preconditions of a political systems are in the ways of thinking of people, in the field of cultural institutions, stereotypes of public consciousness, etc. [...] We should not appeal to power, but produce it ourselves by filling the vacuum of social space. In particular, by transforming the context, the language of political action, creating acceptable and authoritative standards for the society, models

¹²³ Averianov, ‘Tretii Polius’.

¹²⁴ Averianov, ‘Konservatizm - Ochishchenie Ot Illiuzii (Programma Kluba Konservativnykh Analitikov)’.

¹²⁵ Iurii Solozobov, ‘Topor Pod Kompas’, *Russkii Zhurnal*, 14 May 2020, <http://russ.ru/pole/Topor-pod-kompas>.

of cultural self-identity. Paradoxical as it may sound, the new conservatism is conservatism that wants to rely on a conservative civil society.¹²⁶

In line with this practical dimension, the discourse of the Young Conservatives addressed concrete policy issues and took sides in controversies among partisan groups. For instance, in 2004, Averianov intervened in a media controversy to defend the concept of “the spiritual security of Russia” put forward by high-level state officials and Orthodox authorities during a meeting of the Council of the Central Federal District.¹²⁷ Elsewhere, Averianov’s articles include both domestic and foreign policy recommendations such as the launch of “technological and infrastructural growth programs”,¹²⁸ Russia’s reunification with Ukraine and Belarus,¹²⁹ the creation of “strategic alliances for security and economic cooperation with India, China and Iran”,¹³⁰ and the foundation of an “Eurasian Union in the economic and cultural spheres backed by a collective security union”.¹³¹ The set of his policy recommendations were eventually formalized all together in the Russian Doctrine.

Young Conservatism in competition with liberal conservatism

Furthermore, the Young Conservatives’ discourse engaged in a debate with other groups in competition for the representation of their ideas in the state policies and power institutions. As explained by Remizov, in spite of their divergence “in terms of language, stylistic textures and sets of proclaimed values”, Young Conservatives were united by their same position within political struggles:

The main thing is that in the most acute conflicts of our epoch we will find ourselves on the same side of the barricades. It is a paradoxical process when people with very different worldviews find themselves politically together.

The process of communicating with colleagues taught me to appreciate this.¹³²

The situational dimension of Young Conservatism firstly stems from its intention to define itself in interaction and contrast with other actors claiming the etiquette “conservatism”. As put by Averianov, Young Conservatism opposed “false forms of conservatism”,¹³³ with a particular focus on “liberal-conservatism”:

The appeal to liberal conservatism is now very popular among political scientists - this is a kind of rhetorical “fashion”.¹³⁴

As explained by the historian Mikhail Diunov, the backbone of the argument between Young Conservatives and liberal-conservatives was their relation to the legacy of the 1990s:

Liberal conservatives as a whole have always been inclined to consider the general direction of Russia's development since 1991 as correct. On the

¹²⁶ ‘Novie Konservatory: Budushchee Rossii?’

¹²⁷ Vitalii Averianov, ‘O Politicheskikh Itogakh Serafimovskikh Torzhestv’, *APN.Ru*, 30 July 2004, <http://averianov.net/sii/465/?h=670>.

¹²⁸ Averianov, ‘Gensek Vladimir Groznyi’.

¹²⁹ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Vse My Nemnogo “Ukraina”’, *APN.Ru*, 2 December 2004, <http://averianov.net/sii/459/?h=670>.

¹³⁰ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Geopolitika Bolshikh Skrep’, *APN.Ru*, 4 April 2005, <http://averianov.net/sii/454/?h=670>.

¹³¹ Averianov.

¹³² ‘Novie Konservatory: Budushchee Rossii?’

¹³³ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Konservatizm v Otdelno Vziatoi Strane’, *Volshebnaia Gora XII* (2006), <http://averianov.net/sii/501/?h=670>.

¹³⁴ Averianov, ‘O “Sinteze” Pravoslavnoi Ideologii’.

contrary, for the young conservatives, the Yeltsin era is “an era of darkness and horror,” especially since young conservatism is extremely sceptical of any form of liberalism and Westernism.¹³⁵

This ideological dispute was embodied in concrete organisations. Remizov, for instance, pitted his initiative to form the “Conservative Press Club” in 2003 as a reaction to the creation of the “Seraphim Club” [Serafimovskii Klub].¹³⁶ Remizov denounced the latter as a stronghold of a “national liberal ideology,” which “adopted” conservatism for “purely ‘progressive’ purposes”¹³⁷ and used it instrumentally to answer the “party-political ‘demand for conservatism’”.¹³⁸

Averianov’s discourse was also intended as a critique of the agenda and interests of the groups advocating liberal-conservatism. In 2000-2001, he published a series of articles in the newly founded “Religion” section of *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*’s website, where he engaged with other Orthodox authors over their conception of Orthodox political philosophy.¹³⁹ In this controversy, Averianov opposed the “idea of a ‘liberal-conservative’ synthesis in the religious field”¹⁴⁰ advocated by the journalist Aleksandr Morozov (1959-). Beyond an interpersonal argument, the controversy concealed a conflict between groups involved in the definition of the Russian Orthodox Church’s political identity in post-Soviet Russia. Morozov pitted this dispute as a conflict “inside the Church” between the synodal authorities and the ROCOR [Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia]. According to him, Averianov was representative of “the ideologically active part of the laity, who, in essence, adhere to the views of the ROCOR”.¹⁴¹

The “internal ROCOR” considers itself the heir to the entire ideological tradition of Russian conservatism and takes a very tough position. [...] Its essence boils down to the fact that there can be no "syntheses", there can only be concessions to liberalism, which are the essence of betrayal.¹⁴²

Moreover, Averianov and Morozov each claimed the heritage of different schools of “Church journalism” [tserkovnaia zhurnalistika], which were constituted in the mid-1990s. Together with Sergei Chapnin, Morozov founded the independent religious news agency “Metafrazis” in 1995 with the aim to counter the weight of other Orthodox media institutions such as the radio station “Radonezh”, and the journals “Russian Bulletin” [Russkii vestnik] and “Orthodox Rus” [Rus pravoslavnaia], which were associated with the ultra-conservative milieu influenced by Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev). As put by Morozov, Metafrazis was meant to provide an alternative to

¹³⁵ Diunov, ‘Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istoriia Ego Znachenie’.

¹³⁶ The “Seraphim Club” was created in 2003 by the reunion of journalists from the economic magazine *Ekspert* - Aleksandr Privalov, Mikhail Leontiev, Valerii Fadeev and Maksim Sokolov – and the movie directors Sergei Selianov and Aleksei Balabanov. The Club grew out of the journal *Ekspert* as its social and organisational basis and completed the publication of a programmatic political manifesto.

¹³⁷ See Remizov’s reaction to the creation of the Club. According to him, the Club adopted conservatism “for purely ‘progressive’ motives”: Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Russkie Vne Sebia, Ili Konservatizm Protiv Konservatizma’, *Russkii Zhurnal*, 31 January 2003, <http://old.russ.ru/politics/20030131-remizov.html>.

¹³⁸ Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor’.

¹³⁹ Averianov, ‘O “Sinteze” Pravoslavnoi Ideologii’; Averianov, ‘Segodnia Russkoi Tserkvi “Bolshe Vsekh Nado”’; Averianov, ‘Pochemu My Russkie, Pochemu Pravoslavnye?’

¹⁴⁰ Averianov, ‘O “Sinteze” Pravoslavnoi Ideologii’.

¹⁴¹ Morozov, “‘Novyi Kurs’ i Moskovskaia Patriarkhiia”.

¹⁴² Morozov.

these media's "radical", "patriotic-baroque" image of Orthodoxy "mixed with a somewhat gloomy pathos – Russian weapons, princes and the like".¹⁴³ On the contrary, Averianov attacked the standpoint of Metafrazis, which he described as a liberal-conservative and modernist illusion that failed to "create and defend the ideology demanded in the Church and in the society".¹⁴⁴ He further stood in support of the theological relevance and social mission of radical conservative Orthodox media:

Orthodox ideology crystallizes precisely according to the model of "Radonezh" [...], the newspaper "Russian Bulletin" and the magazine "Moscow" – they gradually form a "concrete ideological package". Orthodox journalism prepares society to accept the Orthodox worldview in all its inexhaustibility, so that it is not perceived as something alien. When the initial calculations of this worldview become available to ordinary consciousness, this worldview will be an incorporated ideological system, protected from the hoof of free choice.¹⁴⁵

Averianov's political ideology therefore built up on divisions among Orthodox intellectual groups ingrained in media institutions since the mid-1990s. Furthermore, Averianov's contribution to the continuation and consolidation of this polarisation by introducing a generational dimension to it. On top of Morozov's opposition, Averianov's dynamic conservatism also faced the criticism of the historian of Christianity Aleksandr Krylezhev (1957-). According to him, Averianov embodied the "newest 'Orthodox thinkers'" and modern theo-ideologists," who "borrow the concept of Tradition in its theological sense and transfer it to society".¹⁴⁶ In contrast to what he denounced as the heretic attitudes of the younger generation of Orthodox ideologues, Krylezhev put forward a methodological, theological approach to Orthodoxy. Averianov's response argument also displayed generational gap overtones, by calling for the need to practice a new type of Orthodox philosophy emancipated from the standards of "university textbooks" and the biases of "academic sociology".¹⁴⁷

In addition to Orthodox milieus, Averianov's dynamic conservatism was also phrased to compete with liberal intellectual elites involved in political and academic institutions. Although Gleb Pavlovskii has played an instrumental role in advancing the career of Young Conservatives, he remained one of the main symbolic ideological opponents of Averianov's discourse. Beyond Pavlovskii, Averianov targeted the circle of "experts and ideologists" around him, specifically mentioning Sergei Markov (1958-) and Sergei Chernyshev (1952-).¹⁴⁸ According to Averianov, this intellectual group and their institutions meant to formulate an official state ideology and sought to

¹⁴³ Aleksandr Morozov, Aleksandr Morovo: oshibki i voiny, sudby i teksty tserkovnykh SMI, interview by Anna Danilova, 15 November 2010, https://www.religion.in.ua/zmi/foreign_zmi/6792-aleksandr-morozov-oshibki-i-vojny-sudby-i-teksty-cerkovnyx-smi.html.

¹⁴⁴ Averianov, 'O "Sinteze" Pravoslavnoi Ideologii'.

¹⁴⁵ Averianov.

¹⁴⁶ Aleksandr Krylezhev, 'Tupiki Provintsialnogo Myshleniia', *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 18 October 2000, https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2000-10-18/8_tupik.html.

¹⁴⁷ Averianov, 'Pochemu My Russkie, Pochemu Pravoslavnye?'

¹⁴⁸ Vitalii Averianov, 'Korporatizm - Novaia Mifologiiia', *Filosofskaia Gazeta*, 2001, <http://averianov.net/sii/535/?h=670>.

form the new political and economic elites of the country.¹⁴⁹ In an article published in 2001, Averianov particularly took the case against Sergei Chernyshev.¹⁵⁰ His ideological dispute with Chernyshev cut across elite group conflicts inherited from the late Soviet Union. As one of the founders of the International Fund “Cultural Initiative”, created in 1987 in partnership with the American Soros Fund, Chernyshev was regarded by Averianov as an architect of the “mature perestroika” and “a typical product of the post-modern alienation of the 1970s-1980s”.¹⁵¹ Averianov’s discourse also aimed at the set of institutions with which Chernyshev was affiliated: the media holding “The Russian Institute”, which Chernyshev co-founded with Pavlovskii and included several online publications such as the *Russkii Zhurnal*, and the state university Higher School of Economics, where Chernyshev was a professor and director of the Institute of Corporate Entrepreneurship from 1998 to 2004.¹⁵² Based on a commentary of Chernyshev’s programmatic essay, entitled “Instead of a manifesto. Entrepreneur: A new word. A new estate. A new craft”,¹⁵³ Averianov developed a critique of what he regarded as the ideology of a broader liberal elite group organized by Pavlovskii. In this essay, Chernyshev presented the theses of a liberal technocratic political programme, which assumed that the authority of the state would leave the way to transnational corporations. He reproduced the ideas of theoreticians of the post-industrial society such as Daniel Bell regarding the overcoming of industrial economic sectors by a new information economy.¹⁵⁴ In his response, Averianov set the “old” and “eternal” myths of the Russian civilization – the myth of the Family, the myth of the Empire and the myth of the Church – against Chernyshev’s “new myths” of corporatism and the “religion” of “linear progress”. In contrast with a purely traditionalist worldview, however, Averianov spelled out the dual aspect of dynamic conservatism. He advocated both to “bring back to life the myth-leaders that are typical for Russian civilization” and to “embed them in a new way into modernity”.¹⁵⁵ Averianov therefore appropriated the theme of technological modernity developed by Chernyshev but included it in an alternative, conservative political framework:

We say “yes” to new technologies and say “no” to the new estates, we say “yes” to the new policy of old Russia and say “no” to new myths designed to bury our tradition.¹⁵⁶

By pitting dynamic conservatism against specific elite groups, Averianov shaped the consistency of his worldviews in an interactive definitional process, where its self-definition went through a definition against others. His discourse contributed to providing social and conceptual significance to the etiquettes used to define the identity and frontiers of adversary groups, such as the “post-modernists” as opposed to the “conservatives”. Through this activity of definition of concepts and their

¹⁴⁹ Averianov.

¹⁵⁰ Averianov.

¹⁵¹ Averianov.

¹⁵² Averianov.

¹⁵³ This essay was published in the *Russkii Zhurnal* in September 2000, see http://old.russ.ru/ist_sovr/ckp/20000904_I.html

¹⁵⁴ “In the entrepreneurial scheme, the connection between individual businesses is primarily informational. Therefore, in particular, the post-industrial society is also called post-economic”, quoted in Averianov, ‘Korporatizm - Novaia Mifologiiia’.

¹⁵⁵ Averianov.

¹⁵⁶ Averianov.

application to specific organisations and actors, Averianov consolidated and fleshed up already existing divides among elite groups, which were inherited from the late Soviet period. His speech therefore took on a performative political dimension by maintaining the relevance and further increasing the legacy of elite polarisation in a renewed political context.

An ideology in political action

Besides writing materials, Averianov's ideology of dynamic conservatism was also engaged in more practical political action by contributing to the activity of partisan organisations. In an article published in 2002, Averianov mentioned:

The leaders of the ideological department of one of the new parties in power suggested that I take part in the preparation of a conference on political conservatism in order to further develop the official ideology of the party (and therefore the state).¹⁵⁷

In an interview, he further detailed the circumstances of this cooperation with the party "Unity", which occurred before it merged with the party "Fatherland – All Russia" to form the ruling party "United Russia".

In my opinion, ideological creativity at that moment was something of a hobby for the party leaders. Actually, my active participation in their affairs at that time boiled down to the fact that I became an expert and a member of the jury of the competition of works on Russian conservatism held by this party among students and young scientists.¹⁵⁸

Averianov's cooperation with the ruling party was short-lived. He cited his deception with the "ideological stagnation"¹⁵⁹ and "compromise" that followed the creation of United Russia.

This [conservative] direction died out. In particular, because when the two parties merged, a formula was developed for a compromise between conservatism and progressivism, as it was then understood, and United Russia itself became the fruit of such a compromise.¹⁶⁰

In the run up to the 2003 legislative elections, Young Conservatives positioned themselves for the first time in the party system. As claimed by Mezhuev, their alignment with the newly founded party "Rodina" was almost unanimous.¹⁶¹ The party had been created by nationalist and conservative figures of the older generation such as Dmitrii Rogozin (1963-), Sergei Glaziev (1961-) and Sergei Baburin (1959-). Rodina won 9,2% of the vote and secured 37 seats of the 450 seats in the State Duma. Young Conservatives reinforced the significance of the party's political performance through their discourse. Averianov interpreted the party's electoral success as the sign of an "emerging shift of the Russian state towards a complex neo-fundamentalism".¹⁶² He claimed that Rodina could serve as an incubator for the development of a state ideology in line with his own theory of dynamic

¹⁵⁷ Averianov, 'Tretii Polius'.

¹⁵⁸ Averianov, interview, 11 October 2020.

¹⁵⁹ Averianov, 'Tretii Polius'.

¹⁶⁰ Averianov, interview, 11 October 2020.

¹⁶¹ Mezhuev, 'V Soznanii Minutnoi Sily'.

¹⁶² Averianov, 'Ot Dumy k Soboru (Politologicheskaiia Fantastika Blizhnego Deistviia)'.

conservatism.¹⁶³ Beyond the alignment of Young Conservatives' ideas with Rodina's programme, Natalia Androsenko mentioned that the electoral success of the party was interpreted as theirs as well:

The question of how much the ideas of the Young Conservatives had a real influence on the ideology of the Rodina bloc is controversial, but, undoubtedly, the political success of the bloc was perceived by the political community as the success of the Young Conservatives, although they could not establish any real ties with the party.¹⁶⁴

Dynamic conservatism, and the broader Young Conservatism it affiliated with, were therefore shaped through an interactive definitional process engaged in political and partisan conflict with other groups. Conversely, their discourse contributed to provide meaning and social significance to these groups' adversarial identities and perpetuate their polarisation. By 2005, the Young Conservatives were able to formally establish themselves as an intellectual society in the public sphere and to assemble their ideas into a collective programme meant for political use.

5. The social and doctrinal formalisation of the Young Conservatives' political ideology

In 2005, the Young Conservatives founded a social and institutional environment for the formalisation of their ideology. Egor Kholmogorov led the foundation of the "Conservative Meeting" [Konservativnoe Soveshchanie], which held several group discussions until it published in March 2005 the manifesto "Counter-Reformation".¹⁶⁵ Vitalii Averianov was among the signatories of the Counter-Reformation, while also organising a parallel doctrinal initiative through the creation of the Centre for Dynamic Conservatism [Tsentr Dinamicheskogo Konservatizma]. The Centre served as a platform for Young Conservatives but was more precisely tailored to Averianov's political theory of dynamic conservatism. It published the Russian Doctrine, also called the "Sergei Project",¹⁶⁶ in November 2005.

While the Young Conservatives had been increasingly taking shape as a social and doctrinal ensemble, the immediate political context of the year 2004-2005 provided an opportunity to formally articulate and organise their identity as a group. A series of testimonies of the Counter-Reformation's signatories, published in 2015 on the conservative political website Politconservatism.Ru,¹⁶⁷ reveals that the document was first of all prompted by the authors' reaction to the Ukrainian Orange

¹⁶³ Averianov defines this ideology as relying on three elements: the "revival of the traditionalist imperialist line," "Orthodox populism," and the "restoration of the imperial economic and technological space". Averianov.

¹⁶⁴ Nataliia Androsenko, 'Mladokonservatizm Kak Politicheskaia Ideologiiia', *Russkii Obozrevatel*, no. 5 (2014): 210–17.

¹⁶⁵ Published on the online media Pravaia.ru and on the authors' personal websites

¹⁶⁶ The name "Sergei Project" was chosen after Saint Sergei of Radonezh "The initiators and organizers of the community opted for the name of St. Rev. Sergius of Radonezh, the eternal protector and patron of Russia, who appeared more than once in the most difficult times for her". See "'Sergievskii Proekt'.

¹⁶⁷ Boris Mezhuev is Chairman of the editorial board of this website.

Revolution.¹⁶⁸ The authors shared a similar interpretation of the revolution as an operation pushed for by outside Western forces, which pointed to the weakness of the Ukrainian regime and directly threatened the Russian state. As put by the Counter-Reformation signatory Vladimir Golyshev:

The Counter-Reformation report was a response to the “Orange threat” that was coming from Kiev. Maidan [the name of the square where the largest protests were held] was suspected to be a cunning special operation of the West. We expected that the same scenario could be implemented in Moscow.¹⁶⁹

According to Kholmogorov, the instigator of the “Conservative Reunion”, the Orange Revolution provided an opportunity for greater political resonance to the discourse of the Young Conservatives in Russian politics:

I had the feeling of a certain window of opportunity for the Russian conservatives, which made it possible to speak out at least as a little noticeable social force. The Orange Revolution really strained the Kremlin and we started to that we could be at least noticed, if not heard.¹⁷⁰

In the meantime, the “Conservative Meeting” was also drafted in reaction to the Russian domestic political context. Young Conservatives were bonded by a common criticism of the reforms implemented by the regime, which they attributed to the influence of “liberal lobby” within the ruling elites.¹⁷¹ They particularly denounced the reform on the monetization of pensioners’ benefits, which was introduced in the spring of 2005 in order to replace social benefits in kind by direct payment. As mentioned by Kholmogorov, the group meant to use the opportunity provided by this specific contemporary context to offer a “systemic answer” to what they identified as a more general “political vice”, i.e. the practice of reforms.¹⁷²

The action modes used by the Young Conservatives to institutionalise themselves as an intellectual movement replicated those employed by their ideological competitors, such as the liberal-conservative founders of the “Seraphim Club”.¹⁷³ The foundation of the Conservative Meeting and the Centre for Dynamic Conservatism built up on the interpersonal networks and sociability created in the media institutions where Young Conservatives used to publish and frequent each other – i.e. the online media APN.Ru and Pravaia.Ru and, more specifically for the Centre for Dynamic Conservatism, the magazine *Russian entrepreneur* [Russkii predprinimatel].

¹⁶⁸ The Orange Revolution refers to the series of protests that occurred from November 2004 to January 2005 in Ukraine to contest the results of the presidential election where Viktor Yanukovich got elected. The protests succeeded in calling a second run-off of the elections, which resulted with the victory of Viktor Yushchenko.

¹⁶⁹ Vladimir Golyshev, ‘Adresaty Nashego Doklada Nakhodilis v Kremle i Na Staroi Ploshchadi’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 7 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/adresaty-nashego-doklada-nakhodilis-v-kremle-i-na-staroy-ploshchadi>; See also Arkadii Maler’s testimony: “The original reason for writing the Counter-Reformation report was the so-called Orange revolution in Ukraine at the end of 2004 and the desire to stop a similar revolution in Russia”, in Arkadii Maler, ‘Nasledniki Vekhovskoi Traditsii’, *Politconservatism.Ru*, 3 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/nasledniki-vekhovskoy-traditsii>.

¹⁷⁰ Kholmogorov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’.

¹⁷¹ Maler, ‘Nasledniki Vekhovskoi Traditsii’.

¹⁷² Kholmogorov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’.

¹⁷³ See footnote 136.

Moreover, to establish themselves, Young Conservatives used the resources and capital that they had acquired from their experience working for leading structures in the fields of journalism and political consulting. For instance, Mikhail Golovanov's experience as a former editor-in-chief of the platform SMI.Ru at Gleb Pavlovskii's "Foundation for Effective Politics" provided him with instrumental assets to manage the organisation of the Conservative Meeting. As acknowledged by Kholmogorov, Golovanov prompted the creation of the Conservative Meeting by suggesting to apply Pavlovskii's method to officially establish a Young Conservatives's platform and connect it with the political elites:

Mikhail Golovanov had the idea that nothing could be achieved in politics in Moscow if you did not organize some space for a general hangout of the political class, similar to what Pavlovskii did.¹⁷⁴

Golovanov himself and other participants of the Conference Meeting have put forward his role as an "organizational manager", able to find financial resources and to engage with the wider community of "political strategists" and the Presidential Administration.¹⁷⁵

The publication of the Counter-Reformation and the Russian Doctrine demonstrated the Young Conservatives' ability to organise, act and speak as a group in the public sphere. The same names cut across the signatory lists of the two documents. They represented the largest coalition of authors ever gathered within the young generation of conservative intellectuals. The Counter-Reformation's signatories' list included thirteen authors.¹⁷⁶ The Russian Doctrine was written by three authors, drew from an editorial board of nine members and sought the advice of more than thirty experts.¹⁷⁷ Individuals' decision to commit to a collective action displayed the greater authority and significance that they had acquired as a group. As put by Pavel Sviatenkov:

It was obvious to me that, together, the members of the Conservative Meeting had more weight and social capital than separately. At that time, these intellectuals [...] meant more together than separately.¹⁷⁸

The coalition included authors that spanned a wide conservative ideological spectrum from Orthodox imperialism to secular Russian ethnic nationalism. The Young Conservatives' collective action emerged despite this lack of complete theoretical unity. Their cohesion as a group was shaped by social as much as by doctrinal features. Sviatenkov, for instance, emphasized his primary interest for the habits and practice of an intellectual society over its actual theoretical task:

For me, the Conservative Meeting, as our own little Masonic lodge, was more important than the report that it was preparing.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Kholmogorov, "Kontreformatsiia": Zhizn Bez Maiatnika'.

¹⁷⁵ Krylov, "Kontreformatsiia": Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie'; Golovanov, 'Mezhdru Paternalizmom i Tvorcheskoi Siloi Natsii'.

¹⁷⁶ Vitalii Averianov, Armen Asriian, Iliia Brazhnikov, Mikhail Golovanov, Vladimir Golyshev, Andrei Kobiakov, Konstantin Krylov, Arkadii Maler, Mikhail Remizov, Boris Mezhuev, Pavel Sviatenkov, Kirill Frolov and Egor Kholmogorov. Additionally, the document mentions that "Alexandr Eliseev, Aleksei Chadaiev, Andrei Pritvorov and others also took part in the discussions of the Conservative Meeting", 'Kontreformatsiia'.

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/page95506.html>

¹⁷⁸ Pavel Sviatenkov, 'Veselaia Semeika', *Politconservatism.Ru*, 25 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/veselaya-semeyka>.

¹⁷⁹ Sviatenkov.

Young Conservatives' appetite for the creation of a social venue to exchange among themselves was indeed foundational in prompting their move from individual publications to collective writing. Kholmogorov reported the eagerness of the members of the Conservative Meeting for the exercise of what they perceived as a high-quality intellectual discussion among peers:

[One of] the participants said the following: "This is some kind of intellectual feast." And indeed, a decent number of not the most stupid people (as the next ten years have shown) said interesting things, argued and exchanged interesting dialogues. And all this happened at a very high intellectual speed, so there was no awkwardness, despondency or ignorance of what to say.¹⁸⁰

In a more romanticised testimony, Konstantin Krylov also stressed the burden of the material difficulties faced by the organisation – such as the remote location of their meeting room in Moscow – to underscore the strength of the members' commitment and their yearning for intellectual conviviality:

The place was far from civilization and extremely inconvenient – it happened at the Aviamotornaia metro station, and then we still had to walk from there. But this was also a challenge: are your asses so light, gentlemen conservative thinkers, that you can raise them for the next meeting? They all apparently raised - the turnout, although not one hundred per cent was very good. [...] It was winter. It was getting dark and leaden early. The sky was crushing, the snow was gloomy and dirty, we chatted about trifles and stomped, freezing our feet while waiting for the last latecomer. [...] Someone brought with them simple snacks for tea: gingerbread or bagels. After having waited for everyone, we walked in single file through the black, terrible streets, going further and further into inconvenience, until heavy buildings of unclear purpose appeared. We went down some stairs, then went up and finally, we got to the place assigned to us - something like a big meeting room. There, we set the tea and proceeded to save our Homeland.¹⁸¹

The texts as collective speech acts

Beyond mere written documents, the Counter-Reformation and the Russian Doctrine aimed to perform practical actions. The first part of the Russian Doctrine clearly stated that the text was not a "speculative utopia", a "theory of the 'national idea'" nor a "complete ideology".¹⁸² Rather, it first sought to become a "platform for a broad coalition of public patriotic forces".¹⁸³ The achievement of the Russian Doctrine therefore was not limited to its publication, but also involved group presentations of the text, where the authors showed themselves together and set themselves as a group in the public sphere.¹⁸⁴ Likewise, the meaning of the Counter-Reformation project to its authors overcame its theoretical argument. It sought to allow the emergence of the Young Conservatives as a community of self-standing

¹⁸⁰ Kholmogorov, "Kontreformatsiia": Zhizn Bez Maiatnika'.

¹⁸¹ Krylov, "Kontreformatsiia": Prerdystoriia i Posleslovie'.

¹⁸² 'Tezisy Russkoi Doktriny'.

¹⁸³ 'Tezisy Russkoi Doktriny'.

¹⁸⁴ See for instance the presentation of the doctrine by Vitalii Averianov, Mikhail Remizov and Egor Kholmogorov at the General Assembly of the Conservative Club in May 2005, reported in: Mikhail Pozharskii, 'Russkaia Doktrina - Oruzhie Priamogo Deistviia', *Credo.Ru*, 11/05, <http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/page95546.html>. The introduction of the doctrine to different social milieus will be studied in greater detail in the following paper.

public intellectuals distinct from journalists and political consultants. In the view of Pavel Sviatenkov, the discussions held by the “Conservative Meeting” enacted the rise of the “first community of public intellectuals in post-Soviet Russia”:

A public intellectual is an intellectual who has special knowledge, social capital, authority and public weight sufficient to influence the political agenda. [...] The public intellectuals of the 1990s were never perceived as such. They have always been assigned to journalistic work. [...] If we look at their career, it is somehow connected with the media or PR [public relations]. The Conservative Meeting was the first attempt to create a corporation of public intellectuals not under the brand of "journalism" or PR.¹⁸⁵

Mezhuev further argued that the real meaning of the document was not related to its inner content, but rather to its authorship. The distinctive significance of the Counter-Reformation, according to him, was its announcement of “the emergence of a new political generation on the stage”:

I am sure that if something similar were written and published in 2005 by such people as Sergei Glaziev, Mikhail Deliagin, Mikhail Khazin, Maksim Kalashnikov, Iurii Gromyko, etc.,¹⁸⁶ it would not have had a comparable effect. It was not about the ideas themselves, it was about the person on whose behalf these ideas were expressed.¹⁸⁷

The authors of the Counter-Reformation also aimed to define their group position towards the regime. While they denounced the reforms programme carried out by the government, they also warned against the danger of anti-regime revolutionary movements. They pitted their discourse as an answer to an unsatisfactory choice between a pro-regime attitude and the opposition:

As the only alternative to the reformist nightmare, a “revolution” is imposed on us. [...] The fact that today we are faced with the choice between preserving the existing regime (conducting anti-national reforms) and the revolution (which will inevitably bring even more radical reformers to power) indicates Russia's loss of the last vestiges of political subjectivity.¹⁸⁸

In this regard, the Counter-Reformation addressed one of the major predicaments of Russian conservative thought, which has classically been supportive of a strong state power and has yet historically been at odds with state policies.¹⁸⁹ While the political scientist Paul Robinson has described this paradoxical position of Russian conservatives as “loyal opposition”,¹⁹⁰ the Counter-Reformation rather phrased a loyalist criticism. Arkadii Maler (1979-) elaborated on the group’s position as follow:

The Conservative Conference positioned itself as a third force not in relation to a liberal power, but in relation to the liberal lobby in power, and this is a fundamental distinction. For all my criticism of the authorities, I did not think of myself in any opposition.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Sviatenkov, ‘Veselaia Semeika’.

¹⁸⁶ Members of the older generation of conservative intellectuals.

¹⁸⁷ Mezhuev, ‘V Soznanii Minutnoi Sily’.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Kontreformatsiia’.

¹⁸⁹ As stated by Paul Robinson: “the Russian state has often been a radical, modernizing force of in Russian life. [...] Conservatives have regularly founded themselves in opposition to the state, and arguing in favor of restricting intrusions by the government bureaucracy into the lives of local communities”. In Robinson, *Russian Conservatism*, 19.

¹⁹⁰ Robinson, *Russian Conservatism*, 41.

¹⁹¹ Maler, ‘Nasledniki Vekhovskoi Traditsii’.

Moreover, as put by Mezhuev, the Counter-Reformation was meant as an instrument to “establish a dialogue with the authorities”.¹⁹² The authors sought to demonstrate their “authority” as the leading voices of the new generation of patriotic thinkers in order to trade their “loyalty” towards the state against more influence within the power structures.¹⁹³ To Mikhail Golovanov, the Counter-Reformation was meant to be used as a means to value and sell the expertise of the authors to the regime:

The report was an attempt by this group to propose to Putin in 2005 a new agenda based on a conservative approach (emancipation of national forces), as opposed to the then dominant discourse of liberal reformers (“breaking the country over the knee”). And not only the agenda, but also the ideological experts who are ready to be recruited for this task.¹⁹⁴

In that sense, the Counter-Reformation project was an application of the Young Conservatives’ strategy of entry into the political realm through cultural hegemony. It implemented their belief in what they have widely referred to as the power of meanings, or “sense-crazy” [smyslokратиia], which is the use of ideas as instruments for the transformation of the social reality. As Kholmogorov explained:

At that time, I must confess, I strongly believed in the concept of "sense-crazy". Namely, I believed that if intellectuals manage to formulate some truly strong meaning, some idea, then this meaning by itself will begin to magically change reality without the usual media and party mechanisms. Roughly speaking, this meaning will invade acts of communication. That is, like a virus, it will begin to reproduce itself and as a result, it will become reality.¹⁹⁵

Likewise, the Russian Doctrine was defined as a step towards the practice of “sense-crazy”:

The Russian Doctrine, by its design, seeks to become [...] the beginning of the conciliar work of the sense-crazy layer of modern Russia, the beginning of the formation of the sense-crazy as a self-conscious ideological and political force.¹⁹⁶

From individual to collective publications: framing a doctrinal identity

In the years 2000-2004, the identity of Young Conservatives had grown through an interactive definitional process in contrast and competition with other groups. The doctrinal enterprise they launched in 2005 built up on their socialisation habits to stabilise them into a self-established ideological identity. The Young Conservatives’ work on group publications built up on a series of individual articles that had already offered rallying theses and slogans for the whole group. For instance, Vladimir Golyshev mentioned that Egor Kholmogorov’s article “Partisans of Order”, published in November 2004, “served as a kind of diapason for us”.¹⁹⁷ The historian Mikhail Diunov also identified Kholmogorov’s formula “The Restoration of the Future”, coined in 2003 to express the futuristic orientation of the Young

¹⁹² Mezhuev, ‘V Soznanii Minutnoi Sily’.

¹⁹³ Mezhuev.

¹⁹⁴ Golovanov, ‘Mezhdu Paternalizmom i Tvorcheskoi Siloi Natsii’.

¹⁹⁵ Kholmogorov, “‘Kontreformatsiia’: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Tezisy Russkoi Doktriny’.

¹⁹⁷ Golyshev, ‘Adresaty Nashego Doklada Nakhodilis v Kremle i Na Staroi Ploshchadi’. In the article mentioned by Golyshev, Kholmogorov warned against the danger of the Orange Revolution for Russia and called for the organisation of “civil resistance” against the “technologies” designed to topple political regimes.

Conservatives, as one of the group's "ideological mottos".¹⁹⁸ Similarly, Natalia Androsenko listed Remizov's "Introduction to Nationalism", Mezhev's "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and the Russian Future", Krylov's "Erefia as a Political Reality" and a few other articles as foundational programmatic texts for the Young Conservative movement.¹⁹⁹

The collective format adopted by the Counter-Reformation report and the Russian Doctrine permitted to substantiate individual scattered ideas and formalise them into a consistent group ideology. In its first paper, the Russian Doctrine was introduced as a programmatic version of "dynamic conservatism", therefore establishing Averianov's formula into a full-fledged, operational ideology:

The Russian Doctrine contains a large-scale, ramified and in place even detailed programme of conservative reforms. In this very phrase, some may see a logical contradiction. A distinctive feature of the Russian Doctrine from other platforms that have been created in the foreseeable past and are being created at the present time is its adherence to a unique and, we dare say, advanced ideological platform - dynamic conservatism.²⁰⁰

In contrast to single-authored pieces, the Young Conservatives portrayed the Counter-Reformation and the Russian Doctrine as collective speeches that testified to each individual's belonging to a more general intellectual movement. The leaders of the initiatives insisted on the collaborative aspect of the making of the documents and on their success at harmonising the diversity of viewpoints involved. The authors of the Russian Doctrine claimed that:

The team worked according to the network principle: each [author] took part in the creation of the document, members of the editorial board actively helped each other in determining the ideological vectors and the crystallization of the spiritual, cultural and political meaning of the Doctrine. [...] The creators of the Doctrine sought to develop a unified style of thinking and language that would reflect all the wealth and internal dynamics of a large group of authors (about 70 participants), and through it - of modern Russian society.²⁰¹

Despite the authors' claim to have reached a unified position, hierarchies within the collective of authors granted more editing capacity to some members over others, and consequently more representation to their ideas. The structure of this hierarchy responded to different criteria in both projects. In the case of the Russian Doctrine, Averianov and Andrei Kobiakov (1974-) were in charge of gathering all the contributions and polishing them towards what they understood as the "general conciliar understanding".²⁰² On the contrary, Averianov only marginally contributed to the Counter-Reformation document, which was mainly "owned" and authored by the secular nationalist ideologue Konstantin Krylov.²⁰³ In addition, Kholmogorov

¹⁹⁸ Diunov, 'Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istoriia Ego Znachenie'.

¹⁹⁹ Androsenko, 'Publitsistika Mladokonservatorov v Sovremennom Kommunikativnom Prostranstve Rossii'.

²⁰⁰ 'Tezisy Russkoi Doktriny'.

²⁰¹ 'Sergievskii Proekt'.

²⁰² 'Sergievskii Proekt'.

²⁰³ Iliia Brazhnikov stated that "The intellectual initiative was owned by Konstantin Krylov" in 'Vopreki Nazvaniu Doklad Nes v Sebe Dukh Istinnoi Reformatsii', *Politconservatism.Ru*, 2 September 2015, <https://politconservatism.ru/prognosis/vopreki-nazvaniyu-doklad-nyes-v-sebe-duk-istinnoy-reformatsii>; Egor Kholmogorov also mentioned that "The fundamental

served as the “moderator of the discussion”²⁰⁴ and as the final arbiter of ideological divergence between members. As he reported, his mission as a mediator involved both stylistic and dogmatic concerns:

My task was to “spoil” this text somewhat, bringing it closer to a language, analytical format and presentation understandable to our political system. It was necessary to partially weaken Krylov’s sharp anti-statism in favour of a positive statism inclined towards the improvement of the lives of people, that both Mezhuev and Remizov advocated. It was also required to somewhat strengthen the traditional Orthodox-conservative component, which for obvious reasons was not close to Konstantin [Krylov].²⁰⁵

The difference in the balance of power among the authors resulted in different negotiation of the plurality of the views involved. Orthodox conservatives played a leading role in the writing of the Russian Doctrine but were marginalised in the Counter-Reformation project. One of their representatives recounted his diminished bargaining power in the editing process, compared with that of the secular line:

If we talk about my personal participation, then I represented the “Orthodox” wing in the Conservative Reunion. Accordingly, “my” stylistic and verbal layer in the report is everything that concerns “Tradition”, “Eastern Christian civilization” and the role of the “Orthodox Church”. In the draft, which was twice as long as the final text, it was a solid piece. In the latest edition – it represented one scanty paragraph, and [Russian Orthodoxy] - one phrase.²⁰⁶

On top of their attempt at framing a theoretical unity, the intention of the authors to transform their discourse into a fixed doctrinal identity was also visible in their effort to fit their publication into the tradition of Russian political thought. Kholmogorov claimed that the Counter-Reformation qualified as “a journalistic and historiosophic document, inscribed in the tradition of Russian conservative thought”.²⁰⁷ Arkadii Maler further portrayed the document as the heir of the line of thought of *Vekhi*, which was a collection of essays published in 1909 by a group of Russian philosophers and theologians.²⁰⁸ Likewise, Mezhuev advanced that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s 1974 “Letter to the Leaders of the Soviet Union” could be regarded as the Counter-Reformation’s “predecessor”.²⁰⁹

In addition, the formally doctrinal aspect of the documents lied in the grand narrative they deployed to span the historical origins of the issues they addressed up until the ideal desired society they called for.²¹⁰ In a straightforward two-steps argument, the Counter-Reformation pitted its call for an “unreformist approach to social change” against the practice of “Russian reformism”. The first part portrayed reforms as a “technology of destruction” and an “unkind ‘tradition’”, which started with Peter the Great and was perpetuated in history by a “ritual reproach of the pre-

idea and the basic text were formulated by Konstantin Krylov" in “Kontreformatsiia”: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’.

²⁰⁴ Golyshev, ‘Adresaty Nashego Doklada Nakhodilis v Kremle i Na Staroi Ploshchadi’.

²⁰⁵ Kholmogorov, “Kontreformatsiia”: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’.

²⁰⁶ Brazhnikov, ‘Vopreki Nazvaniu Doklad Nes v Sebe Dukh Istinoi Reformatsii’.

²⁰⁷ Kholmogorov, “Kontreformatsiia”: Zhizn Bez Maiatnika’.

²⁰⁸ Maler, ‘Nasledniki Vekhovskoi Traditsii’.

²⁰⁹ Mezhuev, ‘V Soznanii Minutnoi Sily’.

²¹⁰ On how grand narratives are characteristic of the discursive genre of doctrines, see: Thibaut Rioufreyt, ‘La mise en politique des idées. Pour une histoire sociale des idées en milieu partisan’, *Politix*, no. 126 (2019): 17.

reform past”.²¹¹ In a second part, the document presented the concept of “Counter-Reformation” as a “technology of success”. It reproduced a traditional argument of Russian conservatism, namely, the defence of an organic conception of social change.²¹² The authors set forth an “unreformist approach to social change”, which assumed that “the most avant-garde and bold solution to a particular problem should be presented as a restoration of an old custom or an institution verified by life, as following an example already set or as a continuation of a long and respected tradition”.²¹³ In a similar vein, the first paper of the Russian Doctrine framed a narrative about the “rebirth and new ascent of the Russian civilization” as an alternative to the “myth of the ‘End of History’” and the “crisis of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ project”.²¹⁴ In place of the liberal paradigm, dynamic conservatism was put forward as a “modern attempt to translate Tradition in Russia”.²¹⁵ This attitude was subsequently detailed in the following six papers, respectively covering the “spiritual and political nation”, the “Russian soul”, the “Russian state”, the “Russian economy”, the “Russian society” and the “Paths towards transformation”.

The Russian Doctrine and the Counter-Reformation laid the foundations for a general theoretical framework for Young Conservatism.²¹⁶ Following up on the publication of these documents, Mikhail Remizov and Vitalii Averianov concurred with each other in defining the set of essential axioms at lie in their group ideological identity.²¹⁷ On top of its general characterisation as a forward-looking conservatism oriented towards the development and the future of Russia, their definition of Young Conservatism’s core principles included:

- Civilizational anti-globalism and geopolitical sovereignty.
- Economic protectionism, including nationalization of natural resources, state corporatism and social solidarity.
- Ethnic Russian demographic and migration policy.
- Legitimacy and indivisibility of the Russian state as the heir of the Russian empire and Soviet Union and the centre of the “post-imperial space”.²¹⁸
- Religious traditionalism, applied by giving priority and influence to traditional religions in the cultural and political spheres.

As argued by Remizov, these principles constituted a “tuning fork”, which ensured the semantic unity of modern Russian conservatism. They operationalized the social and conceptual meaning of Young Conservatism, as they delimited the borders

²¹¹ ‘Kontreformatsiia’.

²¹² Robinson, *Russian Conservatism*, 9; Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds., *Contemporary Russian Conservatism: Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives*, Eurasian Studies Library: History, Societies & Cultures in Eurasia, volume 13 (Boston ; Leiden: Brill, 2020), 37.

²¹³ ‘Kontreformatsiia’.

²¹⁴ ‘Tezisy Russkoi Doktriny’.

²¹⁵ Vitalii Averianov, ‘Obrashchenie k “Reshitelnomu Menshinstvu”’, *APN.Ru*, 07 2005, <http://averianov.net/sii/450/?h=670>.

²¹⁶ On the construction of an environment for ideological theorisation see: Jérôme Tournadre-Plancq, *Au-Delà de La Gauche et de La Droite, Une Troisième Voie Britannique?*, Nouvelle Bibliothèque de Thèses. Science Politique, v. 6 (Paris: Dalloz, 2006), 16.

²¹⁷ Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor’; Averianov, ‘Konservatizm v Otdelno Vziatoi Strane’.

²¹⁸ Remizov, Mikhail, ‘Konservatizm Segodnia: Analiticheskii Obzor’.

between “ideologically ‘ours’ and ideologically ‘foreign’”.²¹⁹ However, this theoretical framework included polarities and divergences. In this respect, while the Russian Doctrine became one of the landmark publications of modern Russian conservatism,²²⁰ it also paved the way for a specific ramification within this ideological field. First of all, in contrast to the Counter-Reformation project, the Russian Doctrine gathered a larger coalition of authors, where Young Conservatives (born after 1965) associated with slightly older conservatives born in the early 1960s.²²¹ The document set forth the ideology of “dynamic conservatism” developed by Averianov in the years 2000-2005. While Averianov elaborated this ideology in distinction with the older generation of conservatives, he differed from other Young Conservatives in his effort to pit his worldviews as an incremental evolution, rather than a radical rupture, from the conservative language of the 1990s. Contrary to the paradigmatic shift claimed by other authors within the field of modern Russian conservatism, Averianov claimed that “modern conservatism” did not “break the umbilical cord” with the older generation.²²² In that sense, the doctrine offered a broader acceptance of the meaning of the “patriotic forces”, which it sought to coalesce. For instance, in an interview, Valerii Korovin, a disciple of Aleksandr Dugin’s Eurasianism, recounted that he perceived the Russian Doctrine as the synthesis of the “basic aspirations of the patriotic intellectual community of that period”.²²³ This positive reception testified to the permeability of the doctrine in diverse conservative audiences such as the Eurasianist circles, which the Counter-Reformation on the contrary purposely opposed. In addition, the Russian Doctrine was based on a specific institutional structure, the “Russian Entrepreneur Foundation”, a charitable organisation created by the Orthodox entrepreneur Sergei Pisarev (1960-). As Pisarev explained in an interview, the Foundation was set up to finance “ideological and political projects”.²²⁴ While the Counter-Reformation was a self-organised initiative among intellectuals, the Russian Doctrine was developed within the structure of an external organisation. The Russian Entrepreneur Fund provided significant financial and material resources to the authors of the doctrine,²²⁵ who were able to more firmly institutionalise their initiative with the foundation of the “Centre for Dynamic Conservatism” and the creation of a website exclusively devoted to the Russian Doctrine, Rusdoctrina.Ru. As explained on the website, the Russian Doctrine was framed under the larger “Sergei Project”, which entailed varied initiatives such as the development of the analytical structure of the “Russian Entrepreneur Foundation”, the creation of a club of “ideological close entrepreneurs and statesmen”, and a broader “social movement to uphold the principles and provisions of the ‘Russian Doctrine’”.²²⁶ The role of entrepreneurs in the organisation

²¹⁹ Remizov, Mikhail.

²²⁰ Mikhail Diunov qualified the doctrine as “the most important, and significant in terms of volum, collective work that originated from the Young Conservative environment” in ‘Mladokonservatizm. Ego Istoriia Ego Znachenie’.

²²¹ See for instance the three co-editors of the doctrine – Vitalii Averianov, Andrei Kobiakov and Vladimir Kucherenko (alias Maksim Kalashnikov, 1966-).

²²² Averianov, interview, 28 July 2020.

²²³ Korovin, interview.

²²⁴ Sergei Pisarev, interview by Juliette Faure, 11 September 2019.

²²⁵ During the interview, Pisarev mentioned that the Foundation provided 70% of the funding of the project. Pisarev.

²²⁶ ‘Sergievskii Proekt’.

and objectives of the Russian Doctrine arguably accounts for its significant theorisation of a conservative position on economic issues. While the economy has been a classic blind spot in Russian conservative thought, the doctrine's emphasis on the themes of economic development as well as industrial and technological modernity was one of its key characteristic features. In addition, if the Counter-Reformation report was mostly directed at government officials, the ambition of the doctrine also targeted and identified economic and business elites as potential vehicles for social change:

With certain sympathy for the socialist idea, the doctrine is oriented towards healthy business circles. We stand for the realization that the flaws of the current socio-economic system in Russia are not associated with the fundamental shortcomings of the entrepreneurial class, but with its forced role as an "economic animal" that simply follows the conditions proposed to it by officials. A new social coalition is needed, a union of really conservative people, [...] well-off people, who are also armed with higher spiritual abilities. This is how we the future of Russia, and not through the replicated construction of the Western cult of homo economicus.²²⁷

The doctrine's emphasis on the economy was articulated together with its firm commitment to religious and spiritual principles. Two of the doctrine's major theses insisted on the religious dimension of dynamic conservatism: first, the elevation of spirituality to a state sovereignty concern and an issue of national security;²²⁸ and second, the endorsement of Orthodoxy as "the main prototype of Russian civilization" and the "banner for national and cultural identity".²²⁹ In this regard, the doctrine exacerbated the principle of "religious traditionalism" included in the general outline of modern Russian conservatism's framework and took it to the level of Orthodox state traditionalism.

The dual aspect of the Russian Doctrine – both a landmark document of a new generational Russian conservatism and the founding ground of the more specific field of "dynamic conservatism" – played out in the evolution of its career in the public sphere, which contrasted with that of the Counter-Reformation.

Conclusion

This paper disclosed the social and doctrinal processes through which dynamic conservatism has consolidated as a political ideology over the years of Vladimir Putin's early Presidency, from 2000 to 2005. It argued that the creation of this ideological label related to the emergence of a generation of young conservative intellectuals who sought to establish a new modern Russian conservatism as well as a new profile of public intellectual. The paper demonstrated that the Young Conservatives have succeeded in building a theorisation space for the formalisation of their group identity in the public sphere. This process of ideological identity building was shaped through the group's interactive definition in contrast with the older generation of conservative intellectuals and with other ideologically rival groups. The rise of their career as media intellectuals and the growing institutional visibility of their discourse in the public sphere have demonstrated their ability to contend for the

²²⁷ Averianov, 'Obrashchenie k "Reshitelnomu Menshinstvu"'.
²²⁸ The first of the main theses of the doctrine presented by Averianov in an interview is: "Our supervalues and political ideals are the ideal of spiritual sovereignty and the ideal of social truth". Averianov.
²²⁹ Averianov.

representation of their ideas. In this respect, Young Conservatives have contributed to clearing a space for competitive idea production and circulation.